

**THE SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY
OF NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY
IN VANCOUVER**

By

COLIN IVOR MILLS

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Department of GEOGRAPHY

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date MARCH 2 1994

ABSTRACT -

The Social Geography of New Age Spirituality in Vancouver

It was expected that by the end of the twentieth-century, due to human achievement and technology, religion would be a mere fading memory in the minds and the history books of modernized western people. This has been expressed through the secularization thesis, which describes a "disenchantment" of western culture. Over the last ten years, however, there has been a growing movement seeking to re-enchant this culture by exploring and reconsidering religion, myth and spirituality. One of the most powerful expressions of this is popularly referred to as the *New Age Movement*. This thesis looks at the relationship between New Age and secularization theory, examining the reasons for an apparent turn away from secularization. By using Jacques Ellul's interpretation of the history of the sacred, this thesis proposes that far from being a time of secularization, modernism ushered in an era where the sacred canopy of Christianity was replaced by a new sacred expression in the form of science and technology. In recent years, however, the perceived failure of modernism has generated a search for a new set of sacred expressions in western society. New Age and postmodernism are vehicles which people are using to initiate this search. Currently both phenomena are looking to three sources in order to recover meaning and control over life: the past and the distant, nature and the self. The theoretical challenge New Age and postmodernism represents to the secularization thesis is made concrete in the geography of the New Age Movement. This thesis makes a physical connection between the New Age and areas of gentrification, which contradicts the assumptions of the secularization thesis by proving that an area which should be highly secularized is in fact a place of spiritual exploration.

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Chapter One - INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Almost everybody has heard about it, yet it seems that few people can define it. Everyone knows someone who they would consider to be part of it, yet few claim to be part of it themselves. Many people know it is here, however, few seem to know where it has come from. Associated with Hollywood and Southern California as a whole, the New Age Movement and its philosophies appear in movies, television shows, books and newspaper articles. Almost passé is the omni-present image of Shirley MacLaine which is presented visually and conjured-up mentally whenever the topic is raised in the media or in everyday conversation. The expressions "You create your own reality", "Follow your bliss" and "Find the god within you" have become common-place. New Age ideas have entered into the school system, big business, politics and even traditional churches. Everyone comes in contact with it in one form or another yet it is rarely recognized, often because it is present in very subtle ways. But what is it? Where did it come from? Why is it *here*? And why is it here *now*?

In this thesis I attempt to deal with some of these issues in detail. This chapter, (Chapter One) deals firstly with the research methodology used in the construction of this thesis. This involves a description of the approaches taken in deciding what philosophical and methodological frameworks I used in discussing the New Age Movement in general. I will also outline what methods were used in the gathering of interview and numerical data. Secondly this chapter introduces the reader to the New Age practitioners who volunteered their time and their life stories in this research.

In chapter two we encounter the New Age Movement, attempting a definition and identifying where in society it is present. Also, some of the most fundamental beliefs are described. In chapters three, four, and five we step away from the New Age specifically

and look at broader contexts of western culture. In doing this we will establish a cultural context from which the New Age Movement arose. This section begins in chapter three with an examination of the secularization thesis, a valuable heuristic for exploring the relationship between religion and society. Given the nature of the secularization thesis, however, I opted to use the less well known work of Jaques Ellul in order to provide a perspective which allowed more room for the existence of the sacred in society than is provided for in the standard body of secularization literature.

In chapter four we will turn our attention to the contemporary academic project of postmodernism. Here we will look at the reasons for the perceived failure of modernism as well as the nature of postmodernism. Similarly we will see how postmodernism and the New Age Movement are related to each other. This exercise will provide a further glimpse into the nature of the New Age Movement as well as providing further indications of the cultural context in which the New Age Movement exists.

In chapter five we examine the relationships between New Age, modernism and postmodernism, considering the most basic premises of each and finding a point of origin which is the same in each of these movements. This chapter demonstrates that while each movement uses vastly different techniques to achieve its goal, in fact the goal of each movement is the same in some important respects. In chapter six we step away from the philosophical background of the previous chapter and begin to examine the real history of the New Age Movement. We begin this process by looking at the cradle of the New Age, the 1960s counterculture movement. Here we will see the outworking of the theoretical points raised in the previous chapters with a particular emphasis on how this was manifest in Vancouver. Similarly this chapter will provide some concrete links between the New Age and the counterculture movement.

Chapter seven concentrates on the New Age Movement and its particular manifestations in Vancouver. This will begin with an analysis of *Common Ground* magazine, the longest running New Age publication in Vancouver. *Common Ground*

will give us some insight on the growth of the movement in the Lower Mainland and will also provide a tool for assessing the prevalence of the New Age ideas and belief systems discussed in earlier chapters.

This discussion will then turn, in chapter eight to a discussion of the geography of New Age in Vancouver. Using a variety of resources we will see how the New Age fits into the socio-geographical landscape of Vancouver, and is associated with the middle class phenomenon of gentrification.

METHODOLOGY

Background Material

The New Age Movement is a topic which, to date, is largely unstudied. There does exist a large body of material coming from within the movement which deals with its various ideas, techniques and practices. These books, however, rarely stand back from the ideological position which they are promoting to consider what the New Age Movement itself is and where it has come from. For the most part the literature which is available in New Age bookstores deals with special interests. Perhaps the most significant departure from this is the landmark New Age book, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*,¹ by Marilyn Ferguson. This document was designed to reveal the myriad manifestations of the supposed forthcoming age of spiritual, social and personal enlightenment, which has been dubbed the Age of Aquarius, a name derived from astrology. The book covers a wide range of topics but unfortunately is so fast paced that it leaves the reader breathless, for it rarely dwells on any topic for more than a few paragraphs. The result is a broad brush approach which displays the breadth of New Age, but fails to provide any detailed accounts of what the "Aquarian Conspiracy" is about or

¹Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformations in the 1980's*, (Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.)

where it came from. Despite its shortcomings however, it remains the most comprehensive self-evaluation of the movement to have come from New Age circles.

As valuable to my research as any of the New Age texts were the two local New Age magazines, *Common Ground* and *Shared Vision*. These were invaluable resources, providing up-to-date glimpses into the changing world of the New Age Movement. With articles written about local and global topics relating to New Age, interviews with significant New Age figures and an endless list of New Age advertising, these two magazines formed the bedrock of my New Age source material.

Another body of literature relating to the New Age comes from evangelical Christianity. While it is immediately apparent that most of the books written about the New Age Movement from this perspective are critical, there is a surprising variety in the perspectives taken. This genre of literature ranges from the hyper-critical conspiracy theories, such as Dave Hunt's *The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days*,² to more objective and factual books such as *Understanding the New Age*, by Russell Chandler³ the Religion Editor of the *L.A. Times* and the book, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement* by Elliot Miller⁴ and, *Unmasking the New Age* by Douglas Groothuis.⁵ There are also a few which can only be categorized as brief and incomplete accounts of the movement such as, *From Nirvana to the New Age*,⁶ by Mary Ann Lind. There are also accounts of individuals who have spent time in the movement, but have left to become Christians, (see *The New Age Nightmare*,⁷ or *Escape into the Light*.⁸). For the most part the better books in this genre provide very good summaries of what the

²David Hunt and T.A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1986.)

³Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age*. (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1988)

⁴Elliot Miller, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House: 1989.)

⁵Douglas R. Groothuis, "*Unmasking The New Age*", (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986.)

⁶Mary Ann Lind, *From Nirvana to the New Age*, (Tarrytown, New York: Flemming H. Revell Co., 1991.)

⁷Randall R. Baer, *Inside the New Age Nightmare*, (Lafayette, Louisiana: Huntington House, 1989.)

⁸Rabi Maharaj, *Escape into the Light*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1984.)

New Age believes and they may also provide theoretical frameworks for classifying divisions between different components of the New Age.

Perhaps the most disappointing source of information and analysis on the New Age was in formal academic research. One of the few books to be published dealing with the New Age was a secular attack on the New Age entitled, *Not Necessarily the New Age*.⁹ There were very few journal articles in any field, including sociology, dealing with the New Age. One of the strongest academic bodies of literature on the New Age Movement was seemingly available in the German language sources and was unavailable to me. Only one Ph.D. thesis was available to me, on New Age services in California entitled, *Consciousness shifts to psychic perception: The strange world of New Age services and their providers*¹⁰ by Susan Fries Roberts. In short the material which dealt with the New Age Movement from an academic perspective was thin indeed. As was noted by Roberts noted in her thesis: "There are very few qualified studies of the occult and none of the New Age."¹¹

Another genre of literature became significant in my exploration of the New Age. In discussing how and why the New Age related to contemporary North American culture, I explored in depth the large body of literature relating to the secularization thesis. This is an area of study which explores the function of religion in western society and its apparently decreasing significance since the time of the Enlightenment. Aside from the founding theorists such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, I used the more contemporary works of Peter Berger and David Lyon as central texts. However, in researching the secularization thesis in relation to the New Age Movement it became apparent that the rise of the New Age Movement challenged the secularization thesis rather than supporting it. In consideration of this I opted to use more intensely a work by

⁹Robert Basil (ed.) *Not Necessarily the New Age: Critical Essays*, (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988.)

¹⁰Susan Fries Roberts, *Consciousness shifts to psychic perception: The strange world of New Age services and their providers*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Berkley, 1989.

¹¹Roberts, 294.

Jacques Ellul entitled, *The New Demons*,¹² a work which provides a framework which uses much of the substance of the secularization thesis, but which also provides a theoretical method which does not dismiss the New Age Movement as being a mere "blip" on the screen or an anomaly which does not really need to be explained. Ellul provides a means of evaluating the New Age Movement as being a potentially significant event in western culture.

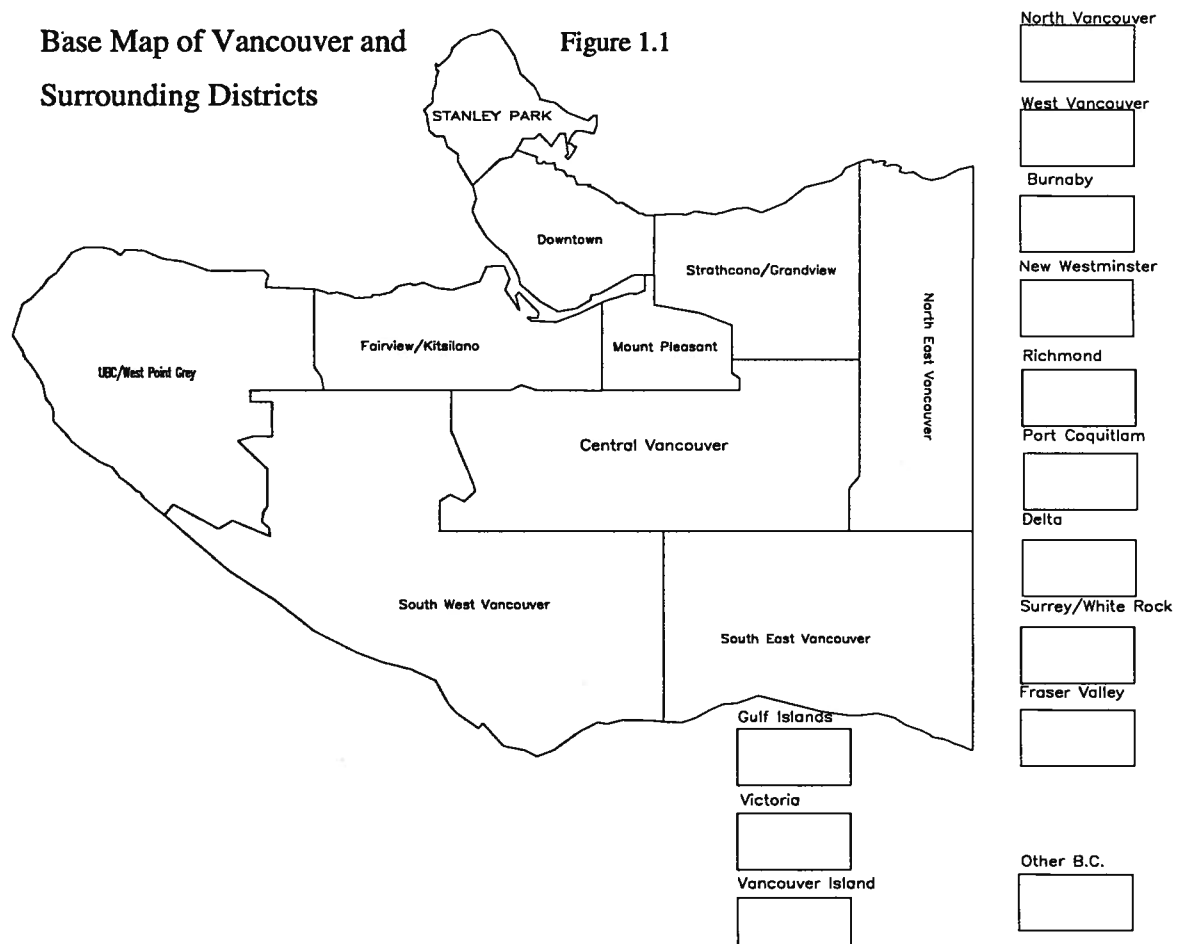
In chapter eight I deal with the geographical issue of the upgrading of inner city neighbourhoods, otherwise known as gentrification. This is done in order to draw parallels between the culture of New Age and a particular segment of contemporary western culture. In order to do this I draw heavily on the theoretical and practical research of David Ley. Fortunately, most of his research on gentrification is drawn from Canadian, and specifically Vancouver case studies, hence making this segment of gentrification research particularly pertinent to my thesis. Adding to the relevance of Ley's research is the fact that he has also done work specifically relating to the relationships between gentrification and secularization.

Common Ground Content Analysis

A significant component in my ethnographic research was to familiarize myself with the New Age community in Vancouver. One of the methods used to achieve this was through reading the local New Age magazine named, *Common Ground*, published quarterly since winter 1982/3. The staff at *Common Ground* were kind enough to provide all the back issues of the magazine, with the exception of issue number six, which was unavailable. The magazine allowed me to read the things New Agers themselves were reading, to access what services were being offered, grasp New Age beliefs and discussion points and identify key figures in the New Age. In short, *Common Ground* provided one window into the New Age scene in Vancouver.

¹²Jacques Ellul, *The New Demons*, (Trans. C. Edward Hopkins), New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

Common Ground, however, served another important purpose. Given that the magazine has been publishing for approximately eleven years, it provided somewhat of an historical - geographical perspective on the movement in Vancouver. By mapping the location of advertisers over the magazine's history, I was able to assess how the movement has grown over the past eleven years. Doing this, however, was no simple task. A minority of advertisers actually provided addresses, hence a map had to be created using telephone prefixes as location indicators. Unfortunately, in Vancouver and



the surrounding area there are no clear geographical boundaries as defined by telephone prefixes, nor does B.C. Tel. provide to the public any maps that would aid in this effort, aside from the very simple map printed at the front of each telephone book. As a result,

the geographical areas which I created to accommodate this weakness are somewhat crude and undetailed (see Figure 1.1). They do, however, I believe portray accurately the general picture of the geographic growth and distribution of New Age in Vancouver.

The difficulties associated with the mapping of *Common Ground* advertising were compounded by the fact that not every advertiser is associated with the New Age Movement. For many it appears that the magazine is merely a good vehicle for advertising their product or service despite the fact that that product or service is in no way associated with New Age *per se*. The result therefore is that for certain conclusions to be drawn regarding the distribution or growth of New Age, the explicitly New Age advertisements had to be separated out from ones which were not New Age. This task was made exceedingly difficult by the inherently unclassifiable nature of the New Age Movement (see chapter two). As a means of determining which advertisements qualified, I decided upon the criterion that the advertisement had to make reference to something of a spiritual nature in order to be classified as New Age. This system had the unfortunate characteristic of being inclusive of spiritual traditions which in substance would not be ordinarily classified as New Age, and similarly it was exclusive of products or services which were known (from other sources) as being explicitly part of the New Age Movement. In extreme cases where it was certain that the adopted system was inadequate, prior knowledge and information from other sources was used to make revisions.

Similarly, the data gathered from *Common Ground* were problematic in that there was no way of determining what segments of the New Age do not advertise in the magazine. It is possible that certain people or organizations that could be considered New Age in nature might find the magazine too expensive, too radical or too conservative or may simply not feel the need to advertise in it. In chapter eight, where the data are explored in depth, these shortcomings are taken into consideration and other sources are used in an effort to increase the validity of my findings.

Interview Subjects

As an ethnography, perhaps the most important component of my research lay in familiarizing myself with the New Age Movement as it was manifest in Vancouver. While researching my thesis I attended free seminars and lectures, sat in coffee shops in Kitsilano watching people, talked with bookstore owners, perused New Age gift stores, and read the two local New Age magazines, *Common Ground* and *Shared Vision*. Deciding, however to take-on the role of observer and not participant, at no time did I ever participate in any explicitly New Age activities, even when asked. My greatest research source, however, were thirty interviews I conducted between July and September of 1993. The interviews were conducted with people who offered some sort of New Age service, or operated a retail outlet specializing in New Age products. All but three of the participants advertised in the Summer 1993 issue of *Common Ground* magazine.

The interviewees were not chosen purely at random. Firstly all advertisements that did not make specifically spiritual comments were not considered. Secondly I tried to draw participants from a variety of the advertising categories which were listed in *Common Ground*. Thirdly, I tried to have a broad ranging geographical distribution of participants.

I interview nine men and twenty-one women, which, if somewhat exaggerated, represents a pattern which exists within the New Age, a higher percentage of female than male participants.¹³ The occupational distribution of the participants is as follows: nine were involved in the retailing of New Age products, for example books, ornaments, videos, health foods, incense *et cetera*. Two were involved in New Age publishing. Three were part of the category "Intuitive Arts" which includes psychics, astrologers, Tarot and Runes. Six were involved in psychology, therapy or counselling and offered services such as past-life regression, channeling, re-birthing and breathwork. Seven

¹³Roberts, 279.

offered services relating to the body such as herbal medicine, Reiki, Rolfing, Homeopathy, Trager, Reflexology or colon therapy. Three were involved with specific spiritual practices relating to a particular spiritual tradition.

Even though many of the participants suggested that I could use their real names I will be using pseudonyms to hide their identity. Similarly, some details are repressed in the text also to maintain anonymity. Throughout the thesis, I will be using verbatim statements from the thirty interviews to develop my argument.

In order to familiarize the reader with the respondents, a brief introduction to each of the thirty participants follows. These are not meant to be comprehensive descriptions of each person, rather they are a means of familiarizing the reader with the types of individuals who were interviewed for this project. Within these brief descriptions there will be comments made about their childhood, how they became involved in the New Age Movement and what it is they are currently doing in relation to the New Age Movement. I also provide a general description of what area of the Lower Mainland they work and/or live in. This geographical description is purposely kept very vague with descriptors such as "a distant suburb of Vancouver", or "Vancouver" to secure the anonymity of the participants.

The interviews also demonstrated the difficulty associated with the classification "New Age". While many of the interview subjects expressed discomfort with the term New Age, but still recognized how others would classify them as such, other participants were adamant that they were not classifiable as "New Age". This posed a difficulty. While I did decide to exclude some of the potential candidates who I contacted on this basis, others ("Frank", "John" and "Raj") fit into a theoretical classification of New Age though they excluded themselves from this categorization.

INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS

"Barb"

"Barb" was raised in a home where spirituality was not important. Although she had vague ideas of there being a creator, she did not believe in God *per se*. For many years this was the extent of her spiritual search, until 1986 when she read *Out on a Limb*,¹⁴ by Shirley MacLaine, a book which captured her interest and started her on a spiritual journey. Since she could not afford to attend most seminars and workshops at this time, "Barb" continued to read, beginning in the area of positive thinking with authors such as Louise Hay and Stuart Wilde, then moving to more spiritual issues with books written by authors such as Edgar Cayce and Emmet Fox. "Barbara's" life changed significantly through reading and eventually she left her job, opening a New Age retail outlet in a distant suburb of Vancouver in 1993.

"Barbara"

Raised in a United Church, until about the age of twelve or thirteen, "Barbara's" interest in New Age type spiritualities began in about 1968 when, as a late teenager, she was given a Tarot reading. For many years following "Barbara" was interested in readings, but only became more deeply involved when she took a course in developing psychic abilities in 1980. Since that time she has been actively doing readings for others and has been meeting with a group of friends for meditation and communication with the dead. "Barbara" opened a retail outlet in an outlying suburb of Vancouver in 1993.

¹⁴Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a Limb*, (New York: Bantam, 1983.)

"Becky"

Few of the people interviewed demonstrated the breadth of experience that was evident in the life-story of "Becky". Born in Vancouver, Becky managed to travel widely as a ski-instructor. Working in Canada, the U.S. and across Europe in the 1960s she became in her own words, "a cultural chameleon". She worked the slopes with the jet-set in the winters, and in a travel bureau in Greece during the summer. It was during the 1960s that she was exposed to the spiritual experimentation of traveling hippies in Europe. Having a spiritual up-bringing which was completely unstructured, "Becky" found it easy to explore many spiritual avenues. Eventually, in the late sixties, she joined a group of newly formed friends and traveled to Tibet on a "spiritual odyssey", where she stayed in a Buddhist monastery. While many of her friends and acquaintances returned to the west, she remained in Tibet training to become a Buddhist nun and teaching in the monastery. She traveled years later as a Buddhist missionary, setting-up Buddhist centres in Australia and other places. After being a nun for seventeen years she returned to Vancouver, partially due to the failing health of her parents. After some more ski-instructing and some other jobs, she began her own spiritual practice in a Vancouver suburb, where she helps people with trance-channeling and meditation.

"Boris"

"Boris" grew up in the Lower Mainland and, influenced greatly by poetry and inspired by the youth culture of the 1960s, he traveled around North America and joined the anti-Vietnam protests in Washington D.C., which were happening during that time. This was influential in his life, for much of "Boris's" activities since then have been related to political and environmental activism. Spiritually "Boris" derives much of his inspiration from simplicity. Things such as prayer, meditation or simply creating music form much of his "spiritual" life. He is aware of the Christian tradition with which he was raised, but maintains a "...deep appreciation [for] many scriptures". Professionally,

"Boris's" career in New Age publishing arose ten years ago from the combination of an academic interest and a desire to create a venue for publishing socially responsible perspectives on issues which he perceived as being significant and urgent.

"Carmen"

"Carmen" grew-up in a small town in Ontario and had a childhood marked by some significant challenges, such as a broken back, a serious eye injury, and anorexia. She was taken to the local Anglican church by her parents, but claims that the family was in the category of "Winter Christians", indicating that the spiritual implications of the religion were not central in family life. Following a successful school career she held a number of jobs, eventually becoming successful in sales. Eventually she left this occupation and traveled to Europe by herself and later arrived in Vancouver as an intended pit-stop on her way to Australia. She made it no further than Vancouver, saying "...as soon as I got off the plane I knew I was home." Living in a Vancouver suburb, she began working in sales again and soon met a man who was marginally involved in New Age-type seminars. They became romantically involved, eventually getting married. She was introduced, through her then boyfriend, to the world of New Age and after much reading she began to pursue the dream of opening, "...some kind of centre [related] to body, mind and spirit; the health of body, mind and spirit." Eventually "Carmen" was able to buy from another woman a New Age retail outlet in the neighbourhood where she had been living. She has now been operating her business for two years. "Carmen" practices Transcendental Meditation and other forms of meditation, she also draws meaning and inspiration from a variety of spiritual traditions, including Buddhism and Christianity, which she left quite consciously in her youth. She also has a particularly keen interest in issues related to New Age health-care.

"Celeste"

Raised in a strong Catholic family in the interior of B.C., "Celeste" found many conflicts between her experiences and Catholic teachings. In her teens she consciously rejected her Catholic background, but failed to find an immediate substitute. At the same time she also was having significant psychic experiences which served more to confuse and scare her than to reassure her. Her only spiritual resource at the time was a copy of the book the *Chrysalids*¹⁵ which she says was like a Bible to her. During her first marriage she removed herself from any spirituality, even suppressing psychic experiences. Around the age of thirty she left her husband and resumed a career in acting. Through various contacts in this community she began exploring the spirituality she had, up until then, ignored since her childhood. Inspired by the feeling of having a new identity, "Celeste" officially changed her name to one she had been hearing in meditation. After a number of self-healing experiences and a great deal of New Age spiritual exploration, "Celeste" had a synchronistic experience in which a person described to her a geometric form which he had constructed, which exactly resembled a form she had been seeing during her meditations. Through a series of events, she obtained the form and currently uses it in a group setting as an aid to spiritually entering other dimensions and contacting spirit guides. "Celeste" does not operate this service for profit.

"Chris"

Having considerable problems with what he was being taught in his local Anglican Sunday School, "Chris" did not really consider spiritual issues until he came to leave home in his teenage years. "Chris" was part of the 1960s youth culture and like many in his generation began to separate the ideas of "religion" and "spirituality" from

¹⁵John Wyndham, *The Chrysalids, the Day of the Triffids*.

each other. During this time he managed to live on a beach on Vancouver Island with some other youths. "Chris" later began studies in massage and then later began studying other health-care techniques and currently practices "Rolfing" and other procedures which are popular in New Age circles. "Chris" began his career in Ottawa but found it too narrow-minded there, so he moved to Vancouver where he has a successful practice. "Chris" remains areligious, but spiritual; he does, however feel somewhat drawn to Zen Buddhism.

"Christine"

"Christine" grew up in a very scientifically oriented home. With her father being a rocket scientist and her brother a nuclear physicist she says that she was raised with "...a science master on her shoulder." With some experience in the youth culture of the 1960s, she developed an interest in esoteric philosophies which went against the grain of her upbringing. She challenges both science and Christianity, saying that they have much to answer for in regards to current problems in the world. "Christine" draws inspiration and meaning from a variety of sources including the I-Ching, pagan traditions, the teachings of "Christ-beings", nature as well as the divine within herself. "Christine" got professionally involved in the New Age in the early seventies, when she met and married the owner of a metaphysical bookstore. She now runs her own New Age retail outlet in a distant suburb of Vancouver.

"Claire"

"Claire" is the owner of a New Age retail outlet located in an outlying suburb of Vancouver. In business for three years, "Claire's" outlet grew out of her home where she sold similar products to friends and members of a *Course in Miracles*¹⁶ group. Aside from a brief encounter with Christianity as a teenager, "Claire" was, "...not aware of

¹⁶A *Course in Miracles*, 1975: (N.p., Foundation for Inner Peace.)

spiritual things," until she began using some astrology, in her thirties, but even this, she said was done mostly out of a sense of boredom. A few years later "Claire" was introduced more seriously to the New Age through a re-birthing session, which changed her outlook on life significantly. This eventually led to the home group mentioned above. "Claire" says she has no dogma and finds much of her inspiration in nature.

"David"

"David" grew up in Vancouver in a family with an interesting and confusing spiritual background. His mother was from Vienna and was Jewish, but when she came to Canada she attended and raised her children in a United church. Later in life she left the United church and became a Unitarian. "David's" father had no use for religion, and accused it of being a pretext for things like colonization and domination. "David" who grew up in the era of the 1960s counterculture became very much a part of the youth scene at the time. Influenced by the spiritualities of the east and motivated by social concerns, "David" opened a retail outlet devoted to such things in the 1970s and currently owns and operates the same business.

"DC"

Unusually, despite the fact that "DC" was one of the oldest participants to be interviewed, she was also one of the few participants to have been raised in an environment where New Age-type ideas were present. Born in 1929, "DC" recalls having been a telepath from an early age. Her parents introduced her to all manner of religions and philosophies and annually her family traveled to Montana from England for a month of meditation with a large gathering of people. "DC" spent 45 years teaching piano, while also becoming an animal behaviourist. At one point in her life "DC" traveled as an

assistant to a hypnotist who had a performing act, an experience which opened her eyes to the paranormal. "DC" also married a man with whom she explored the idea of reincarnation and the practice of hypnotism. During the 1960s "DC" worked with Edgar Cayce. After a debilitating accident in 1986, she traveled to the U.S. with a friend to an institute which dealt with out-of-body research and technological means of improving meditative states. This, combined with the advice of a psychic who she visited, caused "DC" to decide to train to become a registered hypnotherapist. Currently "DC" practices hypnotherapy and is studying to complete a doctorate in hypnotherapy.

"Debby"

"Debby" was raised in a home where her mother consciously tried not to pass down the Anglican roots she grew up with. As a result "Debby" was not exposed to much religion in her childhood. Her introduction to New Age spirituality came when she went for counselling to deal with abuse she had suffered from her grandfather. "Debby" eventually sought past-life regression to determine what karmic events had led her to choose to be abused in this way. She also found some inspiration in the writings of Shirley MacLaine. Having achieved a Master's degree in Librarianship, "Debby" worked for a while but soon was, "...given hints by the universe..." to leave this and pursue a career dealing with New Age spirituality, which she did in March of 1993. "Debby" works out of her home in Vancouver and offers services in channeling, past-life regression and hypnosis.

"Frank"

"Frank" is the interview subject who is the most difficult to confidently classify as being "New Age". "Frank" is a high-priest in a particular denomination of witchcraft. While witchcraft itself is not "New Age", the type of witchcraft he practices, the "Star-Sapphire" tradition, is perhaps closer to "New Age" than any other type of witchcraft.

"Frank" is adamant that he is not a New Ager, calling New Age a "fluffy" sort of spirituality. Despite this, however, "Frank" does agree that his particular tradition is more like New Age than most others would be, even to the point where in order to attract and accommodate New Agers, Star-Sapphire Wicca will use the terminology, language and techniques of New Age. The classifications associated with witchcraft and New Age are further complicated by the fact that witchcraft and many of the traditions associated with it are being used by many New Agers who are not practicing witches.

"Frank", was involved heavily with the 1960s drug culture and was introduced to witchcraft in a rather unusual way. In the 1960s "Frank" met a magician who he befriended for a while, but with whom he became disillusioned after the friend decided to attack some witches who owned a bookstore in Vancouver. "Frank", not having participated in the attack that the friend boasted of, went to the bookstore and met the witches. Impressed by their kindness, "Frank" became interested in Wicca and was later formally initiated. In 1986 Frank had managed to become a high-priest. Two years ago, Frank's wife opened a retail and service outlet for witches in a Vancouver suburb, in which "Frank" performs various functions relating to Wicca in the capacity of high-priest.

"Gerald"

Having a non-spiritual up-bringing and spending most of his working career in heavy equipment operation and some time in the air-force, "Gerald" was not introduced to New Age ideas until he was in his 40s. Through reading some books on subjects such as massage, reflexology, polarity therapy, biokinesiology and re-birthing "Gerald" gained an interest in alternative medicines and healing techniques. After being part of a number of workshops and groups, including a *Course in Miracles*¹⁷ group "Gerald" began to sell New Age products. This led to the opening, three years ago of his New Age retail outlet, located in an outer suburb of Vancouver.

¹⁷A *Course in Miracles*.

"Glory"

"Glory" was raised in a fairly strict Catholic home, and attended Catholic school in Vancouver. For the most part her religious up-bringing was positive and she feels she found out that she was a spiritual person in the Catholic church. Her early spirituality was also marked by the knowledge that she was psychic, which was something she did not make known. As a teenager, however, in the late sixties and early seventies, like many others "Glory" rebelled against her religious roots. Following an inspiring trip to Australia, where she met someone she knew in a past life, "Glory" returned to Vancouver and began exploring spirituality by reading books recommended to her by her massage therapist. Amongst them were the writings of Edgar Cayce and Shirley MacLaine. "Glory" went on to train in a particular form of bodywork and currently operates a practice in Vancouver.

"Herb"

As a child, "Herb" was sent by his parents (who did not attend) to a United church on Sunday mornings almost as a form of free baby-sitting. Largely uninfluenced by his church attendance, "Herb's" first spiritual interest took the form of saving up enough money as a high-schooler in the 1960s to take a Transcendental Meditation course. "Herb" was involved in the drug culture and read widely, including works by Baba Ram Dass and Herman Hess. In the 1970s, he joined an ashram led by a woman who claimed to be the incarnation of the Virgin Mary. After leaving this group, "Herb" completed a Masters and a Ph.D. in health-sciences, while maintaining an interest in religion and spirituality, periodically studying Sufism, Taoism, and western alchemy amongst others. He is now a practitioner and educator in the field of Herbology and has a flourishing practice in Vancouver.

"Janice"

Aside from having a Catholic mother and Protestant father, combined with some experiences with a friend in a local Anglican church when she was young, "Janice" grew-up without any real contact with religion. In the late 1960s, however, she had a friend who was studying to be a Baptist minister. The contact with him inspired her to read the Bible, and also generated an interest in such things as Zen Buddhism. This period of spiritual interest lasted until her late twenties when she became too busy with other aspects of her life to continue exploring. In her forties, however, this spiritual fascination was rekindled while she was in the middle of a successful professional career. "Janice" became increasingly interested in all manner of spiritualities, and eventually left her career and its financial success, coming to the Lower Mainland and in 1989 opening a New Age retail outlet in a distant Vancouver suburb.

"Jewel"

"Jewel" has always had a feeling of spiritual closeness with nature, while her impressions of religion were negatively tainted by her father's emphasis on guilt, sin and punishment which he derived from the Bible. Similarly, she was put off church when she witnessed certain "hypocrisies". For many years she removed herself from all forms of spirituality, but while in her twenties this changed when she began attending Unity church. It was here, after attending for about ten years that "Jewel" attended an evening presentation where she heard about the *Course in Miracles*.¹⁸ "Jewel" decided to read it and soon after, in 1983, she got involved in a New Age company called the New World Network, where she became more familiar with the ideas and concepts of New Age. She was later introduced to breathwork and re-birthing amongst other ideas. Since 1983, "Jewel" has been providing services in Vancouver relating to bodywork.

¹⁸A *Course in Miracles*.

"Jill"

"Jill" was sent to Sunday School as a child but portrays her family as being, "...almost hedonistic". Influential in her spiritual development was a grandfather of hers who was at one time a Presbyterian missionary who left the mission field and came to believe that missions were extremely arrogant. Also in her childhood, she was opened to alternate spiritual experiences when she contacted and asked questions of a sister of hers who had died. "Jill" went on to school and completed a graduate degree in Religious Studies, eventually coming to teach in a University setting for a while. She also traveled to India in the early 1970s where she learned a particular style of meditation and similarly took up TM for a while back in North America. Her spiritual interests, having always been broad began to encompass other areas more closely associated with the New Age Movement, when at a Women's Conference in the United States she was given a crystal by a woman who said she had worked with them before and would work with them again. "Jill" began working with crystals, doing crystal therapy and found that it came naturally to her. This experience led her into many other fields associated with the New Age including channeling, Reiki, sound therapy, aroma therapy, re-birthing, breathwork, theta work, and past-life regression. Over the past twelve years she has been practicing one or more of these techniques and currently offers services related to bodywork and channeling.

"John"

"John" was raised in an unorthodox Jewish home, where the family religion was held only nominally. Aside from the religion of his birth and an innate sense of spirituality, "John" did not really become interested in spirituality until he became involved in the 1960s counterculture movement. During this time he did some experimenting with drugs, including some LSD and also read a lot of the works of

popular spiritual teachers. In about 1978 "John" got involved in a cult-like group which revolved around a single leader. After several years he left this group and became involved in a group which promoted a particular spiritual tradition which has its roots in Tibetan Buddhism. In 1983 "John" officially became a part of this group. Currently "John" is the information distribution person for this particular group in Vancouver, a service which he volunteers for and performs outside of his regular employment, which is unrelated to any New Age activities. "John" operates this service from his home in Vancouver.

"John", does not consider himself to be part of the New Age Movement because of his involvement in a group which derives directly from a long-standing Buddhist tradition. He does, however, agree that there are some similarities between his beliefs and those of New Age, despite his difficulties with what he perceives the New Age Movement to be about.

"Leslie"

"Leslie" is an astrologer who has been in full-time business for about three years, an occupation she chose partly by necessity following being laid-off from her twenty-five year professional career. She has been practicing astrology, however, for about twenty-one years, mostly as a hobby and a side-line. Born in England and raised in the Methodist tradition, "Leslie" was introduced to astrology while in the United States in 1972 and found it immediately appealing. She has also experimented with macro-biotics, Taoism, Herbalism, Numerology, Tarot, various meta-physical arts, and all manner of philosophies. Finding value in all beliefs and traditions "Leslie" is continuously searching, although she emphasizes that astrology is a constant in her life which she has never left. "Leslie" lives in and works from a secondary suite in Vancouver's westside.

"Lisa"

"Lisa" was raised in foster homes and was the victim of a step-father who, in her words was a "rageaholic". Despite some good spiritual experiences with her foster-grandfather, she left home at sixteen and ended up in an unhappy marriage relationship. She left this relationship in 1978, with her two children, depressed and in a lot of pain. At this time she read a book entitled, *The Nature of Personal Reality*,¹⁹ by Seth which changed her perspective on life by suggesting she take more personal responsibility over her life. She soon began going to Unity church and there learned affirmations she repeated to herself regularly. She entered into a new relationship with a man who was an Astrologer and she herself became an Astrologer. She then took some re-birthing sessions and soon after decided to quit her regular job and become a re-birther. She also learned bodywork techniques and also began teaching bodywork. "Lisa" also learned to work with crystals and has read the *Course in Miracles*²⁰ for many years. Currently "Lisa" practices and teaches bodywork, along with selling various New Age health-oriented products.

"Lorrie"

"Lorrie" grew up in Montreal, in a Catholic family, but says that the Catholic religion never held any attraction for her. In contrast to "religion", which "Lorrie" says *leads* a person, she suggests that New Age "spirituality" allows people to lead themselves. Her introduction to the New Age occurred at about age twenty when she went to a psychiatrist for hypnotherapy relating to severe insomnia. During her hypnotherapy session she began regressing into previous lives, which she discovered were the cause of her insomnia. Although the sessions solved the problem of insomnia, she began having

¹⁹Jane Roberts, *The Nature of Personal Reality: A Seth Book*, (Englewood California: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

²⁰*A Course in Miracles*.

nightmares relating to her previous lives. When this happened she began to regress herself, soon discovering that she had been Gwinevere, (named Gwinifar) from the Arthurian time period. Due to the disturbing nature of what she was seeing while regressed, "Lorrie" waited six years until she began to explore these experiences in depth. During this time she explored meditation, Astral-Projection and other New Age techniques. In about 1990, she received a message from a spirit-guide whom she had channeled that she was to leave the business which she owned at the time and she should begin to offer channeling full-time. Following this advice she left her business, and now offers channeling, past-life regression therapy and sexual abuse therapy in Vancouver on a full-time basis.

"Marina"

"Marina" was born in Ontario and recalls a deep connection with nature ever since childhood. The connection was further strengthened by the fact that her father was the president of the Canadian Audubon Society. Her parents were connected with the local Presbyterian congregation, but attended almost exclusively to sing in its choir. "Marina" began a degree in geography, but left after one year to spend time with a friend on an island in B.C. in the early 1970s. During her time in B.C. "Marina" was introduced to Astrology, which marked her introduction to spirituality. She completed her B.A. and also studied as an apprentice in Astrology. "Marina" is currently considering applying to study for a Master's degree at a university and in a subject which is open to the concept of spirituality, and specifically the Astrological interpretation of reality. "Marina" currently works full-time as an Astrologer, spending most of her time outside the Lower Mainland, but coming monthly to conduct sessions in the city.

"Peter"

"Peter" was raised Roman Catholic, but found at an early age that the spirituality which he had a strong sense of did not fit within Catholicism or any other form of religion. Much of "Peter's" energies were focused on completing his education, culminating in a Ph.D. in psychology. In the end, however, "Peter" believed that psychology did not fully meet people's needs and consequently he pursued the introduction of spirituality in psychotherapy. Seeing the omens of a giant spiritual awakening in humanity, he aimed to aid people in being, "...freed from gurus and cults...", and, "...create a bridge to their higher spiritual-self." Beginning his career in the Maritimes, "Peter" moved to the more spiritually hospitable climate of Vancouver in the mid-1980s where he worked for a while with the mentally handicapped, later opening a counselling practice in Vancouver which he still operates.

"Raj"

"Raj" was born in India to a Hindu family, but came to Canada as a child with his family. In his youth he paid little attention to spiritual issues, concerning himself more with sports and other forms of entertainment. In high school he found his first solace against the difficulties of the world in poetry. "Raj" went to U.B.C. and completed an Arts degree. This was followed by a year in the Canada World Youth Program, with which he went to Africa to do relief work in 1978 and 1979. After coming back he was involved in OXFAM, the Red Cross and the Anarchists at various times. It was at this point, in the 1980s that "Raj" began reading books such as, *The Tao of Physics*,²¹ *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*,²² and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*,²³ which

²¹Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*. (Oxford: University Press, 1983.)

²²G. Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, (Rider and Co./Hutchinson and Co. 1979.)

²³Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: an Inquiry into Values*, (New York: Morrow, 1974.)

introduced him to the philosophical side of New Age. At the same time he began exploring the physical side of New Age, in the form of Yoga, which "Raj" enjoyed greatly and soon began to teach. His spiritual journey was also greatly influenced with a trip to a naturopath who help cure him of a childhood struggle with asthma. It was through his contact with the naturopath that "Raj" met an elderly Chinese man who introduced him to a Buddhist and it was then, through a member of this group that "Raj" was introduced to the spiritual organization with which he is currently involved. "Raj" is currently the "centre-head" for the facility devoted to his religious organization. His position involves various administrative and some spiritual responsibilities

"Raj", like "John" and "Frank" is involved in a specific spiritual tradition which predates the New Age Movement and therefore "Raj" sees the New Age Movement as somewhat external to his own tradition. Having said this, however, "Raj" is very open to reading New Age material, meeting with New Agers and adopting ideas and practices which come from the New Age Movement. "Raj", in his own spiritual quest, was very influenced by the New Age Movement and has integrated much of it into his personal belief system.

"Rose"

"Rose" was raised in Ontario, in a Lutheran family. She participated in church activities including studying the catechism, but became disenchanted with the church after seeing a lot of hypocrisy. She left the church as a teenager, in the late 1960s. For a long time after she was uninterested in spirituality, until she was struck by a severe illness in the mid 1980s. After traditional western medicine proved unable to help she went to a naturopath, despite the fact she was very suspicious of his prescriptions. Within a month "Rose" was feeling dramatically better. Three weeks after starting to see the naturopath, "Rose" heard a voice which told her to go to her roof-garden where she received a message from God to go and receive "The Benediction". Following this she phoned a

priest who she asked if he would bless her with the biblical passage, "May the Lord bless you and keep you, may he make his face shine upon you and give you peace." Following that event "Rose" gained an interest in spirituality and began exploring New Age books as well as stopping taking prescription drugs and becoming a vegetarian. "Rose" moved to Vancouver in 1992 from Toronto, feeling a need for a change. She moved into Gastown and soon after moved to Kitsilano (where she currently resides). Her choice of districts in the city was based on the results of Dowsing²⁴ she had done on a map of Vancouver while still living in Toronto. Currently she offers services related to a particular form of bodywork.

"Sally"

Sally was raised in Ontario and at age twenty-one, quit nursing school and decided to come to Vancouver, for no explicit reason. She believes that her spiritual journey began the moment she set foot in Vancouver. After a brief stay in the YWCA, "Sally" found accommodation in a rooming house in Kitsilano. Soon after she met the man who would later become her husband and it was he who introduced her to a Guru, who they began to follow. Moving to Ontario and later New Hampshire, "Sally" was initiated into the group formed by this particular guru. In 1980 after being in the group for six years, "Sally" left her husband, taking her two year old child and returned to Vancouver, supporting herself through a variety of jobs. "Sally" maintained her spiritual interests, taking "est" courses, and a variety of other personal growth workshops. Working as an employee in a New Age retail outlet, "Sally" began to book Vancouver appearances of well-known New Age figures, a job which ended up being financially

²⁴Dowsing is an ancient spiritual art where an individual uses a "dowsing stick" or some other instrument to identify the location of phenomena, most frequently water. Dowsing is most commonly practiced with the dowser walking on the land to identify the specific location of the phenomena. A dowser, however, can also locate their target by using an "occult pendulum" on a map of an area regardless of how far they may be from that location. (see John Weldon, "Dowsing: Divine Gift, Human Ability or Occult Power?", *The Christian Research Journal*, 14 (4), 1992, pp. 8-13, 34.)

very profitable. She then took a six month creative leadership program in California with New Age figure, Shakti Gawain, during which time she was inspired to get involved in New Age publishing in Vancouver. Upon returning to Vancouver, "Sally" began publishing and despite significant set-backs and difficulties along the way she currently owns and operates a successful publishing business in Vancouver.

"Sara"

"Sara" was, "...raised to go to church", however when she went to university she, "...saw that as conflicting with intellectualism" and hence dropped any contact she had with the church. As a youth in the 1960s and 1970s, "Sara" spent a lot of time hitchhiking around North America and eventually made it to Vancouver from Toronto, and decided to make it her home. In the early 1980s "Sara" met a friend who was involved in and introduced her to the idea of a food co-op and to meditation. "Sara" soon got involved in re-birthing and also began studying the *Course in Miracles*.²⁵ Currently "Sara" is involved in bodywork and is located in Vancouver.

"Stephanie"

"Stephanie" was raised in a family environment which was largely unhappy. After her father's death when she was six months old, she lived with other families until she was four on account of her mother's nervous breakdown. "Stephanie" has two sisters, both of whom are also professional psychics. "Stephanie" was exposed to a variety of religious traditions as a child and a youth, but was very impacted by her own sense of clairvoyance as well as some psychic readings her mother performed occasionally for people. "Stephanie" completed a university degree and, during the sixties, as a youth, did some drama. She traveled in Europe during her early twenties. After a bad marriage she was working as a secretary and, in order to raise some extra money, she began reading

²⁵A *Course in Miracles*.

tea-cups in a restaurant, exercising psychic abilities she had left largely unexplored since her teenage years. This eventually grew into a full-time career which she has been doing now for twelve years. Although primarily located in Vancouver, "Stephanie" travels a lot around North America and has regular clients across the continent.

Chapter Two -

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

DEFINING THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

"New Age [*often n- a-*] 1 of or pertaining to a cultural movement popular in the 1980's, characterized by a concern with spiritual consciousness and variously combining belief in reincarnation and astrology with such practices as meditation, vegetarianism, and holistic medicine. 2 designating or of a style of popular instrumental music characterized by simple, repetitive melodies and intended to effect a serene mood."¹

As with any cultural phenomenon, a dictionary definition of the New Age Movement is somewhat less than adequate. The problem, however does not lie in some shortcoming of Webster's powers of explanation, rather the problem is found in the inherent ambiguity of the movement itself. The term, "New Age" is not a description but rather an umbrella term, under which stand many diverse and frequently unrelated concepts. Despite the apparent popularity of the movement, the label "New Age" is sometimes given to groups or individuals who would never have adopted it themselves. There are no specific ways one can classify what is New Age and what is not. There is no central mission statement, no creed, no scripture, no press release and no authoritative individual who would be able to pronounce absolutely what is and what is not New Age.

Not surprisingly many of the books which deal with the New Age Movement fail to provide an actual definition. In short, as one writer put it: "There is no really satisfactory definition, either of the 'New Age' or the 'New Age Movement'..."²

Even those who are actively part of the movement can be at a loss for self-definition. When asked to define the New Age Movement, "DC" responded: "I don't

¹"*Webster's New World Dictionary*" (Third College Edition) (Ed. Victoria Neufeldt) (New York: Websters New World: 1988): 912.

²John J. Reilly, "New Age, New Rage", *This World*, Winter 1988, pp. 119-123: 120.

think I know how to answer that. I don't think I can grasp enough threads to give you a sensible answer." In her response, however, "DC" demonstrated, at the very least the knowledge that the New Age is made up of many different threads which have been brought together *somehow*. The difficulty for "DC" and for anyone who is trying to define or describe the New Age Movement is in determining what the threads are and what is it that brings them together.

There are, indeed many threads which come together in the New Age. Threads of spirituality, traditional religion, psychology, social action, politics, health-care, mythology, occultism and science. The New Age has touched and been touched by almost every realm of human existence. It is this overwhelming variety of manifestations which simultaneously makes it both so difficult to describe and so appealing to so many people. In being so diverse in scope it ends up having very little, if any focus. In contrast, however, by being so flexible, it can attract just about anyone, and indeed, many who are part of it may not even know it.³ "...[I]ts effectiveness rests in its lack of firm definition or rigid organizations."⁴

New age has no official organization, no official dogma, no official leaders. It is more of a collection of seemingly unrelated ideas.

"Stories of hauntings, predictions, premonitions, ghosts, mysterious happenings psychic powers and ESP appear to be a disjointed collection of stories and ideas that serve no particular purpose. Yet to look only at these individual stories is like looking at a Rembrandt with one's nose touching the canvas. Only by standing back can the whole picture be appreciated."⁵

The New Age is a "Rag Bag of ideas"⁶, despite this, however, the very fact that it is exists as a concept, to both those who study it and in the minds of the general public

³Caroline Sutherland, "The New Age", *Vancouver*, Nov. 1989. pp 54-60: 54.

⁴Reilly, 120.

⁵Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe-Hexham. "The Soul of the New Age", *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2, 1988. 32 (12) pp. 17-21: 21.

⁶Hexham, 19.

seems to suggest that there is indeed something which we can look at in order to bring clarification to our discussion. As the above quotation suggests, the way to approach this is to stand back from the details and look at the broad brush strokes. In order to get a sense of what the movement is about we must attempt to bring some coherence to what it is that binds together the threads that "DC" mentioned. In general the following themes inevitably arise in any discussion of the New Age: i) New Age is concerned with human spirituality; ii) New Age derives much of its philosophy from eastern mystical traditions; iii) New Age is concerned with the concept of unlimited human potential; iii) if there is any organization in the movement it is found within the concept of the "network"; iv) generally speaking, the New Age goal is to usher in a new era of peace and enlightenment; v) the New Age has arisen from the combination of countercultural dissatisfaction with the western world, the influx of eastern spirituality, the revival of western occultic and pagan practices and the human potential movement.

Before we continue, however, it is important to address an issue which inevitably arises when discussing the New Age, and indeed any new religious group: is the New Age a cult? Overwhelmingly the opinion of people who have researched the movement is to assert that the New Age is not a cult.⁷ The New Age, as a whole is not organized enough to implement the practices of mind-control which would give it the stamp of being a cult. The levels of personal freedom and ability to dissent from popular opinions within the movement indicate that the primary processes of mind-control are not present in the New Age Movement. Having said this, however, it is important to point out that there have been more than a few cults which have (and still do) operate within the New Age Movement. Just as many cults have sprung from the Christian tradition, many have sprung from the New Age belief system. Groups such as "The American Buddhist Society", a small group led by "Zen Master Rama" (Dr. Frederick P. Lenz), have been accused of mind-controlling and abusive activities. Others such as the Church Universal

⁷see Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age*, (Dallas: Word Publ., 1988.): 17.

and Triumphant,⁸ led by Elizabeth Claire Prophet has been under investigation for some time for the purchase of illegal fire-arms and mind-controlling activities. Similarly more famous groups like Hare Krishnas,⁹ Transcendental Meditation,¹⁰ and Rajneesh¹¹ have attract considerable attention and many accusations of cultic activity.

Nothing New Under the Sun: New Age/Old Age

Both the proponents of New Age and its critics recognize that in at least one sense the term "New Age" is a misnomer. It is commonly recognized that in fact, much of what makes up the New Age is in fact very old. As will be described in detail in subsequent chapters, the New Age finds much of its substance in the past. Ancient civilizations, mythology, religious traditions, ancient ceremonies and much more are being "rediscovered" by New Age leaders and their followers.

"There is nothing New Age about anything anybody is doing. All we are doing is rediscovering what has already been done on the planet thousands of years ago. If you care to investigate the Gnostics, they're the place to go. Because they know. The Rosicrucians know. The Free masons know. The knowledge is there...." ("Celeste")

"I don't see it as the so-called 'New Age'. I see almost everything that we are talking about has been around for a long time. In fact some of it for thousands and thousands of years...

"I don't think that any of this is that new, I think what it is is suppressed, for whatever reason. Now it is coming to the surface again." ("Gerald")

"It is getting back to more of a balance, I feel. I feel we were very unbalanced. We were getting out of touch with who we were and getting caught up in getting things and being a certain way and having a certain image in the world

⁸Steve Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, (Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 1988.): 40.

⁹Hassan, 155.

¹⁰Hassan, 87.

¹¹Hassan, 40

and living the American dream and all that. I think we were getting just unbalanced in life. We weren't getting the emotions, spiritual and the physical, we were getting mostly the physical. So I think the New Age is going back to more a balance, the way the native people were...It is getting back to remember who we are. It's like...mythology I find is Oh so powerful...It's like we've got away from mythology. The only mythology we have now is Star Trek and Star Wars and that kind of thing... We've got away from teaching children the stories of life, the magic. We've forgotten the magic of life..." ("Claire")

"New Age is a reawakening of some of the spiritual values, I feel that we always had before science, the success driven motive of science came along and sort of painted over a lot of the stuff we had been involved in before. It is also a bringing up-to-date those older spiritual values as well. Of course some of them are not useful in the context of a modern society where science has had its hold on us for almost two-hundred years. I mean a really significant hold." ("Marina")

"It just sticks in a little box that term. I just believe it is an attaining of higher consciousness. Very simplistically. It is not that new really, it's old, has been going on for centuries and will probably go on forever. They say New Age because they need something to put words to it." ("Jewel")

"...as my husband says, it really like "Old Age", we're getting back to the old values. Lets say you think of a new term and drop "New Age", then that will become old..." ("Sally")

As will be more fully developed later, the New Age is as much Old Age, as "Sally" says, since it finds much of its inspiration in the past.

Don't Call It That: The Dislike of the Name

The term "New Age" is a term which is somewhat disliked by New Agers themselves. This derives from the fact that many New Agers feel that the term is plagued with bad connotations.

"It is not a very well defined term and I think a lot of times it conjures up fear in people...It tends to alienate rather than bring people together and I'm not exactly sure where the fears comes from, but from what I see it is because there is an image of occult or darkness or supernatural things that people are afraid of, so that's why I don't like it." ("Janice")

"Since about '87 the term 'New Age' has had quite a checkered history. It's a very old term that was, I think first coined in Britain in the last century. There have been magazines called "New Age" and all sorts of things, long before the current cycle...

"The term 'New Age', more often or not, now, for me, becomes an pejorative term that I hear people using, because it was so associated with Shirley MacLaine and some others who were discovering certain mystical states. and whatever and using crystals and channeling. Those I would say...lead people of more sensible natures to say, 'This is crap' or 'New Age rhymes with sewage'. So because it was associated that New Agers all wore purple running shoes and were always positive, and always optimistic or always up in the air, didn't really have their feet on the ground...

"New Age. Yea, it tends to be as a term, more the butt of jokes in a way...And yet many of the beliefs and so on...there's a lot of different types of bookstores and I go into places and there are a lot of quote 'New Age Bookstores' and I go into them and there is this feeling like they are not quite here, they are not really here." ("David")

The distancing of New Agers from the term, "New Age" is also evident in decisions made by some publishers and bookstores to eliminate the category "New Age" in favor of redistributing the books that would have been in that category into sections such as philosophy, religion, self-help and psychology.¹² This was confirmed by "David" a New Age bookstore owner who has seen some organizations change their names in response to the apparent inadequacy of the term "New Age".

"And there are...there is for example an organization called the 'New Age Publishers and Retailers Association' and they

¹²Will Nixon, "The Flight from 'New Age'", *Publishers Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1990. pp. 21-32.

recently decided to change their name to 'New Alternatives in Publishing and Retailing', because the sense of what's transforming is not pigeon-holable..."

It is also reasonable to assume that such decisions are also affected by the negative connotations the term raises in peoples' minds.

Don't Call *Me* That: The Distancing of Self from the Movement

This uncomfortable feeling which the *term* "New Age" elicits is taken one step further with some peoples' discomfort with the *concept* of the "New Age Movement." Predictably the variety of people which the New Age attracts means that under the umbrella will be people who are, at the very least, uncomfortable with each other. As a response to this, many of the people interviewed consciously distance themselves from others within the New Age Movement.

"I refuse to have...refuse to be trapped by the New Age rules of seven astral planes, seven mental planes, seven...spiritual planes, they have numbers for everything, so for me all there is a critical oneness awareness that my planet is alive, that I'm here, that we're all doing the best we can and we are all doing OK." ("DC")

"There was a point where I looked at the [New Age] community in Vancouver and said, 'You guy's are full of shit. You have gone off the deep-end.' But the same way the Catholic church went off the deep-end for me a long time ago. I just felt so much judgment, comparison, competition, jealousy and I just said I don't want to be a part of this. You guys! 'New Age,' I hate that word. ("Celeste")

"[New Age] is also greatly distorted in many ways. There are a lot of New Agers, quote New Agers, running around who are doing a lot of damage to the whole concept of New Age.

"One of the phenomenon too that has been associated with what is going on is, quote, the channeling stuff and I think there's a lot of truth to it in the sense that...inspiration has been one of the guiding forces of man from early history...music, good writing. A good writer will

often say, 'I don't know where that came from, it just flowed right through me'. But now it has been labeled channeling and there is a lot of stuff coming through, but there is a lot of hocus pocus coming through. And again, I don't want to mention any specific authors, because I don't want to alienate people, but there's a lot of...like one of my favorite sayings is, just because they're dead it doesn't make them smart. Just because something appears to be coming, quote, from the other side doesn't make it the truth but a lot of people will grab onto...jump onto the bandwagon. Whether it is their own psychological selves that are talking or aspects of their own consciousness or...you just don't know. There is so much that is very hard to really determine where it comes from and yet it just gets taken on a superficial level and gets carried to extremes and really distorts it. But I have no doubt that there is a really true phenomenon going on a real energy is making its presence felt." ("Christine")

"[New Age is] a bowl of jello with a whole bunch of fruit in it and you push down in one place and other places move. But I think there is a awful lot of sour fruit in it. So I mean there's an awful lot of people running commercial type ventures that really have nothing to do with New Ageism, it is just a venue to sell their product.

"Then there are people who are so fanatically involved in it that they don't have any basis in reality. I would often try to distance myself from New Age phenomenon because there are people who have got such a strange bent and zealously on it. It is a black or white, all or none type situation. I've had patients that I've had for eight years, very close ties with these patients and all of a sudden they see me in a restaurant eating ribs and it is, 'Oh my God, how can you not be a vegetarian, I can't go to you any more.' That kind of phenomenon seems a bit bizarre and absurd to me...there is an awful lot of rigidity in it. So some of the jello has hardened and there is rigidity in places. Instead of being a religion that's supposed to flow with the energies of the universe, sometimes it is a little too rigid for some people. They take things and fanaticize them.

"Also, because of the nature of it it is easy to create all kinds of 'charletisms' around different types of psychic phenomena. It is hard to tell who is real and who's not...it is hard to separate the wheat from the chaff sometimes. Also some people tend to float away a little bit too much. They are a little bit too airy fairy..." ("Herb")

Others have distanced themselves from the movement in general responding to their discomfort with how the New Age Movement is perceived by the general public.

"I think it is wonderful. Unfortunately I think the whole name 'New Age Movement' has gotten bad name, if you will, because a lot of people I find in the New Age Movement become very spacey. The reason for that, it seems to me is because they are focusing very much on lifting their energy and becoming very spiritual and they lose their connectedness with their bodies and what is going on here and so they become very La Di Da, very airy, spacey types and they tend to give the rest of the people in New Age spiritual growth a sort of flippant style. People look on them as, you know, 'one of those'." ("Lorrie")

"First of all, I hate the term. I hate it because it has come to have a certain connotation and picture that is conjured up when that term is used...but I don't like the picture that's conjured up. When I think of New Age and I think when a lot of people think of New Age they have this vision, you know of middle aged hippies...doing very flaky stuff that has no place in an organized society. People who are just a little off the beaten track and maybe a little crazy, you know, and not professional...all of those things. And also they are also placed in certain neighborhoods and blocks in the city, such as Broadway and MacDonald. So personally I steer as far clear of being a member of that New Age community as I can. And I think that there are a lot of flakes out there. I think there are a lot of people who are just looking for something to hang their hat on in the same way that people might have done with religion twenty, thirty years ago." ("Leslie")

"It is a very negative term for me, it has a lot of creation of hope for people in a way that, if it ain't true, that it is doomed to let people down. It is very mental, it brings up a lot of mental creation of wishful thinking and fantasies which are not grounded, not grounded with the earth. I don't mean that in an esoteric way. I mean our everyday lives of shitting and eating and having arguments with your friend, you know? It isn't always some love enlightened thing. there's something unreal about it. A lot of ideas going on, people don't know how to separate their beliefs from what may or may not be true. Rounds and Chakras

and Blah Blah Blah and this colour and that colour and halos and whatever kinds of therapies are out there. I don't know which is true and which isn't, but I just have this definite taste in my mouth that it is stuff that has been drummed up by people. It is very up in the clouds and it's not grounded with one's everyday lives." ("John")

"I'm very not-New Age as well. Do you think when I leave here I listen to tinkling music like Steven Halpern? He's disgusting. I like things with a beat, or I like to go to things with my husband that have some action in them. It's like I really balance my life because I'd go nuts always doing this stuff. I have to get away from all this stuff." ("Sally")

THE PREVALENCE OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

A correlate of the difficulty associated with defining the New Age Movement is how hard it is to determine the prevalence of the New Age Movement. There is no reliable way to determine how many New Agers there are. The Canadian census does not have a category for such a system of belief, nor would the existence of such a category guarantee an accurate means of determining the prevalence of the movement, since, as we have seen, many people who adhere to New Age beliefs do not categorize themselves as being New Age. In determining the prevalence of the New Age Movement it is possible to look at two significant indicators. Firstly there is the degree to which the New Age has entered into the public sphere in the form of New Age oriented programs, courses etc. Secondly there do exist some statistics on the degree to which New Age beliefs have been adopted by the general public.

The Prevalence of New Age Type Structures

The degree to which New Age thought has entered into public life is difficult to measure in any quantitative way, yet there are many indicators that its influence is not small. In order to touch or be touched by the New Age, one does not have to enter into a New Age bookstore, visit a channeller, or attend a New Age seminar, one simply has to

be part of North American society. There are manifestations of the New Age in any and every aspect of daily life. These manifestations, however, are not always obvious. New Age-style principles can often be found deeply imbedded in the underlying principles of something which would, at a glance, appear "normal".

As will be developed more fully in subsequent chapters, the New Age puts a great deal of emphasis on the individual recovering control of one's own health-care from medical professionals. New Age health-care is generally termed holisitc (or wholistic) medicine, a label which emphasises the New Age method of treading the individual as a whole being who needs full attention. "Essential to a holistic philosophy is an understanding that the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of a person are dynamically interrelated and inseperable..."¹³ This is as opposed to the western scientific medical approach of seeing the patient as a broken machine whose component parts are treated in isolation from each other.

A basic assumption in New Age holisitc health is that the individual has within them the power and ability to self-heal, if only they would recognize that power. This manifests itself in the form of all manner of ancient, naturopathic style medicines and medical practices which firstly puts the responsibility of well-being on the individual and secondly looks to ancient traditions for healing techniques and substances. The prevalence of this is firstly evident in the explosion of New Age style health-care facilities which are available to the general public. For example, in *Common Ground* magazine there are listings for 50-60 different health-care practitioners per issue, including Reiki, Trager, Hellerwork, Rolfing, Homeopathy, Feldenkrais, Ayurveda, Reflexology, Yoga therapy, Acupuncture, Colon Therapy, Aromatherapy, Breathwork, Groundwork, Essential Oils, Bio-Kinesiology, Accupressure, and Herbal Medicine. Beyond these health-care outlets, there are also a handful of institutes in B.C. which offer training in these healing arts.

¹³Chris Shirley, "What's the Holisitc Approach?", *Common Ground*, Issue #32, Fall 1990, p. 78.

Secondly there is some incorporation of related practices into the traditional health-care system. For example, Therapeutic Touch, a method of balancing a person's energy and achieving "mind-body harmony" through hand movements over the body is now a treatment registered nurses have the option of learning and applying in hospitals across Canada.¹⁴

In recent years, there has also been a shift within the world of business. More and more private companies are starting to invest in the well-being of their employees since ultimately this increases productivity. As a result, amongst many other things, corporations are sending their employees to seminars and workshops, some of which are based on New Age principles. Seminars such as "Krone Training", "est" (Erhard Seminars Training), "WISE" and "Sterling Management" are classes to which companies such as Proctor and Gamble, Ford and Polaroid have sent their employees.¹⁵ Based on the principles of eastern mysticism and combined with the techniques of humanistic psychology, these seminars introduce their subjects to New Age style thinking and to practices used in the New Age such as; "...meditation, hypnosis, encounter groups, chanting, biofeedback, isolation, as well as tarot cards, psychic healing, channeling, fire-walking, floatation tubs and the intervention of spirit guides".¹⁶

The New Age frequently appears within the realm of social activism. Notably in the realm of the environmental movement. Arising from New Age ideas of the inherently spiritual nature of the natural environment, some environmental groups rely heavily on the notion of Gaia, the Mother Earth, wherein the natural environment is seen as a sentient being. The ultimate connectedness of humans to the web of life which makes up the world as we know it translate in both the reverence for and worship of mother earth.

¹⁴Robin Brunet, "The Bodyworkers: A User's Guide", *Common Ground*, Issue #20, Fall 1987, pp. 5, 55: 5.

¹⁵Annetta Miller and Pamela Abramson, "Corporate Mind Control", *Newsweek*, May 4, 1987, pp. 38, 39: 38.

¹⁶Steve Rabey, "Karma for Cash: A 'New Age' for Workers?", *Christianity Today*, June 17, 1988, pp. 69, 71, 74: 71, 74.

In mentioning psychology and counselling, there needs to be more than just a discussion of where the New Age has entered into this realm, it needs to be said that here we also find one of the strongest roots of the New Age Movement. Going back to the 1960's one of the most significant tributaries of New Age thinking was the Human Potential Movement. Led by Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Paul Tillich, and Rollo May, Human Potential changed the world of psychology and counselling significantly. Human-Potential fundamentally changed the philosophical approach to human problems, changing the notion of "original sin" into one of "original virtue"¹⁷ With the emphasis on a philosophy of "selfism", the Human Potential Movement sought to achieve its goals partly through the introduction of Eastern spiritual techniques.¹⁸ The Eastern based philosophical ideas and the Eastern spiritual practices which Human Potential introduced to psychology have maintained a strong presence within present-day psychology and counselling. Given this background the transition from more traditional to overtly New Age psychology and counselling is one which can be made almost seamlessly.

While perhaps the most vocal opponent to the New Age Movement, the Christian church is also frequently a great ally. In general there is a dividing line which can be drawn between the liberal and conservative wings of the church. Most of the literature which takes a critical stance on the New Age Movement comes from the conservative wing of Christianity. The New Age, however has found some sympathetic ears within the liberal camp. For example, among extremely liberal Catholics there is Matthew Fox, a priest whose "creation-centered spirituality", falls in line with many New Age teachings and thus has created some turmoil within the Catholic church.¹⁹ There is also an interesting phenomenon in the world of extreme conservative Protestantism called the

¹⁷Jane Howard, "Inhibitions Thrown to the Wind", *Life*, July 12, 1968, pp. 48-65: 57.

¹⁸Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship*, (Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publ.: [1977] 1991).

¹⁹Mitchell Pacwa, S.J. "Catholicism for the New Age: Matthew Fox and Creation-Centered Spirituality", *The Christian Research Journal*, Vol. 15, #2, Fall 1992, pp. 14-16, 18, 19, 29-31.

Faith Movement. Although not considered part of the New Age Movement, the Faith Movement which finds its focal-point in American televangelism, teaches ideas regarding the meaning of "faith"²⁰ and the deification of humans²¹ which have been criticized for being New Age-like.

The degree to which the church has been impacted with New Age is exemplified by findings which suggest that in Canada, 53% of the people interested in New Age thought also identify with Roman Catholicism, while 28% identify with Protestantism.²² Similarly, one can look at the degree to which relativism is accepted amongst churchgoers as a possible indicator of the acceptance of New Age ideas within the church. Not all relativists are New Agers, but the acceptance of relativism as a position would indicate the level of openness towards New Age or other spiritualities. In Canada, 58% of churchgoers agree with the statement; "everything's relative",²³ demonstrating that there is an open door to New Age style thought in many Canadian churches.

In education there are a number of New Age type influences. At the most public level there are private schools which are constructed around New Age type principles. For example the Kirpal Ashram School:

"Just as there are many rivers that flow into the ocean, there are a myriad paths that contain truth. All spiritual disciplines are respected, and the children begin each day with inspiring stories from great teachers such as Christ, Buddha, Thoreau, Saint Francis, Yogananda, Mother Theresa, Ghandi... Through sharing uplifting stories of these spiritual teachers the students are encouraged to awaken to their higher selves."²⁴

²⁰Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1993): 67.

²¹Ibid, 106.

²²Reginald Bibby, *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada*, (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993): 51.

²³Bibby, 68.

²⁴Judy Shannon. "Ashram School Encourages Service", *Common Ground*, Issue #4, Fall 1983, pp. 35, 39: 35.

The number of private schools offering New Age oriented education is, however, very small. More prevalent is the introduction of New Age thought into the public school systems. With the introduction of certain types of meditation, visualization and guided imagery, New Age principles can be taught to children. Laura Silva explains the reasoning behind children participating in New Age activities.

"In our program [The Silva Method] we show both adults and children how to create their own personal guides. We call them counselors. Everybody creates a male and a female.

"Children...are able to create two people who will always be with them when they go into the spiritual mode or when they go within themselves to meditate. If they have a problem or a question or a project...they can get additional help by asking their guides what to do. It's a tool to tap more information from the subjective dimension...

"When you allow a child to go within...close his eyes, take a deep breath, relax, meditate and then ask, 'How am I going to solve this problem?'...and he opens his mind to anything that comes, he is suddenly opening up a whole new world that's filled with more information than we have in this physical, limited world."²⁵

Although Laura Silva is speaking specifically about the context of parenting, it is the infiltration of these same principles into public schools which pleases some while causing great concern on the part of others.²⁶

A frequent source for the dissemination of basic New Age ideas is in the form of television programs and movies. As one author put it, "[t]he lifeblood of the new age is the media"²⁷ and nowhere is this more evident than with the "Empress of the New Age"²⁸, Shirley MacLaine. In 1987 North America's eyes were opened to the New Age with MacLaine's docu-drama mini-series, *Out on a Limb*, which documented her own spiritual

²⁵Angele Castoguy, "Visualization & The Answer Within", *Common Ground*, Issue #38, Spring 1992, pp. 17, 74: 17.

²⁶see Groothuis, 13,14.

also, Berit Kjos, *Your Child and the New Age*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1990.)

²⁷Ted Peters, *The Cosmic Self: A Penetrating Look at Today's New Age Movements*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1991): 8.

²⁸ From the cover of, *Vista*, June 1989.

journey into the New Age. With the popularity of her books and her media exposure Shirley MacLaine has greatly increased public awareness of the New Age Movement.

Possibly perpetuated by personalities such as MacLaine, Hollywood has jumped on the New Age bandwagon. With movies such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek V*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and, *Made in Heaven*. Hollywood makes commonplace many of the principles of the movement. Similarly through television shows such as *Star Trek the Next Generation*, and *Twin Peaks*, New Age ideas are disseminated. Even PBS has carried New Age specials such as, *The Power of Myth*, a series of interviews with Joseph Campbell conducted by Bill Moyers, and a series entitled "*How Then Shall We Live?*".

Celebrities like Linda Evans²⁹ (romantically involved with New Age Musician Yani), Joyce DeWitt,³⁰ Willie Nelson³¹, Richard Gere, Sharon Gleiss, Eric Estrada, Anne Mortifee amongst many others have associated themselves with the New Age Movement. So too Oprah Winfrey a self-professed New Age proponent frequently has guests who are in some way or another connected with New Age Thought. Similarly, musicians such as John Denver, Tina Turner³², Carly Simon, and k.d. Lang (who believes she is the reincarnation of Patsy Cline, hence her band's name "k.d. Lang and the Re-Clines") are connected with some aspect of the movement.

New Age politics seeks neither to be right or left, but rather calls itself radical centre, "...not neutral, not middle-of-the-road, but a view of the whole road..."³³ In general the New Age approach to politics can be termed the "politics of transformation"³⁴ wherein politics is to be transformed into a balance of power based on a belief in

²⁹Chandler, 23.

³⁰Ibid, 23.

³¹Elliot Miller, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), 185.

³²John Weldon, "Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism: Mystical Materialism for the Masses", *Christian Research Journal*, 15 (2), 1992, pp. 9-13.

³³Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*: 229.

³⁴Theodore Roszak, Quoted in Ferguson, 190.

individual self- determination leading ultimately to autarchy where each person is in complete control of self.

In Canada, the New Age has made a dramatic entry to the world of real-life politics with the presence of the Natural Law Party, the political wing of Transcendental Meditation, led by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Although criticized as being a means of gaining tax benefits, free public exposure, and a greater sense of credibility for TM, the Natural Law Party has gained followers across Canada and in at least nine other countries.³⁵ In the 1993 Canadian general election, the Natural Law Party had candidates in 231 out of a possible 294 ridings, making it the party with the fourth largest number of candidates. The New Age has even had an impact within the realm of conservative politics. U.S. vice-president Al Gore gained notoriety in the New Age community with the publication of his book, *The Earth in Balance*, which advocates Earth based religions as being a model for achieving harmony with nature, amongst other New Age type themes.³⁶ So too there are the events associated with Ronald and Nancy Reagan frequently consulting an astrologer in regards to political and personal decision making.³⁷

The Prevalence of New Agers

Perhaps more difficult than evaluating the degree to which New Age ideas have penetrated the culture is evaluating how much of the population is actually involved in the movement. One pollster writes, "If you try to gauge it by membership in groups, you won't see it. Because they aren't much for joining, the people involved in this inner search are hard to pin down statistically."³⁸ As mentioned earlier, there is no Census category for New Agers and even if there were, the entry would probably be wildly

³⁵Steve Chase, "Free Advertising for the Maharishi", *Alberta Report*, October 25, 1993. pp. 12-13.

³⁶Al Gore, *The Earth in the Balance*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992).

³⁷Chandler, 21.

³⁸William McCready of "National Opinion Research", Quoted in Furguson, 364.

inaccurate. Despite this, some figures for the United States estimate that 5% to 10% of the population are involved in the New Age Movement.³⁹

Reginald Bibby in his book, *Unknown Gods*,⁴⁰ provides some of the best statistics from survey data on how many people are involved in the New Age in Canada. He reports that 30% of the population are familiar with New Age ideas, 8% being 'somewhat interested', and only 3% of the national population is 'highly interested' in New Age thought. This 3% is paralleled by 3% claiming to be involved in New Age activities.⁴¹ Less than 1% of the population identifies exclusively with the New Age Movement, and of this group, 40% live in B.C. and 30% live in Ontario.⁴² Other indicators demonstrate that a significant proportion of Canadians are oriented towards New Age style thought: 9% of Canadian adults believe "definitely" that they will be reincarnated, while 17% say they "think" they will be reincarnated.⁴³ Astrology is believed "definitely" by 8% of the population and 26% "think" it is true.⁴⁴

Consistent with what we discussed earlier, this data indicates that while very few people are willing to identify themselves as being "New Agers" many people are involved at some level in New Age style activities. While accurate data are not available it seems that between 10% to 20% of the Canadian population is open to New Age thinking while slightly fewer people would be actually practicing some sort of New Age activities. As we will see in chapter eight there is a distinct demographic and geographic pattern of distribution to both New Age thought and activity.

³⁹John Naisbitt, and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000*, (New York: Warner Books, 1990): 280. Cited in Bibby, (1993): 49.

⁴⁰Bibby, (1993).

⁴¹Bibby, 1993, 51.

⁴²Bibby, 51, 52.

⁴³Bibby, 127.

⁴⁴Bibby, 132.

Backgrounds

Who then become New Agers? Again, it is a difficult question to determine the answer to. While there are some studies which look at who is likely to become part of a cult,⁴⁵ there is little reason to assume that the same applies for the New Age Movement. In fact it seems that New Agers are derived from all kinds of religious traditions, family backgrounds, and socio-economic levels.

In total, of the thirty people interviewed for this study, fourteen came from Christian backgrounds, including seven Protestant, four Roman Catholic and three who identified themselves loosely as coming from a Christian background. For many from this group, the affiliation with a church was nominal.

"...'Weekend Christians', I used to call us actually...you know, we had a cottage...or it was 'Winter Christians', that's what we were, because in the summer-time we never went to church, we went to the cottage. Because that was more fun, and then...so I got confirmed, went to Sunday-school, taught Sunday-school a bit when I was in my teenage years." ("Carmen")

For some the church experience is one which they maintained while they were part of the family but dropped when they were given the chance.

"I guess, like a lot of people my age, I'm 46, so I'm a Baby-Boomer child, I was raised to go to church. Any church would do, so my father was Catholic but I went to a little Anglican church down the street. Said my prayers every night. Raised with values that it was important to be a good person, be honest. As a teenager I saw that as conflicting with intellectualism, when I went to university. So I sort of dropped going to church or any kind of spiritual discipline. Didn't really think about it much at all." ("Sara")

For others the experiences were much more negative and they left church, and Christianity as a reaction.

⁴⁵Hexham, (understanding).

"...we'll go back to the actual history of my life which is being brought up with religion in a 'form'. Not being real impressed with that, especially around age eleven. So....my father was really into heavy duty guilt, sin and punishment out of the Bible and his own interpretations of that. I saw a lot of hypocrisy in my family around so-called 'religious' beliefs and principles and actions taken out of that, so there was a real dichotomy around that. As a result of that I didn't want to have anything to do with anything like that for years." ("Jewel")

"I was raised Lutheran and studied the Catechism, which is, for me, like memorizing things and a lot of it didn't even make sense, but it was a set way that you answered the questions and then you were confirmed at thirteen. I just became disenchanted with everything especially when I started to see so much hypocrisy in the church I was in. So I would say, probably when I was fourteen or fifteen, actually probably closer to sixteen, I just was so disenchanted with what I saw, I just didn't go to church at all, for the longest time. I guess I just didn't think about God for quite a while." ("Rose")

"I can remember I was very young, before six, and I was being drilled for the first Holy Communion and I can remember being in tears at night with my mother trying to remember the answers to these two-hundred questions. It was a booklet and my mother was told that in order to have the experience I had to know the answers to these questions. And they were only going to ask one or two questions but you didn't know which one or two, so you had to know the answers to all of them. Here I am, this tiny little thing and I don't understand why I'm supposed to be doing this. I am really tired and I want to go to sleep. I want to talk to my night-time friends and I have to answer all these stupid questions. Just being in tears and just being really afraid. Wanting to please my mother but know that this was stupid...

"When I was in my teens I became very rebellious. I just basically told my mom and dad that I thought the church was full of shit. That it may have served some good purpose for somebody, but it couldn't answer my questions. If it couldn't answer my questions then I wanted to go find somebody who could." ("Celeste")

"[There's] not much in the Catholic church. I really think that makes a lot of people ill. They just get all caught up in guilt and that, but the kindness, you still here that.

"I always say, 'Were you brought up Catholic by any chance?' 'Yes.' All tied up in the guilts, and you're not allowed to have pleasure and always put the other person ahead of you and now we find out that is very co-dependent behavior if you are always looking after other people but not your own needs, so...I don't have that much to say about them." ("Glory")

Only one person came from a background which practiced anything which resembled New Age Spirituality.

"My father was interested in all manner of religions or philosophies, so I got a very wide education. My family were vegetarians back in the 20's, by 1936 we were going down to Montana too for a month every year to meditate... It was quite a large gathering of people." ("DC")

Five people came from what could be termed an eclectic spiritual background.

"I was very fortunate in that my mother was a history teacher and as we were growing up she enabled us to be, (we were christened Protestant), but she enabled us to go and explore different theosophical [sic] ideas. She didn't freak when one week I was going to be a Bahá'í, and the next wanted her to get the Mormons come in so as I could hear about them. She enabled me to go into a Jewish Synagogue, a Ukrainian Catholic cathedral, I mean, so I feel fortunate." ("Stephanie")

"I was not heavily imprinted with forced beliefs in my family. My mother was Jewish from Vienna who had left her faith of birth behind when she came to this country and brought us up in the United church. That was tremendously telling. She later became Unitarian. My father had no use for religion and still doesn't. He says it is rather a nuisance, often being the pretext for so much colonization and domination and so on. So I was pretty much left to find my own way in that sense." ("David")

Four people recalled no family spiritual connection.

"My up-bringing was very loose. There was no religious acknowledgment or structure in the family...with my parents. So, I was basically quite open ended, quite open minded. I didn't have an aversion to anything religious or whatever." ("Becky")

Four people did not reveal their spiritual up-bringing. One person came from a Jewish background, but stated that his family was very unorthodox and the faith was not a significant factor in the household. One person came from a Hindu family. Additionally, three participants mentioned experiences of ESP or related experiences in their youth, but mentioned feeling the need to suppress it.

New Age Conversion

Even more complex than the background of the interviewees, is the diversity of the routes which they took in becoming part of the movement. The sheer variety of entry points is a testimony to the great diversity and prevalence of the movement. Marilyn Furguson provides a four point model of how someone becomes part of the so-called "Aquarian Conspiracy", (read: "New Age Movement"). The first stage is the "entry point":

"Entry can be triggered by anything that shakes up the old understanding of the world, the old priorities. Sometimes it is a token investment, made out of boredom, curiosity or desperation -- a ten-dollar book, a hundred-dollar mantra, a university extension course. / For a great many, the trigger has been a spontaneous mystical or psychic experience, as hard to explain as it is to deny."⁴⁶

Within the sample group there is a wide range of entry points into the movement. For many, becoming a New Ager was a process marked by many experiences and the assimilation of a lot of information. For others there was one dramatic experience which changed their perspective on the world. Nine of the respondents indicated the experience of the 1960's counterculture as being significant, five

⁴⁶Furguson, 89.

mentioned religious groups or communes as being entry points. Three got introduced to New Age via personal counselling, while three pointed to New Age health-care as their entry point. Seven respondents indicated reading books as important, two were exposed to New Age through Astrology and one through Tarot card readings. Three respondents talked of psychic experiences as children as being important in their spiritual journey, while two people were introduced primarily through physical journeys to the east.

To exemplify the process of New Age conversion we will follow the lives of two of the interview subjects: "Lorrie" and "Jewel". We begin with the entry point.

"So it started mostly for me when I went to a psychologist when I was twenty. I had severe insomnia for most of my life and my doctors didn't come up with any answers for me and they recommended a psychiatrist to do hypnosis therapy. I went through hypnosis therapy and learned it from a psychologist and I ended up going into a previous life, and there was the cause of my insomnia. It drastically changed my life. I slept for the first time in my life a full eight hours that very night." ("Lorrie")

"I guess in my twenties, mid-twenties I began going to a church called Unity and they had some...more along the line of positive thinking or positive thought. Principles and God thrown in there and the word God always plugged me in major because I had all these connotations. About 10 years of that and *The Course in Miracles* came into my life via that church through somebody who came to speak one night." ("Jewel")

The second stage is "exploration", where the individual will seek-out information and experiences related to their point of entry.⁴⁷

"So I started studying and researching it on my own, taking myself back to previous lives." ("Lorrie")

⁴⁷Ferguson, 92.

"Just hearing about It I decided I would buy that book, or those books and I did that and then suddenly it was like a whole different view-point into my awareness and I think because I was ready and also open minded enough to go past some of the terminology and words that are in those books that kind of related to my negative up-bringing around religion." ("Jewel")

The third stage is "integration" where the individual will trust an "inner guru" and have their life permeated with their new system of belief, having resolved many of the "sharp conflicts between new beliefs and old patterns."⁴⁸

"Then when I was twenty-one I started having nightmares of a previous life of my own where I was Guinevere in the Arthurian time period and it was a lot of violence and I was not very happy with what I was experiencing. And I regressed myself and found myself being called Gwinifar, a Celtic name and calling people Arthur and I thought, well this is just a little too far fetched for me...And I found it very upsetting, so I put it away for years. I just started doing a lot of meditation, reading about astral projection, started having a bit of out-of-body experience. I met a man...who became my real mentor and teacher for years and he helped me by giving me some books on meditation and helping me to find my power. So I focused on that for years and practicing on some friends regression and therapies, with them as guinea pigs.

"Then the nightmares started for me again when I was 27...I decided I just wasn't ready...yet. So I put that away again and I started focusing on other things. Through that time period I worked as an accountant. I had my own business...downtown... So I have sort of a double life, this logical life dealing with a lot of people in the money world, stock market and things like that. On the other side I was also studying opera and I was planning to be an opera singer and dabbling in past life and meditation and the spirituality side of things. But at that time it was more for me, it wasn't for teaching, for anyone else." ("Lorrie")

"Then having read those books I got involved in a New Age company called New World Network and that was in 1983. And through continually reading and practicing the principles out of those books...Yea I just got a whole new

⁴⁸Ferguson, 93.

awareness of what spirituality is as compared to religion."
 ("Jewel")

Fourthly there is "conspiracy" where, "...he discovers other sources of power, and ways to use it for fulfillment and in service to others."⁴⁹

"Four and a half years ago I was looking for a channeler and I found a channeler who had come to town. She was what I call a psychic channeler who brings the spirits in front of her but not fully into her body. What came through that session was that I was a channeler as well and so I learned how to channel my own spirit guides. They came through me and told me to do this work full-time, to close down my personnel agency and get to work, basically and do the hypnosis therapy that I had learned and past-life therapy and start working one-on-one with people and channel as well, full-time and they told me not to worry about the money, the money would come, people would come and they did."
 ("Lorrie")

"Well doing my own healing by myself through that company that I worked for. Using that particular method and having gained a lot of values and having turned my own life around completely to deciding that I wanted to help other people to do that. So I did training for that and went ahead and started doing it." ("Jewel")

To the extent that Furguson's model is correct, it is apparent that most if not all of the interviewees for this thesis have traveled fully to the fourth stage as each one has integrate their beliefs into their lives and now are in a mode of providing services to others based on those beliefs.

The process of actually becoming a New Age service provider seems also to be as varied and interesting as becoming a New Ager. It appears that for most the decision was not based on economics. Frequently the people interviewed had left positions which were more financially profitable in order to operate their current businesses. "Carmen" is indicative of this.

⁴⁹Furguson, 93.

"I actually had a really great job. I really enjoyed it too, but I knew that this was what I wanted to do. I mean, I tell you, the first year...I mean the job I was at... I was bringing home so much money I was laughing. I could basically do whatever I wanted. I was taking nice trips, got a house. But it wasn't what I wanted to be doing. Long term I knew that....

"...What I really wanted to be doing versus what I was doing, for money, to survive or whatever it was. So then I just started to pursue that, which was I wanted to have a center, some kind of center and I wanted it to relate to body, mind and spirit. The health of body, mind and spirit. And it turned into a bookstore."

Previous occupations of the 30 respondents ranged from computer consultants to oil industry executives to home-makers. The reasoning behind the decisions also varied greatly. Some seemed just to fall into it, where part-time hobbies gradually became more serious, eventually becoming full-time occupations.

"...out of the blue I thought to myself, 'I wonder if I could perpetuate any money at all reading tea cups and palms?' And so I approached a restaurant and I told the fellow what I wanted to do and he agreed, and that was it. That was how I got into it. I sort of fell into it. I had no design in my mind that I was going to be a psychic..." ("Stephanie")

Others, like "Leslie" started their practice as a survival technique, having lost their previous job.

"My background is in computer consulting. I was in the computer industry for twenty-five years and I also did astrology on the side since the '70's and it has always been my main love in life and for the past, I'd say ten years I'd been thinking, '...God if only I could do this for a living, it would be great.' I got laid off from my job about three years ago we were very slow...and I looked at this as being the best thing that ever had ever happened to because I looked at it as my opportunity, finally...and I am still building to a point where...it isn't easy making a living at this, and I'm not at the point where I can say I am making a living at it."

A few were led to their current professions by more spiritual oriented events.

"...eventually it got to the point where...I started getting little hints from the universe, that...'this isn't where you need to be anymore. We need you to be somewhere else now. Are you going to move on your own choice or are we going to have to force you there? If you don't make the choice for yourself it is going to be made for you, which one do you want?'... ("Debby")

"...I was led to go to a women's conference down in the States where I met a woman who gave me one of her personal quartz crystals and told me I'd be giving crystal workshops again, she used the word 'again' and I said, 'What ever you are talking about I am a teacher and trying to kill time, and that's a pretty rock.' 'No', she said, 'you have worked with crystals before and it will return to you easily and you will be doing this work.' It was as if she gave me the blue-prints to the second half of my life. She was right. I found as soon as I started working with the crystals that I knew how to work with them and knew how to teach people to work with them." ("Jill")

While some of the interviewees had seen great financial profit, the majority were not getting rich from their business. Although occasionally a move based on survival, the decision to get involved in the New Age as a profession was most frequently one of conviction in what they believed in and wanting to share that with others.

DESCRIBING THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT: NEW AGE BELIEFS

The difficulty in defining the New Age is paralleled by the difficulty involved in discovering what it is New Agers believe. As we have already seen, the movement is marked more by diversity than by unity, thus suggesting that the same belief systems are not going to be shared by all New Agers. There is some considerable variety in the beliefs held by New Agers. Despite this, however, it is possible to describe some of the most central and widely accepted beliefs. The following is a description of the most commonly accepted beliefs among people in the New Age Movement. The

categorization used comes partly from the book, *Unmasking the New Age*, by Douglas Groothuis.⁵⁰

All is One

In the New Age world-view the universe is seen as monistic. This is the belief that all is One, and One is all. There are no actual differences between any two tangible or intangible things. Differences between things are only apparent, not real. "Ultimate reality of God is seen as impersonal unity or pure consciousness, where there is no thought, no distinctions, no objects, no-thing-ness, then there also is no good or evil. Good and evil, right and wrong, true and false and distinctions made between objects, are a product of the mind, of rational, logical thinking."⁵¹

A significant manifestation of this belief is in the realm of environmentalism. The natural environment is something which is becoming more of an issue for people from just about all philosophical and religious backgrounds. Most people are realizing the importance of "ecology", "conservation", and a host of other environmental buzz words. The goals, and the practical methods of achieving them have remarkable consistency across the board, although the motivations behind the actions differ widely.

Since most people involved in the New Age Movement are monists they believe in the essential oneness of all things. This means that the natural environment, and themselves as human beings are essentially the same thing. Much of the concern for the environment from this point of view comes from J.E. Lovelock's Gaian hypothesis⁵² which brings scientific, and biological support to the belief of essential connectedness between humans and the natural environment. New Age environmentalism is intimately connected with what is now known as "Deep Ecology". George Sessions states,

⁵⁰Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking The New Age*, (Downers Grove: Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 1986).

⁵¹Linda Christensen, "The New Age Movement", Unpublished paper, U.B.C. Dept. of Religious Studies, 1990a: 11.

⁵²J. E. Lovelock. *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

"As we are now beginning to realize, the key to contemporary ecological consciousness is to see the diminishment of man and the diminishment of the planet and its non-human inhabitants as essentially one and the same problem."⁵³

This minimalist view of the environment is not simply physical; it has definite spiritual implications. It involves,

"...an awareness of the equal right of all things to live and blossom into their own unique forms of self-realization...Ecological consciousness recognizes a spiritual reciprocity [sic] between humans, animals, and the land."⁵⁴

Deep ecology,

"[r]efers to the understanding that the extent to which we diminish any aspect of the environment we diminish ourselves. The earth, our ecosystem is an extension of our body, mind and spirit, and our actions toward the earth are viewed as reflections of ourselves."⁵⁵

This belief then creates a world which is animate and sentient, part of the Universal One. The natural world is endowed with a value equal to that of humans, the outcome of which is often a deepened respect for the environment, as is demonstrated by "Glory".

"I have learned with the natives, learning more about nature and to honour nature. That's a big thing, to honour nature. If you go out to pick flowers, ask the plant's permission. Ask the tree's permission. To really honour that. If you pick a stone or a shell of the beach, ask permission that you can take it with you."

Monism, also creates a perception of physical existence as being illusory. Since all is one, and distinctions are unreal, then the differences between things are only illusions. Physical reality is only an illusion. This idea is reiterated by "Lorrie":

⁵³George Sessions. "Ecological Consciousness and Paradigm Change" in, Tobias, Michael. (ed.) *Deep Ecology*. (San Diego, California: Avant Books, 1985): 28.

⁵⁴Ibid, 39.

⁵⁵John Clancey. Et al. *A New Age Guide: For the Thoroughly Confused and Absolutely Certain*. (Eastsound, Wa.: Sweet Forever Publ., 1988): 6.

"Since that experience [of astral travel] I have felt like I was sort of walking on the earth. My feet almost felt like they weren't quite touching the ground. It was a really life changing feeling for me. It felt like I was here but I wasn't caught. I didn't have to get caught in all the stress or turmoil around, I could just watch it and know that it is basically an illusion. I look at this whole experience as an illusion...but what is important in my teaching is to help people to realize the illusion can feel very real and very emotional and we need to heal that, we need to heal the emotions and when we heal ourselves we can come to a greater understanding that it is an illusion and reality is inside of who we really are, that we are spirit. That this is all really a school that we are all here to learn." ("Lorrie")

All is God and Humanity is God

All is God

"Once we admit that all is one, including god, then it is a short step to admitting that 'all is god'. This is pantheism."⁵⁶ This is the belief that everything is a part of the One, or rather part of god. There is nothing which is apart from the One, or apart from god. The unifying fact of existence is that everything is connected to the Source, the One, a universal energy which encompasses all of reality, which is otherwise termed, "god".⁵⁷

Humanity is God

Next, since there are no distinctions between things, and there is also no distinction between a person and god, it is therefore only logical to assert that a person *is* god. Every person and everything is god, free to create its/their own reality and live in that reality how they please with no one to judge them, save themselves. This philosophy

⁵⁶Groothuis, 20.

⁵⁷Some call this source "God" but the New Age concept of the One is very different from the Christian concept of God, since the One is an impersonal energy force, and the Christian concept of God is of a personal being.

is appropriately summed up by Swami Muktananda who says, "Kneel to your own self. Honor and worship your own being. God dwells within you as You!"⁵⁸

The New Age world view not only encourages, but demands the deification of self. There is a presupposition that all humans are god. This rightfully translates into a worship of self. "To be as God is to love no thing more than you, to hold no thing greater than you, and to see no thing as more divine than you."⁵⁹ The deification of self was confirmed by many of the interviewees.

"I think a lot of people are discovering the God within themselves and the God-essence. They are finding out who they truly are and changing the way they look at things, and changing the way they look at themselves and feel about themselves, causing more dramatic changes around the world." ("Rose")

"I guess it is just a feeling that...like when I say that in nature I see the divine in a tree...I'm beginning to realize, I'm just beginning to realize if there's the divine in a tree that the divine is also in me. I have always known this, but I am now beginning to feel it. Beginning to feel the sacred experience that life is, period. My inspiration comes from that feeling, like... Wow!" ("Christine")

Under this system a person is able to pursue whatever they desire and this can easily be seen as a license for a spiritualized hedonism. If a person is god, then it is natural that they will see themselves worthy of anything and everything. "To be as God and to live as God, all you have to do is be yourself and live only for your own happiness and joy."⁶⁰ This can include the desire for money, which is apparently a major pursuit of some of the New Agers. Joseph Murray lauds and applauds this pursuit in these words:

"It is your right to be rich. You are here to lead the abundant life to be happy, radiant and free. You should,

⁵⁸Barbara Marx Hubbard. *The Evolutionary Journal*. (San Francisco: Evolutionary Press, 1982): 157.

Quoted in Groothuis, 21.

⁵⁹Steven Lee Weinberg. *Ramtha: An Introduction*. (Eastsound, Wa.: Sovereignty Inc., 1987): 189.

⁶⁰Weinberg, 189.

therefore, have all the money you need to lead a full, happy, prosperous life...In this book you will learn to make friends with money, and you will always have a surplus."⁶¹

Or, as Stuart Wilde writes, "Money isn't real. It's just energy. When you can open your heart to energy, the money finds you."⁶² Money, however, is not the only pursuit of the person-god, but whatever the pursuit, that person cannot be denied it. There are no moral grounds to convict a person for a particular pursuit. Other pursuits include personal power, physical perfection, spiritual perfection, career perfection and perfection in relationships or even perfect service. As will be more fully developed in subsequent chapters the pursuit of "self", as related to the concept of the deified-self, is a major preoccupation of the people involved in the New Age. Philosophically, the New Ager may be able to take any path they desire.

A Change in Consciousness

One of the key aspects of New Age is its recognition of the importance of the supernatural. In order to realize one's own god-hood it is necessary that a person have a fundamental shift in consciousness. "The mystical view of consciousness is based on the experience of reality in non-ordinary modes of awareness, which are traditionally achieved through meditation but may also occur spontaneously in the process of artistic creation and various other contexts."⁶³ The entry into altered states of consciousness through meditation allows one to achieve a higher order. ⁶⁴ These higher orders involve contact with the supernatural. The dilemma of humanity is an ignorance of divinity, which keeps us from a true change of consciousness.⁶⁵

⁶¹Joseph Murray. *The Collected Essays of Joseph Murray*. (Marina Del Rey, Calif.: De Vorss & Co., 1987): 60.

⁶²*Common Ground*, Spring, 1992, 23.

⁶³Fritjof Capra. *The Turning Point*. (New York: Bantam, 1982): 297.

⁶⁴Ferguson, 79.

⁶⁵Groothuis, 26.

While New Agers believe that all people are essentially god, they suggest that not all people realize it. A person must come in contact with their higher-self, ascend to a higher plane of consciousness before they are able to realize their god-hood. In Kitsilano one can find many methods of entering into one's higher consciousness, which include: Zen meditation, channeling, Zen Buddhist meditation, Zuru Ling Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, Mindlinking, Yoga, Chanting, Vipassana Meditation, Karuna Meditation. There is a consistency of purpose amongst all these methods exemplified by Maharaj Sawan Singh, who teaches, "...a system of meditation enabling one to experience inner LIGHT and Audible Life Stream, the key to Self-knowledge and God-realization."⁶⁶

The interviewees frequently confirmed the belief in the necessity to alter one's consciousness in order to realize one's innate perfection. For example:

"In essence there is nothing wrong with anybody, there are no problems, there is nothing to be learned or there isn't any thing missing, except a willingness and an openness to receive that." ("James")

"[I look] to myself. To myself. I do the Reiki...and this is like getting in-touch with my higher-self. And this is where I'll get my answers. You know, we have all the answers. It's to believe that and I've gotten to that stage where I don't feel I have to go outside. I don't go to readers anymore, any of that stuff. I really believe we have all the answers and this is what I tell all my clients; they have the answers. It's just to love yourself unconditionally. Trust your instincts." ("Glory")

Relativism

Views of Other Religions

New Age being essentially an unorganized collection of religious ideas is hard to label as a religion in itself. It recognizes that there are different religions in existence, but

⁶⁶*Common Ground*, Issue #30, Spring 1990: 59.

it states that essentially all religions are the same. It is believed that there are common truths amongst all religions and that these common truths overrule any differences. Ralph Waldo Trine says, "The sacred books, the inspired writings, all come from the same source - God."⁶⁷ While differences are recognized amongst religions, it is believed that these differences are , "...cultural forms or packages of essentially one and the same thing."⁶⁸ The basic belief is that no one religion has an exclusive view of truth and humans are free to choose which manifestation of the truth they want to follow. It is a supermarket style belief system, where the participants are free to choose from the shelves of religion which ever aspects of spirituality they want.⁶⁹

Due to the monistic view that it espouses, New Age cannot condemn any religion as being incorrect, for all things are the same, therefore all religions, although showing semantic differences, are united by basic overarching truths. This means, "...a Jew can worship equally as well in a Catholic cathedral, a Catholic in a Jewish Synagogue a Buddhist in a Christian church, a Christian in a Buddhist temple."⁷⁰ Again this is a theme which was reiterated by the interview subjects.

"Every religion has its own definition of God. Every religion has its own definition for the same thing, it can't be something else." ("Becky")

"The truth is found in all of them. 'I am in all religions as a string through a set of pearls'. I really like that. I see that string or that flow of truth in all religions and in all philosophies. Although religions and philosophies can get carried away with their dogma. Even the original string can get distorted or lost." ("Christine")

⁶⁷Ralph Waldo Trine. *In Tune With the Infinite*. (New York: MacMillan. Reprint, 1986. (first edition, 1908)): 156.

⁶⁸Linda Christensen. "The Issue of Religious Pluralism: Any One Religion True?", Unpublished paper., U.B.C. Dept. of Religious Studies, 1990b: 1.

⁶⁹See, Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: the Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*. (Toronto: Irwin, 1987) and Bibby, (1993).

⁷⁰Trine, 155.

New Age Morality

New Age relativism is also evident in the peculiar world of New Age morality. Given that everything is perceived of as being relative, it is therefore true that moral decisions are relative in nature. There are no absolute standards, no moral imperatives in the world of the New Age. The existence of absolute standards or moral imperatives would be to deny the points we have already discussed. Absolute standards would suggest that right and wrong did in fact exist, therefore contradicting the idea that "all is One", and differences between notions of right and wrong, good and evil were no longer just illusory. Similarly to think that a person could do something wrong would be a notion in conflict with the assumption of personal deity and ultimate self-perfection.

"It's more the way I live my life, the guiding principles. I run my life totally by my own ethical and moral code. My own internal code as opposed to society's, whatever that is. Sometimes they coincide and sometimes they don't. But I live, I think, very ethically. Like, I would never belie my principles. Well I think there is a difficulty for the general public in a lot of these things because it is hard to know who is ethical and who isn't. Ethics are extremely significant to me. When I do a reading I want to give the person the absolute best reading I can give them. And make sure they have value for money that I tell them truthfully what I see in the chart and that I leave them with a positive feeling. That they can walk out of here feeling better somehow...

"Difficulty with the general public is how do you know this person is on the up and up? how do you know if they are just after my money? how do you know if they are truthful? To me the answer to that is not to regulate and test and really put an old system to work, against what is really a new way of looking at things, but to, in general our whole society need to open up to their intuitive sense and to really access that right brain. We all have intuition, we all have the power to know if this is right or this doesn't feel right, you know, this gut feeling. I think this is part of our life, that we are never trained to access or use." ("Leslie")

"Basically we come from a premise wherein 'harm none, do what you will' is our law, so as long as you are not hurting anyone else and you are following your own will then you are living sort of the way we do. We don't put rules on people, you can't do this and you shouldn't do that. We do...by saying harm none...If you look at that law, it is all encompassing, it covers the Ten Commandments plus. It just doesn't get into the moralistic. I mean, I can't go into your bedroom and say, 'don't sleep with little boys.' I mean, I'm not advocating that, but I'm not into getting into personal lives and stuff. That would be, what I just said, an infringement on the other person. So you know as long as you're not infringing on other people then we're fine." ("Frank")

"A lot of the people who are in the, quote, so-called, 'New Age Movement' have been working in that area for the last ten, twenty years and learning what they need to learn and are now beginning to refine it, integrate it, really be able to reach-out into a wider community with this information and make it available and offer it to say, 'If you want it, it is here'. We're not going to force anybody to believe what they don't want to believe. You don't have to believe anything I say, I don't care if you do or not. It is irrelevant. That's what I believe. You know? You believe what you believe. I believe what I believe and, hey, as long as we are not hurting anybody else or ourselves, fine." ("Celeste")

The belief in relativist morality, however, inevitably leads to point of ultimate contradiction. Each one of the quotations above demonstrates the inherently contradictory nature of New Age morality. "Leslie" speaks of having her own morality, her own ethics but then speaks of there being some universally desirable characteristic in the concept of truthfulness. "Frank" and "Celeste" each speak of believing what you want to believe and doing what you want to do, yet qualify this with an appeal to the golden rule, "...hey, as long as we are not hurting anybody else or ourselves, fine." This type of inconsistency is very prevalent in New Age thinking. There is a standardized appeal to the right to believe and do anything you want, yet there is also an implicit, and sometimes explicit set of rules and absolute moral standards, such as the golden rule.

New Age and Social Concerns

One of the obvious results of a philosophy which asserts that ultimate meaning is found in the self is that attempts to deal with social justice and related issues can seem somewhat awkward or strained. It is of little doubt that most New Agers are indeed concerned for the plight of the less fortunate, but it is evident that their belief system is often times strained to come up with reasonable responses to such situations. Regarding the New Age response to oppression in its various forms, one observer notes:

"When personal consciousness is the single determining factor in social change, then all social problems, including the specters raised by racism, imperialism, sexism, and homophobia, are seen as the result of personal failures and shortcomings."⁷¹

A consciousness of the problems of society and their sources can at times be profoundly lacking in the New Age mindset. New Agers frequently turn to the idea that to change the world one must begin with one's self.

To care for one's self first is done in order to become a person more able to be at peace in the world and therefore be part of creating a better more peaceful existence for all. Ram Dass explains this logic as it applies to his own life:

"...next week I leave for Burma for three months of sitting meditation. That's specifically to do that. Not to retreat from the world but to do that in order to come back to the world in a quieter way to hear truth more clearly in order to be able to serve with less attachment so I will create less suffering in the universe."⁷²

While this is obviously a commendable thought, it is apparent that few if any New Agers have in fact finished with themselves and hence it seems only a few have been able to move beyond the self. The call to be God has left many in the relentless pursuit of

⁷¹Andrew Ross, *Strange Weather*. (London: Verso, 1991), 70-71.

⁷²DeBeck: 38.

perfection (of body, mind and spirit) and it is this endless chase which is pulling many from more socially oriented pursuits. One particularly harsh critic writes:

"Underlying all the hugging and humming, all the therapeutic touching, psychic reading, holistic healing and shamanic counseling is a notion that life's confounding realities can be rubbed away like an ache in the elbow. Self-absorption masquerades as self-improvement. Analyze the spiritualistic jabber about peace and harmony and one is apt to find nothing but jabber itself. After all, who has time to work for peace and harmony if he is spending three nights a week doing crystal therapy of life regression? Volunteer at a soup kitchen? Visit the elderly? Press for civil rights? Demonstrate for nuclear disarmament? No way. Better to sit cross-legged in a geodesic dome and meditate oneself toward the millennium."⁷³

While these comments are on one extreme, there are not without some validity. The comments of New Agers can occasionally seem quite callous, self-absorbed, or simply uncaring.

"You look at the world and it's very beautiful. The world isn't the oil crisis or some guy shot at the 7-11. The world is the sunset and the child running across the play ground with its chubby little legs, laughing. There's so much that people miss and don't see and their lives become tight and mean and lacking."⁷⁴

While the intent of this statement is evidently the affirmation and recognition of the positive aspects of life, it is presented with a denial of its harsh, and painful aspects. Furthermore, with the New Age self-absorption, there is no recognition of the fact that "some guy at the 7-11" is more than just "some guy" to someone, or that someday that "guy" might be a friend, relative or even one's self.

The New Age over-emphasis of self can also make well intentioned contemplations of crisis situations appear embarrassingly irrelevant. The following is an

⁷³Fred Bruning, "Easy Solutions in the New Age", *MacLean's*, March 21, 1988: 9.

⁷⁴Joseph Roberts, "Money. Love & Power: An interview with Stuart Wilde", *Common Ground*, Issue #38, Spring 1992, pp. 8-9, 23: 23.

excerpt from an interview with Eileen Caddy, a teacher/writer associated with the New Age community of Findhorn, Scotland.

"I had an interesting experience during the time when all these people were dying in Ethiopia and the beginning of Band-Aid and so on...They were dying like flies and I found myself sucked into all this disaster that was going on...

"I turned the television off and said, what can I do? It came through clearly, 'Turn the picture the other way round.'...I turned the picture the other way round and looked at all the good things that were coming out of this.

"It was quite a revelation to me to realize that what was actually happening was that humanity's heart was being opened up for probably the first time in their lives...

"...Then I began to think, what about all those people that have died? I thought, well that's a bit hard on them, isn't it? Then I thought, what is death? Death to me is just moving into light. They've really sort of sacrificed themselves to open up humanity's heart.

"I thought, isn't that wonderful! What I needed to say was thank you."⁷⁵

Caddy derives comfort from the death of the Ethiopians. This comfort arises out of *her* perception of death, ("Death to me is..."). The Ethiopians, according to Caddy, who starved to death as a result of political turmoil and drought, sacrificed themselves so that a few million people sitting in their living rooms watching TV would for a few brief moments watch the same program, feel the same guilt and remorse and then send a few of their expendable dollars to a cause they would have forgotten about by dinner time. Instead of being mobilized into self-sacrificing action, Caddy, in response to her own question, "what can I do?" is motivated to "turn the picture around" and see what it is doing for her. In her final analysis her ultimate response is to say "thank-you", and "isn't it wonderful". The self-oriented New Age mindset can quickly turn genuine concern for others into questions of, "what can I (learn/gain/benefit/get), from this?" The result is that the object of the initial concern is, in the end, left out of the answer.

⁷⁵Michael Bertrand, "Choose to Change: An Interview with Eileen Caddy", *Common Ground*, Issue #23, Summer 1988 pp. 6-7, 52: 52.

While *Common Ground* frequently publishes articles dealing with social issues, they are not well represented in the advertising. Advertising categories such as, "Global and Social Change" and "Environment", (places where one might expect to find opportunities for community, national or global improvement or service) have a minimal number of advertisers, with the categories frequently not appearing in the magazine because of an absence of advertisers. As with the rest of society, there is much talk about what needs to be done, but there is little evidence of it actually happening.

To conclude, however, that the New Age is void of any social concern is indeed false. It is perhaps significant that *Common Ground* is primarily an outlet for advertisers and hence the profitable side of New Age is over-emphasized while non-profit agencies and service organizations with their limited budgets cannot afford to advertise. Despite this, service oriented groups like "Seva" manage to advertise in most issues of *Common Ground*.

Similarly it is fair to say that many of the people interviewed appear to be actively involved in some type of self-sacrificing service. It is also true that articles in *Common Ground* are devoted to issues such as nuclear disarmament, environmentalism, racism and human rights abuses, and certainly these articles can be categorized as social services themselves in so far as they educate people and promote social justice.

The difficulty with the New Age is, however, that within a system which purposefully has no unified belief, there is no moral imperative to pursue social justice. As might be expected, the moral relativism which the New Age actively supports and promotes has been used for both good and ill. Many feel drawn toward the concept of service and fight actively for social justice. On the other hand there is no prescribed reason why this course is in fact any better than any other. The hedonist and the egocentrist can also find a home in the New Age. It appears that although the New Age created a society of self-creating and self-acknowledging gods, the moral relativism of the New Age does not require those gods to be benevolent.

New Age Logic: Emotionalism

Disregarding the exceptions to relativism described above, it is generally the case in the New Age Movement that decision making becomes a function of intuition. The logical appeal to an absolute standard ceases to be an option, as it would be under a strict religious system or even a system based on utilitarianism. The result of this is that people simply do what feels right.

"[I do]...what feels right within me. If something feels right within me then I'll follow that. If it doesn't feel right within me I won't do it, no matter what it is, on any level of experience. And that is a part of discernment which is also very important to me...I don't have any judgment on any of that and I also know that I have stopped denying myself. I have stopped denying myself. I have stopped denying things that I see, things that I know, things that I have and I simply accept. I need no reason, I need no logic to support anything that I believe or anything that I know or anything that I see. I simply accept that it is. I don't even necessarily need to understand. As long as it feels right to me. That's the most important thing." ("Celeste")

Similarly, at a free lecture entitled, "The Synchronicity Experience", where "Brother Charles" spoke and later sold his meditation tapes, the person introducing Brother Charles began by saying, "Turn your mind off. Just experience. If you try to analyze you will be very confused."⁷⁶

Fitting with the rejection of the logical mind as being too dominant in western society, the New Age Movement frequently encourages that people leave the realm of logic and move into the realm of experience. Hence the role of intuition, feelings, emotions, experiences becomes greatly amplified in the process of decision-making.

⁷⁶Brother Charles, "The Synchronicity Experience", Free Lecture at the H.R. Macmillan Planetarium, Vancouver, September 21, 1992.

View of the Future

The term "New Age" originates in a belief that the world is moving between two significant astrological periods. The period which has dominated for the past 2000 years has been one of dogma and institutionalized religion, namely Pisces. At some point near the turn of the century we will be moving into a period of universal unity, namely the Age of Aquarius. The age of Aquarius is, "...the age of an open world, a time of renewal when a fresh release of spiritual energy in the world culture may unleash new possibilities."⁷⁷ The assumption is that humans are evolving towards perfection which will ultimately result in heaven on earth.

The cosmic optimism which New Agers believe in, leads them to strive for universal unity. Perhaps one of the most popular aspects of this is found in the teachings of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of Transcendental Meditation. His promise is large and utopian:

"With this scientifically validated knowledge, it is no longer necessary for any individual of any nation to continue with problems or suffering. Every government can now raise every area of national life to perfection through Maharishi's Master plan to create heaven on earth, which utilizes Maharishi's Vedic Science and Technology to apply the unified field of natural law for the glorification of all aspects of life -inner and outer."⁷⁸

This overall theme of the perfection of humanity is evident in many areas of the New Age. In Vancouver, the "Hug for Peace", held on St. Valentine's Day was to send the energy of thousands hugging at one time around the world.⁷⁹ The Peace concert held early in 1990, had a similar purpose. Many of the services allude to a change in the world order. Such things include, "...[plans] for Peace and Sharing...inspiring humanity to transform all of its structures - political, social and economic."⁸⁰ Robert Aiken, a local

⁷⁷Ferguson, 42.

⁷⁸*Globe and Mail*, March 1, 1990: A9.

⁷⁹Taken from wall poster advertising the "Hug for Peace", March, 1990.

⁸⁰*Shared Vision*, Issue 18, February, 1990: 24.

counselor and Astrologer is hopeful of the time when, "...suddenly everyone will want to find his/her inner peace...", which he tentatively says would be foreshadowed on Feb. 2, 1993, the time of a specific astrological convergence.⁸¹

"The final goal is to transform society and the world."⁸² The goal is to realized when everyone finds, "...peace and harmony within..."⁸³ By finding our true-selves, the conflicts between people will cease.

CONCLUSION

While no description of the New Age appears fully comprehensive, it is apparent that the movement does not completely defy description. While being purposely difficult to label, the New Age Movement is not so amorphous as to be completely void of distinguishing characteristics. Indeed, when one looks closely enough, much of what New Age looks like it is only part of the process involved in coming to understand this contemporary cultural movement. To gain a more full understanding it is also necessary to ask: Where did it come from? Why does it exist now? and Why does it exist in this culture as opposed to others? In the remaining chapters we will look at these questions among others in order to gain a fuller appreciation of what it is the New Age is saying, and what it means to this culture.

⁸¹Robert Aiken. "World in Transition: Part II". *Shared Vision*, Issue 18, February 1990: 14.

⁸²Sutherland, 60.

⁸³Aiken.

Chapter Three -

THE CULTURAL PREPARATION FOR THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In my view the New Age movement is not the inevitable outcome of the spiritual evolution of the planet, as many New Agers themselves propose.¹ The New Age Movement has arisen in a particular place, North America, at a particular time, the 1970's and 1980's, and as we will see later, primarily amongst particular segments of the population. Despite the fact that the New Age Movement has extended its boundaries far beyond North America and it draws inspiration from cultures and belief systems extending far into history, the central fact remains that the current cultural phenomenon which has been given the title the "New Age Movement" is somehow a product of the culture in which it began. Insofar as this is true, an examination of this culture would provide a good basis for explaining the reasons for the existence of the New Age Movement.

Part of the solution to this, I believe lies in the understanding of what is known as the secularization thesis. It is generally understood that over the past few hundred years, and even in the past few generations of North American society, the Christian church has played a decreasingly important role in the majority of people's lives. Many people will view their parents or grandparents as being more religious than themselves, and similarly might have a mental image of the local church as being the milieu of elderly people. These folk images are to a certain degree supported by statistics gathered by people seeking to provide evidence for these generalized observations.² To a certain extent, anyone who would generally agree with this statement could be said to have an

¹Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformations in the 1980s*, (Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin): 70.

²For example see, Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*, (Toronto: Irwin, 1987.)

understanding of the central observation of the secularization thesis. To go one step beyond this, however, and begin to provide reasons for *why* this is the case becomes slightly more difficult.

Given that the literature around secularization is so rich and the discussions so varied, the inevitable danger is that the focus of this thesis - the New Age Movement - will be lost in an expanded discussion of secularization. There is no conceivable way to touch upon even a small fragment of the topics that secularization opens up, or be able to represent all the view points and significant players who have contributed to this debate in the context of one chapter. With this in mind, the objective of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the concept of secularization, with a view to providing a reasonable explanation for why the New Age Movement has taken root in North America at this time.

Drawing on almost all aspects of society, secularization theory attempts to explain why the fabric of western society has changed so drastically in the last two centuries. If one were to radically simplify secularization theory, might be briefly summarized as follows: At one time religion bound western society together culturally. It explained the world, it organized social institutions and it organized people's thoughts and beliefs. However, with the Enlightenment march of technology and science, religion started to fade. People began foregoing the church and its way of thinking in favour of the more rational approach to the world offered to them by industrialization and modern science. As a result the church as an institution and organizer of society began its inevitable descent from power, which would lead ultimately to its complete demise.³

The problem with this general thesis is, however, that in light of recent history, including the advent of the New Age Movement, the resurgence of conservative Christianity, and the current rise in other religious groups, it appears that secularization

³Based on a summary in, David Lyon, *The Steeple's Shadow*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, Publ., 1985.): 6

is slowing down, if not being reversed.⁴ The inevitable demise of religion which many secularization theorists predicted is not happening in any regular manner. In fact, the reverse, a sacralization appears to be a more accurate portrayal of the current situation.

If we accept that there appears to be a certain level of re-sacralizing occurring in society, we must then look at secularization theory and conclude that, in regard to the inevitability of the demise of religion, it is at the very least in question. This, however, is not to say that secularization theory is not without merit and cannot be an aid in furthering our understanding of the changes which have occurred in society over that last few centuries. Given this it would probably be to our advantage to look at secularization from a different vantage point. For that reason, in the next section of this chapter we will look at the history of western society from a perspective which looks at the changes in a slightly different light to that provided by the secularization thesis.

JACQUES ELLUL: *THE NEW DEMONS*

The primary theoretical map that I will be using to guide us through the history of the sacred belongs to sociologist / theologian Jacques Ellul. Specifically, I will be drawing from his 1975 work, *The New Demons*⁵. It is here that Ellul provides a poignant and powerful account of the changes which have occurred in western society from the time of the Enlightenment (and before), changes which have otherwise been categorized as secularization. I shall be interpreting the transitions between pre-Enlightenment society and enlightened / modern society and then the transition from modern to postmodern society based upon the model which Ellul provides. This model is based in some of the prime findings and assumptions of secularization theory, but interprets them quite differently.

⁴Colin Campbell, "The Secret Religion of the Educated Classes", *Sociological Analysis*, 39 (2), 1978, (pp. 146-156): 146.

⁵Jacques Ellul, *The New Demons*, (Trans., C. Edward Hopkins), (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

Challenging the given

Ellul begins his work by challenging a presupposition, which has gone largely unchallenged in the western world. The assumption, which most people (intellectuals and the general population alike) make, is that we are living in an areligious society, a society which has parted ways with myth and the sacred. It is generally assumed that due to the fact that we are in a post-Christian, post-Constantinian⁶ era, then *ipso facto* we are in a post-sacred society. Ellul recognizes that indeed society has been de-Christianized and laicized⁷, and that "secular" thought, has been propelled to the forefront of our social and political institutions. He disagrees, however, that this necessarily implies that all is profane and nothing is sacred in this era.

Ellul puts some of the blame for the assumptions of desacralization on American arrogance. The U.S. began as a country dedicated to devotion to God and godliness. Everything up until, and peaking in, the 1930's, had the ring of Christianity to it.

"The President was always calling upon the Lord. The Bible was in all the hotels. Advertising was based on Christian maxims...There was an identification made between the American way of life and Christianity."⁸

This did not last, for "...suddenly the whole thing toppled and fell apart", with science and technology as the displacers⁹. The Americans then panicked, generalizing and totalizing the situation, assuming that this was happening the world over. It was assumed that if it was happening in America, then the whole world was losing Christianity. Furthermore the assumption was also made that to lose Christianity was to lose religion. The process of generalization meant that Americans,

"...[passed] from the statement that 'modern man no longer believes in Jesus Christ' to 'modern man is atheistic', from 'modern man is no longer Christian' to 'modern man is no

⁶ That is, an era which has shed the marriage between church and state which Constantine initiated.

⁷ "Laicization" is the process of removing the church from the state.

⁸ Ellul, 41.

⁹ Ibid.

longer religious', from 'modern man no longer reads the Bible and no longer listens to sermons' to 'modern man is rational and takes no part in mythical discourse.'" ¹⁰

The generally held belief was that if Christianity fell, all religion ceased to exist, that nothing other than the Christian God was sacred, and therefore non-Christian is non-sacred.¹¹ Ellul does not ignore the Enlightenment as being the seed of the shift away from Christianity but he points out that it was not until popular America began to feel the brunt of the change that it became a completely pervasive assumption. The struggles between Christianity and scientism, its successor and deposer, began in the Enlightenment and many battles had been fought and settled since then. Unable to accept that there could be a sacred, other than what had been, the American declaration was that society "...no longer believed in the sacred."¹²

It is also true that this assumed death of the sacred is partially attributable to the secularization theorists themselves. It has been pointed out that proponents of the secularization thesis state that secularization is a necessary and factual result of improved science and technology.¹³ There seems to be little discussion amongst secularization theorists regarding the possibility that secularization may be neither factual nor inevitable, and hence through their influence they promote the belief in the death of religion.

Identifying the Sacred

The perspective one takes regarding secularization is very much dependent upon one's definition of religion and what constitutes the "sacred". Traditionally there are three basic views on this. One equates religion and the sacred with organized churches and specifically religious groups.¹⁴ The second expands on this first definition to include

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid, 42.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Lyon, 31, 32.

¹⁴Ibid,10.

"common" or "folk" religion. This includes fringe beliefs, superstitions, and "old wives' tales".¹⁵ This does not require any organized religion and becomes much more defined by the culture, traditions and individual beliefs and experiences. The third commonly accepted definition of religion and the sacred, sees anything which gives meaning to a persons life as being sacred.¹⁶ This can mean a sport, a hobby, an individual or anything which forms the direction of one's life is sacred.

For traditional secularization theorists the first two definitions are most frequently adhered to. For Ellul however it is the third definition which is central in his evaluation of the concept of secularization. He is not satisfied with the declaration that society is no longer interested in the sacred and therefore asks:

"...I think the first order of business is to find out whether or not we live in an age that has thrown religion aside. What if the analysis is wrong?" ¹⁷

What if religion and the sacred do still exist, but have simply changed their form? In order to answer this question fully Ellul recognizes the need to define the function of the "sacred". He realizes that,

"If, after examining everything which those primarily involved agree to call religion or myth, I discover a function (complex) on behalf of man and society; if, then, I discover phenomena not expressly called religion or myth but fulfilling exactly the same function, I would be entitled to say that, while the vocabulary has changed, the substantial reality is identical, and I find that I am really in the presence of a religion or a myth." ¹⁸

In defining the function of the sacred, his first and most important observation is that, "...the sacred is not one of the categories of religion. Religion, rather, is one possible rendition of the sacred."¹⁹ The implication of course is that to be sacred

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid..

¹⁷Ellul, 19.

¹⁸Ibid, 47.

¹⁹Ibid, 48.

something need not be part of a "religion" (in the traditional sense of the word). The sacred is in fact the standpoint from which everything is viewed. It is the point from which all limits and boundaries are drawn. Keeping this in mind, Ellul points to three areas in which sacredness can traditionally be identified: 1) peoples' relationship to the universe, 2) sacred time, and 3) peoples' relationships with others.

An individual's relationship to the universe is arguably the most obvious and important of the three. Sacred value, Ellul argues, is attributed most often to that which protects and that which threatens. That which provides a refuge, which guarantees logical, rather than illogical space, and which affirms the existence of an order becomes sacred.²⁰ This represents the provision of points of reference²¹ an assured method to interpret one's own existence, and to "...be oriented in the world and know where and how to act."²² This provides order, however, it also exposes and warns of disorder. The sacred provides discernment for what is or is not permitted, and why. With the "true" comes the "false". The sacred therefore is that which bestows meaning.²³

Secondly, Ellul presents the role of sacred time. This is not a concept of the meaning or purpose of abstract time, but rather is an exploration of the importance of specific moments in time, best represented by festivals or ceremonies. These are moments of permitted disorder amidst the order, and are in stark contrast to the order.

"It is a time between the times, a silence between words, a plunge into the absolute origin, which one must *come out of* in order to begin." ²⁴

It is a time where chaos is passed through in order to give, "...force, virtue and validity..."²⁵ to the order. Ellul does not provide any concrete examples of what such a sacred time might entail, but it appears that his allusion (however unclear), refers to

²⁰Ibid, 50.

²¹Ibid, 51.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid, 52.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

times where that which threatens is faced and challenged, but not necessarily defeated. Sacred time strengthens the existing order when the participants emerge from the time of exposure and disorder still intact, ready to live once again under the protection of the sacred. Here then, the sacred, in the form of sacred time, is that which tests and shows the boundaries of the order.

The third signifier of the sacred is found in peoples' relationships with each other. The sacred relationship is founded upon, "...integrating the individual into the group."²⁶ The sacred is necessarily communal if it is to survive. The sacred is made so by normalizing actions and concepts through group justification. When an individual adopts a behaviour which has been, or is being, normalized within the group, the individual becomes integrated, and in the process adds greater credence to the sacredness of that which is, or is becoming, sacred. To challenge, or stand against the sacred is to either eliminate oneself from survival in the group, or to "...prove that the order is not an order."²⁷ If the desacralizer survives, then the entire order is put in a position of possible breakdown. The final function of the sacred, then, is to legitimize and justify a group and its actions.

Given Ellul's description of characteristics which define sacredness, it is logical to assume that any social context where these identical characteristics are found may quite reasonably be termed "sacred", even if quite far from the traditional, religion-related concepts of what is sacred.

Desacralization and Sacralization

Given the ideas presented above, our next logical step is to combine the concept that modern (post-Christian) society may not be areligious with the assertion that sacredness is identifiable by its dominant characteristics, regardless of the label it has

²⁶Ibid, 53.

²⁷Ibid, 54.

been given. The product of this combination is the following question: "has Christianity been replaced with a new sacred, and if so, what is it?"

Before we enter into a discussion of this question we must first establish the process by which changes occur. The first question we must deal with is: how does desacralization occur, or, in other words, how does that which is sacred lose its sacredness? Simply put, sacredness is lost when the functions of the sacred lose their ability to bestow meaning, to justify actions and to continue as reliable tests for reality. This is when the characteristic functions of the sacred are successfully challenged.²⁸ This is the point where a seemingly better order deposes the position of the sacred.²⁹ What then happens is that which had the power to exile the sacred, immediately becomes sacred itself.³⁰ Ellul takes examples from history, reminding us how the church in pre-Reformation times succeeded in desacralizing nature, only to become sacred itself. Then during the Reformation, scripture was used to desacralize the sacredness of church and dogma, with the outcome being the Bible as sacred text.

Ellul also asserts that once a sacred order has been experienced and rejected, it cannot be revisited, at least in the same form that it was.³¹ What then is the new sacred? What is it that has deposed Christianity? How did the process occur, and when? Is there something to come after this sacred? The new process of desacralization and sacralization, which Ellul argued in 1975 that we are a part of, and which I will argue we are moving beyond, is a process of "dereligionizing".³²

²⁸Ibid, 58.

²⁹It is perhaps appropriate to point out that while this theory bears some similarity to Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts, the two are in fact different. Not insignificant is the fact that Kuhn's model was designed exclusively to interpret change within the realm of the natural sciences, while Ellul specifically tailors his model to broad social criticism.

³⁰Ellul, 58.

³¹Ibid, 64.

³²Ibid, 59,

ENLIGHTENMENT TO MODERNISM

For the purposes of this discussion, I will be considering the Enlightenment as the starting point for the major shifts which form what is commonly considered to be the modern era. I will be considering the "modernists" and "modernism", as a series of parallel movements centered around the arts, architecture and science. This period, however, will be presented as a continuation of the secular currents which began in the Enlightenment.

Sacred Reason: The Enlightenment and the Modern Era

It would be very difficult for anyone to deny that the key word when discussing the shift from pre-Enlightenment to Enlightenment times is "reason". It is generally asserted that the major thrust of Enlightenment thought was to establish reasoned thinking as the primary method of decision-making. One of the major proponents of this perspective was Immanuel Kant who described the Enlightenment as, "...the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority..."³³ It appears that it did not take long until Kant's concept of Enlightenment began to be played out in society. Science, which based its conclusions on "objective reason", started to become an authority which informed people's decision making. Similarly in politics and philosophy it was the abstract individual (a hypothetical being who derived all its decision-making from reasoned self-interest), who captivated people's minds. The problem which arose from this was that science and philosophy were in apparent conflict with religion and the current ecclesiastical authorities.³⁴ This, of course, did not mean that everyone immediately threw religion out the window and became areligious. In fact, to some degree the opposite occurred. People did not receive inventions and the products of science with great acclaim, because they were perceived

³³Michel, Foucault. "What is Enlightenment?" in, *The Foucault Reader*. (Ed. P. Rabinow), (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984): 38.

³⁴Ellul, 60.

to be violating that which was sacred.³⁵ The Victorian moral code, which derived authority from the adult male, the church, the Bible, the state and the family, remained strong well into the 1900's. Yet despite this apparent lingering authority, it is evident that real authority was shifting towards a new set of institutions.

Carl Raschke reminds us of an important trend in nineteenth century Europe which contributed to the growth and acceptance of the processes of desacralization. He points out the disenfranchisement of the intelligentsia from their traditional aristocratic patrons.³⁶ Hence it was at this time that scholars and artists began to depend on the market place and the masses for their financial support. The result was that they no longer had to kowtow to aristocrats, or the church which the aristocrats were still in close contact with. They became "cultural rebels", distinguishing themselves from the masses, and at the same time criticizing "bourgeois complacency and hypocrisy."³⁷ This allowed them to pursue endeavors which were essentially anti-traditional in nature with little fear of financial repercussions.

The pre-Enlightenment sacred was found primarily in two locations, firstly in the church and secondly in nature. The life of the pre-Enlightenment individual was structured by the moral codes of the church, representing an absolute authority, and by the rhythms found in the natural environment. The Enlightenment, however, through science, technology and complementary strains in philosophy, desacralized both of these. Reason and the scientific method eliminated for many the need for a God by which to explain the universe. The myths and stories found in the Bible paled in comparison to the seemingly endless powers of explanation which were offered by scientific discovery and reasoning. Beyond that, science made religion not only unnecessary, but appeared to prove it incorrect. The evidence supplied by the scientists seemed to contradict what religious authorities had been saying on a host of topics.

³⁵Ibid, 61.

³⁶Carl A. Raschke, *The Interruption of Eternity*, (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980.): 82.

³⁷Ibid, 82.

Most prominently we can cite Darwin's, *Origin of Species*,³⁸ and Mendel's paper on the genetic breeding of peas (although much less recognized at the time), as conclusive works that seemed to negate the Christian perspective on reality. The new rationality which was created was perceived to be without the irrational concepts of myth and religion. Some, like Feuerbach, Marx and Nietzsche, saw the consequential loosening of the grip of religion as a point of celebration.³⁹ Stephen Kern points out that in Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God that the distinction between sacred and profane is eliminated and that consequently, "...any place can become sacred."⁴⁰

Running parallel with discoveries and progress in science was the process of laicization. Beginning with John Locke's, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,⁴¹ (1690), and later with works such as John Stuart Mill's, *On Liberty*,⁴² (1859), and similarly with the work of Immanuel Kant it became apparent that Liberalism as a political system was on the rise. The overwhelming spirit was the autonomy of the individual. Hobbesian Utilitarianism, which gained much attention "... grew out of an effort to apply the methods of science to the understanding of man and was both atheistic and deterministic."⁴³

Religion, however, was not dead. Robert Bellah points out that biblical Christianity and Utilitarianism shared the center stage of American perspectives on reality from the time of the civil war until the 1960's. Utilitarianism revolved primarily around the concept of "interest", where a neutral state encouraged and preserved the individual's right to pursue their own concept of the "good".⁴⁴ Biblical Christianity was primarily concerned with "conscience", where the state promoted community, charity

³⁸Charles G. Darwin. *On the origin of species by means of natural selection : or, The preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life* (New York : Heritage Press, [1963].)

³⁹Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*. (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge Mass., 1983): 178.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 179.

⁴¹John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press; 1979.)

⁴²John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, (1859), (London: Penguin Books, 1974).

⁴³Robert, N Bellah, "New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis in Modernity". *The New Religious Consciousness*. (Ed. C. Glock and R. Bellah) (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1976.): 335.

⁴⁴Ibid, 335.

and Christian virtue.⁴⁵ The incompatibility of the two meant that they never achieved any kind of harmony.⁴⁶ In most situations the result of a combination was a corruption of the biblical tradition as it became consumed by utilitarian individualism, "...so that religion itself finally became for many a means for the maximization of self-interest with no effective link to virtue, charity, or community."⁴⁷ Eventually, in the 1960's, the United States went through what France, Russia (U.S.S.R.) and most other western countries had experienced earlier; a process of laicization. Technology, science and bureaucracy took over the role of the church in providing the guiding principles in society.

Not only was the sacred position of the church in society greatly challenged by Enlightenment thought, but the sacred connection which people had with nature was also being eroded. The root of this particular desacralization can be closely linked with 18th century urbanization.⁴⁸ As people moved into cities from the countryside, society and its inventions began to replace the functions previously reserved for the natural environment. Respect and deference towards the "...phenomena of birth and death, of germination and the lunar cycle, etc..."⁴⁹ were lost and replaced by utilitarian implementations of new, "rational" social structures, technology and created order. The natural world was replaced by the controlled, artificial and systematized world of the urban. Similarly, nature was desacralized via the new patterns of work that the urban experience entailed,⁵⁰ and by the growing levels of pollution which this new life produced. In the country, people's work enabled them to interact with the sacred realm of the natural environment. But in the city, the new work was regimented by "reason". Work no longer was permitted to contain any, "...mystery or depth."⁵¹

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid, 336.

⁴⁸Ellul, 62.

⁴⁹Ibid, 62.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid, 63.

"Work had once been filled with those secret things, with those hidden participations in a unitary world from which one snatched a fragment and became a Prometheus in so doing. Now, by contrast, work is a process of the global seizure of a world which, the more it is worked the more it is robbed of its depth."⁵²

This theme is picked up by Marxists, who criticize the capitalist mode of production for atomizing and de-humanizing the worker. Under a mechanized, production-line factory system the "...workers can no longer grasp the totality; they can no longer see beyond their immediate fractionalized job..."⁵³ In rural settings farmers and craftspeople were able to follow a task through from inception to completion, infusing their own creative talents into the product. As factory workers who performed one task repeatedly they lost any concept of what it was they were making or why they were making it. The vision of nature, and its sacredness was lost from the new urban societies. The mechanical world of the factory and the mine, which is so prevalent in any discussion of industrial Europe, invaded the mythical connection with the environment and made it into a world where efficiency and order, guided by reason and organization, became the chief ends. It was, and still is, a world where,

"[e]verything is completely explicable. No longer is it necessary to appeal to some mystical body, to some miraculous charisma, on behalf of the authority of the law or the sovereignty of the administrative power. Power is a matter of system. Again, organization is all that is needed."⁵⁴

Charles Dickens was more than aware that nature was becoming separated from people and that human systematization was providing the rhythm of life, as this passage from *Little Dorrit* demonstrates.

"It was Sunday evening in London, gloomy, close and stale. Maddening church bells of all degrees of

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production*, (London: Verso, 1985): 33.

⁵⁴Ellul, 63.

dissonance, sharp and flat cracked and clear, fast and slow, made the brick-and-mortar echoes hideous. Melancholy streets, in a penitential garb of soot, steeped the souls of the people who were condemned to look at them out of windows, in dire despondency...No pictures, no unfamiliar animals, no rare plants or flowers, no natural or artificial wonders of the ancient world -all *taboo* with that enlightened strictness..."⁵⁵

For Dickens, the world of the city was devoid of nature and consequently devoid of beauty and brightness. Similar in nature to the passage cited above, at the beginning of *Bleak House*, he writes of the rain being soiled by soot and the sun as being dead, killed by smoke."

Desacralization

Technology and the pursuit of utilitarian reason became the desacralizers of the Enlightenment era. Consequently, if we follow Ellul's model, the next step is the immediate sacralization of those very things which caused the desacralizing. These desacralizers became newly manifest as sacred in the forms of science, technology and utilitarian individualism.

The role of science and technology as the new sacred is not so difficult to see, for it is a sacred which is still around us to a large degree. Magic and mystery have become the, "marvels of modern technology":

"The Television set presents an inexplicable mystery, an obvious miracle constantly repeated. It is no less surprising than the highest manifestations of magic, and one worships it as one might worship an idol, with the same simplicity and fear."⁵⁶

Even though Ellul goes on to point out that through vast repetition any miracle can wear thin,⁵⁷ the television still presents one of the most outstanding examples of the sacred

⁵⁵Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*. (1857), (Suffolk, Engl.: Penguin Books, 1985.): 67.

⁵⁶Ellul, 72.

⁵⁷Ibid.

potential of modern technology. The real sacredness, however, does not lie in any individual invention, but rather in the worship of technology as a whole and in what it will do in the future. After God has been eliminated, the future falls directly into the hands of humans. Salvation moves from the realm of faith and morality into that of human ability. Human ability has become a deity, for it enables us to deny finitude. It allows us to assume we can solve any problem given enough time and effort, hence problems become the responsibility of the physical and social engineers.⁵⁸

Technology has also been characterized as, "...the instrument of liberation for the proletariat...",⁵⁹ the tool which will free people from their labour. This notion was held by Stalin who believed that "[e]very advance in technology is an advance for the proletariat".⁶⁰ Technological advances are not just limited to the proletariat and not just to labour. It is that which can free all people from pain, transport us vast distances, allow us to communicate when not physically together, and it entertains us. In short it allows us to control the harshness of nature and eliminate its restrictions on us as finite humans.

Nowhere is technology more evidently embroiled in a pursuit of deity than in the never-ending quest of modern medical technology to postpone or even defeat death. Presently we feel so confident in our ability to avoid death indefinitely that we no longer ask the questions of the meaning of life which death has traditionally forced humans to face.⁶¹ Technological optimism has led to the notion that people can create and control their own destinies. Yet, despite the role of saviour which technology has taken on, it is not generally recognized as being anything other than enlightened, secular thinking. Many people,

⁵⁸Craig Gay, (Regent College, Vancouver) "All Dressed Up and Nowhere To Go", lecture, U.B.C., Feb. 25, 1992.

⁵⁹Ellul, 73.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Gay.

"...do not believe in a sacred. They smile when the word is spoken, but they fly into a mystic rage when one contests the validity of technology, and from that point on they call down doom on the contesting person."⁶²

Technology is presented as being our slave, that which we control, but in reality it has become the unimpeachable god.

The other new sacred form is utilitarian individualism.⁶³ While technology has provided great potential for what we can do, it has eliminated notions of what we are, therefore, the pursuit of meaning needed a new outlet. A new political liberalism was based on rationality, where power was in the hands of the people and they were to determine their own ends and purposes. The new liberal states need not be controlled by myth and mystery, because they are simply facilitators of utilitarian individualism, wherein people are not bound to accept anything except that which they want. People are "...self-originating sources of valid claims."⁶⁴ Hence it is supposed that this new democracy and utilitarian individualism cannot possibly be sacred because they do not impose any particular concept of the good or the right. But this is false - utilitarian individualsim is not sacred because it makes itself out to be God, but because "...the people accept it, live it, and look upon it as the great ordainer, the supreme and inevitable providence."⁶⁵ It is sacred because people accept it, and orient themselves and others in direct relation to it.⁶⁶ Utilitarian individualism is a stand-in for deity because people are sold on the concept of the individual which the liberal system promotes. One is not permitted to challenge the validity of a system with is supposedly neutral in its promotion of what is good. While this appears to be the most workable of systems, in

⁶²Ellul, 73.

⁶³This sacred expression is portrayed by Ellul as being the nation-state. I have chosen to replace the concept of the nation-state with the ideas of utilitarian individualism. This is done, because the notion of utilitarian individualsim is more relevant to our discussion, and does not corrupt the central points of Ellul's thesis. It appears that the notion of the nation-state as a desacraliser is much more relevant to the French context from which Ellul was writing than the North American and specifically the Canadian situation.

⁶⁴Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self", *Political Theory*, 12 (1), Feb. 1984. (pp. 81-96): 87.

⁶⁵Ellul, 81.

⁶⁶Ibid.

reality it is far from neutral. The truth is, that no matter how neutral utilitarian individualism appears it still promotes a certain conception of 'self'- a conception wherein the rights of the individual are supposed to be superior to any one conception of what is good - and hence is based on values which must necessarily be justified.⁶⁷ It is this system of values which has ascended to the position of the sacred, and the values themselves are beyond reproach.

While we have demonstrated that science, technology and utilitarian individualism have succeeded in desacralizing the church and nature, we must test them to see if they have truly fulfilled Ellul's notions of sacredness.

The first is that of providing meaning for life. Included in this are the necessary functions of providing security from that which threatens. Technology clearly performs the role of protection with great ease. Technology gives us the power to control much of the world around us, tailoring it to suit our needs and wants rather than us tailoring our needs and wants to suit the environment. Similarly it provides an optimism which leads to utopian concepts of a world tamed completely by the marvels of technology.

Technology has been unable to give meaning to life, so it is here where the philosophers step in. Philosophers saw that in a world where God has been eliminated, that ultimate purpose and meaning could simply no longer exist. This meant that meaning and purpose became subjective, leaving humans entirely self-referential. For philosophers such as Nietzsche, this was a great relief,

"O heaven above me! Pure! High! For me this is your purity now: that there is no eternal spider and spider webs of reason, that you are for me a dancing floor of divine coincidences, that you are for me a table of the gods for divine dice playing"⁶⁸

Nietzsche saw purpose in the elimination of meaning. For him freedom sprang from the unbinding of cosmic purpose from human consciousness. "The corrosion of steady

⁶⁷Sandel, 82-83.

⁶⁸Nietzsche quoted in; Raschke, 95.

moorings for human thought and hence culture..."⁶⁹ was the license people needed to create their own, more valid and powerful meanings. The new liberal philosophy of utilitarian individualism refuted objective morality meaning there was potential justification participation in activities previously declared immoral. Similarly it demanded that reason be the guiding principle in all activities deemed to be amoral.

It is at this point that *fact* and *value* became separated. Value became that which we believe and hold personally, a private affair. Fact became that which is public, objective forms of knowing which are, it is said value-free.⁷⁰ Here the world became divided into the worlds of public / fact, the realm of science and technology, and private / value, the realm of the individual. These two worlds were to kept separate from each other, each one having its own sacred god to pay homage to.

Meaning in the new order was derived to a significant degree from a combination of technology and utilitarian individualism. Technology, (objective facts), became sacred because it informed us of the mechanics of the world and the indisputable laws of nature. Individualism, (the protector of subjective values), became sacred because it gave us the freedom to hold whatever subjective values we desired within this exposed and controllable reality. Legitimization and justification for group actions were propelled by technology and legitimized by utilitarian individualism. For each, the limits and boundaries of the system were tested during the sacred moments of scientific experimentation and through experimentation with new forms of individualized morality (such as the dawning of the era of sexual freedom). The fulfilling of the roles of a sacred domain made technology and utilitarian individualism legitimate (although unrecognized), expressions of the sacred in western society.

⁶⁹Ibid, 96.

⁷⁰Lesslie Newbiggin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publ., 1989).

A Note on the Modernists and Sacralization

Separate from the movement which I have just described as having its beginnings in the Enlightenment, is a series of artistic discourses in the early twentieth century. Included in this group are the Surrealists, the Cubists, Symbolists and others. Possibly the only commonalties that can be drawn between these groups is that they were all reacting against the status quo. In order to differentiate these movements it is best to draw a line between rational objective strains and those that were subjectively oriented.

The objective modernists are those such as the Logical Positivists and Bauhaus. The Logical Positivists, best known for forming the Vienna Circle, operated under the assumption that entirely objective knowledge was possible.

"The logical positivists sought to ground a 'scientific', antiphilosophical philosophy that would set all reliable knowledge on strong foundations and isolate it from the unreliable."⁷¹

Furthermore, the positivists method was assumed to be the, "...only true route to knowledge."⁷² The positivists can be identified as extending many of the ideas which began with the Enlightenment, specifically promoting the idea of objective knowledge. We can see it as being super-modernist in its "...commitment to 'removing the metaphysical and theological debris of millennia'".⁷³

Along the subjectivist edge of modernism we find the Surrealists, the Cubists and the Symbolists, who actually appear to be more anti-modernist in their orientation. These are movements which were grounded in the arts rather than in the sciences and found their expression in poetry and other writing, painting, photography and film. Surrealism (which I will use as a representation of the subjectivist strain) can be conceived of as a challenge against everything, with specific stands against

⁷¹Peter Galison, "Aufbau/Bauhaus: Logical Positivism and Architectural Modernism", *Critical Inquiry*, 16 (4) Summer, 1990 (pp. 304-752).

⁷²R.J. Johnston, *On Human Geography*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.): 84.

⁷³Galison, 726.

positivism.⁷⁴, war and religion.⁷⁵ André Breton, (the recognized leader of Surrealism) writes,

"Surrealism as I conceive of it, asserts our complete *nonconformism* clearly enough so there can be no question of translating it, at the trial of the real world, as evidence for the defense."⁷⁶

As much as they set themselves up against the world, Surrealists tried to assert what they thought was right. They did not want to be a philosophy in the scholarly sense, but tried to create a new conception of the world,⁷⁷ through heightened self-awareness. This self-awareness was to be achieved through self-absorbing techniques such as dreams and automatic writing. Breton accused the world of being "...only relatively in tune with thought..."⁷⁸ and asserted that Surrealism was fighting the war against this ignorance of self and reality.

While the Logical Positivists were evidently in conformity with Enlightenment thought to some degree, the subjective modernists saw the realism of a reasoned existence as being "...hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement."⁷⁹ It is clear that both camps were interested in desacralizing the church, yet their new sacreds were quite different. While the positivists sacralized the scientific method, creating an overt Scientism and completely rejecting any notion of metaphysics, the Surrealists and others fell towards extreme subjectivity, promoting anti-Christian forms of metaphysics. Specifically the Surrealists openly participated in occult activities using the powers of evil in a "cosmic revolt" against Christian conceptions of the supernatural.⁸⁰ The Surrealists still sought divinity, in the form of "The Supreme Point", but this was a

⁷⁴André Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*. (Trans. R. Seaver & H. Lane) (Univ. of Mich. Press, 1969): 6.

⁷⁵Michel Carrouges, *André Breton and the Basic Concepts of Surrealism*, (1950) (Trans. Maura Predergast), (Univ. of Alabama, 1974).

⁷⁶Breton, 47.

⁷⁷Carrouges, 1.

⁷⁸Breton, 47.

⁷⁹Ibid, 6.

⁸⁰Carrouges, 28.

search for a deified self where spiritual reality and the "other world" lay in the depths of one's own consciousness. ⁸¹ An unusual connection, however, can be drawn between the Surrealists and the positivists, this being that both sacralize experience. The positivists believed that there is knowledge (objective knowledge) only from experience. The Surrealists, on the other hand, believed experience was the route to subjective understanding, which to them, in the end, is the only real understanding.

QUESTIONING MODERNISM

At this point it is important to point out to the reader that Ellul ends his book certain that we were (1975) still squarely in the modern era. In the epilogue he writes; "So we are in the most religious of all worlds, at the sacred heart of a technical universe."⁸² Yet Ellul points out that this technical universe is unsatisfactory, it is creating as many (if not more) problems as it is solving. The religion of technique, to his mind, has failed. He does not foresee the next sacred, or even the decline or demise of the modern sacred, despite its failings. While Ellul ends his criticism in the modern era, I hope to show, by extrapolating from his ideas that there is indeed a new sacred on the horizon, or at the very least the demise of the old.

Science / Technology

In the world of science, it was in the height of the modern era, (the early decades of the 1900's) that some of the supporting blocks of a mechanical positivist science were removed. Albert Einstein with his theory of relativity and later Heisenberg with his uncertainty principle showed that absolute scientific answers were an impossibility. Heisenberg's research showed that,

"Scientists cannot obtain an entirely objective view of the

⁸¹Raschke, 135.

⁸²Ellul, 203.

world, primarily because the scientist cannot remove himself absolutely from the scientific analysis or experiment. All scientific work is phenomenological, that is, to some degree conditioned by consciousness."⁸³

This was a direct assault on the Enlightenment idea that there was only one answer to any one question, and consequently only one way to represent something. Some modernist painters, composers and writers began to pick up on these ideas,⁸⁴ taking on "...multiple perspectivism and relativism..."⁸⁵ But Harvey notes that there was still a belief in a, "...unified, though complex, underlying reality."⁸⁶ This belief in an ultimate reality was most prevalent in the sciences. Even to this day it is assumed by many that science can be, and is, objective, despite the attempts of many writers to discredit this idea. The successes of science have made it difficult to criticize. Science, however, has not had a perfect track record and it is the magnitude of its failures which has exposed some vulnerable spots in its armour.

The technology of modernism has not produced a mechanistic utopia envisioned or a world made peaceful by technology.

"What upsets us, fills us with anxiety, and sends us into deep trauma is not merely 'future shock.' It is the unending vision of the most bloody of all worlds. Massacres are a daily occurrence, after we thought we had put an end to that horror in 1945, that we would never again see Hitlerian concentration camps and the holocaust of Hiroshima, that perhaps we were putting an end to war. We have discovered the Soviet concentration camps...We are living in a world of widespread warfare, sitting on a powder keg, and knowing that one mistake can blow everything up. We are also living in a world of famine."⁸⁷

One could add to this list the recent awareness of environmental degradation, the dwarfing of the individual in mega-corporations, nuclear disasters such as Chernobyl and

⁸³Norman F. Cantor, *Twentieth Century Culture*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1988.): 99.

⁸⁴Harvey, 28.

⁸⁵Ibid, 30.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ellul, 204.

a host of other technologically created problems. Regardless of the proof that science cannot provide ultimate answers to questions, it is becoming increasingly evident that people are losing faith in the practices of science and its ability to solve problems. People are realizing that, "[f]aith in reason, science and technology have not led us to paradise", but instead we have been led to nihilism and despair.⁸⁸

Lyotard demonstrates one of the ways in which science has lost credit in recent years. He criticizes science for the way in which scientific knowledge gains and claims legitimacy. He proposes that science discredits forms of legitimation which are dependent upon narrative. Yet Lyotard says that narrative is self-legitimizing while scientific knowledge "...can never validate itself simply by its own procedures..."⁸⁹ Science must receive justification and legitimation from society by answering the question; why should it exist and why should it be supported?⁹⁰ Here Lyotard says science had two recourses. Firstly there is politics, where science claims the ability to emancipate people from their problems (specifically slavery and class oppression), leading to absolute freedom.⁹¹ Secondly there is philosophy where, "...knowledge is a prime part of the gradual evolution through history of self-conscious mind out of the ignorant unselfconsciousness of matter."⁹² The problem, however, is that since the second world war these meta-narratives (politics and philosophy) have lost legitimacy, hence, "[s]cience is no longer held to be valuable and necessary because of the part it plays in the slow progress towards absolute freedom and absolute knowledge."⁹³ Lyotard welcomes this and wants to press on to a postmodern science which, abandons "centralizing narratives."⁹⁴

The sentiment of Lyotard is one which is gaining acceptance amongst many

⁸⁸Kathleen Akena, "The Return of Enchantment", *New York Times Magazine*. Nov 27, 1987.

⁸⁹Connor, 30.

⁹⁰Ibid, 30.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid, 30.

⁹³Ibid, 31.

⁹⁴Ibid, 34.

people and his ideas are being taken from science and applied to other areas (as Lyotard himself extends them to cultural diversity). The basic question which is being asked is; why should any one perspective on an issue be taken as the only correct one? (This of course includes the scientific perspective.) Some have even gone as far to say that all positions are correct and no one can say that anyone else's view is wrong. The result is that there has been, "...a shift from the muffled majesty of grand narratives to the splintering autonomy of micronarratives."⁹⁵

Science has lost its position as an unimpeachable god. Through peoples' refusal to accept technology as necessarily benevolent and the failure of scientific meta-narratives, science and technology are feeling the push of a desacralizer.

Utilitarian Individualism

What then about the sacred role of utilitarian individualism? Bellah tells us that in the 1960's there was a reaction to the expanding wealth and power to which Americans had become accustomed. Utilitarian individualism was focused primarily on 'means' and people began to ask questions about ends.

"There were of course some sharp questions about the unequal distribution of wealth and power, but beyond that was the question whether the quality of life was a simple function of wealth and power, or whether the endless accumulation of wealth and power was not destroying the quality and meaning of life, ecologically and sociologically."⁹⁶

Bellah continues with a statement which fits quite well into Ellul's conception of desacralization and sacralization.

"If the rationalization of means, the concern for pure instrumentalism, was no longer self evidently meaningful, then those things that had been subordinated, dominated,

⁹⁵Ibid, 32.

⁹⁶Bellah, 338.

and exploited for the sake of rationalizing means took on a new significance. Nature, social relations, and personal feelings could now be treated as ends rather than means, could be liberated from the repressive control of technical reason."⁹⁷

It is not a far leap from this to the notion that the utilitarian individual was being threatened by a desacralizer, which would itself ascend to the position of sacred. The desacralizer appears to be subjective experience. Previously the individual, although free to choose their own ends, was bound to the maintenance of reason and objective knowledge in a pursuit of maximizing personal benefit. The new individual is permitted to pursue subjective experience and other non-material ends such as community and environmental preservation, an idea foreshadowed by the conscious rejection of modernism displayed by the surrealists, cubists and symbolists discussed earlier.⁹⁸

At this time the traditional liberal conception of the abstract individual (later redefined by John Rawls in 1971 in his landmark work, *A Theory of Justice*⁹⁹) started to come under attack. The communitarian and feminist critiques of liberalism centered around the belief that it denies any status to obligations in its "primacy-of-rights" conception.¹⁰⁰ They also claim that it "atomizes" people by "...disregarding the role of social relationships and human community in constituting the very identity and nature of individual human beings."¹⁰¹ Similarly they deny the liberal conception of humans as being fundamentally oriented towards competition, conflict and calculated self-interest.¹⁰² There was a perceived need in the 1960's for greater social identity and community. It is no accident that Jane Jacobs' revolutionary book, *The Death and Life of*

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Interestingly these groups also foreshadowed the New Age through their embracing of metaphysics, experimentations with altered states of consciousness and automatic writing among other things.

⁹⁹John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.)

¹⁰⁰Charles Taylor, 1985: *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers, Volume II*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 188.

¹⁰¹Marilyn Friedman, "Feminism and Modern Friendship: Dislocating the Community", *Ethics*, 99 (2) . 1989: pp. 275-290.

¹⁰²Ibid.

Great American Cities,¹⁰³ (which called for greater community and diversity in urban areas rather than existing patterns of land-use segregation), became the manifesto of community groups and some planning departments. There was a switch from inner city slash and burn policies towards community planning, conservation and protection.¹⁰⁴ Communities such as Soho and Greenwich Village in New York were able to muster enough support to save their communities, although seemingly "run down", from the wrecking balls of city hall.¹⁰⁵ More extreme versions of community in the 1960's were the hippy communes which sprouted up, wherein participants lived in the closest and most intimate of quarters with the other members.

The decline of the acceptance of utilitarian individualism and its fruits were visibly challenged in the form of protests, specifically against the Vietnam war. The war was seen as "...technical reason gone mad..."¹⁰⁶, and I would assert that it was also seen as utilitarianism gone mad (i.e. utilitarianism untempered by the 'harm principle'¹⁰⁷). The protests for racial and sexual equality were as much against the successes of utilitarian individualism as against its failures since the successes were grossly unequal in their distribution. People were looking for the state to rectify these situations. Utilitarian individualism had created a consumer society (an unequal consumer society) which lacked any depth or meaning. The ends of the society seemed to be wealth and power, but the state could not provide the populace with any system by which to contextualize it. It was wealth and power for its own sake. Utilitarian Individualism failed and lost some of its sacredness due to its inability to provide meaning and purpose for life.

¹⁰³Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (1961) (New York: Modern Library 1969).

¹⁰⁴J. Caulfield, *City Form and Everyday Life*, U of Toronto Press, (forthcoming): 1.

¹⁰⁵Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living*, (Baltimore: John's Hopkins Univ. Press, 1982.)

¹⁰⁶Bellah, 338.

¹⁰⁷The harm principle states that a person is allowed to pursue their own ends provided that they do not hurt another person (Mill, 163).

FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM

While it is evident that the modern sacreds which I described above are still very much with us, it is increasingly evident, as we have seen, that these sacreds are losing some of their ground. The feeling is that people are moving beyond the modern era. Some see it as a complete break with the modern era, others see it as a revolt against 'high modernism', and still others see it as simply the, "...commercialization and domestication of modernism..."¹⁰⁸ For some it is an immensely positive movement, others feel it is hopelessly shallow and unacceptable. Despite this range of opinions, most realize that something has changed in the last twenty or so years, but trying to pin down what exactly proves difficult.

For Jean-François Lyotard postmodernism is a, "...war on totality', the absolute refusal of any kind of universalism" ¹⁰⁹, even universalism in science (a subject which Lyotard is interested in). Lyotard feels that, "...post-modernity means incredulity towards all meta-narratives..."¹¹⁰ For Fredric Jameson postmodernism has more to do with a, "fading of a sense of history", where people do not know the past and consequently live in a "perpetual present."¹¹¹ This break with history is caused by a loss of artisanal qualities in both the modes of production, and the resulting "depthless" products found in post-industrial society.¹¹² For him the root of this new production is found in the "centerless ubiquity", of postmodernism's capitalism, which he terms "multinational capitalism."¹¹³

For Jean Baudrillard, postmodernism is commodification. He asserts that, "...it is no longer possible to separate the economic or productive realm from the realms of

¹⁰⁸David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.): 42.

¹⁰⁹Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.): 39.

¹¹⁰Charles Davis, "Our Modern Identity; The Formation of Self", *Modern Theology*, 6 (2), Jan, 1990:160.

¹¹¹Connor, 45.

¹¹²Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism*, (New York: St. Martin Press, 1989): 128.

¹¹³Connor, 48.

ideology or culture..."¹¹⁴ because everything, including emotion, love and knowledge, has been consumed by the world of the economic. For him, everything is signs, everything is reality dismantled and reproduced, everything is simulation.¹¹⁵

Michel Foucault in his promotion of postmodernism, "...set out to uncover the fundamental cultural codes that as anonymous forms of thought impose order upon existence."¹¹⁶ He sought to uncover the ways in which people are made into subjects and also recognizes a relationship between power and knowledge in society.¹¹⁷

As a reaction to modernism, postmodernism seeks to recover much of what was lost in modernism. In seeing the loss of meaning and purpose, postmodernism begins to search for a renewed sense of meaning in life. Similarly as modern institutions took control away from the individual (contrary to the desires of utilitarian individualism), postmodernism seeks to bring personal power and authenticity to individuals and institutions deposed by modernism. A product of this renewed search for meaning and authenticity is a desire to explore understand, and glean meaning from history. In the next chapter we will deal with this issue more fully as we explore how postmodernism seeks to recover meaning in a society seemingly void of it. Similarly, we will see how the postmodern project is mirrored by the New Age movement.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the sacred expressions of modernism are still prevalent, and possibly in control in this society currently. But as we have seen, this old view of the sacred is increasingly under attack. In the following chapters we will be examining the forms which are being created in the effort to provide a new sacred in society. We will look primarily at the New Age Movement and at the avenues which it is exploring. We

¹¹⁴Ibid, 51.

¹¹⁵Ibid, 56.

¹¹⁶Davis, 162.

¹¹⁷Ibid

will see how the New Age is attempting to recover a renewed sense of control and meaning through the exploration of cultures removed in time and space from the west, through nature and through a renewed emphasis on the self. As a generalized description of the events which have historically transpired, Ellul is largely in agreement with conventional secularization theorists. Ellul portrays the Christian church as being an institution which lost its once privileged and dominant role in society, with the power being transferred to scientific and governmental institutions. The perspective Ellul takes regarding secularization theory, however, is peculiar because he portrays the changes in western society as being a substitution of sacred realms, rather than a shift away from the sacred and towards the profane as has conventionally been stated. This difference is generated largely from a different set of definitions which he attaches to key concepts. For example, where Ellul asserts that anything which organizes peoples' perceptions of the world can be called sacred, most secularization theorists would assert that the sacred must include some notion of religion or transcendence. The result of this is that to Ellul's thinking there will necessarily always be something which is sacred in society, whereas according to the conventional definition, the sacred can indeed cease to exist.

The advantage which Ellul's perspective gives us is that in the light of the New Age Movement and other spiritual resurgences, we do not need to throw the secularization thesis out. Where conventional secularization needs to be reversed in order to accommodate such movements, Ellul gives us a framework into which such developments fit. Understanding this, if we accept that the sacred role of science, technology and the nation state are under attack in contemporary society, it must therefore be true that there is a new sacred realm on the rise. In the following chapter we will look at the areas in which people are looking for this new sacred, and two vehicles, the New Age Movement and postmodernism which are being used in this search.

Chapter Four - LIVING THE POSTMODERN

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we saw how during the modern era meaning and sacred value were attached to science and technology as well as utilitarian individualism. We also saw how these institutions have been attacked in recent years, accused of not living up to the promises which they made. The sacredness of these institutions is being questioned. There seems to be a search for a new sacred, a new way of perceiving the world, a new place from which people can derive meaning and security.

This chapter looks at the New Age Movement and the contemporary academic concept of postmodernism as being the vehicles which some people are using to discover a new realm of meaning and sacredness. It is apparent that many of the most significant points raised in New Age and postmodernism are in fact extraordinarily similar in nature. Despite this, few people have made attempts to draw connections between the two.¹ This, it seems, is a substantial gap in the literature of each, since it is clear that they may each prove invaluable in aiding an understanding and criticism of the other.

Noting this gap in the literature, it is my intention in this chapter to demonstrate that there are substantial links between postmodernism and the New Age Movement and similarly each of these contemporary movements are efforts to create a new search for meaning in the wake of the desacralization of the gods of modernism. Firstly, we will examine the most central premise of each, which is the rejection of meta-narratives and the consequential embracing of all narratives. Secondly, we will look at how both are involved in a renewed search for meaning in three central places: i) history and other cultures, ii) nature and iii) self. Thirdly I will provide some notes on postmodern and New

¹To date, I have only seen one short paper which deals directly with a comparison:
David Lyon, "A Bit of a Circus: Notes on Postmodernity and New Age" *Religion*, Spring, 1993.

Age cultural parallels using the cultural critiques of Jean Baudrillard and the New Age cultural figure of Shirley MacLaine.

THE ROLE OF NARRATIVES AND META-NARRATIVES

The most prevalent and identifiable theme in postmodernism is the vehement denial of meta-narratives and the embracing of all narratives. It is from these two notions that almost all other postmodern ideas radiate. There is a basic belief in the death (or non-existence) of "Truth" and the consequential affirmation of all "truths" in the postmodern position.

This position is perhaps most forcefully asserted by Jean-François Lyotard, who says, "[l]et us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name."² Postmodernists believe that there is "...no universal reason."³ This means that there is no single way to explain the universe, no single theory that encompasses all of reality. Furthermore, the Enlightenment, which gave us the meta-narrative of "reason", is seen as being the creator of totalitarian systems:

"...not only Hitlerism and Stalinism of dreaded memory, but also the colonial domination of Western reason inflicted upon non-European peoples and even upon alternative cultural spheres within Europe itself. The claim that reason has universal relevance, they argue, is insipidly totalitarian."⁴

Although initially discussing science, Lyotard goes on to apply his ideas to world cultures. In line with his belief that postmodernism should be intolerant of meta-narratives he says that "...we must embrace and promote every form of cultural diversity, without recourse to

²Jean-Françoise Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. (Trans. Brian Massumi) (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, , 1984): 82.

³Gregory Baum, "The Postmodern Age", *Canadian Forum*, May 1990, (pp. 5-7): 6.

⁴ibid, 6.

universal principles."⁵ The aim here is cultural plurality. All narratives are to be equally valid, and self-validating.

"Instead of 'les grands récits' with their claim to universality, there exist a multitude of small narratives generated by the particular experiences of many tribes. Each tribe tells its own story. Each tribe has its own discourse and interprets its own world..."⁶

Although Lyotard's application is to world cultures, postmodernists often reduce the self-validation of narratives to the level of the individual.

As we have already seen, the New Age Movement also embraces the acceptance of any and all narratives, and refuses to accept meta-narratives. This is partially expressed by the belief that all religions are essentially one in nature and that variations are only superficial, not substantive. Ralph Waldo Trine (an important pre-New Age figure) writes; "...a Jew can worship equally well in a Catholic cathedral, a Catholic in a Jewish synagogue, a Buddhist in a Christian church, a Christian in a Buddhist temple,"⁷ and he adds, "[t]he sacred books, the inspired writings, all come from the same source - God."⁸ While this might suggest that New Agers believe that there is an overarching meta-narrative (i.e., that there is a God who has ordained religious writings), New Agers are careful to assert that there is no single way in which God can be expressed and in fact God is whatever you make God out to be, including not having to conceive of God at all. Everyone's conception of what or who God is or isn't, is entirely self-validating. What is not acceptable, however, are conceptions of deity that are exclusive and say that other conceptions are wrong. New Agers discard all religious positions that claim exclusivity and look with favour upon all beliefs that are tolerant and accepting of any religious quest. They reject totalizing religion and accept as valid each person's own personal interpretation of spirituality.

⁵Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989): 37.

⁶Baum, 6.

⁷Ralph Waldo Trine, *In Tune With the Infinite*, (New York: MacMillan [Reprint, 1986][1st ed. 1908]): 155.

⁸Ibid, 156.

Celebrations of Diversity and Fragmentation

A subset of the rejection of meta-narratives is the celebration of diversity and fragmentation. Postmodernism is a rejection of the modernist search for unifying theories, consequently it celebrates diversity and finds no problem in contradiction. Postmodernism specializes in "radical eclecticism."⁹ It "...swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is."¹⁰ In rejecting meta-narratives and accepting all narratives, postmodernism opens the door for montage and pastiche, where diversity is brought together to make the whole, with no effort to unify or standardize. Disconnection and diversity is not merely accepted, it is celebrated. Postmodernism attempts to recognize the messiness of life and the diversity of human culture with no agenda to tidy it up or create uniformity. It believes that reality is best experienced and most peaceful when each element is satisfied in recognizing, but not changing, all the other elements and when each element has equal opportunity to represent itself.

New Age shares a similar penchant to celebrate diversity. On the shelves of Banyen Books, a major New Age focal point in Vancouver, there are books on topics as diverse as: Taoism, Witchcraft, Christianity, Islam, Satanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zen, Native Indian Spirituality, the environment, Tarot, Astrology, Gestalt Therapy, Jungian Psychology, Druidic Literature, Gurdjieff, human potential, self-healing, hypnosis, meditation, reincarnation, past-life regression and spirit channeling. These diverse and contradictory elements share a common goal and co-exist in apparent harmony on Banyen's shelves, although historically many have been exceedingly hostile towards each other. New Age seeks to create a spiritual pastiche, wherein the commonalities of all forms of spirituality are accepted, and differences are ignored.

⁹Peter Fuller, "Towards a New Nature of the Gothic", *Art and Design*, Vol 3, 1987: 7.

¹⁰David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989): 44.

Before moving on it must be noted, however, that New Age may be fundamentally different from postmodernism in that it is ultimately searching for spiritual unity and universal oneness. The celebration of diversity and fragmentation is simply a method of achieving peace and harmony during earthly existence. Postmodernism believes in fragmentation and diversity for its own sake, with no appeal to future perfection or utopia.¹¹ This appeal, however, is paradoxical in its very nature since it is the opinion of postmodernists that the lack of a meta-narrative, or conversely the existence of this form of diversity and fragmentation is itself better than or preferable to modernism. This suggests that postmodernism is itself a meta-narrative which proposes a superior form of social organization. This idea will be dealt with more fully in chapter six.

THE RECOVERY OF MEANING: THE DISTANT AND THE PAST

As modernism slowly recedes from contemporary culture, one of the most significant realizations to which people are coming is that modern culture was devoid of meaning. Utilitarianism and functionalism, the propelling fuels of the modern era, have come up short of the mark. They did not bring the happiness they promised. What they did bring was a culture blind to history, myth, story, legend, religion, emotion, and transcendence. Postmodernism, sets itself up as being *against*, not just *beyond*, the modern era, it is not just "post-modern", it is some respects "anti-modern".¹² (This "anti-modern" sentiment, however, appears only to be applied to aesthetics since modern technology is rarely refused in the aid of design or construction.) It seeks to recover lost or forgotten memories of cultural riches. As a result, philosophers, artists, musicians and all manner of people have begun a search for meaning. Seeing the black-hole of meaning in western culture, many have turned their gaze beyond the geographically and temporally

¹¹In so far as this is true, New Age can be seen as more *modern* than *postmodern*, since in an ultimate sense it celebrates its own unifying meta-narrative, one which postmodernism would reject.

¹²Huyssen, 7.

close. Hence, postmodernism looks outside of western culture and the modern era in order to find a more genuine culture.

One area where this is manifest is in the world of architecture. When one looks at the buildings from the first half of this century, it is evident that they stand in stark contrast to the buildings of previous eras, and indeed of the present era. The modern era was self-consciously *new*. In order to be new it had to meticulously expunge all symbolic references to past architecture and the social, religious and cultural symbols built into it. Modern architecture was a purposeful break with historical (architectural) continuity.¹³ This, despite the results, was not done with malicious intent. Charles Jencks reminds us that essentially humanist values were at the heart of modernist architectural efforts.¹⁴ It was an attempt to create a single, over-arching and shared symbolic order. To create a new, progressive, and humanistic architecture (which in turn would help to shape society), all references to the regressive, primitive, and non-functional elements of the past would have to be eliminated. Buildings were to express the new order, they were to be, in the words of Le Corbusier "machines for living in". 'Ornament', Adolph Loos proclaimed, was 'crime'. Ornament was indicative of wasted time, it screamed of inefficiency, and hence was to be struck from true modern architecture. The new, shared, symbolic order was to be that of machines, of efficiency, of technology, and of human ingenuity.

This new shared symbolic order, however, never really became popular.¹⁵ In short, no one, excepting the "intellectuals", and those wishing to keep up with modern progress (for example the architects and perhaps some politicians wanting to modernize their cities), bought the modernist line. Modern architecture was built for the "3 M monster" the "Mythic Modern Man" a creature which did not exist, despite the fact that everything

¹³Linda Hutcheon. "The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History", *Cultural Critique*, No. 5, Winter 1986-7. (pp. 179-207): 179.

¹⁴Charles Jencks. *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, (New York: Rizzoli, [4 th ed.], 1984): 23.

¹⁵Fuller, (1987), 6.

was designed for it.¹⁶ Humans did not fit into the buildings. The philosophical foundations of the buildings were too weak and the whole enterprise began to crumble.

The modern project became essentially a tyranny. Modern architects played God and set themselves over and above their creations.¹⁷ Their buildings were built as "ultimate" buildings, built by "ultimate" architects who were able to see society's problems and then prescribe the correct building to cure them. But the prescription was failing. Symbolic disasters of modernism such as the Pruitt-Igoe complex in St. Louis drove this point home. A low-income housing project, built as a "machine for modern living", Pruitt-Igoe was demolished due to the fact it had become un-livable.¹⁸ Modern architecture, it turned out, was repressive, not liberating. In short, it lacked humanity.

In the exultation of technique, modern western culture replaced the search for meaning with the search for means. The *ends* of western culture was to create the ultimate *means*. The goal was to find the best technique, hence, once these ends proved hollow, there was nothing from which to rebuild. Postmodern architecture seeks to return to elements that have been stripped by modernism. Despite a world of opinion and debate over source and technique, it is evident that postmodern architecture is committed to the search for meaning. One of the ways meaning is being recovered is through the re-use of the symbols of earlier western styles and similarly through the use of styles from other cultures.

Postmodern architecture celebrates everything which modern architecture condemned. Ornament, art, style, symbol, fantasy, imagination, spirituality, and colour are all reinvested into the architecture. Rather than trying to break with the past, postmodernism seeks to reconnect with it, using a variety of styles. Some construct buildings according to a pattern of "straight revivalism",¹⁹ where there is an almost Xerox-

¹⁶Jencks, (1984), p. 24.

¹⁷Hutcheon, p. 187.

¹⁸Harvey, p. 39.

¹⁹Jencks, (1984), p. 90.

like copying of styles. Consider the winning proposal for the new Vancouver Public Library central branch. The existing square concrete and glass building is to be replaced by a facility built as a replica of the Roman Coliseum. So too, In Disney's Epcot center, in the "World Showcase" one can walk from the Chateau Laurier to a British street scene, to the Eifel tower, to the winding streets of Marrakech and a Mexican Ziggurat, all in the course of a leisurely afternoon. Here one is exposed to an array of international architecture, reproduced on a grand scale, and to excruciating detail.

Others are more concerned with being sensitive to context and hence follow a pattern of "Neo Vernacular",²⁰ where the style of the surrounding culture forms the design basis. Given these and other styles available to the postmodern architect, an area of growth in a city can become over overwhelmingly varied in architectural style.

Consider Vancouver's Fairview Slopes, in which Caroline Mills²¹ describes a montage of styles. In Fairview Slopes there exist, in some strange unity, industrial themes (representing the neighbourhood's history) beside representations of the Mediterranean (playing on the area's topography and proximity to the water), a San Francisco theme (reinforcing the notion of Vancouver as "San Francisco North" - a notion that incidentally began with the 1960s counterculture), a theme of Bath and Brighton (representing a leisure resort), and row houses (eliciting notions of the urbane and cosmopolitan).²² Yet despite the fact that a variety of vastly different, and perhaps even totally contradictory, styles are brought together, an over-all sense of unity is achieved.

There is, however, a definite limit to this fascination with history and other cultures. Traditions are not held on to absolutely, they are only imported when tempered by western conveniences and sensibilities. Tourists flock to ancient places, but get there via modern technology, and "[m]edieval castles offer medieval weekends (food, dress, but

²⁰Jencks, (1984), p. 94.

²¹Caroline Mills, "Life of the Upslope: the postmodern landscape of gentrification", *Society and Space*, 1988, Vol. 6, (pp. 169-189).

²²Ibid, p. 176.

not of course the primitive heating arrangements)." ²³ There is a pattern of taking from history the positive and the exciting, while leaving the uncomfortable or inconvenient behind. Jencks reminds us that in architecture, any of these borrowings from the past are at least partially still modern as they are invariably constructed using modern techniques and materials. ²⁴

Postmodern critics have also pointed out the commercial use of nostalgia and the idealizing of past generations and societies in order to create pleasurable experiences. M. Christine Boyer writes,

"Nostalgia is a sweet sadness generated by a feeling that something is lacking in the present, a longing to experience traces of an authentic, supposedly more fulfilling past, a desire to repossess and re-experience something untouched by the ravages of time...But it also fuels the desire to return home with bags filled with trophies commemorating that innocent and treasured past." ²⁵

"Indeed, a growing nostalgia for various life forms of the past seems to be a strong undercurrent in the culture of the 1970s and 1980s ...a growing fascination with pre-modern and primitive cultures..." ²⁶

Mark Jarzombek also charges that the practice of using past styles has resulted in "historical shoplifting", ²⁷ which "does not require any real intellectual work". ²⁸ He states that the use of previous styles gives the illusion of "depth" and architects use the technique to gain undeserved scholarly legitimation. ²⁹

²³Harvey, 301.

²⁴Charles Jencks, *What is Postmodernism?*, (New York: Academy/St. Martin's Press, 1986): 15.

²⁵M. Christine Boyer, "Cities For Sale: Merchandising History at South Street Seaport", in M. Sorkin. (Ed.) *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, (New York: Hill and Wang): 201.

²⁶*Ibid*, 13.

²⁷Mark Jarzombek, "Post-Modernist Historicism: The Historian's Dilemma", *Threshold IV*, Spring 1988. (pp. 88-96). p. 89.

²⁸Jarzombek, p. 89.

²⁹*Ibid*, p. 89.

It appears, no matter how convincing critics might be, that this trend will not disappear quickly. We live in a time and a culture where people have a rich "Musée Imaginaire."³⁰ We have all seen the great architectural achievements from history, we all know what the cities of the world look like. Television, cinema and photography have given each of us a vast library of architectural styles in our minds-eye. It would be almost impossible to create buildings that did not draw from this pool of knowledge. Similarly, given the state of technology, with computer aided design, advanced building materials and the ability to produce "personalized" objects, we are able to produce a much greater variety of structures than ever before. Consequently, "[we] are exposed to a plurality of other cultures and...can make choices and discriminations from this wide corpus, whereas previous cultures were stuck with what they'd inherited."³¹

The New Age too hearkens to past eras and other cultures to find meaning. They see the Christian church as being hopelessly distant from its spiritual roots, and harmfully institutionalized and dogmatic, so they either disregard it altogether, or turn to more esoteric or Gnostic style interpretations of it. Hence they see pre-modern history and non-western cultures as offering a journey into purer, more authentically spiritual times.

Ancient cultures are seen to represent true spirituality and awareness. Marilyn Ferguson says that recent changes, which we now term "New Age", are "...rooted in the myths and metaphors, the prophecy and poetry of the past."³² The call is to achieve "ancient knowledge" and to learn the traditions, practices and beliefs of previous peoples.

Like postmodern architects, New Agers have a wealth of history to draw from. But rather than being a history of architectural styles, it is a history of religious practices and philosophical ideas. Like the range of choices available to the postmodern architect, the New Age offers what seems like the entire spiritual world to its practitioners. Hence, in the promotional publication for "Banyen Books", Vancouver's premier New Age Book

³⁰Jencks, 1984, p. 95.

³¹Ibid, p. 95.

³²Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, (Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin, 1980): 45.

store, there are headings for Buddhism, Taoism, Zen, Hinduism, Alchemy, Astrology, Tarot, Divination, Cosmology, Shamanism, Native American Wisdom, Mythology, UFO's, Celtic Studies, Gnosticism, Christianity, Judaism, Sufism, and Islam. It is a virtual smorgasbord of world religious and spiritual thought, and like radically eclectic postmodern architecture, all these styles hang together, in apparent unity with any internal contradictions lost in the appeal of the over-all facade.

Also, like postmodern architecture, often it is an ancient style coupled with modern convenience that is sought. New Age is,

"...Christianity without rules and dogma, eastern philosophies with no physical discomfort: New Age blends what applies and chucks out the rest."³³

Much like Postmodernism, New Age seems subject to the selective use of history to satisfy contemporary desire, often resulting in the trivializing of the borrowed practice. This has even been noted within the movement itself. Following an article entitled "Non-Natives on the Red Road"³⁴ one reader of *Shared Vision* magazine responded angrily in a letter to the editor. Discussing the absence of, and the subsequent search for meaning in North American society, he wrote,

"This search has, like the search for the New World, become another encroachment upon North American indigenous peoples. Not only have the lands been appropriated, but now it appears the cultural and spiritual values have been appropriated too. The ever present need to 'own' is stronger than ever"³⁵

Like postmodern architecture, it has the potential to be a supermarket style belief system where the participants are free to choose from the shelves of religion the new and improved metaphysical product of their choice. Since the participant is free to adopt

³³Caroline Sutherland, "The New Age", *Vancouver*, Nov. 1989. (pp. 54-60, 136): 136.

³⁴Ruth Raziell, "Non-Natives on the Red Road", *Shared Vision*, 41, Jan 1992, pp. 6-7.

³⁵*Shared Vision*, 43, March 1992: 11.

whatever appealing aspects of religion they choose, they are then also free to discard the uncomfortable, demanding, restrictive or boring aspects of any spiritual tradition.

Hence with the New Age we find that Jencks' idea about postmodern architecture, is equally valid - we can have what we want, they were stuck with what they had.³⁶ In the end, it is evident that postmodern architecture is making an effort to find a new "shared common order" in the geographically and temporally distant. However, postmodern society is by design, pluralistic, making an "integrated culture" almost outside the realm of possibility.³⁷ As demonstrated by the "radically eclectic" nature of postmodernism, to talk of a symbolic order that could be drawn from world cultures, and at the same time shared by them, is wishful thinking at best. For this reason I turn now to one other source for the recovery of meaning: nature.

THE RECOVERY OF MEANING: NATURE

As in architecture, the world of art suffered a crisis of meaning at the hands of modernism. To describe the loss of meaning, Peter Fuller, uses the Greek word "kenosis" to indicate a "voluntary relinquishing of divine power".³⁸ Fuller, in his book *Theoria*,³⁹ (which documents the life and writings of John Ruskin and many of his contemporaries), studies how, with the onset of modernity, western art changed from an expression of human relationships with creation and the creator, to a creation pointing only to itself, for its own sake. Initially it was thought the scientific method would confirm and strengthen the biblical explanation for the creation and sustenance of the world. It was believed that nature was "God's second book",⁴⁰ and science, in the form of "natural theology", was a way to read that book. The accurate and scientific representation of nature was a way of experiencing and learning more of the creation and hence the creator. However, as the

³⁶Jencks, 1984, p. 95.

³⁷Fuller, 1987, p. 8.

³⁸Peter Fuller, *Aesthetics After Modernism*, (London: Writers and Readers, 1983): 27.

³⁹Peter Fuller, *Theoria: Art and the Absence of Grace*, (London: Chatto and Windus): 1988.

⁴⁰Ibid, 33.

scientific method proceeded, with the theories of Darwin and others, it was evident that the gap between theology and science was widening. "Natural theology" saw unity, cooperation and purpose in the creation. Science, particularly Darwin's natural evolution, highlighted brutality and competition.⁴¹ It was becoming increasingly difficult to hold higher spiritual values and at the same time be true to nature, in the face of scientific discoveries.⁴²

As science became increasingly accepted, the world of art began to change. Science was no longer reinforcing divine revelation,⁴³ therefore nature lost out to science and human achievement as a viable subject for the artists' creations. Since there was no divine in nature, since there was no divine at all, art was to be accepted as art for art's sake. Beauty was now according to function or the aesthetic response it elicited.⁴⁴ There was now nothing beyond the aesthetic experience of art. Art could not point beyond itself, it was nothing more than the visual sensation it produced.⁴⁵ The new art was nihilistic,⁴⁶ offering little hope, and avoiding any real discussion of meaning. Modern art Fuller tells us, elicited *aesthesis*, (mere sensual perception), where once it had brought forth *theoria*, (the response to beauty with one's moral being, which implied the witness of the glory of God).⁴⁷ Modern art was profane, ancient art was sacred.⁴⁸ This movement did not last however.

With the first and second world wars came tremendous public awareness of the arts and crafts movement, along with and an increased interest in neo-Romantic and other more "traditional" forms of art.⁴⁹ The landscape (threatened and injured by the war)

⁴¹Ibid, 78.

⁴²Ibid, 85.

⁴³Ibid, 114.

⁴⁴Ibid, 46.

⁴⁵Ibid, 206.

⁴⁶Fuller, 1983, 28.

⁴⁷Fuller, 1988, 45.

⁴⁸Ibid, 71.

⁴⁹Ibid, 198.

returned to the consciousness of artist and viewer alike.⁵⁰ By the 1960s , with a broad cultural examination of modernism, artists were beginning to change their ideas (with Fuller among them). Postmodernism brought with it a skepticism of the modernist conception of the "triumph over nature"⁵¹ by humans, hence nature, and its spiritual significance became a viable theme again.

But what is it that nature offers artists as a theme? Fuller feels that legitimate postmodern art must be dedicated to the rediscovery of a shared symbolic order.⁵² In modern art there was an aesthetic crisis "...[having] its roots in the disruption of the shared symbolic order."⁵³ Fuller believes that since primitive times, human beings have been connected to each other and to their own identity through art. In turn the art was connected to a shared system of religious beliefs. Art confirmed religious beliefs in the order of things, it gave a sense of meaning and purpose. It allowed the continuation of the belief that the world was designed with them in mind. Science, exposing a world of chance, separated people from design, meaning and purpose. The result was that, "[a]rt severed itself from the 'cosmos of hope'; it ceased to offer 'another reality within the existing one'..."⁵⁴. Therefore, Fuller believes that the postmodern project is to recover the spiritually hopeful and communal meaning that art once offered. Religious symbolism he feels, however, is inappropriate. The new order needs to arise from an "ecology of the mind."⁵⁵ He wants spirituality, without religion, arising from a shared recognition of the fact that the mind arose from nature. The mind, he suggests finds nature beautiful, and is

⁵⁰Ibid, 198.

⁵¹Ibid, 213.

⁵²Not all of postmodern art, of course, deals with nature, much of the most visible postmodern art deals with issues such as popular culture and consumerism, yet there is still an identifiable acceptance of natural themes in the art community.

⁵³Fuller, 1983, 19.

⁵⁴Ibid, 24.

⁵⁵Ibid, 38.

awed by the patterns found in it because the mind is its product,⁵⁶ pointing out that there is a human impulse to unify and sanctify the total natural world.⁵⁷

Evidently many artists are exploring such themes. In the book, *New Perspectives in American Art*, the author discusses transitions in the art world, and recalls her impressions of an earlier Italian exhibition, pointing out the "recovery of myth, the symbolic meaning...of fire and ritual, the organic harmony of art and of nature at its most elemental..."⁵⁸ It is evident from the pictures of the exhibition it was written for that many of the artists drew their inspiration from the spiritual and mythical qualities of nature.

The New Age, similarly, finds recovered meaning in nature. New Age monistic beliefs maintain the essential oneness of all things. This means that human beings and the natural environment are essentially the same thing. One of the central sources for New Age ecology is J.E. Lovelock's Gaian hypothesis.⁵⁹ Using "Gaia", the ancient Greek name for Mother Earth, Lovelock gives scientific support to the belief in the essential connectedness of all things. "...Earth's living matter, air, oceans, and land surface form a complex system which can be seen as a single organism..."⁶⁰ Gaia is seen as a single living creature, of which all other life-forms are a part. Taking Lovelock's biological cues, New Agers combine his science with closely related spiritual ideas. Gaia is presented as a sentient being, hence, "...it follows that the trees, as well as, other plants, rocks, water, are sentient beings also."⁶¹ Again, this belief system finds, if not its origins, at least a sympathetic resonance in eastern pantheistic monism, wherein "God is the cosmos. God is all that exists; nothing exists that is not God."⁶²

⁵⁶Fuller, 1988, 227.

⁵⁷Ibid, 224.

⁵⁸Diane Waldman, *New Perspectives in American Art*, (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1983): 10.

⁵⁹J.E. Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1979).

⁶⁰Ibid, p. vi.

⁶¹Sheila Weaver, "Trees: Guardians of the Earth", *Common Ground*, 11, Summer, 1985: 3.

⁶²James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1988): 140.

Given the current importance of environmental issues, New Age can enter the realm of environmental activism through the broader (though not necessarily New Age) door of what is called "Deep Ecology". Calling for a spiritual growth where humans see themselves as One with the non-human world, Deep Ecology includes, but "...goes beyond the so-called factual scientific level to the level of self and Earth wisdom."⁶³ Deep Ecology explicitly sets itself up as being against the "Dominant Modern World view". The following (Figure 4.1) comparison of the modern world view to the one of Deep Ecology illustrates the difference between the two.

Figure 4.1 - Modern World View and Deep Ecology

Dominant Modern World View

- Dominance over Nature
- Natural environment as resource for humans
- Material/economic growth for growing human population
- Belief in ample resource reserves
- High technological progress and solutions
- Consumerism
- National/centralized community

Deep Ecology

- Harmony with Nature
- All nature has intrinsic worth/biospecies equality
- Elegantly simple material needs
- Earth "supplies" are limited
- Appropriate technology; non-dominating science
- Doing with enough/recycling
- Minority tradition/bio-region

Source: *Deep Ecology*, p 69.

Criticizing the modern world-view for being anthropocentric,⁶⁴ Deep Ecology suggests that "Ecotopia" can only come with "*self-realization*" and "*bio-centric equality*". Self-realization is the idea that the self is seen as part of Gaia's oneness; a "...realization of 'self-in-Self' where 'Self' stands for organic wholeness."⁶⁵ Bio-centric equality is the perspective that, "all organisms and entities...are equal in intrinsic worth."⁶⁶ Deep Ecology sees the spiritual and physical embeddedness of the self in nature as essential. Like

⁶³Bill Devall, *Deep Ecology*, (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1985): 65.

⁶⁴Ibid, 43.

⁶⁵Ibid, 67.

⁶⁶Ibid.

Fuller's conception of legitimate postmodern art, New Age is seeking an "Ecology of the Mind",⁶⁷ recognizing the inherent spiritual interconnectedness between the mind and nature.

There are also other expressions of connectedness with nature that can be found in the New Age. The adoption of North American Indigenous spiritualities and Wicca (witchcraft) demonstrate a turn to earth based religious understanding. Similarly, eco-feminist spirituality strongly emphasizes the concept of the maternal spiritual qualities of the earth.⁶⁸

As with Peter Fuller's concept of the ecological mind, Deep Ecology and other expressions of New Age's return to nature, call for a spirit of *theoria* where nature does not merely elicit an experience, but rather serves to point to deeper spiritual meanings. The triumph of humans over nature is rejected by both, and is being replaced by a sense of interdependence and spiritual discovery.

THE RECOVERY OF MEANING: SELF

The modern era was one that was guided largely by peoples logical/rational thoughts. It appears that the postmodern era is striving to be one led by the soul, the imagination, and personal experience. In recent years there has been a tremendous decline in the level of trust people are placing in technology and bureaucracy. As a result,

"[t]hey rely upon a wisdom of their own, based on their experience of exclusion and marginalization. They recognize that they must build their lives around human values disregarded by society, such as solidarity, community, conviviality, and spirituality."⁶⁹

Subjective experience is superseding reason and science as the controlling indicators in peoples lives. The postmodernists recognize this as being an essential component in the

⁶⁷"Interview with Satish Kumar", *Common Ground*, 19, Summer 1987. (pp 5, 6, 51): 5.

⁶⁸Judith Plant, (Ed.), *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989)

⁶⁹Baum, 7.

postmodern project. One of the central projects of postmodernism is to empower the individual, conceived as a combination of mind, soul and senses. For the postmodernist, the self is the locus for meaning. One draws from history and nature to find meaning, but since one is free to be selective only that which is *personally* meaningful is ever truly chosen. The only essential is that the individual be able to find meaning and gain a better sense of their place in the world.⁷⁰ Each persons own narrative is to valued as equal to everyone else's, and each persons experiences are the only validation needed.

The New Age Movement has a similar idea of the role of self, subjective experience and subjective knowledge. Marilyn Ferguson writes; "...heretics are gaining ground, doctrine is losing its authority, and knowing is superseding belief."⁷¹ The New Age Movement's perspective is based on the notion that since individuals create their own narratives, their own personal experiences are the best and most valid interpretations of those narratives. "Experience and intuition are thus the final authorities for New Agers."⁷² These interpretations are almost invariably centered around being able to experience one's true divinity. One New Ager proposes to help you find your "soul purpose," and to teach you how to "expand your Five Senses to experience everyday realities with passion and excitement - as life was intended to be lived."⁷³ In a course entitled "Ascension as a Practical Possibility" one can learn the "process of achieving total union with our unlimited divine Self, which manifests as complete mastery on Earth."⁷⁴ Many of the New Age services revolve around training people to experience life more fully and richly though achieving greater awareness of one's own subjective ability to define existence. It is apparent that this experiential self-centredness for some can lead to pure hedonism.

⁷⁰Lyon, 1993.

⁷¹Ferguson, 371.

⁷²Miller, 17.

⁷³*Shared Vision*, April 1992, 5.

⁷⁴*Ibid*, 32.

There is consideration of others, but in almost all cases other-centredness comes though properly experiencing the self. New Age other-centredness comes from their conception that there is a universal linking among all beings which is expressed in the premise that, "All is One. We are All One. All is God. And we are God."⁷⁵ The way that this belief is practiced is uniformly manifested in believing that to treat yourself well is to treat others well. "Help Heal the World By Healing Yourself",⁷⁶ one advertiser writes, appropriately summing up the New Age version of other-centredness, where true experience of the other comes through the experience of "true" self.

JEAN BAUDRILLARD AND SHIRLEY MACLAINE: IMAGE AND REALITY

One of the outstanding postmodern observers is Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard, in critiquing contemporary (postmodern) society, especially the United States, introduces the concepts of simulacrum and hyperreality.

At the core, Baudrillard, sees postmodern society as,

"...increasingly governed by images which the human subject no longer creates or controls; images which come from "elsewhere" or from "nowhere" in the sense that they do not appear from an identifiable human imagination."⁷⁷

Steven Connor provides a useful summary of Baudrillard's four historical stages through which representation has passed.

"Initially, the sign 'is the reflection of a basic reality'...In the second stage, the sign 'masks and perverts a basic reality'... In the third stage, the sign 'masks the *absence* of a basic reality'... In the fourth, terminal stage, the sign 'bears no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.'"⁷⁸

⁷⁵Chandler, 29.

⁷⁶*Shared Vision*, 16.

⁷⁷Richard Kearney, "Ethics and the Postmodern Imagination", *Thought*, 62 (244), 1987, (pp. 39-58): 39.

⁷⁸Connor, 55-56.

Baudrillard depicts postmodern society and particularly American culture as being completely embedded in this fourth stage of representation. America is a reproduction without an original, an image of an image. There is no real, there is only the hyperreal. The hyperreal is more than real, it is an image that has been made real by the fact that what is real is an image itself. Therefore, what is real, is not, since it is only an image. Conversely, what is image, is not, since it refers to nothing that is real.

"Reality is no longer considered the 'original' of the image...the very distinction between the real and the imaginary...has been virtually abolished...Image and reality have dissolved into a play of mutual parody - to the point where we can no longer say which is which."⁷⁹

Besides the entire capitalist system, this concept, has a few key manifestations. Baudrillard points to computers, and more importantly television and Hollywood. In emphasizing the importance of Hollywood, he suggests that American reality was created with the screen in mind, even though reality was there first.⁸⁰ While Hollywood appears to be representing the world around it, the world is actually the creation of the images presented on the screen. Hence cultural reality has been caught in a spiral of representation with no real source, or, more accurately, the source is itself a representation. American culture is a representation of the silver screen, which is a representation of American culture.

It appears, however, that Baudrillard's conception of postmodern culture has a spiritual twin in Shirley MacLaine. It would be no surprise to Baudrillard that the most prominent spokesperson for the New Age spirituality is herself a product of Hollywood. Where else can people with influence come from? If the American president of the 1980s came from the screen, why shouldn't the spiritual leader?

⁷⁹Ibid, 39-40.

⁸⁰Baudrillard, Jean. *America*, (trans. Chris Turner). (New York: Verso, 1988a): 55.

"Reality is only what we create it to be...We are responsible for our experiences because we create them,"⁸¹ MacLaine learned on a life changing trip to Peru.

"Everything is a thought form. Our planet is a thought form. It has a spirit. It's evolving. The universe is a thought form. Our bodies are thought forms and our lives are just feelings and thoughts."⁸²

The belief held by New Agers is that we are all the creators of our own realities and that earthly existence is only an illusion. Shirley MacLaine believes the world is her creation. It appears, however, that she is only taking personal credit for what Baudrillard attributes to Hollywood. She has lived in a reality of cultural production, her world has created the world, for her to believe that she is its author is not such a leap. Shirley MacLaine is living Baudrillard's America to its limit. She is embodying his most basic points, that there has ceased to be a real in a world of pure simulation, and that things become their opposites. Shirley MacLaine is not a product of the world, the world is a product of her, even though the world came first. There is no real, there is no image, there is only the interplay between the two.

If the wider culture is a creation of the cinema, then so too are individuals. "...[M]any Americans may have become reflections of the reflections that have been brought to them by media-oriented, postmodern cinematic society."⁸³ People have been formed by the characters they have seen on the screen, but these characters are simply images. So too, Shirley MacLaine is formed by images of characters, not cinematic characters, but the characters she herself claims to have been. Through the process of reincarnation she claims to carry the memories and experiences of people she was in previous lives. She records this musing while on her spiritual search:

⁸¹*Out on a Limb*, ABC Video Enterprises Inc., 1992, (Dir. Robert Butler).

⁸²Joseph Roberts, "Interview: Stuart Wilde", *Common Ground*, 38, Spring 1992, 8.

⁸³Norman Denzin, "Paris, Texas and Baudrillard on America", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 8, 1991: 131.

"I really seemed to be two people - or ten people - I didn't know. Yet was I an actress because I was more closely in touch with some of the roles I had played in other lives?"⁸⁴

MacLaine draws a striking parallel between the spiritual idea of reincarnation and Baudrillard's idea of the simulated individual. She has become a person bound up in the identities given to her by her meditative (cinematic) imagination.

Baudrillard makes many points that seem to find resonance in the New Age. Consider Baudrillard's use of the image of the Moebius strip, (Figure 4.2) In the Moebius strip, there is continuity between the close and the distant, interior and exterior, objective and subjective, real and image, they are caught in the same spiral.⁸⁵ Like

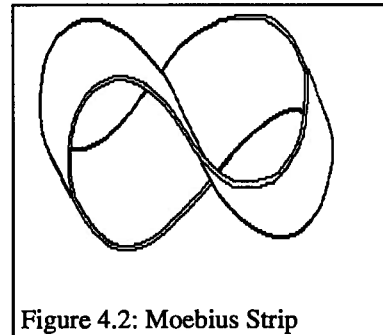


Figure 4.2: Moebius Strip

Hollywood and America, the Mobius strip represents things becoming their opposite, yet doing so smoothly and imperceptibly.

The New Age has its own Moebius strip. New Age has borrowed from Chinese spiritual history, the symbol of the T'ai-chi. (Figure 4.3) An almost omni-present symbol, the T'ai-chi represents the concept of the "Great Source" from whence all things come. This force is made up of opposites, the *yin* and the *yang*. These opposites that represent good/evil, bright/dark, masculine and feminine, are the two primordial cosmic forces united to bring about a harmonious order. They are part of a "mysterious union" where cyclically, like the seasons, each becomes the other. "These are dynamic operational agents, that are continually moving in cyclical changes, from one to the other. Each element has its time to rise, flourish, decline, and be taken over by the next."⁸⁶

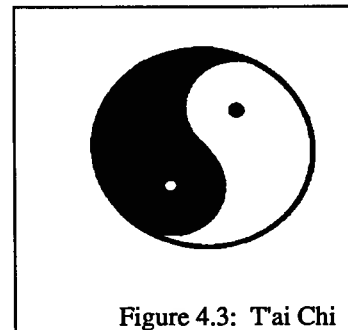


Figure 4.3: T'ai Chi

⁸⁴ Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a Limb*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1983): 271.

⁸⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *Xerox and Infinity*, (Trans: Agitac), (London: Agitac, 1988b).

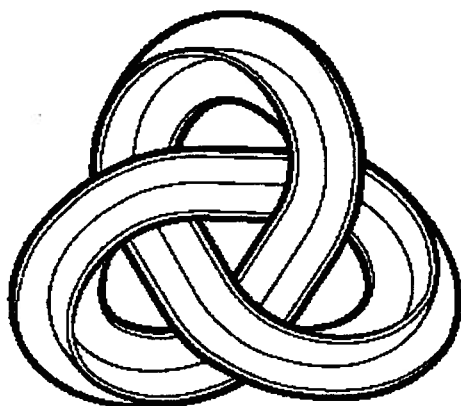
⁸⁶ Theodore M. Ludwig, *The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World*, (New York: MacMillan, 1989): 423.

Similarly, on the cover of *The Aquarian Conspiracy*⁸⁷ appears a design that, like the Moebius strip, represents a loop, where each path twirls around the loop, each becoming the other, where inside becomes outside, top becomes bottom. (Figure 4.4)

Also, for Baudrillard, simulacra eliminate chance, all is response according to a plan, everything is a programmed action of response. So too for MacLaine, the concept of "synchronicity" eliminates chance. Synchronicity, suggests purpose and intent for every action. "Everything is just happening as it should...I do not believe in accidents",⁸⁸ she is told by her spiritual mentor. Chance simply does not exist and synchronicity, while less rigid than a computer program, still suggests everything is a result of intent.

America is a hologram, according to Baudrillard.⁸⁹ "Information concerning the

Figure 4.4: Cover Design from *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, M. Ferguson. Illustrated by, David Westwood



whole is contained in each of its elements."⁹⁰ All of American reality, in its "plasticity and simplicity"⁹¹ is held together by the illusion that created it. Everything is part of the hologram, everything is essentially made up of the same substance, everything comes from the same source, and if the source is interrupted, if the laser beam is interfered with, "...all the effects are dispersed, and reality along with it."⁹²

In the same way the concept of the hologram is utilized in the New Age. Marilyn Ferguson summarizes "holographic supertheory" as such...

⁸⁷Ferguson.

⁸⁸*Out on a Limb* (video).

⁸⁹Baudrillard, 1988a, 29.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid, p. 30.

*"...our brains mathematically construct "hard" reality by interpreting frequencies from a dimension transcending time and space. The Brain is a hologram, interpreting a holographic universe."*⁹³ (Italics in original)

Moreover, in eastern pantheistic monism, it is believed that the soul of the individual is the soul of the cosmos: "*Atman is Brahman*", (The universe is contained in each individual). Taken as somewhat more than the analogy that it is, this New Age "truth" about the nature of the universe is derived from the nature of actual holograms, wherein the entire holographic image can be reproduced from a mere fragment of the original (albeit with decreased clarity).⁹⁴

For Baudrillard, America is the centre, the supreme power and it alone has been able to conceive of and achieve its own utopia.

"Americans are not wrong in their idyllic conviction that they are at the center of the world. the supreme power, the absolute model for everyone...[America] is built on the idea that it is the realization of everything the others have dreamt of - justice, plenty, rule of law, wealth, freedom: it knows this, it believes in it, and in the end, the others have come to believe in it too."⁹⁵

Baudrillard sees America as a self-created, self-achieved utopia (a utopia which Baudrillard himself does not accept). It has made itself the centre, it is its own ideal creation.

In the same way, New Agers are able to make themselves the centre. This idea is perhaps nowhere more strongly expressed than in the image of Shirley MacLaine standing on Malibu beach shouting, at first reluctantly, then exuberantly "I am God, I am God, I am God."⁹⁶ She and others have sought for and then created their own utopia by permitting themselves to believe in their own deity. They are the unabashed centre of their own universe. Finally, Baudrillard points to the desert, America's last frontier. In its

⁹³Ferguson, p. 182.

⁹⁴Michael Perry, *Gods Within: A Critical Guide to the New Age*, (London: SPCK, 1992): 27.

⁹⁵Baudrillard, 1988a, 76.

⁹⁶*Out on a Limb* (video).

emptiness, absolute freedom, aridness, and silence, it becomes the essence of America.⁹⁷ The desert is the opposite and the image of American "(un)culture". Baudrillard looks at the desert because in its arid emptiness it *is* American culture, while at the same time it is so much the opposite. If Baudrillard began his search in Hollywood and ended in the desert, why should we be surprised to find that Shirley MacLaine has made the same pilgrimage. Shirley MacLaine is setting up her own spiritual retreat centre, called "Ariel Village" in Crestone, Colorado - an area of plains and brush at the foot of the Rockies near the desert sand of the "Great Sand Dunes".

CONCLUSION

When one considers the striking similarities between the New Age Movement and postmodernism, it is evident that they are, in fact, two movements that share common ideals and common objectives. The New Age and postmodernism are both concerned with the reinfusion of meaning into a world they perceive as being stripped of it by the cold, calculating institutions and ideals of modernism. They can also be portrayed, using Ellul's framework, as two parallel attempts to dethrone the sacred idols of modernism, replacing them with new sacred idols, those found in nature, past and distant cultures and ultimately in self.

While in a Weberian sense, the New Age and postmodernism would be representative of a re-enchantment of society, a return to the spiritual values of the past, it is perhaps more accurate to view this situation in the sense outlined by Ellul, who reminds us that a de-throned spirituality cannot return in its original form, that if it is to return it must somehow be altered. This is in fact true in New Age and postmodernism. While there is a return to some forms of spirituality, including the deposed Christianity, it is apparent that New Age is bringing back transcendent spirituality in a form which is significantly different from the pre-enlightenment world of Christianity. New Age

⁹⁷Denzin, 126.

spirituality, while including some aspects of Christianity is concerned most prominently with eastern spiritual traditions along with the occult, and other ancient and new spiritual expressions. Similarly even these traditions are rarely adhered to in their original sense. New Age spirituality is ultimately concerned with the individual interpretation of spirituality, with traditions merely serving as a convenient means of organizing ideas or as providers of ritual and symbol. In the end, however, the New Age permits the altering of tradition and belief to suit the self, never demanding the altering of self to suit belief or tradition. Hence New Age is not the mere re-enchantment of the western world, a return to the transcendent beliefs of this, or any other culture, it is rather the reinfusion of transcendent spirituality in an entirely new form. It is the invention of a new sacred realm not the restoration of a traditional one.

Chapter Five -

MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM AND NEW AGE: A COMMON PURPOSE

MODERNISM AND MODERNIZATION

Before I begin this discussion it is important to note that there is a distinction that needs to be drawn between the concepts of *modernism* on the one hand and *modernization* on the other. Modernism, for the purposes of this thesis, can be described as the formalized intellectual/academic concept that the universe is essentially a closed mechanical system wherein, given enough knowledge, science and technology would both be able to understand all phenomena and be able to predict the outcome of any event. This was the world of scientific optimism which created all manner of technical solutions to the world's problems. Modernization on the other hand is the "growth and diffusion of a set of institutions rooted in the transformation of the economy by means of technology."¹ Both of these ideas orbit around the concept of technology, but where modernization is the natural unfolding of society in response to technology, modernism is the belief that technology is a saviour.

Having looked at the relationship between New Age and postmodernism (see Chapter Four) it is clear that there are significant differences which exist between postmodernism, New Age and their antecedent, modernism. Both New Age and postmodernism posit themselves as being reactions against modernism. This is undoubtedly true. There is little feeling of sorrow for the passing of modernism from the perspective of either postmodernism or New Age. It is clear that both are unsympathetic to the techniques of modernism, claiming that modern science and technology have created more problems than they have solved. Modern mechanism has created an unsustainable consumer society and modern rationalism has left a void of meaning in

¹Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, Hansfried Kellner. *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1973): 9.

western society. New Age and postmodernism are convinced that modern techniques have failed.

We must ask however, if we probe beneath the level of technique to the level of purpose, if there is any substantial difference between modernism, postmodernism and New Age? The goal of modernism was ultimately to discover the means by which humans could solve all of their own problems. Modernism promised to eradicate hunger, cure all diseases (delaying and possibly even denying death), create completely efficient and profitable businesses, eliminate the need to work, control the environment, and conquer space. Modernism made grand promises that given enough time the inevitable advancement of knowledge and technology would eventually give humans complete control over themselves and their environment.

But are New Age and postmodernism really that different? As mentioned above they most certainly disagree with the techniques of modernism, but do they disagree with its ultimate purpose? New Age and postmodernism also make promises, they too offer control. Postmodernism and New Age focus on the task of returning to people the control which was wrestled away from them by the institutions of modernism: government, the medical community, science, corporations, the church and almost every other institution which can be equated with the techniques of modernism. Modernism created experts, answers, techniques and hierarchies. These were meant to be the means by which humans would gain complete control over their world. Their perceived failure has created a new search for control. New Age and postmodernism are part of this new search. The goal is the same, the techniques are different.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERNISM

According to Peter Berger *et al.* the modern mind - modern consciousness - has been formed primarily by two overarching features of the contemporary world: Technological Production and Bureaucracy. (For the purposes of this paper it is only

necessary for us to consider the first of these, although a discussion of bureaucracy would not detract from it.)

The Result: The Pluralization of Social Life-Worlds

In the realm of technological production it is evident that people develop ways of dealing with the logic which that world demands. Eventually the individual who is operating within this world will learn to differentiate between it and other parts of their life. People will act different and possibly believe different things depending on where they are. The end result is that they will begin to create a dichotomous self, one part of which is dealing with and operating in the public realm of technological production the other part operating in and dealing with one's private life-world.

The individual learns that the realm of the public is one of anonymity, fact, and detachment, whereas one's private world becomes one of connection, values, and personal relationship. The two worlds serve two different functions and the individual grows accustomed to moving between the two worlds, sometimes developing completely different, and possibly contradictory, patterns of behaviour. One only needs to think as far as the stereotypical business person who "lets their hair down" after work, indulging in various activities seemingly contradictory to their work persona. Furthermore, the fact that this distinction exists between the public and the private self does not preclude the possibility that the individual may further pluralize each of these realms, wherein they may have multiple public identities and multiple private identities.²

The separation between public and private can occur on a multitude of levels, but possibly one of the most significant separations occurs at the level of fact and value. Frequently in the realm of either bureaucracy or technological production an individual is faced with many facts, completing actions or making decisions based on the empirical data and scientific knowledge. However, within this realm one's religious, political or

²Ibid. 65.

social beliefs are suppressed. What one believes becomes irrelevant to completing the task at hand and hence is discarded from the work-world and in fact the pursuit of such things in the work place is actively discouraged by employers. Similarly at home, in one's private realm one is free to pursue value laden questions of religion, politics or social concerns without the constraints felt at work. It is at home that one is left to discover one's purpose or meaning in life.

The Collapse of the Sacred Canopy

It is at the point of the separation of life-worlds that we begin to see how technological production and modernization relate to both the concept of secularization and the New Age Movement. This relationship comes at the point of the widespread adoption of technological production. As the consciousnesses of people began to get divided between their work worlds and their private worlds, religion (which did not fit into the public world of people's work) began to take on the characteristics of a purely private, free-time pursuit.

In chapter three we saw how western society, up until the Enlightenment, had been formed around the premises of Christianity. In pre-modern times one could be assured that their family, the people they worked with, and the people they just ran into on the street would have accepted the same basic set of beliefs (allowing for some variation, of course). Essentially everyone had the same concept of the nature of the universe and reality, everyone was under the same *sacred canopy*.³ The adoption of the modernist world-view, however, in the public realm rolled back that sacred canopy. As the modernist world-view, as promoted and disseminated by modern science and philosophy, became more and more associated with the realm of public interaction it weakened the hold of the Christian perspective eventually relegating it to the private realm.

³Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1969)

The fact that the Christian sacred canopy was made into something private and not public meant that it became much easier for people to step out from under that canopy and adopt another world-view with which to order their private lives. The Christian world view no longer had an exclusive hold on the consciousness of people. The dominant Christian perspective on reality was having to share the stage. The sacred canopy ceased to be unifying. People were free to adopt alternate belief systems, such as the modernist world-view or even the world view of another religion.

It is easy to see that the privatization of religion soon became the pluralization of religion. As the doors of religious experience swung open people were free to experiment with multiple spiritual realities. As Berger, *et al.* suggest the resulting religious atmosphere was one where..."[o]ne may be baptized a Catholic, marry in a protestant service, and -- who knows? --die as a Zen Buddhist (or, for that matter, as an agnostic)."⁴ Where there was once a sacred canopy there now exists only, "millions of small tents; no global umbrella, only a bewildering range of pocket umbrellas for those who may care to have one."⁵ The privatization of religion means that people are no longer automatically part of some cultural religious system, but rather they must decide on religion for themselves: "...faith is no longer socially given, but must be individually achieved."⁶ (This, of course can equally translate into the option of a person having no spiritual beliefs.) The very concept of privatized religion is at the very core of New Age, in fact New Age could not exist in any society other than one which would tolerate and encourage a religious system which promoted pure individuality, a religious system which does not try to define the sacred canopy, a system wherein there is no sacred canopy but rather the hand-held umbrellas mentioned above.

⁴Berger, (1973), 81.

⁵Os Guinness, *The Gravedigger File*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987 [1983]): 97.

⁶Berger (1973), 81.

A Single Life-World.

Despite the attractiveness of an existence where religion is a private affair rather than a public one, there have always been large segments of the population who , although embracing a privatized faith, still saw the separation of the public and private realms as being problematic. Therefore modern society inevitably generates those who are discontented with it. Already we have made reference to three significant populations who can be considered discontents of modernism, namely those subscribing to the 1960's counterculture, the New Age Movement, and postmodernism. I have already described how each of these groups has protested and reacted against the principles and practices of modernism. Here I would like to expand the previous discussions by adding that one of the main reasons for this reaction lies in the dissatisfaction with the separation of the public and private realms.

As we have already seen, in the counterculture, postmodernism ,and the New Age Movement there is a concerted effort to challenge and displace the dominant paradigm of modernism. So too, we have seen that each of the these movements deals with the attack on modernism in markedly different ways. Despite this, however, there does seem to be one area in which all three of these movements are commonly united in their fight, and that is in the twofold approach of firstly breaking down the public/private dichotomy and secondly replacing it almost exclusively with the private realm.

Under the control of modernism it is the public realm which reigned supreme. Moreover, it was the experts (the scientists and bureaucrats), the high priests of modernism who were in full control of society. The private realm was one which had little impact in society. Although people were free to do what they wanted in that realm, there was little chance that private activities would be able to change society.

The reactions against this, in the forms of the counterculture, postmodernism and New Age, have all been efforts to replace modernism's public structures (technocracy, technological production, bureaucracy...*et cetera*) with private, small-scale and

individually controlled systems wherein the individual could take back control from the experts. In the world of modernism it is the public realm of science and technological production which exercised the most control over the general public. In people's interaction with education, government, medical and financial institutions it was the logic of modernism which exercised ultimate control. It was the so-called experts who made the important decisions relating to a person's health and finances. It was the experts who were making decisions of national importance, such as the decision to go to war.

As we discussed earlier it was against this kind of control that movements such as the counterculture were reacting. In doing so they threw off the mantle of public, expert ordained, control and swung the pendulum to the other extreme bringing the private realm into the view of the public. Through public nudity and copulation (as extreme examples) the counterculture sought to reverse the encroachment of the public into the private by making the most private actions public. The experts were rejected and in response each individual asserted themselves as their own expert. Scientific fact and technology were uniformly dismissed and replaced with individual experience as being the ultimate discerners of truth.

As is so clearly demonstrated by the counterculture, but equally present in postmodernism and the New Age movement the discontents of modernism rejected the technique of science, technology and their guardians, the "experts". They rejected the concept of the public control over people's lives. They rejected the dichotomy of fact/value, public/private which this system had created. In response they sought to bring fact/value, public/private together by making the private ruler over all, giving ultimate control to each individual.

In all three of these movements a major theme has been the empowerment of the individual, frequently with emphasis on those individuals who have traditionally been denied access to power structures.

THE COMMON THREAD: CONTROL

The search for technique.

As we have seen above, while in the modern era it was the experts who were going to save us, in the postmodern, New Age era it is the individual who becomes his or her own saviour. Each of us is responsible for ourselves and our portion of the whole. The differences between these two perspectives are indeed significant, and there is no doubt that the two concepts are rooted in two very different ways of approaching the world and its problems.

Despite the differences, however, it is evident that the two perspectives actually derive from a common base. There is an underlying assumption, which unites the two philosophically and practically. Both the modern world-view and the postmodern and New Age world-views share the common impulse that the human race, in some way or another will find the appropriate methods with which to bring about a better world.⁷ There is the assumption that humans are capable of making the world a better place. Whether it be through advanced technology or advanced spirituality, both perspectives are optimistic in the hope that there will be positive progress, if only people would practice the correct technique.

The New Age and Control.

While it is evident that New Agers are embedded in the search for the recovery of meaning, it is also true that the purpose and meaning which they are finding are not the same as that which traditionally has been found in the places where they are seeking. New Age meaning finds its home in the *control* of the past and the distant, the control of nature and ultimately the control of self.

⁷While the New Age Movement might see this as leading to a perfect, or near perfect world, postmodernists see this as being simply a way to make the world merely better, or perhaps simply more equal.

Discovery of Control: the Past and the Distant

Modernism sought to limit the control of religion, spirituality and the past in general by completely discrediting it. The method was the myth of progress, which asserted that scientific discoveries and the advancement of human knowledge would eventually eliminate all problems in the world, thus condemning the myths and legends of religion and the past exclusively to the history books. Modernism controlled the past by purposefully obliterating it, by rendering it useless. Modernism was a conscious break from the continuous historical/spiritual lineage of the past.

The New Age treats the past very differently, but it too puts definite controls on it. In the New Age the past and the distant are revelled in, they are borrowed from, they are looked to, they are held up as examples for today, but like modernism, the New Age seeks to control it. As was mentioned before, when New Agers borrow from the past and the distant what they take is usually tamed or adjusted to suit ideas of modern comfort or convenience, it is never taken at face value.

"...Christianity without rules and dogma, eastern philosophies with no physical discomfort: New Age blends what applies and chucks out the rest".⁸

In the New Age the religious myths and cultures of the past are used, but as we saw before, they are used very selectively. This idea can be taken one step further to demonstrate that the New Age seeks to take the past and the distant and control it so that it is the individual who has the power over the tradition rather than the other way around.

With the privatization of religion the door was opened not just to the adoption of other spiritual traditions but perhaps even more so to what I previously called supermarket- style religion, wherein the individual shops the shelves of religion taking a variety of products, keeping only that which pleases the pallet. Hence within a world of privatized religion people tend to be "conversion prone"⁹ as they switch brands according

⁸Caroline Sutherland, "The New Age", *Vancouver*, Nov. 1989, pp. 54-60, 136: 136.

⁹Guiness, 105. and Berger (1973), 81.

to taste and preference. Frequently the outcome of this process is that an individual will end up with a spiritual larder packed with an endless variety of products to be chosen from according to one's feelings from day to day. New Agers tend to draw their inspiration from a variety of spiritual sources and usually are quick to point out that they do not participate in any one particular spiritual or religious organization. As a result, through eliminating the uncomfortable and through providing endless variety, the New Age controls the religions of the past. If one spiritual product goes sour it is simply disposed of and replaced by another, fresher one. This style of spiritual consumerism is the perfect reflection of a world in which the individual's micro-narrative is the final authority. As with postmodernism, New Age must endorse each individual's perspective on the world, and by extension must allow the individual complete freedom to move between micro-narratives, discovering, experiencing and disposing of them at will.

The spiritual freedom to make such choices is derived from the control belief in the relativistic nature of all religions, suggesting that all religions essentially derive from one source and hence to define differences is to miss the point of them all. Such is the stance of "Stephanie";

"I am not a part of any organized religion. I have, I feel, a fairly holistic approach to faith. I believe that whatever it is that gives you strength, that's great. If you are a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Jew, a Christian, whatever...if it gives you that internal strength you need, then that's wonderful. I don't feel that there is one faith that is better than another.";

and "Becky";

"Every religion has its own definition of God. Every religion has its own definition for the same thing, it can't be something else.";

and "Barb";

"There is not any one writer, not any one path. I take everything that I read, that I am drawn to and what feels

right. What I can believe. I'd say I haven't studied the Bible in any respect, but any New Age teachings from Jesus I certainly pay attention to....I just try and take from everything. I am open minded. I am open minded to everything. I haven't studied eastern religions but I know I'd get something from all of them.";

and "Chris";

"As far as organized religions out there, Buddhism would be probably of all the ones I've read about...And of the Buddhist practice, more of a Zen Buddhist. Although it is more of an attitude and relationship with life than a practice. There are no Buddhist temples that I go to.";

and "Glory";

"Now I would say that I just do my own thing. I'm not really involved with any particular group. Although I went out to see the Dali Lama and I support him whole heartedly. With the Reiki, again, that doesn't interfere with any religion or race or anything...Just try to be a good person and honest and this kind of thing and set examples for people."

Others, like "Carmen", have had a process of coming to terms with the spirituality with which they were raised, having rebelled from it and then later turning to a position wherein they could accept it.

"I practice TM and also just meditation as a whole is very important, not just TM. You know that's a technique, but...and yoga, the philosophy of yoga and you know yoga isn't just postures, it is a whole way of being. You know I don't worship a guru or I'm not, just not that kind of a person really. I think that each guru or spiritual leader, including Christianity has just incredible things to offer, it's when people start to use it for, you know, coming from a fear based way of thinking or trying to control people or control people's minds, or then I don't agree with it. But Christianity, for a long time I could not even have the word 'God' around me. I couldn't stand the word God. Even if I picked up a book, it could be just the most spiritual book that ever...if I saw "God" and stuff in it, in the beginning, it

was just a big turn off to me, I just would not...Even Leo Bascallia at times I thought, he's a quack, right? Because he was too religious, I thought, and yet now I don't think that way. I often, sometimes I even pick up the Bible and read a scripture from it and get huge learning out of it and I'll pick up a book on Buddhism, which I'm really drawn to, that would be...if I was ever going to have a religion I think it would be...but I think religions label people, so if you are Buddhist, you're Buddhist, if your Christian, you're Christian. That just creates more separation, rather than seeing how similar we are. That then when we label each other we start to see how different we are."

As I have described, for New Agers the issue of spiritual choice is intimately related with a desire to create control in their lives. Spiritual control is created by framing one's spirituality in the context of free-form religion. By adopting a variety of spiritual traditions New Agers are able firstly to control what religions they adopt and secondly they are able to control what aspects of the religions they have chosen they will adhere to. Hence there is much discussion that portrays traditional religion, which has not granted such liberal freedoms, as being controlling and dogmatic and hence not a true spiritual experience (or if it is true it has not been experience in its fullness). Ironical, of course, is the certainty with which they assert that they are non-dogmatic in their bold accepting of all religions, hence dogmatically labeling all those who would not hold this position as being "closed-minded".

"It is no accident that I have moved from teaching comparative religions to doing work that awakens someone's spiritual essence, because I no longer think it appropriate for me, or necessarily for anyone else to try to take the spiritual frequencies that are coming in now and put them into a religious context with rigid 'do' and 'don'ts', very rigid rituals and so-on. So I don't find therefore, my own spiritual practice involves tunnel vision, it never has and it never involves the idea that there is one way of going home or that there is one spiritual practice that's for everyone...So I have been initiated into a system of meditation in '74 when I was over in India by an Indian master that I did for some time and then something

happened to the whole movement that I didn't identify with, again a form of tunnel vision which I can't buy into. I was then led to do TM meditation, which is a good sort of basic skill, but I don't believe in the ideology of the movement...In other words my spiritual life tends not to fit into traditional religious structures anymore. In other words it is not that I don't identify with the Christian perspective, but that I don't limit myself to that, is the way I'd put it. I identify very strongly with the Christ presence, but I would never say I was merely Christian in that sense. I learn from every religious path..." ("Jill")

"The truth is found in all of them. 'I am in all religions as a string through a set of pearls.' I really like that. I see that string or that flow of truth in all religions and in all philosophies. Although religions and philosophies can get carried away with their dogma. Even the original string can get distorted or lost." ("Christine")

"I was initially raised in the Methodist religion and there were things about it that I loved and things about it I didn't like. I've always been something of a rebel and so the dogma and creed part of it never really sat well with me and I've never really understood why people make up rules and regulations. And who were these people to make up rules and regulations and stand between what I believe is a greater force." ("Leslie")

Some spoke very candidly about their perceptions of New Age Spirituality in comparison to traditional religion, indicating their conviction that traditional religion is about being controlled, whereas New Age spirituality is about the individual being in control of their own spirituality.

"There is no real comparison because religion is a control issue, as far as I am concerned, whereas spirituality is a very...individual person's experience with God...whatever that looks like, and what those words might be for each person is different." ("Jewel")

"Catholic religion never held any attraction for me at all. I don't believe in religion at all. From my learning through channeling I came to the understanding that religion is

following whereas New Age spirituality is leading yourself and finding your own light within. Your own power rather than someone else's...something outer...That is why I don't believe in religion, because there tends to be a total letting it...putting everything on a God rather than taking any responsibility for our choices and a lot of people would rather blame the world or blame the society for problems so it is very important that people start taking that responsibility for themselves." ("Lorrie")

"I guess what I would call the New Age Movement in a way is people looking for spirituality and maybe they didn't find it in organized religions or the religions they grew up in, but they are still looking. You can call it an inner connection or a higher-self or God or whatever." ("Raj")

This control, however, comes through not just a self determined set of religious beliefs, but the deliberate reinterpretation of the traditional religions in order to suit the New Age agenda.

The "Source" is this ancient knowledge...if you look at all the religions in their pure essence, they are all basically saying the same thing it is just different flavors, but is all basically the same. If you look at Christianity, for instance, I used to...getting the Nag Hamatti library, the one on the Gnostic gospels. It was found in this copper cylinder the origins of Christianity, what it turned into, not even 200 years old when it started to change, the church got involved in two totally different things and it was re-written to suit whoever was in power at the time. Like Jesus, from what I can see now, was very much into the heart as far as what he prophesied and what he taught. I also think that he spent some time in India and studied under some of the masters there. A lot of the information I would say is from India. ("Rose")

While it is clear that the New Age reinterprets all religious traditions, it is apparent that none receives such a re-reading as historical Christianity. New Age writers frequently use the Bible as a source for their philosophies, but do so only in so far as they provide

esoteric interpretations of its content. One author provided an appropriate summary of how some New Agers have re-written Biblical passages.

"It is written: man does not live by the bread of the Bible alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God -- from channelers, from Gnostic gospels, from the scriptures of all the world religions.

"So come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoga upon you and learn from me, your guru, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find oneness for your souls. For my yoga is easy and my burden is light.

"If anyone is thirsty for secret knowledge, let him come to me and drink. Whoever receives my secret knowledge and becomes one with me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow within him."¹⁰

In total, 24 of the 30 people interviewed could be categorized as being "eclectic" in their spirituality. Many were able to recite a long list of spiritual endeavors with which they are or had at one time been involved. Similarly, many also had a substantial list of spiritual practices with which they were involved in some professional or semi-professional level. The eclectic nature of New Age spirituality can be seen as something which could only exist in this society. The breakdown of the sacred canopy in western society has meant the privatization of religion, which in turn has created an atmosphere in which people not only move from one spiritual tent to another, but it has also meant that individuals feel free to mix and match, creating a personal spiritual umbrella which bears more resemblance to a quilt than anything else. Furthermore, this spiritual blending can also be portrayed as the rejection of traditional spiritual controls in favour of the individual being able to exercise control over the spiritual tradition.

Interestingly, recently it appears that New Age is not only rejecting traditional religion, but in keeping with the pattern of privatized religion, it seems to be also

¹⁰Ron Rhodes, *The Counterfeit Christ of the New Age Movement*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990): 13,14.

rejecting group-oriented forms of New Age style spirituality. The first target of this assault appears to be the guru oriented groups which were indicative of the counterculture roots of the New Age Movement. Such groups appear to be falling into disfavour with the New Agers and are being replaced with a more personalized spirituality.

"Sally" recounts her own progression from the "guru scene" to a place of individualized spirituality for which she provides astrological support.

"So that was that. I started going to the guru scene in town here. It was a man who lived in India called Kirpal Singh. And I had never met him. Kirpal Singh came to town probably...this was 1974...So he came to town probably in 1968, '69 or '70. And he initiated probably 600 people in Vancouver. People flocked to him. It was a real Guru scene around the late '60's and early '70's. It is proven astrologically that that's the time period that is really open for gurus. Because there were gurus everywhere. Which is much different from today, when I think people really want to be in their own power instead of giving their power away by having...worshipping somebody."

So too, "Peter", in describing his spiritual journey recalls his own feelings regarding the spirituality of the 1960's and how things have changed.

"I began to see that humanity was on the verge of a major spiritual awakening and that there was an incredible need and a cry for individual empowerment in that process. That people be freed from gurus and cults and this whole business of getting caught-up in other people's stuff and that a vehicle needed to be created to kind of bridge their own relationship with their higher spiritual-self."

New Agers generally rejected the intensive guru-led group experiences of the 1960's, replacing them in the 1970's and '80's with the workshops, seminars and retreats which have made the New Age famous. Today, it appears that even these are too group oriented and are consequently are also falling out of favour. "Sara" told of her perceptions of how the large New Age organizations have declined in popularity since the

early to mid 1980's and then she gave some perspective on how she became disillusioned with them.

"It was a time when there was enough money floating around and people were quite interested. I think it has reached saturation point now. I mean I still have a private practice, but we no longer have the organization. I think it maxed-out. I think it had a long run of several years and I think there are still...But the big organizations...I mean it was a real heyday for group work. I was involved in EST and The Sterling Community and The New World Network all through the 80's. Big communities with lots of people attracted to them and big events and lots of mixing of energy and different kinds of people and that seemed to be what was happening.

"There still are some going. At least in my reality anyway, I decided that it wasn't that healthy to be so totally involved in a group that had a particular philosophy. That the nature of it excluded other people who didn't believe in that belief system. These groups end up with a particular language and way of looking at things that's exclusive. I just decided for my growth that it would be better to not be involved in that."

"Claire" also recounted how her experiences with a New Age group early in her spiritual journey were important but now feels that the group experiences were too restrictive.

"That whole process was very enlightening. It also was...it was an interesting process because I don't think those...there was a certain control in the group that I don't totally think is appropriate, now, but I believe it was very supportive for me to go through that at the time. I would not go into a group like that now. You get kind of caught-up in it and you get a little bit distant from reality, but it was the best thing I ever did because it broke me away from my patterns.

"My basic understanding is that I don't want to get stuck into any box again. I always want to be open to new ways of looking at things."

Another shared this sentiment.

"Sometimes [I do seminars], it depends on where I am at. Like the networking thing I've gotten involved in that quite a bit sometimes. I've done so many workshops and programs and stuff to do what I do now, that I rarely do anymore." ("Jewel")

Others shared more general reservations regarding New Age groups that did not necessarily derive from personal experiences but more likely from a position of observation.

"I guess the part I don't like about it is when I see the cultish things happen or people getting lost in guru worship to the point where they completely lose sight of who they are and their purpose for being here. And also people who use some of the concepts, or whatever of the kind of New Age spirituality, like there's certain things that run through all the books like accountability and responsibility to yourself and to the environment, that kind of thing and I think that people can really sometimes work those kinds of things and turn them around and use them against themselves and other people. And I also don't like the cliquish way that a lot of people in the New Age all of a sudden surround themselves with people who are only in the New Age, and to the exclusion of the rest of the world and everyone else. I think that we are here to live in the world and, yes, the New Age and spirituality is a big part of that, you know. For instance, there's meditation groups and things that are going on in book stores and various places and they are very cliquish. They have their meditation group and it is the same group of people, which is great, I think that's nice and there is an energy that happens when people, for whatever reason, men's groups, whatever. ...you know, the power is in their hands it's not in mine and it's not in a teacher's hand. I mean it's like, everyone has the answers in themselves, they just have to get quiet enough to hear them. And when we form a group or a clique that is nice and comfortable for ourselves, we're not sharing peace and whatever with other people who need it." ("Carmen")

In general, there was a definite pattern that the interviewees have a perception that the direction New Age spirituality is taking is towards an intense personal experience. Those involved in seminars they ones that relate to personal empowerment. But more often than

not spirituality has become an individual expression, unrelated to any kind of group process. The key idea is one of going within rather than looking for answers from without. People now lead themselves rather than following others.

"Well in this sort of New Age...I think it is going from a place where you think it is outside of you to coming back inside of you. I have noticed that workshops that are popular now are ones that empower people. People want to take something home to chew. They don't want to see someone and they leave town and that's it." ("Sally")

"But I think it is great because it is teaching people to lead themselves rather than to follow someone else. That to me is what any good teacher out there will do. There are some teachers out there who do sort of promote a fear and a following. And I don't agree with that because, that to me is not true spirituality..." ("Lorrie")

"I think people are looking less at outside influences, even say drugs or whatever they used then, and [are] going within." ("Barb")

"I'm not a person who likes to live...grab hold of somebody else's trip and kind of go along like that. I like to run my own life. So I might go drop in and go to one of these and drop in and go to one of those, but I'm not likely to embed myself with a certain group..."

In the past I might have, would have maybe got involved with a certain movement or group or whatever and then found, Aah no, this isn't really me, you know and maybe try something else. But now I purely do the things I am interested in doing...

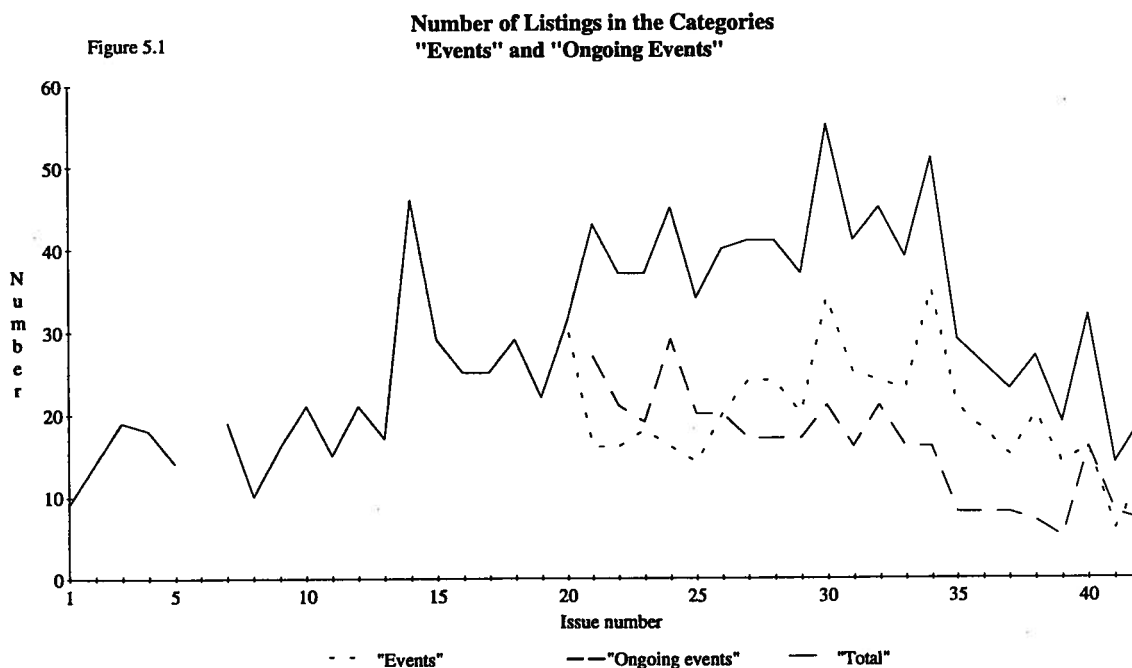
"I have taken many many many workshops over time, but now it probably is decreasing. I think it is kind of like an internalization, if you like, because initially all of us seek information externally, seek ideas externally and then we come to a point when we begin to develop some of our own ideas or things that we'd like to research where we want to focus our energy rather than looking for it from external force." ("Leslie")

"People are no longer satisfied with the group answer. I think it is a very individual search for connectedness to

God. People don't want...it's no longer...the ritual is no longer sufficient. We want to explore further beyond the ritual, we want to get to the essence of the experience and we also are starting to notice that essence of experience is attainable and available through more than one door. It may all be the same house, but there are many windows and doors. I think some people get caught up in the trappings. I think some people have always been caught up in the trappings...

"I think we are in the 'Post-New Age', in that people are no longer flocking to the workshops blindly. They've got a few workshops under their belt and are more selective. They are starting to get a lot clearer as to what specific areas of their lives they want to improve the quality of..." ("Boris")

This pattern of the decline in the popularity of group experiences, such as seminars, workshops and retreats is confirmed in *Common Ground* magazine. In looking at the listing categories of "Events" and "Ongoing Events" (Added in issue #21 - Winter 1987) it is apparent that there has been a dramatic drop in the number of events advertised since issue #34, (Spring 1991). (see Figure 6.1)



This would support the notion that the 1980's were a time of seminars and workshops, but as the 1990's progress there is much less demand for that group oriented New Age experience and more of a turning inward for spiritual experience.

"Boris" spoke of the "Post-New Age", an appropriate term which can be given to this pattern of change which seems to be marking experiences within the New Age community. This seems to be the inevitable progression of the privatization of religion. As the sacred canopy of the western world was drawn back, people sought cover under a variety of smaller tents in the form of guru-led communes and other groups in the 1960's. As people began to feel controlled and restricted within these groupings they fell apart only to be replaced by the more fragmented workshops, seminars and retreats of the 1980's New Age movement, representing perhaps sacred pup-tents. But the progression has gone one step further. In a world of completely privatizable religion, even the seminars and conferences proved too stifling of individual expression and experience and hence the New Age Movement has fragmented even further to the level of the hand-held umbrella, a world of completely private spiritual experience where experiential spiritual contact with others is becoming the exception rather than the rule.

This pattern of increasing fragmentation can only be described as the recovery of control over the realm of the spiritual. In the context of religion, people are gaining control over the religions and traditions of the past by isolating themselves from any interpretations of religion external to themselves. New Agers exercise ultimate control over religion by removing any sort of binding connection with others, especially those who may have been granted some sort of social legitimacy in the interpretation of that belief system or tradition. One can exercise complete control over spiritual traditions by ensuring that they do not have to hear interpretations of that spiritual tradition which conflict with their personal interpretation.¹¹

¹¹This trend towards the privatization of spirituality is also bound-up inextricably with the concept of control over self, which I will address little later in this chapter.

Throughout all of this discussions and in the quotations from the participants there are strong echos of postmodernism. In the eclecticism, relativism and the exaltation of micro-narratives we see clearly the themes of postmodernism which were addressed in chapter four. Once again it is made clear that the connections between modernism and postmodernism are more than mere coincidence, but rather a strong indicator of their common purpose.

Discovery of Control: Nature

In the face of environmental catastrophe, New Agers deny the methods of modern technology, labelling them destructive of the planet, Gaia, Mother Earth. It is their firm belief that if we learn to "tread lightly" on the planet it will ultimately be able to survive *ad infinitum*. They believe that ultimately modern control is destructive of the environment, but in return they also advocate a control of nature, just a different kind of control. Seeing that modern technology is out of control and ultimately destructive they seek to remove control from modernists and replace that control with their own brand. No matter how much more prudent or beneficial their control is, it is still control over the environment.

"Natural Systems, both as the source of physical nutrition and as the body of metaphors from which our spirits draw sustenance become central. Bio-regionalists ask us to understand 'self-interest' in its most basic sense to make certain of the long-term sustainability of life on this planet. Our responsibility becomes one of enhancing the whole Earth's ability to function as a single self-regulating organism."¹²

¹²Bob Witzl, "Living Responsibly Where We Are", *Common Ground*, Issue #11, Summer 1985: 33.

In one particularly extreme example, "Celeste" described how she believes that humans are on this planet in order to assist Mother Earth through a particularly difficult situation.

"If you want to take a look at it strictly esoterically, the planet is in a period of transition. We are moving from the third dimension, into the fourth dimension and into the fifth dimension. Scientists know this, they are not telling people in general that this is what's happening. Scientists know that in a few years we are going to come in contact with a meteor, I believe it is a meteor of humungus proportions. If the planet herself has not been able to shift her trajectory, (which is possible for her to do and she is in the process of doing that right now), we're not going to collide with that meteor. The transition of the planet into the fourth and fifth dimensions is going to be enhanced. A lot of the work we are doing right now on the planet, those people who meditate, those people who work with alternative healing and counselling, those people who are in tune consciously, spiritually aware, working with channels and psychics and all that realm...A lot of the work that is being focused right now is being focused on the planet herself to assist her through this transition. Assisting ourselves and our personal growth, assisting the planet through her personal transition. The planet, everything on the planet, including ourselves, is sentient in one way or another. It is energy. Scientists can prove that scientifically. This table is energy, it is moving, it just appears to be solid. We believe it is so and so it is. The planet herself is conscious, [a] sentient being. She has made agreements with humanity to serve a specific function for a specific length of time. Those agreements were mutual and there are those people on the planet who have come here for the specific purpose of assisting her through this transition."

While it remains true that there is a sense that humans are intimately involved in the natural environment and both are capable of, and should exercise responsible control over it, this control is also imbued with an admirable sense of reverence. Nature is not perceived of as object but rather a partner. As opposed to the type of control the New Age exercises over religions, it seems to treat nature much more respectfully.

"I have learned with the natives, learning more about nature and to honour nature. That's a big thing, to honour nature. If you go out to pick flowers, ask the plant's permission. Ask the tree's permission...If you pick a stone or a shell off the beach, ask permission that you can take it with you."
("Glory")

The underlying principle, however, still remains. There is still a belief that humans both can and should exercise control over the environment, even if that control is manifested in the exercise of restraint.

As an example of this, one only need look as far as the renewed interest in alchemy which is part of some New Age circles. Andrew Ross points out that at its core alchemy is perhaps as close to modernism as anything else.

"Alchemy, after all, was nothing more than a method for transmuting nature into energy, and few could deny that this has become one of the technological projects, with a vengeance, of modern science."¹³

Discovery of Control: Self

Ultimately, however, the ultimate level of control comes down to control over self. We have seen already how the New Ager seeks to deify self and consequently to create for self a perfect mind and body. The desire to be perfect can only come down to a belief that the self and the world around the self is ultimately perfectable and completely controllable.

Perhaps the most obvious manifestations of the New Age pursuit of ultimate control over one's own body is apparent in the field of health-care. This comes at two levels: firstly the desire of the New Age to recover the very field of health-care from modern science, and secondly the desire for individuals to be able to control their own bodies.

¹³Andrew Ross, *Strange Weather*, (London: Verso, 1991): 24.

The feeling of the inadequacy of western medicine is exemplified by personal experiences such as "Rose's", wherein western medicine paled beside New Age-style health-care.

"I guess it was about eight years ago now, I had a pretty dramatic experience where, because of different events in my life, different things were happening in my life, I got Candidas and western medicine didn't even recognize that I had it. They didn't recognize if it was a valid disease or not, but it was precipitated because I was on the birth control pill and I had a lot of amalgam fillings in my mouth and I had two minor surgeries in that month...It was time for a change. This in a lot of ways is like the death card, which is where, in the Tarot, where you die to be reborn into a new life...Then I heard the name of this naturopath from two different sources and I thought, "well there is nothing left to lose and...on meeting him, he has an energy, an aura about him, he looks like he could have been a Mayan Priest...I felt I didn't have anything to lose so I was going to let him do whatever he was going to do to me. That involved taking a saliva sample and analyzing it and Vega testing as well. He prescribed various vitamins and homeopathic remedies and then he did something that I think was similar to Reiki, but I wasn't really sure what it was. It involved sound. Even though it seemed totally off the wall to me at the time, I went along with it because I was starting to get better. I would say within a month there was a dramatic recovery where I was getting much better." ("Rose")

Many of the interviewees gave their perspectives on the need to recover the field of health-care from the realm of science and to re-situate it the realm of personal, individualized control. This perspective was echoed by "Lisa" following an in-depth description of the benefits of "Breathwork".

"...so it is a natural way and it puts you in touch with your inner-being. It puts you in touch with the god in you. That's the value and it's not going out there and having a psychiatrist or somebody telling me, 'blah blah blah'. You know, it is my own inner being doing it, which I like. I like being in control." ("Lisa")

Control is certainly the premier issue when considering health-care as the following quotations demonstrate most forcefully.

"The Healing Power Within You / We believe that everyone has the power within themselves to heal every circumstance and situation in their lives."¹⁴

"...I kind of see it as there was this progression and this learning and discovery that man has been doing over the eons and along came western medicine and profit margins and it got a real shit-kicking and it was purposefully suppressed. I see New Age as a resurgence of...and what is really, quote-unquote, New Age is the reclaiming of personal power. 'Doc. What's wrong with me? Go ahead, no, don't bother, give me the anesthetic, wake me up when it is over.' That is going to become a thing of the past." ("Chris")

"I'm seeing now...is the 'the Wellness Show', what you call a 'straight' fair. Grannies coming in with their husbands...and they know nothing, absolutely nothing. But they want to get better. So they're dipping into this a little bit at the edge of the New Age. And they're open. They want to learn. They sign up for workshops. They want to know all about these things. People are tired of being sick and they're losing a lot of respect for the medical profession and they're really searching and looking. So that to me was an eye opener, to see all these older people...you know seeing people like us doing Reiki or Shiatsu and want to know more about it." ("Glory")

"I think that there's a lot of peace to be found in the New Age things. And I think, even as far as holistic medicine, it gives people hope, it also turns people towards a responsibility towards themselves, rather than putting all the responsibility on a doctor to cure me, or having our...even if it is a small little headache or whatever, having it fixed for us with a Band-Aid, an aspirin or whatever and people are looking at what's the underlying cause of that. I think the more that they clean out what that stuff is, and it doesn't have to be big dramatic things, the more peace that we will

¹⁴*Common Ground*, Issue #29, Winter 1989/90:14.

have. We store things in our bodies at a cellular level and deeper." ("Carmen")

"The other thing that is interesting is that people are looking for their own answers as well as taking responsibility for their own health in a lot of cases. They are not wanting to just go to the doctor and have pills given to them and saying, 'This will take care of it.'" ("Gerald")

"I think [The New Age Movement] is just making a beautiful big mattress so that when the crash comes, it's a big mattress to land on. It means that society is educating itself in the...to be their own doctor, to be their own lawyer, to be their own whatever." ("Becky")

"I believe that everything has to maintain a balance, nature has to maintain balance, we have to maintain balance. If things go too far one way to an extreme that there is a way that there is a way that comes to bring it back, you know? more in balance in being centered. It has gone to the extreme, I personally see, in the medical profession and having been involved in that as a nurse and seeing that they do a lot of good but there is room for more, way more than what has been previously there. Also I believe this about finding out we are all responsible, we are all powerful, we all know what we need to know. We have got to take charge individually and hopefully by doing that individually we can make a difference out there in the...making it more of a balance.

"We are all our own expert and we have a right to make our own decisions and choices and do that responsibly with concern for not only ourselves but others." ("Jewel")

"I don't think that any of this is that new, I think what it is is suppressed, for whatever reason. Now it is coming to the surface again. A lot of it was suppressed by the medical profession for control. The same with the churches, they suppressed a lot of things and changed a lot of things, again for control. And now with mass movement and communication and that, people are not willing to just accept what one person tells them. They use their own judgment

I think all of this is wonderful and great and I'm not going to put down the medical profession because if I went out there

and was hit by a truck, I'd probably go to the hospital and let them do a certain amount on me." ("Gerald")

Perhaps the most illuminating discussion on the issue came from "Chris" who shared his frustrations about western medicine and the need to re-claim personal power and control.

"...we have surrendered to the medical model and said, 'you tell us'. Socially we have surrendered to the scientists and said, 'well, you give us the meaning,' and, 'Oh, you can figure it all out, well great.' What that did do that was effective, I think, was it gave us an alternative to religion, which used to be where we were supposed to find meaning in life. Polishing our relationship with God and through parables, our relationship with each other and all of that. That didn't work either. It is about the individual in all those levels, reclaiming that personal power.

"It is the concept of, 'wait a minute, they didn't give us the answer, so we are done with that now and now we get to...' and I'm sure some of it will be new ideas and some of it will be the ideas that have worked over the ages as far as who we are as people...

"We are going to figure it all out and we will be able to come up with the answers and perhaps, due to the age of religion and how long it has been around that it is like, 'well, we're not getting the answers there, let's see if the scientists can give us the answers', and fortunately we didn't give them the 7000 years we gave everyone else, we gave the church and what not. But it is true, they've been given a real good crack at it and...one fellow was talking about western medicine in terms of an experiment that has failed miserably. I don't view it as quite that. There is some modern medicine being used in the hospitals in China, very very effectively and they are not about to give up the oriental medicine. They say, 'Hey forget that stuff, we'll use the herbs, but we love these sharp scalpels'

"There is no way I would poo-poo what they can do to some poor fellow who gets an eye injury at work...and doctors go in there and patch it up and you can't even tell... That is modern medicine, I've got to take my hat off to that.

"A concept that I have thought in terms of [modern] medicine is that if you're not going to die inside a week you should stay away. If you've got a week to figure stuff out then chances are you are going to be able to find something else...

"...a broken arm is a crisis. It is like you need to take care of that right away. That is what our emergency room should be filled with. Unfortunately we get people in there with all sorts of boils on their butt and they expect a doctor to take care of it.

"[New Age medicine deals with] things that are going to happen that you have got some time. That boil is not going to kill you in the next week, get a poultice from a naturopath. So instead of using an antibiotic, which affects the whole body, get a poultice, put it on your butt and it will suck that boil right out of there. That is a more appropriate way of addressing.... Of course the true new Age approach would be to also ask, 'what's going on with your butt that you need to be producing these boils?'"...

"That's another thing that our modern medicine doesn't have is that it doesn't have the time. The initial symptom is presented to the doctor and that is what they try to treat. If the doctor took an hour to try and chat it out with the person there would be all this other stuff that isn't being dealt with, like, you know, 'How are you sleeping?'"...

The decision to exercise control over one's self has led to what may be considered drastic actions by some people. A number of the women interviewed made decisions to discard western forms of birth control in favor of simply "choosing" not to get pregnant.

"So anyway...So I was on the pill at the time and one of the first times we made love [my boyfriend] said, 'what's this shit! Get rid of it.' So I threw it in the garbage, or he did. And I wasn't on any contraceptives for a few years after that. I never got pregnant, but it was the whole mentality of natural foods or natural living. Because it is crap really, those." ("Sally")

This same decision led one woman into a situation fraught with irony. Moreover this same situation demonstrated in a particularly cold way the extent to which private control can exclude the consideration of others.

"I quit using birth control and I said I don't need this anymore. I knew I could control my own body. I don't need to get pregnant if I don't want to get pregnant. And I got pregnant twice, but at the same time I simply talked to the fetus and said, 'OK I don't want this. This is not appropriate.' And both times they just left. There was no

chemical intervention. There was no medical intervention. It was strictly me. My energy. My body. My knowingness. My self. Working with my self, and nobody outside was doing anything. I did it for myself." ("Celeste")

Another manifestation of the recovery of control over the self is evident in the New Age's teaching that individuals are personally responsible for everything that happens in their lives. For many this concept derives from the eastern concept of Karma wherein all the "good" and "bad" which occurs in a person's life is the working out of a system of cosmic justice. Karma is a philosophical/religious idea that says that what a person does in one life-time will return to them in a later life-time. For example if you are a murderer in one incarnation there is a good chance that in order to learn the necessarily lesson you may well be murdered in a subsequent life. Similarly if you are benevolent in one incarnation you will probably be the recipient of benevolence in another life. If you were once rich, you may later be poor and so on. Furthermore the outplaying of these event are not merely caused by the whims of some distant cosmic justice, they are in fact the deliberate choices of the people who experience them. Hence one can not blame a past-self, one has to accept the experience as being something they themselves chose in order to have a valuable learning experience.

To create your own reality means to be in total control of your life. For New Agers the ultimate source of meaning, purpose and reality is found in self. As one writer puts it,

"...new consciousness is a spirituality of co-creation, rather than a spirituality of receiving only gifts of the abundance's from that which is the creator.

"As a supplicant, which is the old, more traditional way of doing things, you have to beseech and pray and hope God will hear your prayers and hope God will respond to them and take care of you in whatever capacity, as a father or parent would take care of a dependent. Whereas, to be a

participant is to say 'I can create my own reality. I have the facility, the technique, the understanding.'"¹⁵

This philosophy fits perfectly with the concept of a totally privatized religion. God is no longer a personal being who exists beyond self, God is self. There is no need to ultimately look beyond self. Meaning and purpose are all derived from self, leaving the exterior world as a source of inspiration and ideas, yet since cosmically the exterior world is ultimately one's own creation, one's own reality, it becomes yet one more expression of self.

"Where else do I get inspired? I guess I get it a lot inside, it is basically me and myself. I'm carrying around my source now which is great. It is like a battery which I'd have to hook up other places before, but I'm sort of like self-sufficient now, in this body and spirit." ("Sally")

"[Where do I go for inspiration?] To myself. To myself. I do the Reiki...and this is like getting in touch with my higher-self. And this is where I'll get my answers. You know, we have all the answers. It's to believe that and I've gotten to that stage where I don't feel I have to go outside. I don't go to readers anymore, any of that stuff. I really believe we have all the answers and this is what I tell all my clients; they have the answers. It's just to love yourself unconditionally. Trust your instincts." ("Glory")

"If there is anything that this New Age or this metaphysical thing can give people is that they have the power within themselves. That we all know our own answers and our own truths." ("Carmen")

The logical outcome of the concept that you create your own reality is the strong belief that the individual is the creator of, and hence is responsible for every action, every experience which one has.

"A lot of my focus is on power. Growing inner-power and just feeling very connected because I feel a lot of what people go through on earth, and certainly what I went through in my youth is a feeling of separateness. Part of

¹⁵Joseph Roberts. "Creating Your Reality: an Interview with Lazaris", *Common Ground*, Issue #26, Spring 1989, pp. 12-13: 13.

what I am here to remember and help other people remember is that we are One with everything around, literally everything. And that we also create our own reality, and that is a big part of my...where I live and they way I teach, taking full responsibility for everything in my life and not being able to blame anyone for anything that I created. I mean, if it is raining I take responsibility that I have created this in my existence this day. If someone is creating a tight situation with somebody I take responsibility that I am creating this for a reason and I try to look inside either through meditation, or talking to my spirit guides, why am I creating this? What am I learning from this? So I really trust them. There is always a learning for every situation. That is why I don't believe in religion, because there tends to be a total letting it...putting everything on a God rather than taking any responsibility for our choices and a lot of people would rather blame the world or blame the society for problems so it is very important that people start taking that responsibility for themselves. Part also of what I'm teaching and I'm also going to do more writing, is to get that responsibility out there and to realize our...find our own power inside and feeling one with everything around us will help us to make our choices and take responsibility and ultimately, world peace. (laugh)" ("Lorrie")

"I find more and more, the people I am associating with who are positive thinking people. When you get into positive thinking you don't want to be around a lot of sick people, you know...The people who are into different ways of thinking, tend to drop away because they don't understand your way of thinking. You know, we have different ways of saying things...when something happens to you, you kind of say, "well, what did I allow to happen today?"...you see that you have a part in that. Things don't happen to you. So other people who don't understand that, you just can't talk on...it's really interesting how that happens. I do have some friends we play cards with that don't understand those kinds of principles and it is very interesting listening to them, and I find it fascinating and I'm just glad I'm not there." ("Claire")

"I know I'm here to help people and nursing I didn't feel I was doing that, so what I'm doing now I feel like I'm doing far more than I ever could have if I'd stayed working in a

hospital setting. I can't stand sick people anymore. (laugh) Because my whole belief system has changed to the point that, 'Hey, you are responsible for this illness' and the training that I received was quite opposite to that, 'Hey illnesses just happen to you,' and I don't believe that at all. I'm OK with sick people, I'm very compassionate with them. I think part of that is they are going through that to learn something. And it might be that their learning might come to the fact that 'Hey, I can change this. I don't have to be a victim of this disease or sickness or whatever. That maybe there is a different way to look at or maybe there is something I can do to let this go, [that] kind of thing.' It just comes to knowledge. Being given knowledge and awareness. When and if they are ready because not every one is ready for that, because not everyone is ready for things." ("Jewel")

This philosophy causes the people whose lives aren't yet perfect to ask what it is that is going wrong, or what they have done or not done to end up in this situation.

"You either have all you want in your life right here, right now, or you have the excuses why you don't.

"If you don't have all you want in your life right here, right now, then you haven't given yourself permission yet. You haven't empowered yourself to have it all yet...!"¹⁶

Sometimes, however this philosophy can begin to sound quite cold and heartless when the most severe of life's issues are dealt with.

"This is the victim versus being responsible for our lives idea and that the...We're talking sweeping generalities here, but you've got the single mother who, you know, 'Woe is me. I've got this child, I'm stuck in this situation and...that ass-hole ran out on me.' And all of that - Victim, you know, gets in a car accident, 'I'm a car accident victim.'

There is the other side of it where, we've created exactly where we are. And there is the other approach which is a blend of haphazard life just unfolding or more specifics around, you know, we are actually in control, in charge of our lives." ("Chris")

¹⁶*Common Ground*, Issue #30, Spring 1990: 13.

This, can be amplified in even more drastic situations, the explanations for which become very difficult to accept. For example, "Debby" described how she had been abused as a child and in seeking answers to the situation she...

"...wanted to do past-life regression to see what kind of Karmic things had caused that event in my life. Why I had selected that. Why I had chosen to be abused..."

Similarly, "Lisa" tells of her experiences with this philosophy.

"...I read the book called, 'The Nature of Personal Reality', by Zeth, and that book changed for me...I had always been a victim, a victim of men. And in that book it said I was the creator of everything that happened to me in my life. I thought, 'Wow', I went, 'If I'm the creator of this wonderful mess...' you know, 'Then that means I can create something different for myself', Then this means, if this is true, if what I am reading here is true, And I knew that what I was reading was true, because my whole being went, 'Oh this is how it is'. If I can make this big a mess then I can also create joy and happiness in my life. It kind of opened the door, that I was willing to take responsibility for my life rather than blaming my step-father or husband for my unhappiness. I started taking personal responsibility..."

"[Later I was raped at home, by a man with stocking on head and a knife]..."

"It healed me. It healed me at a level that I can't believe. At first because I was in a place of taking responsibility...I have a different view point, but back then I felt responsible for everything, like, how did I create this. So I was always saying, 'So how did I create this one?' So it really hurt because I couldn't figure it out and after a week I remember phoning the police because I realized I heard that someone else had been raped and I realized I needed to...yes I had created this, but this man had to be stopped in what he was doing..."

"Lisa" continued to struggle with this experience and much later began to change her perspective slightly.

"What these 'Life Expansion' courses are is like the next level of the *Course in Miracles*. It takes it a little beyond, where instead of saying, you know, 'everything you create is

your creation', that some things happen to you where, of course you wouldn't have created it, but it is how you respond to it...it is not like everything is your idea. There is a little difference there which I think makes a lot of sense."

To varying degrees of extremeness, New Agers seek to take total control of the self. The manifestation of this belief seems to revolve around the accepting of personal responsibility for all aspects of an individual's life. The is evident is the recovery of health-care from the realm of science and re-positioning it with individuals. The belief is that both sickness and health are the responsibility of the individual. People's well-being is the result of their own actions. Sickness is a "dis-ease" of the spirit, a relinquishing of one's life to external powers, a giving away of one's control over self. Well-being is the recovery of control. A person is free of sickness when one is in complete control of self.

The ultimate end of New Age seems to be the total empowerment of individuals and as a logical extension of this, these individuals are to have total control over the past, the environment and ultimately their own self. In considering the locus of control, it is evident that New Age and its correlate postmodernism are direct rejections of modernism. Modernism sought to have all control situated with the experts, the people who understood science and technology. In considering the basic underlying principle of "control", it becomes clear that in fact these movements are simply different methods used in a common search. Modernism and its declared enemies -- postmodernism and New Age -- are all based on the premise that humans can control everything, that the human race can and should consider itself capable of improving and controlling the world.

NEW AGE AND SCIENCE: PROVING THE CONNECTION

The New Age frequently names science as one of the major culprits in the creation of a world gone astray. Science has separated people from the land, it has replaced myth and religion with cold facts and figures, it has created "the bomb" and has removed

meaning from the world. The feeling that science has failed in its promises is strong among New Agers. Science has failed to deliver, but it is also portrayed as having suppressed other ways of thinking about the world and hence the New Age is attempting to recover the more authentic, more natural pre-scientific ways.

"It's the idea that there is a breakdown of the traditional western way of seeing things. There has been a breakdown of faith in the western religions...institutionalized religions. When that faith, like when the technological progress came along and...so everything has been breaking down, we realize that technological pathway has been a dead-end and science is not saving us in the way we hoped it would. Science does not have all the answers. The institutionalized religions do not have all the answers. As a matter of fact, both of these alienate our whole sense of self from who we really are. We've been programmed to be this and that and the other thing the moment we're born and then we find out we're really messed up. Like all the mental institutions, all the mental health. It is a total breakdown of an old way that is no longer working." ("Christine")

"New Age is a reawakening of some of the spiritual values, I feel that we always had before science, the success-driven motive of science came along and sort of painted over a lot of the stuff we had been involved in before. It is also a bringing up-to-date of those older spiritual values as well. Of course some of them are not useful in the context of a modern society where science has had its hold on us for almost two-hundred years. I mean a really significant hold." ("Marina")

"As civilization grew and we became reasoning, independent beings (or simply puffed up with our own sense of self-importance, depending on how you look at it) we became increasingly separated from this early sense of mystery. Mystery was replaced by science, and we began to disassociate works that we considered our own creation from that of God and the Universe and Everything Else [sic] we didn't understand. Viewed through "enlightened" scientific eyes, music became more mechanical and down-

to-earth. There were, however, some composers who never lost their sense of perspective."¹⁷

Some take on a perspective that isn't so much centered on an inherent inadequacy of science, but rather that there are cosmic explanations for the current anti-scientific sentiments. For "Becky", science is just not able to keep up with this cosmically changing world. When asked about science she thought that it was...

"...too slow. It's too slow. I'm being very kind, I'm saying it's just too slow. It is too slow. And if you want the New Age reason for that it's because...OK, this is the latest scuttlebutt, OK, in the psychic centres, the psychic circles. It's that this planet and all our planets, our planetary system is floating through the universe. It's not in one corner of the universe doing nothing. It's actually moving through the universe and starting a couple of years ago it has moved into a hot-spot in the universe. The energy is accelerated...You can see what that means. It means that the energy upon which society built institutions, structures, mental and physical, theology, the energy foundation that those were set-up on and during no longer exists. We have moved into another energy field....so why should we be surprised when those structures suddenly crash?"

There are others who just feel that science isn't able to cover everything, that some things are simply outside of grasp.

"I am interested in a wide range of subjects that...I believe that science doesn't know how to prove, but that doesn't mean that they don't exist." ("Leslie")

Despite this consistent perception that science is not what it makes itself out to be, the New Age seems to contradict itself by frequently turning to it for validation. Major works like Fritjof Capra's *The Tao of Physics*¹⁸, and others like *The Tao of Science*¹⁹, *The*

¹⁷Brian Tate, "Inviting Music into our Homes," *Common Ground*, Issue #33, Winter '90/91: 14.

¹⁸Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, (Oxford: University Press, 1983).

¹⁹R. G. Siu, *The Tao of Science*. (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1957).

Dancing Wu Li Masters,²⁰ and, *The Eye of Shiva*²¹ explore intensively the relationship between the realm of science and New Age belief systems.

Along a much more popular vein New Agers frequently use the terms "science" and "scientists" seemingly to bring validity to whatever is being spoken about. It seems that within New Age there is need for scientific approval.

"If you want to take a look at it strictly esoterically, the planet is in a period of transition. We are moving from the 3rd dimension, into the 4th dimension and into the 5th dimension. Scientists know this, they are not telling people in general that this is what's happening. Scientists know that in a few years we are going to come in contact with a meteor, I believe it is a meteor of hugmungous proportions." ("Celeste")

"Generally throughout the world science is coming close to metaphysics. I was watching this show last year that Carl Sagan did about the Black Holes and how they feel that Black holes are time-tunnels for other beings from other universes to travel through and they feel that the universe is a honey-comb of black holes that people can time travel through. I thought, this is amazing, this is a scientific show they are so close to discovering these things." ("Lorrie")

Undoubtedly, however, the use of science within the New Age is nowhere more apparent than in the world of product promotion. Advertisers spread scientific sounding terminology on their advertisements liberally. The range of "scientifically tested and proven" methods for improving health, entering into altered states of consciousness and improving one's relationships seems endless.

**"NOW YOU CAN USE A TAPE TO MEDITATE LIKE
A 108-YEAR-OLD MONK**

*Improve Your Health, Habits, Sleep, Memory, Relationships
and More...*

"...Until now, it could take years of practicing meditation to get into a deep state of relaxation necessary for effective re-

²⁰G. Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*. (New York: Morrow, 1979).

²¹A. de Reinourt, *The Eye of Shiva: Eastern Mysticism and Science*. (London: Souvenir Press Ltd, 1980).

programming. Most people don't have the time, dedication or the discipline needed to learn advanced meditation techniques. Besides, caves can be boring and damp."²²

"LIFE FORCE ENERGY PLATE

A natural source of energy drawn from the Universe, contained in a wafer-thin metallic plate 3" by 5". Fit in your pocket or purse.

"The Atoms and electrons of aluminum have been altered so that the plates are in resonance with the basic energy of the Universe. They function as transceivers that create an energy that will penetrate any material substance by osmosis.

The plate is beneficial in increasing the level of positive energy and well being in all life forms: plant, animal and human."²³

"The Synchronicity Experience. Brother Charles, American born master, studying with Paramhansa Muktananda was asked by his teacher to return to the West and find a way to introduce Eastern Philosophy to the West. Brother Charles reveals to us an expanded and elevated dynamic that is known as a Source Consciousness Awareness. People are drawn to him because being in his presence catalyzes a correspondent enlightening elevation within themselves - meditation becomes a spontaneous happening.

Synchronicity Contemporary High-Tech Meditation products were developed to suit the fast paced lifestyles of people in the West. The audio cassette products use sound patterning to balance the left and right hemispheres of the brain to induce a meditative state opening the doors to paranormal experience."²⁴

"Because so much depends on a healthy you. / KYOLIC ODORLESS GARLIC / The Scientists' Choice."²⁵

"Relief From Pain: Freedom to Move!...If you suffer from headaches, digestive problems, aching joints, excessive menstrual cramps or other discomforts, these may be symptoms of a subluxation, or spinal misalignment.

²²*Common Ground*, Issue #30, p. 79.

²³*Common Ground*, Issue #35, Summer 1991, p. 64.

²⁴*Common Ground*, Issue #36, Fall 1991, p. 18.

²⁵*Common Ground*, Issue #44, Sept/Oct. 1993: 53.

"Combining traditional and progressive procedures, Dr. Bill Cameron uses a recognized three stage treatment for this disorder..."²⁶

"**Tachyon**TM / Your Health and Fitness are in Your Hands / What is Tachyon Energy? Tachyon energy is a life-force that exists infinitely throughout the universe. It is an organized force field that diminishes chaos by increasing order and coherence in any system. Scientists in Japan have created products that have been uniquely processed to focus this life force."²⁷

"**NEW WORLD NETWORK** introduces **The Synchro-Energizer Brain Wave Machine**

We are all seeking ways to clear ourselves. The **Synchro-Energizer** device helps us to cut through the outer layers of negative programming quickly so we can do our inner work more effectively/Light and sound impulses stimulate and balance both hemispheres of the brain, yielding remarkable results."²⁸

"**WELCOME TO THE FUTURE** / For a vibrationally new you / **EXPERIENCE PEGASUS PRODUCTS** / The largest collection of Gem Elixirs, Flower Essences and Homeopathic Remedies available now."²⁹

"Magneto-Therapeutic Device **ELEKIBAN** / The earth is a giant permanent magnet with poles in the north and south, and all living creature exist within its vast magnetic field. For centuries, man has studied the application magnetic force for therapeutic use. Today, the positive effects of magnetic force in medical treatment have been clinically confirmed and recognized by modern medical science....**ELEKIBAN** is designed to give **MAGNETIC FORCE STIMULATION** in the precise spot of the tense muscle or muscular stiffness..."³⁰

²⁶*Common Ground*, Issue #43, Summer 1993: 10.

²⁷*Common Ground*, Issue #39, Summer 1992: 58.

²⁸*Common Ground*, Issue #21, Winter 1987/88: 10.

²⁹*Common Ground*, Issue #30, Spring 1990: 7.

³⁰*Common Ground*, Issue #23, Summer 1988: 4.

There is also a catalogue of New Age type, mind expanding products which lists the products, reviews them, and includes their prices.³¹

Advertisers, however are not the only people to use science in such a manner. Even some religious groups themselves cannot resist the urge to bring scientific validity to their particular spiritual technique.

"SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO JOHREI/ Johrei is the most advanced scientific method to date: it is no exaggeration to say that it will become the basis for medicine in the twenty-first century."³²

"With this scientifically validated knowledge, it is no longer necessary for any individual of any nation to continue with problems of suffering. Every government can now raise every area of national life to perfection through Maharishi's Master Plan to create heaven on earth, which utilizes Maharishi's Vedic Science and Technology to apply the unified field of natural law for the glorification of all aspects of life -- inner and outer."³³

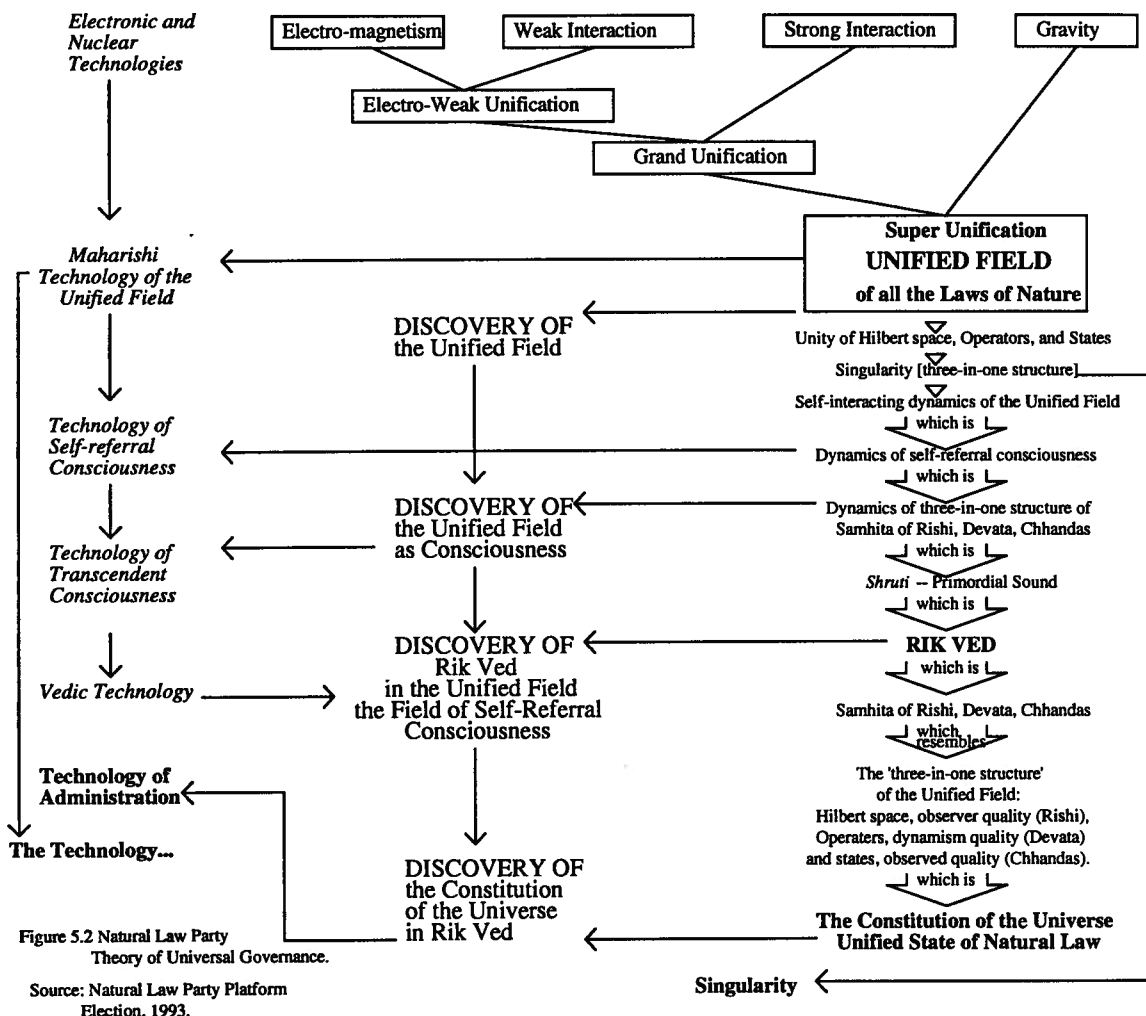
As the quotation above exemplifies, pseudo-science is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in Transcendental Meditation. TM applies its own scientific understanding to the political governing of the universe. The following is from the political platform of the Natural Law Party (TM).³⁴

³¹Judith Hooper and Dick Teresi, *Would the Buddha Wear a Walkman?: A Catalogue of Revolutionary Tools for Higher Consciousness*, (New York: Fireside, 1990).

³²"SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO JOHREI", Pamphlet.

³³*Globe and Mail*, March 1, 1990: A9.

³⁴"Natural Law Party", Election Platform for the Natural Law Party, Canadian General Election 1993: 30.



The idea of needing validation from science continues at a different level in the related need for some kind of institutionalized recognition. While science proves the validity of techniques, institutions (also generally berated by New Agers) are needed to bring validity to people and their practices. Andrew Ross points out that the New Age points the way to individual self-actualization through the route of accreditation and institutionalization.

"As middlebrow scientific culture, New Age wants to be fiercely self-determining, but the path to establishing that authority leads through the obstacle course of accreditation that under-pins scientific authority and marks non-institutionalized opinions as illegitimate."³⁵

³⁵Ross, 27.

This is evident in the life of "Lisa" who did bodywork for a while without having been certified in any official way. She realized that in order to maintain her business she would probably need some kind of certification.

"At one point I thought I needed to have some kind of certification for...I needed something that people could say, 'well, she's registered,' or 'she's this,' or 'she's that,' so I became a Trager practitioner, which took me a year..."

Similarly, "DC" told of how important it was for a particular New Age style phenomenon to be recognized by the central institutionalized body of psychology in the form of an insertion of it into the psychological Diagnostic and Statistical Handbook of (the DSM).

"So there will be a whole section in the New DSM. That should give you some idea of what is happening with this New Age. This is an incredible turn of events. it is wildly exciting."

In any one issue of *Common Ground* the reader is made aware of a plethora of institutions eager to certify people in their particular practice. There are listings for: the "Neuro Linguistic Programming institute", "the Institute of Transpersonal Empowerment", "The CTI Counselor's Training Institute", the "New Method Kinesiology Institute," "The Healership Training Institute of BC," the "Applied Psychophysiology Institute", "Bastyr College - Natural Health Sciences", "Wild Rose College of Natural Healing," the "Canadian College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine", the "International College of Traditional Chinese Medicine" the "Heartwood Institute", "Dominion Herbal College", "Spirit Light Healing Arts", the "Reflexology Association of Canada", the "Institute for Therapeutic Learning", the "Institute of Chinese Herbology", the "Kootenay School of Rebalancing", and the "Shiatsu School of Canada". Aside from the many colleges and institutions to choose from there are also hundreds of day long courses one can take relating to almost any topic within the world of New Age. In short there is no lack of institutions ready to provide accreditation to people for performing

New Age style practices, many of which have traditionally been passed down from generation to generation in cultures untouched by the concept of "graduation". The proliferation of diplomas and degrees relating to ancient practices appears to be the absorption of modernist, scientific standards into the New Age.

What then are we to make of this strange relationship which exists between New Age culture and the world of empirical science? As mentioned above, on one hand the New Age treats the scientific method and the products of science as a plague which has to be eradicated from western culture. On the other, New Agers frequently return to the world of science to seek validation and accreditation. It is no small problem to determine why this strange love-hate relationship exists, but I believe that exploding some of the possible reasons will help us to understand further the even stranger relationship between modernism and its discontents.

In this chapter, we have seen how the cores of New Age and postmodernism appear to be the product of the same impulse towards perfectibility that was expressed in modernism. The only differences -- and they are significant -- which exist between the movements lie in the adoption of vastly different techniques. Part of the New Age technique is to move away from the technological / scientific paradigm which has dominated western culture in recent history and move towards a paradigm based on the idea of natural self-control. But somehow this move is not complete.

Andrew Ross points out that upon preliminary examination there is the obvious observation that everything within our culture is destined in some way to emulate and echo the dominant scientific world view.³⁶ The assumption here is that scientific rationality is so much a part of western consciousness that everything that comes from the culture will be marked by it, even if that thing is a conscious dissenter from the culture. This, however, can hardly explain the extent to which the New Age calls upon science for validity.

³⁶Ibid, 17.

Generally ignored by conventional science, New Age science is essentially an attempt to create an alternative science, one which can deal with the paranormal and metaphysical rather than just the physical and without the stringent proof tests of conventional science. In order, however, to dislodge conventional science from its position, New Age science must work within the existing language and procedures set by the existing science.³⁷ As a result New Age science looks, to the uninitiated, like some strange, even discredited wing of modern science. This leaves New Age in something of a contradictory situation where it is...

"...on the one hand, obligated to emulate the dominant, rationalist discourse, and on the other, condemned to the fringes of pseudoscience and the twilight zone of reason by the guardians of orthodoxy."³⁸

In the end, it is apparent that the New Age seeks to straddle between two worlds where it sees the obvious errors and problems created by science yet it boldly asserts itself as beyond those shortcomings. It asserts that it is a "...kinder and gentler science."³⁹ It portrays itself as science with a benevolent attitude, science for the sake of people, not for the sake of science, that its discoveries and applications will be "appropriate", not arbitrary.

"I'd say in that respect in the New Age there is a sense of evolved values and yet we're faced with the technology that is endangering us in the long run. It is a mixture. I think we are in a struggle to figure out how to get smart with our technology, in the service of life rather than the service of technology." ("David")

Where the New Age sees the power and potential of science it embraces it. There is the assumption that science will also become the ally of the New Age.

"Ultimately, some part of the holists' desire lies in their hope that rationalist science, no matter how fundamentally

³⁷Ibid, 20.

³⁸Ibid, 22.

³⁹Ibid, 30.

impaired by its materialist premises, will be able to prove the legitimacy of New Age claims..."⁴⁰

Ross is pointing out that the New Age, although fundamentally opposed to the principles of science, is willing to adopt them when they support the New Age claims, no matter how dubious in nature.

"...it is paradoxical that the New Age movement, which rejects the fruits of technology and seeks to regress to the primitive in its religious understanding, wishes at the same time to be up-to-the-minute in its use of arguments based on modern scientific discoveries."⁴¹

Similarly, it is probably also fair to assert that advertisers assume that the mention of scientific support for the product will be beneficial since there still remains in the culture a respect for science. Again, as we discussed in chapter four, in the world of postmodernism there is a parallel desire to explore the ancient, while at the same time utilizing the latest technologies to do it.

This, however, brings us to a point in which we can return to the initial topic of this chapter. In seeing the willingness of the New Age to adopt science it becomes clear that although largely discredited by New Age, science becomes a convenient technique to be applied when "appropriate" in the ever present search for ultimate human control over the world. As Craig Gay observed,

"On the one hand, the movement obviously represents a clear protest against technological artificiality, and the theme of returning to a pre-modern and more natural existence is quite prominent in New Age literature. Yet it would be mistaken to imagine that the proponents of the return to nature necessarily envision the renunciation of human mastery over nature. No, even in the context of New Age criticisms of science and technology, the critics themselves still assume *a priori* that the problems of the human condition are up to human beings to solve and that

⁴⁰Ibid, 20.

⁴¹Michael Perry, *Gods Within: A Critical Guide to the New Age*, (London: SPCK, 1992.): 27.

we must be prepared to use any means at our disposal to the end of solving them."⁴²

If the techniques of science could be re-framed so as to become more palatable to the New Ager it would not be such a great difficulty to adopt this tamed or adjusted science as yet another resource to be used by the New Age in pursuit of the same end.

The ideal of enhancing one's control over self runs through all of the New Age's use of science and scientific terminology. Whether it be brain-wave machines, meditation techniques, vitamins, crystals or herbal remedies, the rhetoric of science is employed as a means of increasing the weight given to the claim that the product will enhance one's control over one's body, mind or spirit, and sometimes all three.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter Three we saw that under modernism it was believed that all the world's problems could be solved if only enough time and energy were spent in understanding the natural mechanics of each situation present in the world. Despite the fact that postmodernism and New Age are seen as reactions against modernism, sometimes even called anti-modern, New Age statements such as the following from *Common Ground* magazine appear regularly.

"I can't think of any problem that presently does or possibly could confront the human species, any problem, which if understood, is beyond the reach of the human species, any problem, which if understood, is beyond the reach of the human mind."⁴³

Through the adoption of the logic of technological production and the subsequent pluralization of life-worlds, western society has seen the rolling back of the Christian sacred canopy which once gave a unified world-view to the culture. With the advent of modern technological production the public realm became one imbued with a sense of

⁴²Craig Gay, "Common Ground: A Few Reflections on the New Age Movement", *Crux*, March 1992, Vol XXVII, No. 1, pp. 15-21: 18.

⁴³"Another Side of the Man: an interview with Norman Cousins", *Common Ground*, Issue #37, pp. 10-11: 10.

mechanistic order, while in the private realm people were left to pursue value-laden issues such as religion. Inevitably this created a pluralization of social life-worlds where people began leading split lives where they would have a consciousness tailored to suit the requirements of each realm. The failure of modern technological ideals and the inadequacy of split consciousness paved the way for the discontents of modernism. The New Age, the 1960's counterculture and postmodernism are all examples. While each was still sympathetic to the underlying principle of progress and the inevitability of human control over the world, they differed greatly over what methods should be employed in achieving that end.

The New Age employs the philosophy of empowering individuals to exercise self-determined, spiritual control over the past, nature, and ultimately the self as opposed to the modern technique of experts applying scientific, mechanistic control. In viewing the relationship which connects the New Age and the world of science, it is apparent that the New Age looks to the world of empirical science for credibility. As we saw in Chapter Four the New Age movement grew out of the principles of the counterculture while consciously deciding to leave behind most of its techniques. In the same way New Age and postmodernism have retained the same underlying principle as modernism while completely altering the methods used to achieve their desired ends. Since, however, their opposition is only in regards to the technique and not to the principle of progress and control, if the New Age is able to adjust either the techniques or the rhetoric of empirical science (ie. by making it appear to support New Age claims and to be consistent with New Age morality) then they can co-exist as apparent allies.

"...New Age is a response, if you like, to the so-called Enlightenment 'project of modernity' that was, and still is, bound up with the imperatives of growth and development. In principle, New Age proposes a continuation of this project, but in the name of a different human rationality."⁴⁴

⁴⁴Ross, 73.

Chapter Six -

THE 1960s COUNTERCULTURE AND THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

THE 1960s COUNTERCULTURE

Introduction

By definition, a counterculture is a movement which acts against the dominant culture. It acts against the values, power structures and patterned exchanges of a society.¹ In the 1960s the most prominent countercultural element in American society was the large youth culture. The counterculture was the predominantly white, (95%)² middle class,³ college educated, (93%)⁴ children of the 1950s baby-boom era, a segment of the population which had grown to an unprecedented size. Although not all the young people in this era were actually part of the counterculture, enough were to make it a movement that could not be ignored. By the 1960s these children had grown into teenagers and young adults and were going off to colleges, filling them beyond capacity. As a result, in the colleges (and elsewhere) there existed a large collection of relatively privileged students who were able to observe the modern world as it was unfolding, but who did not necessarily feel attached to it. They were detached by the fact that they had grown up living off of the fruits of their parents' labour. They had not experienced the hardships of the war or the depression and they did not have to work in their youth.⁵ Consequently, they were the first generation of modern children who were able to observe the modern system without ever having to enter into it to survive (with the possible exception of the Vietnam war which asked this generation to offer its life in order to serve the nation). At the end of their childhood (and especially in college), when they hung in a state of

¹J. Milton Yinger, *Countercultures*, (New York: The Free Press, MacMillan, 1982), 5.

²Rex Weiner and Deanne Stillman, *Woodstock Census*, (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 20.

³Ibid, 17.

⁴Ibid, 23.

⁵Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969), 31.

ambiguity between dependency and responsibility they were able to turn their attention to the errors, weaknesses, inadequacies and contradictions of the world in which they lived.⁶ The irony then, is that it was the very excesses and luxuries of modern technocratic American society which gave the '60s generation the time, money and education which were necessary to be critical of it.

Countercultural elements in society have always existed. Occultists, fringe religious organizations, anti-technocratic political groups, poets, novelists, painters, composers and many others have always been in opposition to the dominant cultural system, whatever that may be.

A decade before the '60s youth ever reached the age of consent, Allen Ginsberg, C. Wright Mills, *MAD* magazine, and the Beatniks were just a few of many voices leading towards a climate of criticism.⁷ But the '60s children were able to do something that the 50s generation had not been able to do, (or did not want to do). They got,

"...dissent off the adult drawing board. They [tore] it out of the books and journals an older generation of radicals authored, and they turned the hypotheses of the disgruntled elders into experiments..."⁸

It appears, however, that one of the striking differences between this and other countercultures was that the '60s youth culture was not essentially coming from a small, fringe portion of the population. It was unique, "...that a radical rejection of science and technological values should appear so close to the centre of our society, rather than on the negligible margins."⁹ The group which was performing this cultural coup was a central portion of society, in fact they were the hope of future generations. They were prospective presidents, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals. They were a very large group. The baby boom of the 1950s meant that the '60s youth held a disproportionately

⁶Roy Wallis, "The New Religious Movements as Social Indicators", in Eileen Barker (ed). *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society*, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 223.

⁷Roszak, 24.

⁸Ibid, 26.

⁹Ibid, 51.

large percentage of the population. Hence, by size and by social position the hippy culture was able to become a large and formidable force.

Their size, affluence and education afforded the '60s generation the time to experiment at a point in their life when their elders, a generation earlier, had had to enter into the "system" in order to take care of home and family. The advantaged position of the '60s youth allowed them to ask questions of society which had never really been asked before and their sheer size afforded them an audience.

But what were their criticisms and why did they have them? What, in fact, they were reacting to was the existing dominant American social, economic and political structure. The American system was essentially a "technocracy", which Theodore Roszak defines as,

"...That society in which those who govern justify themselves by appeal to technical experts who, in turn, justify themselves by appeal to scientific forms of knowledge. And beyond the authority of science there is no appeal."¹⁰

To this he adds that technocracy is "...the social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organizational integration."¹¹

At its core, technocracy has three basic premises. Firstly, that all problems have a technical (scientific) solution, and "...[i]f a problem does not have such a technical solution, it must not be a *real* problem. It is but an illusion."¹² Secondly, that social problems in technocracy are the result of "breakdowns in communication" and people need simply to sit down and reason together in order to find the solution.¹³ Thirdly, experts are the people who will solve these problems. Only experts really know what the problems and solutions truly are.¹⁴

¹⁰Roszak, 7.

¹¹Ibid, 6.

¹²Ibid, 10.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid, 11.

The '60s youth culture were restless and uncomfortable under the technocratic system. Milton Yinger in his book, *Countercultures*¹⁵, gives an extensive explanation of the factors which contributed to the identification of the inadequacies of the dominant system (technocracy) by the '60s youth. On a structural level, Yinger first points out that technocracy had created a completely depersonalized work force.¹⁶ People had become mindless cogs in the production machine. The average individual was disconnected from having to actually know anything of their job. Knowledge was left exclusively in the hands of the experts.¹⁷ Therefore the individual became an impersonal part of an impersonal system. Second, he refers to the demographic fact of an increasingly large middle-class youth population which would inevitably share their dissatisfaction and develop a cohesiveness due to their bond of age and situation.¹⁸

Third, Yinger discusses the concept of "relative deprivation", where the standards of comparison of this generation would be based on a forward rather than on a backwards gaze.¹⁹ In a generation of ever-increasing expectations, material and otherwise, when a plateau is reached and their expectations continue to rise, the gap between reality and desire widens. Hence a feeling of deprivation sets in despite the fact that real deprivation may be far less than in previous generations.²⁰

Fourth, Yinger points out there was a structural promotion of feelings of isolation. With a weakening of intimate social circles (family, church, neighborhood, work groups) there was a greater likelihood that individuals would feel detached and isolated.²¹

Yinger also examines many of the cultural inadequacies of technocracy. He suggests that generally there was a feeling that the social values of the day were either inadequate or irrelevant. The values of a culture which depended on technology were

¹⁵Yinger.

¹⁶Yinger, 52.

¹⁷Peter Berger, et al. *The Homeless Mind*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), (Ch. 1).

¹⁸Yinger, 54-59.

¹⁹Ibid, 59-65.

²⁰Ibid, 59.

²¹Ibid, 65.

seen to be void of any real meaning or coherence. Despite some small hypocrisies, ("Technology may be abhorrent but electrically amplified guitars are essential"²²) the general feeling was that technology had created a more disastrous situation than it could ever hope to correct. Similarly, utilitarian individualism (the dominant philosophy guiding people's sense of purpose in life), which blindly promoted material affluence and personal gain, was too costly.²³ This philosophy did not provide any truly meaningful patterns of social or personal existence, since it was oriented to consumption, without any meaning or purpose beyond consumption.²⁴

Along with this loss of meaning was an accompanying loss of myth and symbol.²⁵ The religious, social, and cultural symbols of the technocratic society had failed to bring with them any lasting sense of worth or meaning. Utilitarian individualism and technology provided only the rusting corpses of machinery, as the symbols of modern society. The church, the only widely recognized outlet for spiritual meaning to the middle-class American family, ceased to be relevant. The church was perceived as being too engrossed in the values and practices of technocracy. It had suffered terribly as a result of its own marriage into a system of utilitarian individualism much earlier in its American history.²⁶ The church could gain no sympathy or interest from a generation which saw it as being as much a part of the technocratic system as the state itself.²⁷ As a result this generation saw a vacuum of meaning, myth and symbol, which they impatiently waited to fill with the first believable substitute.

Along with the structural and cultural inadequacies which pushed a generation into rebellion, Yinger points to an assortment of natural tendencies which would have helped pull individuals into the movement.

²²Ibid, 79.

²³Robert Bellah, "New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis in Modernity" in C. Glock and R. Bellah (eds) *The New Religious Consciousness*. (U of C: Berkley Press, 1976).

²⁴Ibid, 339.

²⁵Yinger, 81-83.

²⁶Bellah, 336.

²⁷Ibid, 340.

Firstly, there is the natural curiosity which can draw many youth into the forbidden or the inverted.²⁸ The lure of the different may have been a significant enough reason to attract some into a position of rebellion or of protest. The technocratic world had become unbearably dull and any change was seen as a change for the better.

Secondly, there was also a significant level of discontent with the restrictiveness of the technocratic society. The feeling was that the culture had become repressive: sexually, religiously, socially, and in almost every other mode of existence. There was a yearning for a Freudian release of aggression and sexuality along with anything else which was feeling bound-up.²⁹ This created the desire for a *negative identity*, coming from the "...desperate choice between being a failure, a nobody, an 'invisible man,' and being a shockingly visible antihero, a person to reckon with..."³⁰ Rather than be a submissive agreeer, people chose to become self-determined disagreeers who asserted their rights as individuals. This was considered to be a part of the necessary steps towards self-discovery.

To Yinger's points I would also add that there was most certainly an element of fad and momentum in their rebellion. Since everyone else was doing it, a certain portion of the population would have become part of the flow of things without ever really thinking of personal motivations or beliefs.

Fighting Technocracy

Their target was technocracy. As a first order, they mounted a challenge to the principles of rationality. Rationality and technology, in their eyes, had created more problems than they had solved. The promise of revolution which had created America (and the American dream) had dissolved and the counterculture was not going to give it a

²⁸Yinger, 66.

²⁹Ibid, 69.

³⁰Ibid, 71.

second chance.³¹ They were to achieve their goals by "doing" and "experiencing". They rebelled against the rational controls of the material universe, over social relations and over self.³² Rebellion was to be achieved through feeling, not thinking. The ends promised by power and wealth were proving to be hollow, at best, so the counterculture sought to make feelings and relations the new ends of their existence.³³

"'Unnatural' control is contrasted with 'natural' surrender. Instead of dominating reality, one should 'dig' it. Instead of manipulating others one should 'encounter' them. Feeling ('sensitivity,' 'sensibility') is given priority over rational thought. Indeed the youth culture has a generalized hostility to all planning, calculation and systematic projects."³⁴

The new experiences were also in protest to rationality because they were 'now' oriented, they were 'instant'. The delayed gratification of bank accounts, and jobs was seen as a fraud. The '60s children wanted purpose, meaning and pleasure, and they did not want to wait for it.³⁵

Given this, both the principles of rationality and the institutions which promoted it were abandoned almost completely. Some even abandoned the country, heading for months or years of traveling in the East or possibly spending a summer living in caves on the island of Crete with no modern convenience or responsibilities.³⁶ "Becky", a traveller herself at this time said:

"There was quite a movement. Mass movement with people going to India and Zanzibar, and that was in the late '60s. The reason they were moving was because they were into drugs. They were experimenting with altered states of consciousness. They were disillusioned by the established economy, the establishment. They were Americans, totally

³¹Bellah, 334.

³²Berger, 202.

³³Bellah, 334.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵James A Beckford, *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*. (Sage Publ./Unesco, 1986), 340.

³⁶Thomas Thompson, "Crete: a Stop in The New Odyssey", *Life*, Vol. 65, No.3, July 19, 1968.

against the Vietnam war and were trying to distance themselves until it blew over." ("Becky")

To challenge rationality was also to challenge the high priest of the system - the "experts". There was no longer an attitude of acceptance for the facts and figures which experts gave them. There was reason to challenge the idea that correct, effective knowledge belonged only to those who were experts. It was also no longer assumed that the intentions of experts were benevolent or that modernism's fundamental principles were ethical.³⁷ This sentiment was echoed by "Leslie".

"There would have been people rebelling against a system that obviously was not working, and feeding the individual in us. Because I think that's to me where society goes astray when it tries to regulate everything...there is no room for people to be themselves, even in terms of family. I've people coming to me who are doing things their parents told them they should be doing. I think the '60s was a rebellion against that whole idea of everybody...telling me who I should be and what I should do. What about me? What if I don't want to be doing those things?" ("Leslie")

The realities of the Vietnam war served to confirm the suspicions of the counterculture and the point was driven home by reflecting on the real meanings of the euphemisms which the military use with the public.

"Threatening to burn and blast to death several million civilians in an enemy country is called 'deterrence'. Turning a city into radioactive rubble is called 'taking out' a city. A concentration camp...becomes a 'strategic hamlet'. A comparison of the slaughter on both sides is called a 'kill ratio'. Totaling up the corpses is called a 'body count'."³⁸

Similar euphemisms were used against the general American public in all sectors of their lives and the counterculture knew it. Hence the counterculture implicitly and explicitly distrusted the experts of technocracy, and in fact had very little trust for *anyone* over thirty.

³⁷Roszak, 143.

³⁸Ibid.

In response to the impersonality and perceived futility of work, many hippies opted to not work at all, choosing rather to beg for the little money which they might have needed to survive. This of course fit hand-in-glove with their rejection of materialism. They no longer believed that quantity *in* life related to quality *of* life.³⁹ They were world-rejecting in nature, accepted simplicity, naturalness and spirituality as virtues while condemning society for having lost sight of truth.⁴⁰

1960s Spirituality

One of the most significant occurrences, however, was a search for new philosophies on which to hang the principles and activities of the countercultural rebellion. According to the secularization thesis, as western society progressed further and further along the road of science and technology and as more and more of the world's problems were solved, religion would decline and eventually evaporate. In one sense the world did become more secular as the Christian church declined in importance and size. The thesis was wrong, however, in that the supposed death of the Christian God has not produced secularization, but rather it spawned other spiritual searches.⁴¹

The 1960s proved to be much more than just a time of political and social protest. The counterculture did not seek to change only institutions, it sought to change the very consciousness of western society.⁴² This was to be partly done through the realm of spirituality. Hence the '60s were more than a time of rebellion against technocracy, they were a time of great spiritual searching and experimentation.

Up until the 1960s the Christian church had been the major spiritual outlet for European and American society. The church, however, was not prepared to deal with the youth of the 1960s. The church had become more and more of a social institution,

³⁹Roszak, 207.

⁴⁰Wallis, 217.

⁴¹Andrew M. Greely, "Implications for the Sociology of Religion of Occult Behavior in the Youth Culture", *Youth and Society*, V.2 #1, Sept., 1970, pp. 131-140.

⁴²Yinger, 103.

moving further and further away from its spiritual, neumenistic traditions. Spirituality became much more of an idea than a practice. For many, Christianity had lost the ability to help people attain any kind of intimate spiritual knowledge.⁴³ The youth culture was interested in experiencing spirituality for themselves, they were not interested in hearing someone else tell them about it. The church appeared to lack any true spirituality and was seen as ineffectual at being able to answer sufficiently the major questions of life. The Christian church was seen as absolutist, authoritarian, conforming, (demanding obedience) and rationalizing,⁴⁴ therefore in the eyes of the '60s youth the church was just one more technocratic institution and consequently it is not surprising to note that church attendance dropped dramatically during the '60s.⁴⁵ This was all the more reinforced by the fact that the parents of the baby-boomers were essentially "joiners".⁴⁶ Church attendance was a matter of social habit with no application in daily-life, a practice which promoted the perception that the church is an institution of hypocrites with no real substance.

It was not a great chore for the counterculture to discard Christianity along with the technocratic system. This, however, left what was essentially a spiritual/cultural vacuum. There was a crisis of meaning and as Milton Yinger points out,

"[m]any of those caught in such a situation grasp for faith; they invent what they can (glorious religions are seldom the outcome), and they borrow meaning systems that seem uncorrupted by the society around them."⁴⁷

⁴³John Coleman, "The Religious Significance of New Religious Movements", in J.Coleman and G. Baum (eds) *New Religious Movements*. (New York: Seabury Press, 1983): 12.

⁴⁴Steven M. Tipton, "New Religious Movements and the Problem of a Modern Ethic," *Sociological Perspectives*, V. 49, No. 2-3, 1979: 287.

⁴⁵Robert Wunthnow, "Recent Patterns of Secularization: A Problem of Generations?", *American Sociological Review*, V. 41 (Oct) 1976, pp. 850-867: 852.

⁴⁶Beckford, 13.

⁴⁷Yinger, 83.

There was nothing left in the West, so as a result they reached over-seas to the East where there already existed belief systems which seemed to be the perfect antidote to the poison of the West.

"In a time of perpetual crisis, when a great deal of scientific effort is given over to discoveries that at best might reduce the disasters caused by earlier scientific efforts, it is not difficult to understand the appeal of movements that promise instant insight or a group supported way to the discovery of ancient or eternal truths."⁴⁸

To the eyes of the counterculture youth, the religions of the East were instant, ancient and uncorrupted, all at the same time. One did not have to spend years agonizing over the philosophical ins and outs of Eastern religion if one did not want to. All that one had to do was experience. Meditate and feel. The truths espoused by the ancient religions were time-honoured and passed down through countless generations. But most importantly they were uncontaminated by technocracy.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and other eastern religions, philosophies and practices were imported by Eastern Gurus traveling west or by Westerners who had spent time in the East traveling and/or studying in some monastery atop an isolated mountain in Tibet or some similar country. The hippies of the counterculture were anxious to grab hold of the ancient wisdom which appeared to be so supportive of the objectives which they were seeking to achieve. As a result the 1960s saw a great deal of growth of eastern religions in America.⁴⁹

"Becky" recalled from her own experiences one of the ways in which eastern spirituality found its way into North America.

"All those people that went through Nepal and attended those meditation courses, they went back to their countries and towns eventually and missed the action. So they

⁴⁸Ibid, 103.

⁴⁹"New Religious Movements in the Asian Tradition", in C. Glock and R. Bellah (eds) *The New Religious Consciousness*. U of C, Berkley Press, 1976.

invited these teachers, these Tibetan Lamas to come and visit and put on a course because they could not afford to keep going Nepal and they couldn't afford to send their friends there either, which a lot did..."

Eastern spirituality, although largely in harmony with much of the counterculture project, still had to be reconstituted to fit the expectation of the hippies. There was a certain level of domestication or even vulgarization which had to be performed in order to make the eastern religions more palatable to the Westerner.⁵⁰ As Roszak points out in regards to the growth of Zen in North America, the very act of propagating and popularizing it is in fact contrary to its most fundamental message.

"Traditionally the insights of the religion have been part of an extremely demanding discipline in which verbal formulations play almost no part...The best way to teach Zen...is to talk about anything but Zen, allowing the enlightening spark to break through of its own unpredictable accord..."⁵¹

This softening of Eastern religion to meet the needs of the Westerner is something which was confirmed by "Becky" who spent four years in Nepal during the 1960s while becoming a Buddhist nun.

"So this particular teacher was very astute and he had a big surprise because he was basically a medieval Tibetan man and all of a sudden he meets all these hippies...It was interesting for him to try and figure out what was...where we were coming from, because he couldn't teach us like he taught his Tibetan students and his Tibetan monks. He couldn't teach us the same way at all. He found that he had to throw out dogma and systems..."

After domestication, however, Eastern spirituality was everything that technocracy was not and hence was immediately appealing. It contained the kind of ethic which the counterculture was looking for. Zen and other Eastern Philosophies were based on descriptive rather than prescriptive rules.⁵² The basic guidelines of life which they

⁵⁰Yinger, p. 233.

⁵¹Roszak, p. 133.

⁵²Tipton, p. 294.

promoted were, according to one analysis, based on orthopraxy (ethics based on doing) rather than on orthodoxy, (ethics based on rules).⁵³ It was based on experience, not belief or objective facts. It was non-dogmatic, allowing for considerable latitude in the way in which one could express oneself. It was world-rejecting, treating the material world as only a small part of the full range of human experience.

Integral with the search for new forms of spirituality in the 1960s was the use of hallucinogenic drugs. While some forms of Eastern religion expressly forbade the use of drugs, (3HO,⁵⁴ TM,⁵⁵) for the most part they were treated as an ideal method of spiritual enlightenment and experience. Timothy Leary, the high priest of LSD, got the ball rolling with his now famous saying, "Tune in, turn on and drop out". And from this the counterculture got much justification for experimenting with drugs. The drug culture served many purposes such as being a way of simply doing something your parents forbade you to do.⁵⁶ For some drugs were time-fillers, something to do when there is nothing to do.⁵⁷ For others they were a method of coping with the pressures of life.⁵⁸ But for most, drugs had become the route to instant spirituality and enlightenment.

"...they knew, if only vaguely, that somewhere behind the forbidden experience lie rich and exotic religions traditions, occult powers, salvation - which of course, the adult society fails to understand and indeed fears."⁵⁹

The promises of the drug experiences were vast. Leary says,

"The LSD kick is a spiritual ecstasy. The LSD trip is a religious pilgrimage...the way to groove to the music of

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Alan Tobey, "Summer Solstice of the Healthy-Happy-HolyOrganization", in C. Glock and R. Bellah (eds), *The New Religious Consciousness*, (U of C: Berkley Press, 1976).

⁵⁵Hank Johnston, "The Marketed Social Movement: A case study on the Rapid Growth of TM", *Pacific Sociological Review*, July, 1990. pp. 333-355.

⁵⁶Roszak, 155.

⁵⁷Gilbert Geis, "Hypes, Hippies and Hypocrits", *Youth and Society*. V.1, No.4 June 1970, pp. 365-379: 373.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Roszack, 166-7.

God's great song...the sacrament will put you in touch with the ancient two million year old wisdom inside you..."⁶⁰

Thousands of youth followed Leary's advice, experimenting with LSD, Mescaline, marijuana and a host of other drugs.

The truth of the matter, however, is that only in '60s America could spiritual enlightenment have come through the drug experience. These were the children which had been accustomed to the path of least resistance to the place of most pleasure.⁶¹ They were also, to one writer's perception the children of drug addicted parents, (albeit legal tranquilizers and sedatives), who grew up accustomed to solutions found in pills.⁶² The ultimate irony, however, is that in making drugs the route to spiritual enlightenment they were betraying the very principle of anti-technology/technocracy which they set out to defeat.

"The gadget-happy American has always been a figure of fun because his facile assumption that there exists a technological solution to every human problem. It only took the great psychedelic crusade to perfect the absurdity by proclaiming that personal salvation and the social revolution can be packed in a capsule."⁶³

This irony and the general inadequacies of the drug induced road to spiritual enlightenment were eventually realized. The harmful side-effects, addictive tendencies, and "bad-trips" which drugs inevitably brought with them were seen much later by some of the 1960s youth. So too, once the door to the spiritual had been opened by drugs, many pursued other, non-drug induced, spiritual experiences. "Boris" made this observation regarding drug use in and after the 1960s:

"A lot of people thought it was the drugs that cracked open people's consciousness. And they were very powerful, LSD was very powerful, smoking dope, marijuana, those sorts of things changed people's sense of reality in the same way

⁶⁰Timothy Leary, quoted in Roszak, 167.

⁶¹Roszak, 170.

⁶²Roszak, 177.

⁶³Ibid.

alcohol changes people's sense of reality. But back in those days there was a focus or an emphasis on raising consciousness, but it was not about taking drugs for recreational purposes *per se*, it was more for the opening the doors of perception...So, I think drugs became a destructive thing at a certain point because, it is like people got into a habit with them rather than using them as yet another perception, another point of view to look at things."

The Failure of the Counterculture

"The communal movement, that experiment in co-operative living that was so much a part of the hippy lifestyle, had died of heart failure like the hippy movement itself and was now just a footnote for some sociology grad's master's thesis around 1990."⁶⁴

There is no doubt that the hippy culture has long since passed from public prominence. In the early years of the 1970s the hippies packed-up in large numbers and left the communes, cut their hair, got jobs, bought cars and stopped taking drugs. Somewhere along the way the hippy movement ended and it seems that the problem was that it was unsustainable.

In reacting to the rationality of technocracy, the hippies sought to eliminate the defined roles of society. Institutionalized society was to be avoided at all costs. The roles which society placed on people were to be eliminated and therefore society was to be an organic, dynamic, self-determining, self-perpetuating entity not to be designed, but to be experienced.⁶⁵ Peter Berger *et al* point out, however, that this anti-institutionalism created ironies for itself. For example, in the communal movement:

"Whatever the cherished experience for which the commune has been created, its survival is dependent upon some variety of continuous economic maintenance; almost invariably, the activity necessary for the latter collides with

⁶⁴John Grey, *Dazzled*. (Toronto: Irwin, 1984), 140.

⁶⁵Berger, 211.

the experience that serves as the *raison d'être* of the commune."⁶⁶

Similarly, by rejecting the idea of conformity they encouraged the idea of 'doing your own thing', rather than fitting into pre-determined roles and behaviours. Despite the apparent limitlessness inherent in the idea of "do your own thing", Berger *et al* point out that endless variety was not the outcome.

"The irony of the youth culture is that everyone is supposed to "do his own thing" in dynamic disorder - with the result that almost everyone seems to be doing the same things, and highly predictable things to boot. Apart from members of the armed forces, the proponents of the youth culture are probably the most uniform portion of the population in their clothing - one can spot them, like soldiers, a mile away."⁶⁷

This theme was reiterated by some of the interviewees. "Christine", recalled her impressions of the hippy scene she was involved in.

"I became disillusioned with them...then after knowing them for a while, I lived in California (I went to University of California in Berkeley), so I was there in the People's Park thing and everything and then coming up to Canada...Then they started putting me down for not being more like them. I noticed that there was a sense of very strong conformity that they expected of me as well and it ended up being there was a very strong sense of 'them' and 'us'. Like there were the straight people and there were us. I never liked that....The hippies became very divided against the straights and I resented that."

Similarly, the practice of disrupting the working of the system, whether political, social, military or otherwise became anything but the chaos it was intended to be. The patterns of disruption became essentially programmed, turning intended mayhem into predictable pattern.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Berger, 211.

⁶⁷Berger, 212.

⁶⁸Berger, 213.

Beyond these seemingly superficial ironies of the institutionalization of anti-institutionalism, Berger *et al* point to a much deeper paradox embedded in the very concept.

"The concept of the naked self, beyond institutions and roles, as *ens realissimum*⁶⁹ of human being, is at the very heart of modernity. Thus the whole rebellion against the bureaucratic structures may be understood as a demodernizing impulse, the anthropological assumptions of the rebellion are profoundly modern. It is here, in our opinion, that we encounter the paradox in its most profound form. The demodernizing impulse of rebellion against the structures of modernity faces a dilemma. *Either* it can continue its assault on institutions in the name of a modern notion of the meta-institutional self -- in which case it will, in one way or other perpetuate the classical modern dichotomy of 'unreal institutions' / 'real self', thus defeating the original motive for rebellion. *Or* it will create new institutions to which it will ascribe a higher status of reality, in which case...it will be forced to revise its assumptions about the relationship of self and society."⁷⁰ (Italics in original)

Berger *et al* are pointing to the fact that the very motive of the counterculture, the elimination of structures and institutions, is the very motive of modernism. Modernism sought to release people from church and state, making the individual totally self-deterministic. The very nature of the pursuit meant that the counterculture was either going to repeat the errors of modernism or die trying. The counterculture was either going to be caught in a continual battle against institutions, forever binding itself to the notion that institutions are "unreal" and the self is "real", never being able to resolve the dichotomy, or it was going to create new structures which were "better" but in the process defeating its own purpose.

The counterculture of the 1960s was unable to perpetuate itself. As a visible movement it lost momentum and fell from the people's consciousness. But did it

⁶⁹*Ens realissimum* means to be living the facts or truth.

⁷⁰Berger, 213, 214.

disappear entirely? Did it survive beyond the history pages? Few people would deny that it had changed western society, that it had raised the public's consciousness regarding war, politics, religion, social justice and a host of other issues. But did all this momentum and energy simply stop and go away?

It appears that the ideals of the counterculture have in fact resurfaced in the form of the New Age movement, where many of its adherents have found a new home.

The New Age and the Counterculture - Similarities and Differences

It has frequently been observed that the 1960s counterculture and the New Age Movement bear similarities to each other, but it is obvious that they are not exactly the same. What then are the similarities and differences and what can they tell us about each of the movements?

New Age observer, Elliot Miller, points to out that many of the ideals and goals of the 1960s counterculture movement are kept alive in the New Age Movement.

- "(1) an anti-materialism which emphasizes a lifestyle of 'simple living and high thinking';...
- "(2) attempts to build alternative, utopian communities;...
- "(3) an exaltation of nature;...
- "(4) rejection of traditional morality;...
- "(5) fascination with the occult;..."⁷¹

Both the New Age and the counterculture, in reaction to western materialism have an orientation towards more simple lifestyles, centred around happiness through spiritual fulfillment rather than material accumulation. It must be noted, however, that especially in the New Age, justified through relativist morality, people can pursue material wealth if they so desire. Despite this, however, it appears that the majority of New Agers are committed to simple living.

⁷¹Elliot Miller, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), 24.

As with almost any system of belief, there is the sincere belief that adherence to certain ideals will create a better world. Both the New Age and the counterculture have expressed this belief. "Peter" appropriately summed-up this sentiment when responding to a question regarding his perceptions of the the 1960s and his involvement in them.

"The real connection to the ideal, to the essence...love and what was attempting...to be brought about there, still lives within me...I saw and it was clear idealism was not enough and there needed to be a very, very strong grounding of this idealism in a way that could work. I think that has been one of the driving factors for me, was to find a way to keep that idealism alive...The sixties I saw as being some incredible spirits, who saw the possibilities, who saw the vision, but who had no real ability to integrate what was necessary in order to bring that through, in order to really be a bridge. The people who I admire the most and respect the most today are people who I call transformers, the people who are actually able to stand as an embodiment of that vision and truth just by being who they are, their presence...A lot of [hippies] got wasted...there is a lot who did not though and they are alive and well today and they are so well woven into the culture that this movement, this vision is very much alive, but it's happening in a way that is user friendly, that isn't threatening, that isn't such an overwhelming shock that kills."

In examining this list of similarities, it is evident that it represents the broader ideals of the counterculture, which appear to be the same ideas as the New Age. Through anti-materialism, the exaltation of nature, the exploration of the occult, and the changing traditional morality, both the New Ager and the counterculture are creating alternatives to the ideal of functional rationality and the institutions which perpetuate it. This in turn creates ideas of an alternative and utopian future.

Despite the similarities, however, Miller points out that there are some significant differences between the two movements.

"(1) The NAM is not primarily a youth movement, but spans all ages."

- (2) New Agers are usually not distinguishable from the rest of society by outward appearance."
- (3) Hard-Rock music is not a rallying point."
- (4) Though revolutionary in its long-term objectives, the NAM is not anti-establishment in the overtly rebellious sense of the 1960s.
- (5) Whereas the sixties counterculture tend to be either radically left...or anarchistic New Agers have developed an entirely new approach, termed 'radical centre'.
- (6) New Agers have not generally continued the hippies' emphasis on free sex..."
- (7) While psychotropic...drugs were the doorway to the spiritual realm for most hippies, the mysticism of the New Age movement is largely drug-free."⁷²

This list of differences is not so much a list of differences in overarching ideals, but rather a list of differences of structure and technique. Due to the failure of countercultural technique and structure, the New Age has framed the same ideals within a different conception of how these ideals should and can be achieved.

The youth orientation of the counterculture is the most obvious difference, given that all the hippies who never could trust anyone over thirty all became thirty -- and forty -- themselves. New Age has replaced a youth culture with a system they hope appeals to all, young and old. When asked of her impressions of the 1960s counterculture, "Jill" responded this way,

"...and yet what we are in now is not a repeat of that because the sixties was sort of a...well it just seemed to relate to hippies, a particular generation, whereas what we call the New Age crosses boundaries of age, culture, and its just is very very eclectic. But there are similarities, because there is a spiritual optimism and idealism in both times. But apart from that I think the sixties was very localized in terms of age and type of person we're dealing with. Whereas this culture...I mean you could be talking about someone who's ninety-eight or somebody who's age four and we're still talking about this area."

⁷²Miller, 24.

"Glory" also commented on how New Age is appealing to even the oldest members of society.

"I'm seeing now...is the "The Wellness Show", what you call a "straight" fair. Grannies coming in with their husbands...and they know nothing, absolutely nothing. But they want to get better. So they're dipping into this a little bit at the edge of the New Age. And they're open. They want to learn. They sign up for workshops. They want to know all about these things. People are tired of being sick and they're losing a lot of respect for the medical profession and they're really searching and looking. So that to me was an eye opener, to see all these older people...you know seeing people...doing Reiki or Shiatsu and want to know more about it."

The dress codes and the music of the counterculture became the victims of their own success. Firstly their increasing popularity made them anything but a statement of rebellion, for they became instead the height of fashion and conformity. In keeping with the hope of including all people, New Age dress seeks to include more than alienate, having no real identifiable fashion.

In demonstrating how her appearance does not differ from the general culture, while still maintaining the ideals of the counterculture, "Sally" said,

"That guru group I was with it was a lot of long skirts which I actually wore too. I made one out of a curtain, an old fashioned flowered curtain. Oh yea...It doesn't feel like the movement ever stopped or anything, it just gradually is going like a curve. It is just changing a bit. You know now we are wearing jackets like this [she tugs her blazer] or a bigger diamond or something."

The anti-establishment and anarchistic tendencies fell due to the paradox of institutionalized anti-institutionalism, rendering both self-defeating. The New Age has replaced this with what they hope is a much more inclusive concept of "Radical Centre".

"The political perspective of the Aquarian Conspiracy is best described as a kind of Radical Centre. It is not neutral, not middle-of-the-road, but a view of the whole road. From

this vantage point, we can see that the various schools of thought on any one issue -- political or otherwise -- include valuable contributions along with error and exaggeration."⁷³

The emphasis on free sex, the epitome of the concept of spontaneous social experience became both predictable and unpleasant as women especially saw it as abuse rather than a more "real" experience of another person. The New Age has replaced this with a concept of sex being sacred and to be experienced with a person with whom one is in love.

"DC" confirmed the sexually promiscuous nature of the hippy culture:

"1960s...crimies, we went to bed with everything that moved..."

As did "Marina":

"I was 13 at the time - of course, that was when I was starting to leave my family and socialize...Of course I was affected. It meant that I could do what everybody else was doing which was basically, if they felt like it, go to bed with any body they wanted to."

"Glory", however, comment on how the sexual openness of that era has changed in the New Age.

"You know with the free love and just all the casual sex...I know now that does hurt your soul...I don't know if it was like giving away your power, but it was not respecting yourself and now...(because that's all I think about of the sixties is the free love part) [laugh]...now to think of sex as something really sacred, you know, so that's the major difference."

Finally the drug culture began to fail as people began to "fry" themselves. Following the experiences of Baba Ram Dass, who, while on his spiritual journey in the East records the experience of giving an Buddhist monk some LSD, after which the monk

⁷³Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's*, (Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 229.

responded; "It's good, but not as good as meditation."⁷⁴ New Agers get "higher" and have more "genuine" spiritual experiences through meditation and other spiritual practices than was ever possible through drugs.

In discussing the 1960s, "Peter", indicated that the while the drug culture created a door to spirituality, the technique itself was flawed.

"...many people, I think, missed it and got caught in the ideal and the vision that was there, but thought it had something to do with drugs, or thought it had something to do with sex or thought it had something to do with rock and roll, or whatever. All these, of course, were ways of awakening to what was true, but pretty unbalanced, dysfunctional ways."

"David", compared the naiveté of the drug culture with a healthier situation guided by elders, traditions and some kind of cultural institutions, indicating this is what he hopes the New Age is, or will become.

"Of course in the '60s there was a lot of naiveté about psychedelics in particular and people may have learned a great deal, but there was a lot of casualties, in different kinds of ways. In a culturally sanctioned shamanic process where there are elders that know what's going on, the chances are for a good outcome. In the '60s it was all up for grabs. And we were, as a scientific culture, embracing things. We need a strong container of experiences people deal with and we did not have that, we did not know it. So there was a lot of wildness and madness and probably a lot of suffering, really."

The progression from taking drugs as a spiritual opener, to abandoning drugs in favor of spiritual practices is evident in the histories of many of the interviewees, such as "Herb."

"It started off with the drugs and the spiritual thing then the...drugs kind of fell to the side."

This list of divisions between the two movements seems to represent the differences in opinions relating to what techniques should be used to achieve the same

⁷⁴Baba Ram Dass. "On Knowing." *The Georgia Straight*, Vol. 3, #66, July 16-22, 1969. pp. 9-10: 10.

ideals. In looking at these similarities and differences between New Age and the '60s counterculture, it is evident that they lend credence to the idea that the counterculture was structurally impossible to maintain. In the New Age Movement, the ideals have been perpetuated but they have adopted different, sometimes completely opposite approaches to achieving what is essentially the same end. It remains to be seen if the New Age approach will be any more successful or lasting than the counterculture's.

The techniques of the two movements differ greatly and seem to represent the recognition of the ironies which made the counterculture impossible to perpetuate.

In general counterculture members sought to reject functional rationality through alienating themselves from the dominant culture and through instant experience. Following on the failures of this technique, the New Age seeks also to reject functional rationality, but through the technique of inclusion and carefully planned experiences.

From Counterculture to New Age Culture.

Having seen how the New Age and the 1960s counterculture differ and share commonalities, let us now explore whether there are actually strong links connecting these two movements that share so much.

There is little doubt that the 1960s counterculture served as a cradle for much of what is now termed "New Age". Many writers acknowledge that the 1960s served as an incubator for spiritual ideas which have now come to be part of the New Age.⁷⁵

"...the 1960s counterculture is a major historical tributary among several that have converged to become today's rushing river of New Age activity."⁷⁶

"After the sixties, the counterculture sheared its locks, picked up its briefcase, and moved into the cultural

⁷⁵So too, postmodernism has intimate connections with the 1960's For example see: Andreas Huyssen "Editorial", *New German Critique*, 33, 1984, pp. 3-4: "The very concept of postmodernism is, to be sure, rooted in the American experience of the 1960's." (4)

⁷⁶Miller, 24.

mainstream. The ancient wisdom made a similar transition, largely shorn of its spiritual overtones and assimilated into secularized forms."⁷⁷

"Contemporary roots of the New Age can be found in the counterculture movements of recent decades."⁷⁸

Marilyn Ferguson, one of the earliest spokespersons for contemporary New Age presented her finding on the subject as such.

"One observer described the tumultuous events of the 1960s as the Great Refusal, when millions seemed to be saying no to conventions and concessions that had been taken for granted for generations. It was as if they were acting out of Edward Carpenter's prophecy that the time would surely come when great numbers would rise up against mindless conformity, bureaucracies, warmaking, dehumanizing work, needless sickness. In discovering those regions of mind in which they transcend 'the little, local self,' human beings would create an agenda for the renewal of society.

"To historian William McLoughlin, the sixties marked the beginning of America's fourth 'great awakening,' a cultural dislocation and revitalization that will extend into the 1990s."⁷⁹

The evidence of the connections between the New Age and the 1960s counterculture lies partly in the prominence of certain figures who have had influential roles in both. Baba Ram Dass, previously known as Richard Alpert was a prominent hippy leader. Expelled from Harvard for LSD use, Alpert went to India to study under a guru, eventually bringing Eastern spirituality to the west and helping to popularize it. Although far from being a central figure Ram Dass remains a popular and influential personality in the New Age scene. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental Meditation (TM) gained world attention after introducing TM to the West. The popularity of the meditation system grew exponentially after the Beatles adopted the Maharishi's system and traveled to the East to be with him. Currently TM still has a considerable following

⁷⁷Robert Burrows, "Americans Get Religion in the New Age," *Christianity Today*, 30(8), May 16, 1986. pp. 17-23: 17.

⁷⁸Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1988), 48.

⁷⁹Ferguson, 126, 127.

and is recognized by many New Agers. Less prominent but still significant is hippy activist Jerry Rubin who made the transition from Counterculture leader to New Age advocate, publishing a book entitled, *Growing (Up) at 37*, to document his journey.⁸⁰

Even though some of the leaders in the New Age community were also leaders in the counterculture, it does not guarantee that the majority of the general New Age population were also part of the counterculture. Indeed, it is difficult to say how many of the most prominent New Age leaders were involved in the counterculture. Miller observed that,

"...[i]t's true that many of the hippies of yesteryear are not a part of today's NAM...and most contemporary New Agers were probably never a part of the sixties counterculture."⁸¹

To some extent the people who were interviewed for this study could be considered New Age leaders, since they are owners and operators of New Age retail outlets or some kind of New Age service. They are separated from the general New Age community, most of whom are not vocationally part of the New Age. Keeping this in mind it is still of some interest how significant the connection between the counterculture and the New Age is.

Some of the participants in the study felt that there was a definite link between the two movements. For example "Chris" said;

"This New Age direction is something that was born out of the ['60s] partly because there was exposure to information, to go in that direction. Socially it did not become such a Taboo to have different ideas. Radically new ideas and that became the norm...."

"Sally" commented in regards to the counterculture;

"It doesn't feel like the movement ever stopped or anything, it just gradually is going like a curve. It is just changing a bit."

⁸⁰Jerry Rubin, *Growing (Up) at 37*. (Warner Books, 1985).

⁸¹Miller, 24.

Also "Rose", too young to have been a hippy herself observed the following.

"There seemed to be a lot of disillusionment with the way things were and the way they could be. I feel it was really necessary, because I feel that a lot of people involved in spirituality now were from that era or the tail end of that era."

"Raj", also too young to have been a hippy said;

"Now I kind of think of it as...if you think of the New Age movement, or whatever is happening now as the maturation, the '60s really was the adolescent phase, the playing, the trying."

In total, eleven of the thirty interviewees claimed that they were actually hippies.

Like "Stephanie",

"I definitely was affected by the '60s, you bet. Love-ins, Sit-ins, wearing my hair long, I was always involved with music and drama and dance and that was all very big."

"David";

"So the late '60s and '70s certainly had a strong watershed feeling for me, but that was because it was my coming of age time, so all of the insights I had had more vividness for me."

Of this group of eleven, eight spoke of being opened to alternate forms of spirituality during their time as a hippy, while one was involved in New Age style spirituality from well before the counterculture. Five of these people were involved in some sort of spiritual commune and two actually traveled to the east as part of their own spiritual journey. Another, eight of the thirty people interviewed had minor involvement with the hippy culture, but would not have considered themselves hippies. This group of people spoke of some drug experimentation and hitchhiking. A few referred to themselves as "weekend hippies". Like "Barb",

"Although I was not a big part of it....I believe it freed us all up to choices, to being different."

Or "Sara;

"I was only ever really a week-end hippy. The illegal aspect did not really appeal to me."

Some had circumstances which held them back from participating fully, like "Lisa".

"I was never a hippy although I wore the little glasses and the cotton skirts, smoked marijuana. I had a family, I was a mom. I liked it. I liked the thought of love rather than war, hate and anger. I was in San Francisco, Haight-Ashbury all of that before I was married. I loved it, I thought it was a great era."

Of this group, five were introduced to alternative forms of spirituality during this era. Most, although probably exposed to it, were not strongly affected by it at the time.

Finally, eleven of the thirty subjects were not hippies at all. Of this group, five would have been too young to have been involved. Despite this, however, eight claimed that they had some sort of psychological affinity with the movement. Like "Claire",

"It was very inspiring. It was very inspiring to see people who were willing to say "No" to materialism and go off in a new direction...I loved the music and the freedom. It was just inspiring even though I was not part of it. It really inspired me."

Others, were, and have since been touched by the music of that era. "Jewel" said this after being asked if she felt the sixties counterculture affected her.

"It probably did, but at the time I was raising babies. The only thing...Music was very influential I feel and a mirror of what is happening in our culture at a time."

So too, "Glory" was touched by the musical experimenting of the era.

"I think probably the main effect was the Indian musical instruments...now I know that music is more than music. Music is an energy and it has a power to heal. So I'm glad that that music was around even if we did not quite understand it, its power."

"Herb" also saw the music of the counterculture as being very significant, along with the drug culture.

"The Beatles and LSD. I'm serious. They've influenced the culture really really heavy. I think the Beatles just happened to be a venue for that phenomenon to happen around. Also the utilization of LSD and or other psychedelics really pushed people to realize, maybe father doesn't know best, maybe the TV is conning us in that sense, and so it helped people to realize there was a realm bigger."

Some participants lightheartedly stated regret at not being part of it. For example, "Gerald".

"At that stage in my life I was in the nine-to-five job type of thing. I was not a hippy or I was not into marijuana or stuff like that....I did not even see it that much around me actually...I kind of think I missed something sometimes."

Or Carmen,

"Well, considering I was born in 1964. (laugh) But it did, I actually...my family often said that I was born in the wrong time, you know, I was born too late. I say, that's all right, I died in '63 (laugh) I came back, right?...I just joke with them, but yea, I have a sense that even though I was young, (I would have been 0-5 in the '60s). I do have a sense, you know the music and stuff still touches me. And I love shows from that time and I like history from that time, reading about what happened, and I love the Beatles, you know. Yea."

Or Raj,

"I came to Canada in June of 1966. I was only 6 and a half, but I know that consciously or unconsciously the music affected me. I used to just listen to it a lot as a kid. So it is, how is a child affected by what's around them...I think at the time I did not really understand it but, I would say, at a heart level I have an affinity to it, because I like some of the music and the idea of freedom or liberation or the idea of being free. It was something new that they really did not know what it was. I think there was that sense of freeing.

I talked to people. I even looked it up in the newspapers and went to the library to see what it was really like, to see what people really said. They have it on microfiche. I was looking for certain things, looking for New Year's day to see what the newspapers said. What was the hope? ...I would say it has influenced me somewhat, I don't know how much. I would say more at a heart level, I guess.

...I guess it was kind of more the spirit of it, not the drugs or the biker kind of stuff, more of the freedom.

You have to remember I was 6 at the time. Now I kind of think it is just the spirit is in the songs. I used to listen to all those songs."

In determining the linkages between the counterculture and the New Age it is interesting to note that the strong positive relationship between "hippiness" and how long a person has been involved in their business. The people who were actually hippies have been operating their current businesses for an average of 10.5 years and have been involved in New Age related activities on a professional basis for an average of 15.2 years. Those who had some contact with the counterculture but would not have called themselves hippies, have operated their current businesses for an average of 4.2 years and have been involved in related businesses for an average of 5.4 years. The participants who had no direct connection with the counterculture have been operating their current businesses for an average of 3.7 years and in related business for the same amount of time.

These figures are partially deceiving in that some of the participants would have been too young to have ever been a hippy, thus making it impossible for them to have operated any business for more than a few years. Taking this into consideration, however, when the figures are recalculated to include only those participants in all three of the categories who would have been old enough to have lived through the 1960s and be able to open a business at the time, the figures remain much the same. Of course the business life of the people who were hippies remains the same at 15.2 years. The group that was marginally affected by the counterculture increases marginally from an average

of 5.4 to an average of 6.8 years in business. Similarly the group that felt they had no connection to the counterculture increased slightly from an average of 3.7 years in business to 5.3.

These figures strongly indicate that the New Age was initially led by people who came directly from the 1960s counterculture. Those people who most intimately connected with the counterculture have been in business an average of ten years longer than those who were not connected with the counterculture. It is only more recently that people without a connection to the counterculture have started joining the New Age.

COUNTERCULTURES IN VANCOUVER

The Vancouver Hippy scene

"Vancouver knows exactly how to define a hippie. He's somebody whose hair blocks his neck from view, who is a dope fiend and lives somewhere in the neighborhood of West 4th Avenue."⁸²

While the counterculture of the 1960s is considered to be a predominantly American phenomenon, it had its impact in Canada as well, where one of the components of its impact in Canada was the fact that Canada was a haven for American youth who were dodging the draft for the Vietnam war.⁸³ Most of Canada's major urban centres were in some way affected by the incoming American youth and the local youth who became hippies. One of the most prominent hippy areas in Canada was the Yorkville district in Toronto. Here hippies lived year round in crowded hangouts with almost no money, limited possessions and no planned future.⁸⁴ Yet despite the prominence of Toronto the real capital of hippy activity in Canada was being formed in Vancouver.

⁸²Jack Batten, "How the Town's Fighting the Dread Hippie Menace", *MacLeans*, August, 1967. p. 19.

⁸³Ron Veruzh, *Underground Times*, (Toronto: Deneau Publ., 1989), 3.

⁸⁴Reginald Smart and David Jackson, "Yorkville Subculture", in W.E.Mann (ed) *The Underside of Toronto*. (McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1970).

There are logical reasons for Vancouver becoming the capital of hippy culture in Canada. Firstly, Vancouver is on average warmer than the rest of Canada and hence for hippies who were not always assured that they would find shelter, the climate was the most hospitable. Secondly, Vancouver was also the closest Canadian centre to San Francisco, the birth place of the hippy movement and therefore was more in touch with the movement. In fact, Vancouver managed to acquire the title "San Francisco-North" during this time. Thirdly, the more relaxed west coast atmosphere would have been more conducive to alternate forms of behaviour than elsewhere in Canada.

While it is estimated that there were probably only about 1200 hippies in Vancouver, they created quite a stir from about April 1967 until the end of 1970. During this time the two major local newspapers kept keen eyes out for hippy activity, reporting from mostly a negative standpoint, representing the view of the police and city hall. Geographically hippies were heavily concentrated in the area of West 4th between MacDonald and Alma. It was here that they had their coffee shops and retail outlets. Stores such as "Rags and Riches Clothing", "Phase 4", a coffee shop, "The Psychedelic Shop" and "Village Bistro" coffee shop, all graced the landscape of West 4th Avenue. There was also hippy activity in the downtown area around Richards Street and in Gastown. Similarly hippies moved onto the beaches in the summer, eventually making Wreck Beach their own after several nude-ins.

The Vancouver hippies, as in most other places, had many conflicts with local police and town officials. Mayor Tom Campbell made a point of trying to rid the town of hippies including repeated efforts to shut down their newspaper, "The Georgia Straight". Similarly the Vancouver police were vigilant in enforcing loitering laws and in making surprise drug raids. Public sentiment was divided, ranging from those who were vehemently opposed to the very existence of the hippies to those, like a few local ministers who encouraged the general population to reach out and help the hippies wherever they could.

Spirituality in the hippy scene in Vancouver was, like anywhere else, bound up with the drug scene. Vancouver was even home to a congregation of the American Psychedelic Church.⁸⁵ In one particularly spiritually oriented edition of the *Georgia Straight* in January of 1968, Dan McLeod wrote that;

"Next summer you may be one of the thousands of people in Vancouver who will be using mind expanding chemicals for the first time, to experience the God powers of all your senses including the mind."

Similarly the *Georgia Straight* published an article about the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (TM) which was extremely critical of him because he was too materialistic and was against the use of drugs.

Evidently, the counterculture movement had a strong presence in Vancouver, and this was most prominently displayed in and around the Kitsilano district. In making the connection between the counterculture and the New Age Movement it is therefore logical to begin in this same geographical region.

From Counterculture to New Age in Vancouver.

"That's Yuppie land, but Kitsilano always has been. Always has been. It was like that before New Age. It was like that before Hippies. I mean Hippy hollow was 4th Ave. Kits has always been like that. Probably the natives were like that. (laugh)" ("Becky")

"Well, when I was a teenager and attracted to the Bohemian kind of scene, 4th Ave. was at that time pretty much where it was happening. 4th and Arbutus was sort of like a crossroads. Two of the corners at that time at 4th and Arbutus were grass, two of the four corners. So there was a strong element of hanging-out around that area. There were a number of shops and a dance hall, what's now the Kitsilano theater was then called, "The After Thought", Vancouver's original psychedelic dance hall. So I was just

⁸⁵Arnold Meyers, "The Psychedelic Revolution", *Artscanada*, No. 109/110, June/July, 1967.

used to Kitsilano, it was sort of my milieu. I grew up in Kerrisdale, around Arbutus and 37th.

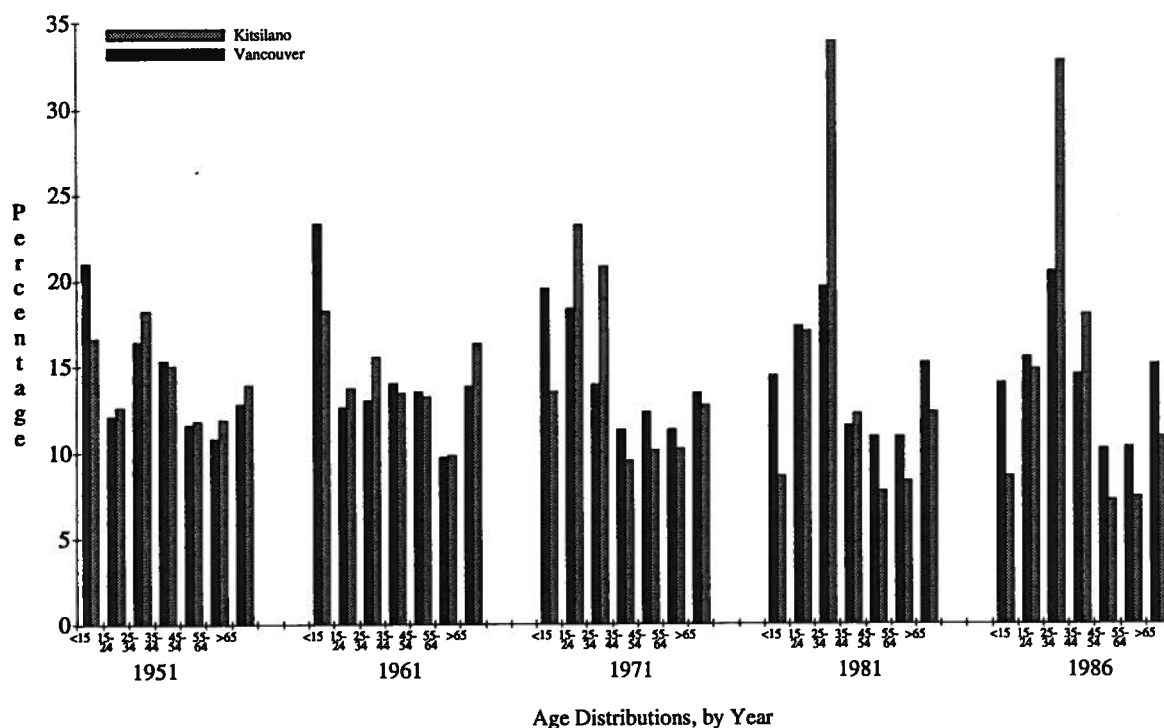
So I became kind of what you would call a 'Kitsilano Peasant' for quite a long time and that was very comfortable. There were a lot of people, rents were reasonable, it was not a fancy neighborhood..." ("David")

The connection between the New Age and the counterculture in Vancouver is quite clear. It is no accident that both the counterculture and the New Age are centrally located in the same districts in Vancouver. The Kitsilano district in Vancouver, particularly West 4th Avenue, was the informal hang-outs for the counterculture in Vancouver (see above). Over time this district matured and became the headquarters of New Age activity in Vancouver (See Ch. 8, "The Geography of New Age").

The continuity between the counterculture and the New Age in Vancouver is also partially evident in demographic characteristics of the region. Figure 6.1 shows that from 1951 - 1961 the Kitsilano area had a age distribution which roughly mirrored that of the rest of the city of Vancouver. This distribution changes, however in 1971 when there is a dramatic jump, relative to the rest of Vancouver, in the number of residents aged 15-24. This increase in this particular age grouping would reflect the influx of people who would have been part of the 1960s counterculture. By 1981 and 1986 the Kitsilano area shows an overwhelming population concentration in the 25-34 age category and then also in the 35-44 grouping by 1986 (Figure 6.1). The implication of this is that the population segment which poured into the Kitsilano area in the late 1960s has maintained its dominance in the area as it has aged. This population grouping is commonly seen as the hippy turn yuppie generation, at it also appears that it is this same segment of the population which is at the forefront of the New Age Movement.

As mentioned above it was this same generation which left the traditional religious institutions and pursued private, non-institutionalized forms of spiritual experience. This trend is evident in statistics relating to church attendance. Over-all there is a dramatic

Figure 6.1

Age Distributions in Kitsilano and Vancouver,
1951 - 1986

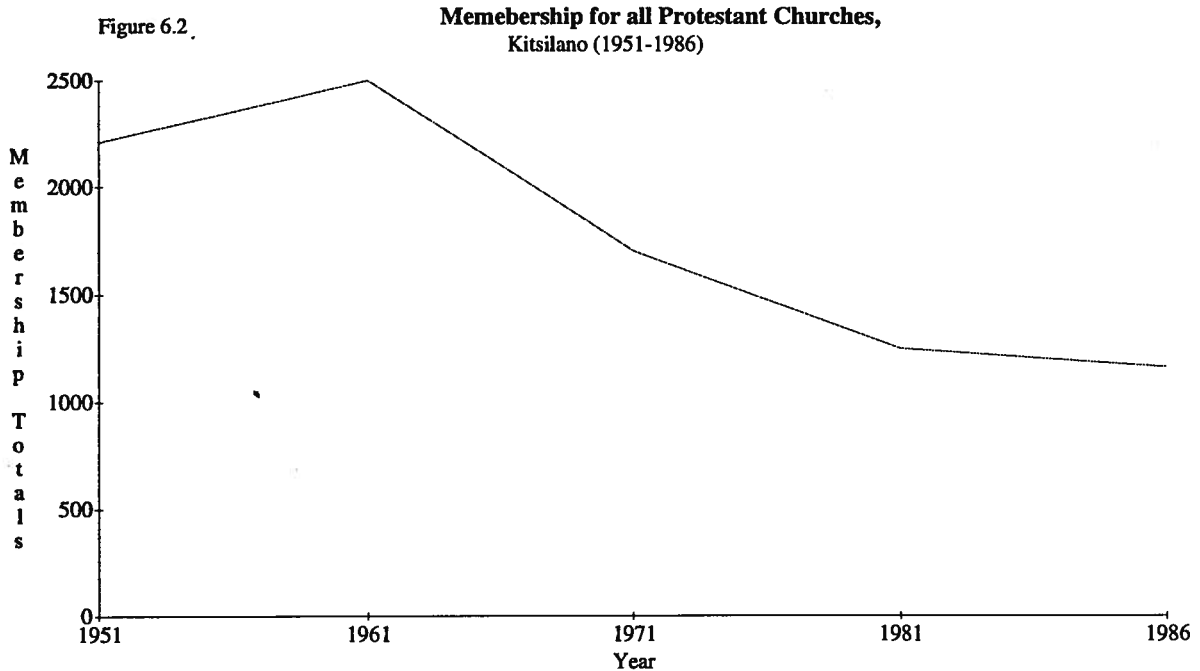
Source: Martin, Bruce. *Faith Without Focus*. 1989, pp. 110, 135.

decline in church attendance in the Kitsilano area from 1951-1986 (Figure 6.2).

It is widely recognized that church attendance was in decline all across North America at this time. The amplification of this pattern amongst the counterculture generation is evident in the comparison of declared religious affiliation between the Kitsilano district and Vancouver as a whole. Both the hippies and the New Agers are careful to state that they do not adhere to any one religion. They are, in their descriptions of themselves, without religion and without dogma. Hence, in responding to the census questions regarding religious affiliation, this population would undoubtedly respond, "no religious affiliation." This appears to be the fact when one compares the census data regarding religious affiliation in Vancouver in general and Kitsilano. In 1971, 17% of Vancouver's population declared "no religion", while in Kitsilano the number was 22%.⁸⁶ By 1981, in

⁸⁶Bruce Martin, *Faith Without Focus: Neighbourhood Transition and Religious Change in Inner-City Vancouver*. M.A. Thesis, UBC, 1989: 192,160.

Vancouver 27% of the population declared "no religion" while in Kitsilano 32% were making the



Source: Martin, Bruce. *Faith Without Focus*. 1989. p. 192.

same claim.⁸⁷ This category, of course, only indicates that the respondent is not associated with a formal religious institution. It therefore is made up of both those who are completely without spiritual practice and those who have active spiritual lives, but do not associate with a particular institution, (the group into which New Agers would most frequently fit).

In looking at these few demographic indicators it is clear that the Kitsilano district has been central to the population which makes up the body of both the counterculture and the people who are at the forefront of the New Age Movement. This therefore adds more legitimacy to the assertion that the New Age Movement has risen from the 1960s counterculture.

⁸⁷Martin, 192, 160.

Of particular importance to this connection is Vancouver's unofficial New Age headquarters, "Banyen Books". Currently located at 2671 W. Broadway, Banyen was opened by Kolin Lymworth, a Vancouver native who was actively involved in the local hippy scene. The store had its beginnings (prior to 1970) in the back of a natural food store called "The Golden Lotus", a hippy hang-out at the time located at 4th and Bayswater. Lymworth then opened a store at 2739 W. 4th where the store stayed from 1970 - 1973. The store then moved to 2715 W. 4th, from 1974-1980. In 1980, Banyen left W. 4th to 2685 W. Broadway (9th) from 1980-1987. Following this the store moved from 2685 to 2671 W. Broadway, where it remains today. Similarly, out of "The Golden Lotus" came "Woodlands Restaurant and Natural Food Store", and "Lifestream Natural Foods" which became "Kits Natural Foods", and is located less than one block from Banyen at 2582 W. Broadway.

The influence of Banyen Books is attested to by some of the interviewees, like "Jill".

"It is like Banyen Books is the New Age corner...it is just a gathering place."

Also, DC, after being asked about what the most important developments over the past 10-15 years replied;

"I'd like to put Banyen Books Stores at the top of Vancouver because it has allowed people to see books they did not even know existed."

In Vancouver the Kitsilano district serves as both a physical and a demographic link between the New Age and the 1960s counterculture. Through the physical presence of places such as Banyen Books and the general characteristics of local demography and spirituality Kitsilano bears marks of a neighbourhood which has changed remarkably while staying the same. Kitsilano has moved from hippy to yuppie, from LSD to meditation, from poverty to wealth, but these dramatic changes are themselves an

indication that the area has in fact remained home to many of the same people. In total eighteen of the thirty participants (60%) currently live in or have at some time lived in the Kitsilano area, demonstrating that there is a strong correlation between people connected with the New Age in Vancouver and the Kitsilano district. The area has grown up with its population, but they are indeed the same population.

CONCLUSION

The previous discussion has demonstrated that the counterculture and the New Age are connected firstly on the level of ideals and goals. They share a common fight against the dominant western paradigm, while at the same time differing greatly at the level of methodology. Secondly, it can be asserted that these ideological connections are not merely coincidental. In fact, due to the psychological affinity many New Agers share with the counterculture, and due to the predominance of people involved in the hippy movement who resurface as people offering New Age services, it can fairly be asserted that the New Age is, in substance and origin, the same movement as the counterculture of the 1960s, though using many different techniques in its quest for the same ends.

Chapter Seven -

COMMON GROUND: A VOICE FOR NEW AGE IN VANCOUVER

INTRODUCTION

Origins

In the winter of 1982/1983 there appeared on the streets of Vancouver a free black and white tabloid sized magazine printed on regular newsprint. With a circulation claimed to be 20,000, the twenty-seven page magazine named *Common Ground* contained no articles; just a few introductory notes, a description of *Common Ground's* financial situation, the names of similar publications in North America and abroad, details on how to advertise, and amongst it all, inspirational quotations from people such as Mother Theresa,¹ Albert Camus,² Albert Schweitzer,³ Albert Einstein,⁴ Fidel Castro,⁵ and Kirpal Singh.⁶ Declaring itself to be "British Columbia's Resource Guide", *Common Ground* listed 186 advertisements in its first issue, all of which were categorized according to 17 headings. The categories ranged from "The Arts", to "Business Services", to "Global and Social Change", to "Spiritual Practices" and to "Psychic Arts and Intuitive Sciences".

Common Ground, published by Alana Mascali, Michael Bertrand and Joseph Roberts from a basement in Kerrisdale,⁷ was inspired by a magazine of the same name in San Francisco which had been in operation for 9 years prior to Vancouver's first issue.⁸ *Common Ground* subscribed to the "Community Resource Publishers Association Code", which says:

¹ *Common Ground*. Issue #1, Winter 1982/3: 15.

² *Ibid*, 17.

³ *Ibid*, 22.

⁴ *Ibid*, 18.

⁵ *Ibid*, 17.

⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

⁷ "Common Ground Celebrates", *Common Ground*. Issue #40, Autumn 1992: 5.

⁸ *Common Ground*. Issue #1 Winter 1982/3: 2.

*"By listing in this publication, we the advertisers acknowledge that we do business in a spirit of unity, cooperation, and understanding, and maintain a high level of integrity, responsibility, and service."*⁹(italics in original)

If there was a theme to the first issue, it was "Networking", the concept which would guide the publication in general. Networks, loosely knit groupings of people who trade ideas and information through individual conversations, publications, weekly meetings or even via computer linkages, are the primary and preferred way to disseminate New Age ideas. Networks are most commonly constructed around a particular idea. Linda Christensen categorizes New Age Networks into five primary types: i) personal growth groups, ii) occult groups, iii) holistic health groups iv) spiritual/religious groups and v) socio-political groups.¹⁰ Networks allow individuals to explore these areas of the New Age in a relatively detached manner, participating only in that which pleases.

"This organic mode of social organization [networking] is more biologically adaptive, more efficient, and more 'conscious' than the hierarchical structures of modern civilization. The network is plastic, flexible. In effect, each member is the center of the network."¹¹

"'Whatever happened to the 1960s?' and 'Where did people go in the 1970s?' There is Another [sic] America it is pulsating and expanding and unfolding through *networking*...

"Fueled in large part by the sweat equity of the survivors of the 1960s and inspired by a vision of a peaceful yet dynamic planet, an entirely new culture is emerging in our land...

"Networks are an evolutionary form of representational power in a decentralized system. They also represent a felt need to move away from a faceless

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Linda Christensen, *Understanding and Responding to the New Age*, (Surrey, B.C.: Christian Info News, 1991): 3-6.

¹¹Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformations in the 1980's*. (Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 213.

bureaucracy to an understandable and responsive human face."¹²

Common Ground even included in one of its early issues a poem about networking, which demonstrated its purpose and the aspects of it which New Agers would want to emphasize.

DECIDE TO NETWORK

*Decide to Network
Use every letter you write
Every conversation you have
Every meeting you attend
To express your fundamental beliefs and dreams
Affirm to others the vision of the world you want*

...

*You are a center of a network
You are the center of the world
You are a free, immensely powerful source
of life and goodness
Affirm it
Spread it
Radiate it
Think day and night about it
And you will see a miracle happen:
the greatness of your own life.
In a world of big powers, media and monopolies
But of four and a half billion individuals
Networking is the new freedom
the new democracy
and new form of happiness.¹³*

Despite the fact that there was no explicit connection between the New Age Movement and *Common Ground*, the advertising itself demonstrated that this magazine was going to provide a voice for people who might not find sympathy elsewhere. There were headings for such standard things as "Business Services", "Crafts", "Food" and "The Arts", but there were also the more unusual categories of "Psychic Arts and Intuitive Sciences", "Spiritual Practices" and "Health, Healing and Bodywork". The latter

¹²David Leslie, "Dynamic Structures for Change", *Common Ground*, Issue #8, Fall 1984, pp. 5, 43: 43.

¹³Robert Muller, "Decide to Network", from, Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, *Networking, the First Report and Directory* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1982.). Quoted in: *Common Ground*, Issue #8, Fall 1984: 3.

grouping "...[i]ncludes: Holistic Health...healing derived from native, oriental or pre-modern traditions..."¹⁴

In these sections it was evident that the New Age and its many and diverse practitioners would find a possible advertising home, if not more, within the pages of *Common Ground*. Within the first issue there was room for information about an E.S.P. Fair, many astrologers and clairvoyants. The "Church of Revelation, Crystal Eye Center" advertised,

"The ultimate purpose of this New Age Church and school is to share the Ascended and Ascending masters of Light mystical and spiritual teachings showing the way to God Consciousness and Self Mastery, using Rainbow Bridge Meditation and the principles and teachings of all spiritual paths. We teach Wholeness, healing, seeing auras and other gifts as well as development of soul psychic powers."¹⁵ (all capitals in original)

In the same issue *Common Ground* readers were able to learn about ashrams, meditation centers, Buddhist organizations, Sufi Orders, Rebirthing Seminars, Reflexology, Iridology, and a host of other services and organizations that previously had little opportunity to make themselves widely known to a potentially receptive audience.

The list of other journals under the heading "*Common Ground* - type publications found elsewhere,"¹⁶ hinted at the publication's New Age nature. The titles of these magazines gave an indication of the possible direction *Common Ground* was setting for itself. Among them were; *Inner Life* - (Toronto); *Whole Life Times*- (L.A.); *PhenomeNEWS* - (Pleasant Ridge, MI.); *The Aquarian Directory of New Mexico* - (Albuquerque); *Inner Quest* - (Cincinnati); *Portland Reflection and Transformation Times* - (Portland); and *Holistic Learning Quarterly* - (Pittsburgh).

¹⁴*Common Ground*, Issue #1: 2.

¹⁵*Ibid*, 21.

¹⁶*Ibid*, 27.

Orientation

While New Agers say that they are politically "radically centered", the politics of *Common Ground*, represents somewhat of a left liberal perspective. Given its roots in the counterculture of the 1960s this is hardly a surprise. The politics of *Common Ground* is clearly evident, especially in the early issues in articles about contemporary social issues like the arms race, nuclear disarmament, whales, TV advertising, Third World poverty, and the environment. Having presented topics such as these continuously over its history, *Common Ground* is revealed as being sympathetic to concerns which have traditionally been associated with the political left. At times there have even been more overt indications of the magazines orientation to the left with the publication of a articles such as the one which supported NDP leadership candidate Robert Skelly, portraying him as an ardent supporter of the peace movement.¹⁷

The Audience

In the spring of 1992 *Common Ground* reached a circulation of 100,000. Claiming a readership of three persons, per issue the magazine announced an audience of 300,000. Who, then, are the supposed 300,000 readers of *Common Ground*? This is, in fact, a difficult question to answer with any degree of accuracy since to date there is only one source dealing with the readership of the magazine, a reader response survey which was printed on the back cover of issue #35 in Summer 1991. The survey was to be completed by readers and mailed back to the magazine. The response rate was probably very low, as the survey was not formally administered and no efforts were made to make the survey easy to return. There is also no way to determine what category of reader might have been more likely to respond to the survey. These shortcomings make the survey suspect as a source of scientifically verifiable information. Despite this however,

¹⁷Pam Tranfield, "Skelly's Vision Creates Unity Network", *Common Ground*, Issue #7, Summer 1984: 40.

it is reasonable to assume that the most devoted readers of the magazine would have been the majority of respondents, and hence the survey may provide a reasonable profile of a this influential segment of the magazine's readership.

The survey asked some standard demographic questions such as age, sex, household income and education. Beyond this the survey dealt largely with issues of taste and preference, or in other words, lifestyle. Only one question dealt directly with a theme which could be directly related to the New Age: "In the past 3 years I have used the services of a...[list of New Age style health practitioners etc.]."

The results of the survey have not been made available to the public in full. The only data which have been officially released by *Common Ground* is a tabulation of the responses to some of the questions which were on the survey package which is sent to potential advertisers, presumably to inform the prospective client of who will likely be reading their advertisement.

Assuming that the respondents are generally part of the New Age Movement in some form or another, the survey results indicate that the readership is part of the stereotypical Kitsilano yuppie segment of the population. The readers, according to this survey, are 65% women with an average age of 39 and 35% men with an average age of 41. The average household income is \$49,938 *per annum*, and 76% of the readers are professionals, with 55% holding university degrees and 27% college diplomas. Half (49%) the respondents have children and 99% are non-smokers. Seventy-four percent dine out regularly, with almost 37% doing so 4-5 times per week; 66% of the respondents are vegetarian and 73% indicate juices as being their favourite beverage followed closely by herb teas. PBS (public television) and CBC (public radio) are the most popular media stations and 93% list reading amongst their favourite hobbies. Unfortunately the one moderately New Age question which asked about which health-care usage, was not referred to in the hand-out.

The results however do confirm that at least some of the New Age Movement is made up of the baby-boom, turned hippy, turned yuppie, generation. They are members of the well-heeled, health conscious, moderately wealthy, professional classes.

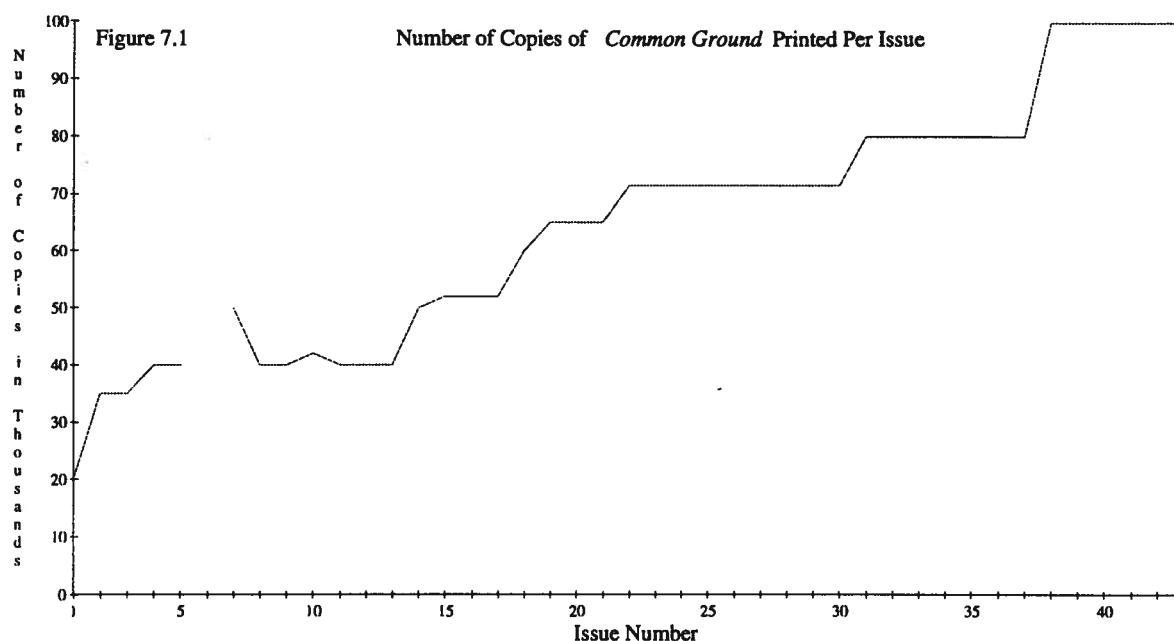
MEASURING THE GROWTH:

Given that *Common Ground* remains a voice for the New Age Movement, it is possible to see trends and themes of the movement in the various components of the magazine. Of course, the contents of one magazine cannot represent the movement completely, but is fair to suggest that it is at the very least a partial representation of the movement.

Circulation

The relative effectiveness and popularity of a magazine can be partially measured by its circulation. *Common Ground* is not a subscriber supported publication. Although it is possible to subscribe for a small fee, the magazine is primarily distributed free to those who are interested through retail outlets, magazine stands, libraries, cafés and restaurants for people to pick up at their leisure. Although it is impossible to determine how many people actually read *Common Ground*, its circulation has demonstrated continual growth since its first issue (Figure 7.1). Based on a readers' survey which suggests there are three readers per copy, the publishers proudly claim in each issue that their readership is three times the number of printed copies.

Beginning with a circulation of about 20,000 publication has grown to a substantial 100,000 copies per issue. This could be interpreted as a growth not only of *Common Ground* magazine, but also of the growing acceptance of New Age ideas and practices.



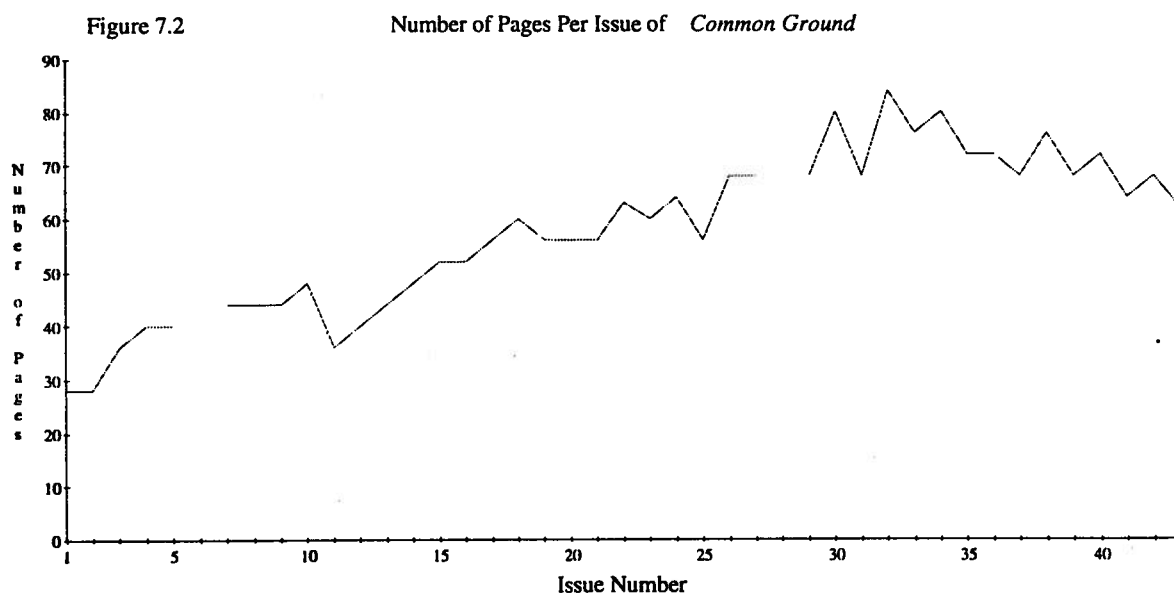
Size

The publication has not just grown in its circulation. It has grown substantially in size, although this has shown more variation than circulation. Originally only 28 pages, *Common Ground* is now generally publishing between 68 and 72 pages per issue (Figure 7.2). From this graph it is evident that there was a peak in the number of pages around issues 30 to 34, (late 1990 - 1991) with a subsequent consistent decline. This corresponds with the increase in size and popularity of Vancouver's other New Age magazine, *Shared Vision*. Although it was launched in 1987, *Shared Vision*, like *Common Ground*, took a few years to settle and find its niche. It is reasonable to assume that *Shared Vision* began to cut into some of the advertising base which had previously been *Common Ground's* monopoly, causing *Common Ground* to cut back on the number of pages per issue. It is also worth mentioning economic recession might also have cut into the advertising base of the magazine.

Advertising

Resource Directory

The primary focus of *Common Ground* has always been to provide a resource directory which would promote New Age networking. In order to do this the magazine has always ensured that the organized collection of advertisements which generally makes up the body of each issue remains central and consequently this portion of *Common Ground*

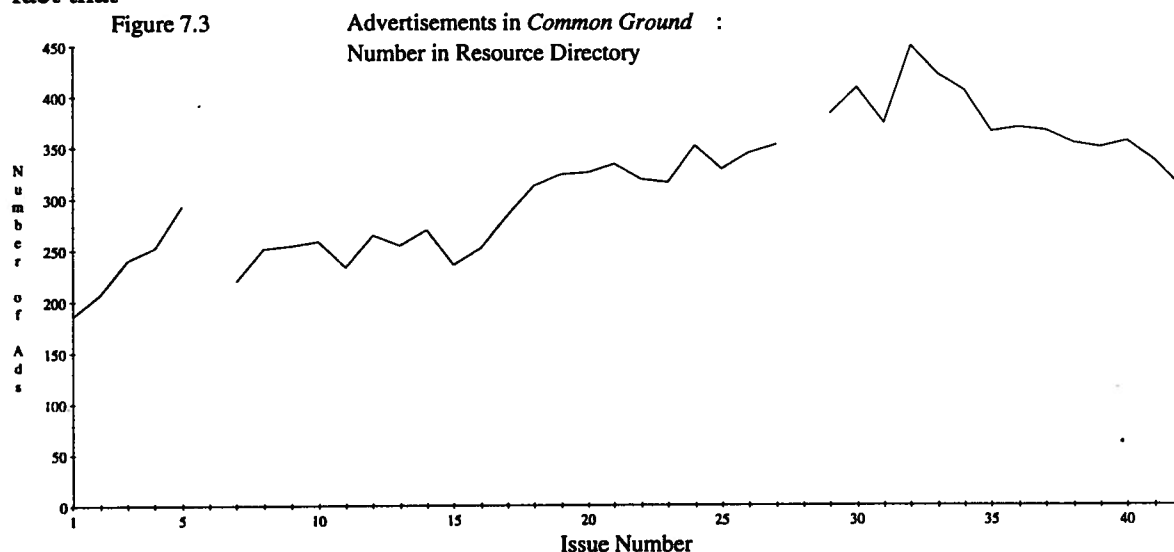


has grown considerably over the years. The trend reflects the pattern which we saw figure 7.2, showing the growth in the number of pages per issue, which also peaked around issue numbers 30 - 34, with a subsequent decline.

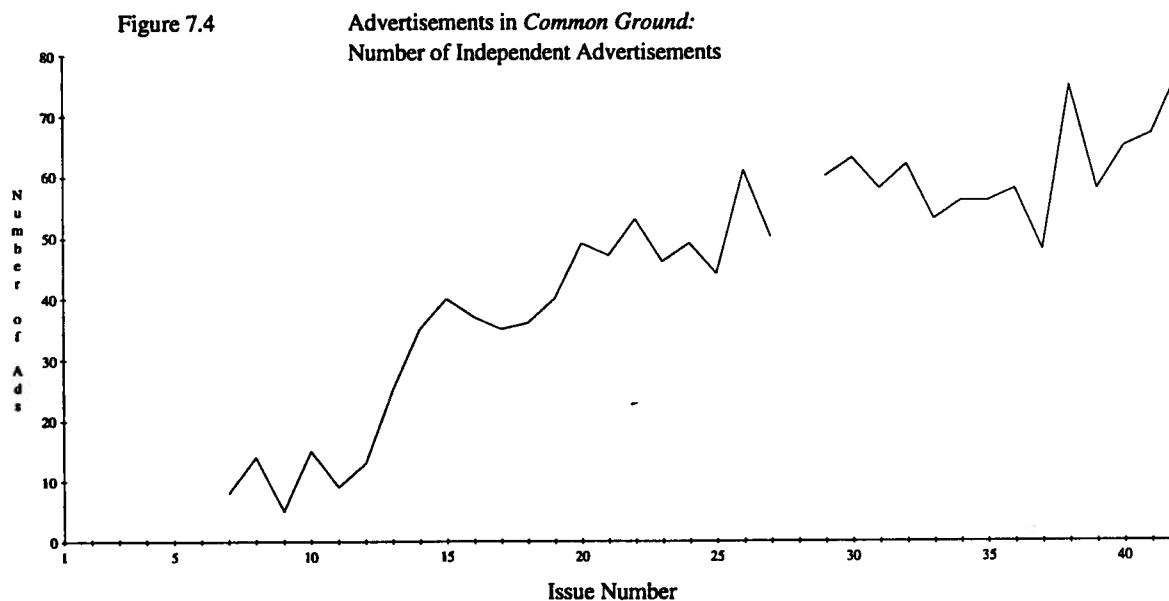
Independent Advertisements

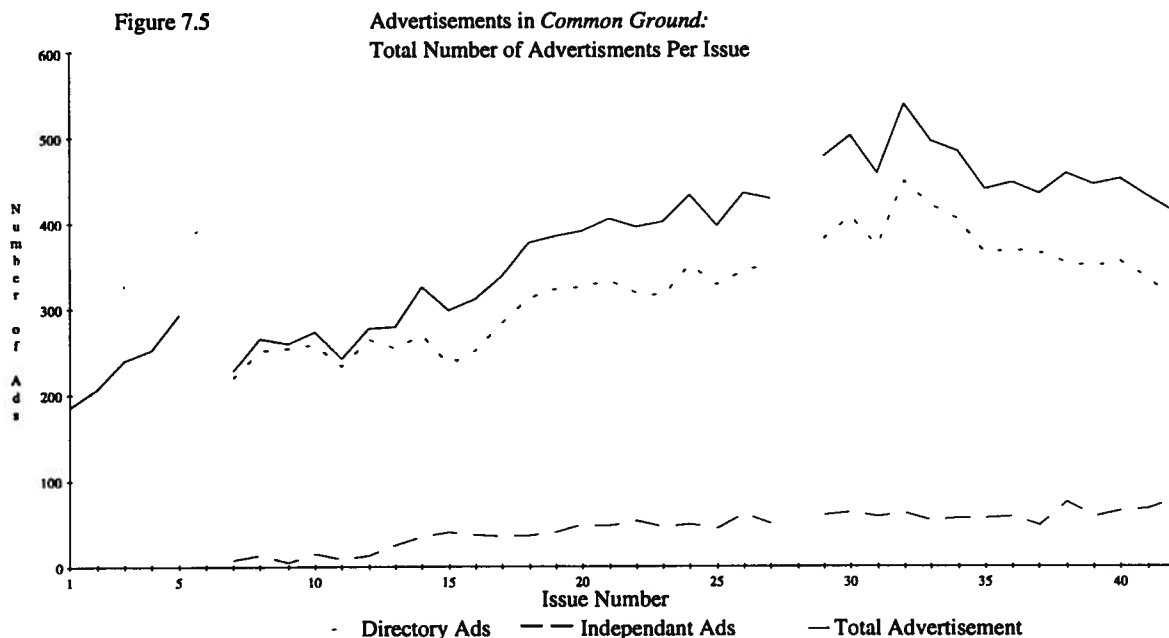
Along with the Resource Directory, *Common Ground* began in its 7th issue to include independent advertisements amongst the articles and other parts of the publication. These include anything from business card size advertisements to full 2 or 3 page spreads. Over the years these have become increasingly important, and the steady

increase in the number of these advertisements has been notable (Figure 7.4). Despite the fact that



independent advertising has been steadily increasing and directory advertising seems to have peaked and is now on a slight decline, when one looks at the total advertising in *Common Ground* it is evident that resource directory advertising is still very dominant. (Figure 7.5) This appears to be an indicator of the well-being of *Common Ground* magazine and perhaps the general well-being of the New Age in Vancouver as a whole.





Overall there seems to be a contradiction in the patterns which are evident over the history of *Common Ground*. The pattern of circulation shows steady increases in the numbers of magazines printed per issue. While *Common Ground* seems to be getting a wider distribution, the actual number of advertisers per issue seems to be declining somewhat, as too is the number of pages per issue. *Common Ground*, despite having its advertising base cut due to competition from *Shared Vision*, has still managed to increase the number of drop-off points for its distribution. The result is less advertising, but greater circulation. Because of the increased circulation there is an indication that the New Age movement is continuing to become more geographically widespread, and continues to grow numerically.

SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Caveat Emptor

It is unlikely that anyone could ever read an entire issue of *Common Ground* and not have some nagging doubts or suspicions regarding the contents of at least some of the articles or advertisements. One observer commented,

"Admittedly, some of the products and services advertised in *Common Ground* are difficult to take very seriously. I would guess that even a reader familiar with the New Age movement might find the extraterrestrial connection...a bit suspicious. And I think I would have to see it to believe that eating blue-green algae could do quite as much for a person as the advertisement for it indicates. Another advertisement for a high-tech meditation technique devised to alleviate the stress wrought by modern technology struck me as somewhat oxymoronic. And so I must confess I find much of this stuff to be a bit bizarre."¹⁸

Even the publishers realize that the magazine may contain some products whose claims are a bit too fantastic. In what are essentially the credits at the beginning of each issue they have embedded the following disclaimer:

"Responsibility for the claims made and practices of advertisers rests solely with them...The opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily reflect those of the publishers or the advertisers."

The need for such a disclaimer appears to be well founded. Some of the advertisements really do seem to be too strange to take seriously. A few examples:

*"Beyond the Seen and the Unseen...
A rare opportunity to meet
DACIA ST. JOHN
psychologist & physical trance medium from San Diego
channeling a higher energy source
* receive universal knowledge!
past * present * future
* startling changes ahead!
* belief systems will be challenged!
* healing energy may occur!
* some questions will be answered"*¹⁹
(Italics and boldface in original)

"PATRICIA SUN, world wide respected Healer. Patricia Sun has an unusual ability. A sound which she emits, heals

¹⁸Craig Gay, "Common Ground: A Few Reflections in the 'New Age' Movement", *Crux*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 15-21: 15-16.

¹⁹*Common Ground*, Issue #12, Fall 1985: 36.

and brings into alignment your understanding of yourself."²⁰

(Capital letters in original)

"EXTRATERRESTRIAL EARTH MISSION There are millions of us here. Extraterrestrials in human bodies. We have come in support of the co-creation of Heaven on Earth. It is time for us to fully awaken to our divine purpose and then fulfill it."²¹ (Boldface in original)

"LAUGHING DRAGON FLYING ACADEMY

Relaxation, meditation, astral and time travel, transmutations, hugging, total peace, love and freedom. In-person inspired laughter, from the zany poet, channel and alien, Ken Williams.²² (Boldface in original)

There are also some advertisers who, over time, were proved to be, at the very least, incorrect in their advertising. In an early issue, winter 1985/86, the channeled entity, "Aurorra", made some prophecies regarding the coming years.

"A PROPHECY

"The darkest of the night before the dawn was 1984.

"Beginning with January 1985, the horizon began to brighten in promise of a new sunrise, a new spiritual essence. The dawning will take five years during which the intensification of spirit will be increasingly perceptible to all peoples of the world. The increase in energy will affect everyone physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. No one will be exempt.

"In late 1989, the first rays of pure spiritual consciousness will befall upon the eyes of all humankind. Over the ensuing five years, the vibration of your planet will increase dramatically as the rays of pure spirit approach the midheaven.

"For some, this change in consciousness will be experienced as a wondrous celebration. For others, it will be a trying and most difficult period.

"I am available to tell you more, if you are willing to ask..."²³

²⁰*Common Ground*, Issue #18, Spring 1987: 8.

²¹*Common Ground*, Issue #35, Summer 1991: 10.

²²*Common Ground*, Issue #30, Spring 1990: 60.

²³*Common Ground*, Issue #13, Winter 1985/86, pp. 22-23: 22.

Over six years later Aurorra was still giving sessions, the emphasis, however, had shifted to a series of sessions entitled, "Power and Compassion", where Aurorra helps you to, "rediscover your innocence, your creativity, and your love of life."²⁴ There is no mention of prophecies or even an indication that Aurorra would discuss such global issues as were mentioned years earlier. A year later Aurorra's channeller, Nancy Shipley Rubin, was conducting seminars of a similar nature, with no mention of Aurorra.²⁵

The problem of the validity of the advertisers can also be seen in their lack of judgment. For example, in an advertisement for a local New Age radio talk-show the following appears:

"AUGUST 31 **Keith Harrary**, Clinical psychologist, psychic researcher and co-author of the "Mind Race". Our topic will be cults. Keith counseled many followers of the infamous Jimmy Jones of Jonestown, Guyana.

"SEPTEMBER 7 **Gary Scharff**, part I: Our discussion of cults will continue with this ex-moonie. Gary was a member of the Unification Church for four years and now counsels young adults who have been involved with cults.

"SEPTEMBER 14 **Gary Scharff**, part II.

"SEPTEMBER 21 **Gary Scharff and Keith Harrary** will take your calls and answer your questions on cults and mind conversion techniques...

"OCTOBER 12 **Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh**, part I: Rajneesh has developed a philosophy that now claims to have over a half million followers. Don't miss this rare opportunity to hear Rajneesh, himself, speaking about his philosophy and his religion. Rajneesh is the man that said such things as:

"I am talking about the whole truth so the future of my religion is infinite. All other religions will disappear into it..."

"I would like to see (my followers) take over the world."

Aurorra responded if you were willing to ask, and if you were willing to pay. Aurorra charged \$120.00 per hour for private sessions.

²⁴Common Ground, Issue #38, Spring 1992: 29.

²⁵Common Ground, Issue #42, Spring 1993: 18.

"Jesus Christ was 'at most a madman. You can go to any madhouse' and find another.

"You should stop giving Nobel prizes to criminals like Mother Theresa, who is increasing the world population by saving orphans."

"OCTOBER 19 Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, part II."²⁶ (Italics and boldface in original)

It is no small irony that just two weeks following a series of discussions on cults and mind control the radio-show would host Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Rajneesh, famous for taking over Antelope, Oregon, was the leader of a mind-controlling religious cult.²⁷

The New Age spirit of openness and acceptance has inevitably led to such apparent contradictions. While this attitude is commendable insofar as it lets its readers determine what is best for them, it has the predictable outcome of creating a magazine which presents many incompatible, bizarre or simply ironic positions. Irony, of course, is also at the core of postmodern genres.²⁸

NEW AGE FINDS *COMMON GROUND*: THEMES AND TRENDS

In *Common Ground*, one finds the manifestation of the philosophical concerns which I identified as being common to both New Age and postmodernism in Chapter 5. Upon reading *Common Ground* it becomes very clear that these themes are represented in an astonishingly clear and consistent manner.

Recognizing the Situation

Frequently within the pages of *Common Ground* there is a recognition of the fragmentation of culture which I described earlier. Like Peter Fuller's call for a "shared

²⁶*Common Ground*, Issue #12, Fall 1985: 5.

²⁷Steve Hassan, *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, (Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 1988), 40. Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1965), (Revised and Expanded, 1985): 351.

²⁸Linda Hutcheon, *Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991.)

symbolic order" (see ch. 5), some New Agers see a disintegration of contemporary culture, the dissolution of modern myths, and a consequential need for unity.

"Stories get worn out. Images get worn out. Myths get worn out. We're in one of those periods between great formative myths. Joseph Campbell was saying that, and many other people have observed that one of the reasons we, as individuals, suffer big anxieties and feel troubled so often is because we're past the point where there is a great organizing myth that we all share in and we haven't reached the next time that there will be one. So we're exposed to the great forces of the world without an organized imagination that we share about that."²⁹

"The new paradigm into which we are moving is one of process rather than substance, of interaction. As we recognize the principles of self-organizing systems we realize that the power that is there is not a private property, is not mine or yours, but it ignites between us in our interaction as we are bold to encounter each other, as we can hear and speak to each other in truth."³⁰

We also find frequently that the new paradigm of which New Agers speak is connected to the ideals of the 1960s counterculture. There is a recognition that the 1960s created a, "revolution in the structure of our beliefs",³¹ and that although some of the spirit of this revolution was lost in the 1970s, it is being recovered in the 1980s and 1990s.

"Part of the mystique of 'the 60s was that whether it was through drug induced psychedelic experiences or through spontaneous revelations... people saw what needed to be done and they wanted to do something about it. Over the

²⁹Michael Bertrand, "Meeting in the Forest: an Interview with Michael Meade", *Common Ground*, Issue #29, Winter 1989/90. pp. 9, 18-19: 18.

It must be said in regard to this quotation that although it appears that Mead is endorsing an overarching meta-narrative for society, he qualifies this later in the same passage by saying that the organizing myth must "...have an open vision that includes other cultures and other styles and other ways of being..." It seems that he is calling for a meta-narrative which is inclusive of all narratives. This is the ultimate New Age hope, a syncretism of postmodern pastiche.

³⁰Joanna Macy, "Despair and Empowerment on an Endangered Planet", *Common Ground*, Issue # 33, Winter 1990/91, pp. 18-19: 19.

³¹Jeff Ewener, "Choosing our Future", *Common Ground*, Issue # 10, Spring 1985, pp. 2, 44: 2.

intervening years many people have tended to lose that vision."³²

"There are so many excuses when it comes to the subject of peace. Some people suggest that in the sixties, the obsession with peace was arbitrary -- simply a fad that faded away and gave way to an equally popular seventies obsession with material things. But despite disclaimers, peace is making a comeback."³³

Common Ground even brought the issue of the lost ideals of the '60s and the subsequent materialism of the '70s to the forefront when they promoted a debate between Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. Hoffman represented the continuation of the '60s ideal by fighting the nuclear and environmental battles while being arrested for cocaine use and consequently fleeing underground.³⁴ Rubin represented the hippie-turned-yuppie/New Ager trend, turning '60s activism into '80s business sense and New Age self-awareness.³⁵

"The last time they shared a stage in Vancouver was 1969, during their "Pig for President" campaign against Nixon. The Police still remember the arrests, sit-ins and student take-overs left in their wake.

"Seventeen years later, who are these people? Why have they changed so drastically since the '60s? Where are they headed in the '80s?"³⁶

Other famous voices from the 1960s appear periodically throughout *Common Ground*. Ram Dass (previously Richard Alpert) famous for his experimentation with LSD, appears in the magazine discussing his life,³⁷ along with a couple of articles about John Lennon.³⁸

³²Michael Bertrand, "Birthing a Co-Creative World: an Interview with Barbara Marx Hubbard", *Common Ground*, issue #30, Spring 1990. pp. 10, 17: 10.

³³Jana White, "Peace Makes a Come Back", *Common Ground*, Issue #15, Summer 1986, pp. 3, 42: 42.

³⁴"Abbie Hoffman vs. Jerry Rubin", *Common Ground*, Issue #13, Winter 1985/86, pp. 5, 42: 5.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Susan DeBeck, "Service and the Way of Spirit: An Interview with Ram Dass", *Common Ground*, Issue #12, Fall 1985, pp. 5, 38.

³⁸Larry Gerkman, "John Lennon: 20 Years Ago Today", Issue #27, Summer 1989, pp. 64, 65. Trevor Carolan, "John Lennon: In Memoriam", Issue #9, Winter 1984, p. 2.

There is also widespread recognition that western society is going through a paradigm shift in the form of a renewal of spirituality.

"Our generation has some real important decisions to make and conversions of the heart.

"Change of ways, change of paradigm. To move from Milton to Einstein. To move from an anthropocentric paradigm to a cosmological one. To move from a civilization that is anti-mystical, which is what ours is...to move from that pathology to a mystically oriented spirituality. That's conversion, revolution. And, it's happening."³⁹

"There is a revolution occurring within our society. It is not the political revolution of the sixties and seventies, but rather an awakening of the Human Spirit. It is only now that we are beginning to realize the extent of the power we have within ourselves."⁴⁰

Common Ground even offered its readers a quiz to test whether or not they were adhering to the modern world view.

"The dominant world view is a collection of our beliefs, values, and habits which makes up the myth by which our society lives its life...Take the following quiz as an exercise in examining your world view. Answer the questions with either an 'A' for agree, 'D' for disagree, and a 'U' for unsure.

- People are fundamentally different from all other life forms on Earth. Because of the intelligence of humans, they are in dominion over other life forms.
- People are masters of their own destiny. They can choose their goals and are capable of doing whatever is necessary to achieve them.
- The world is vast and provides unlimited opportunities and resources for humans.
- Our history is one of growth and progress. For every problem there is a solution, therefore progress need never cease.
- All problems are solvable.
- All problems are solvable by people.

³⁹Michael Bertrand, "Rediscovering the Mystical: An Interview with Matthew Fox", *Common Ground*, Issue #24, Fall 1988 (1), pp. 6-7, 16: 7.

⁴⁰Sheldon Bilsker, "Exploring Inner Power", *Common Ground*, Issue 13, Winter 1985/86, pp. 38, 39: 39.

- Many problems are solvable by technology.
 - Those problems that are not solvable by technology can be solved in the social realm.
 - When our world problems become severe and look hopeless, we can work hard and find a solution before it is too late.
- Give yourself 5 points for all 'A' answers, 3 points for all 'U' answers and 0 points for all 'D' answers.
- If you scored 35-40 points you hold the current and most popular view of the world in which we live.
 - If you scored 10-35 points, you are starting to question the current world view and are part of a shift to a new way of thinking.
 - if [sic] you scored 0-10 points, you are part of a new way of thinking -- questioning where we have not seriously questioned before."⁴¹

Common Ground, and its many authors are aware of the shift which is taking place in contemporary culture. While the concept of postmodernism was never mentioned, predictably the idea of a paradigm shift between New Age / Old Age, Piscean era/Aquarian era was mentioned with frequency.

Narratives and Meta-narratives: Diversity and Fragmentation

Like the New Age Movement as a whole, *Common Ground* is, at two levels, a celebrant of diversity. Firstly, at the macro level, *Common Ground* represents a wide variety of spiritual interests. There seems to be very little which would be excluded from its pages. *Common Ground* has been an advertising vehicle for a huge variety of spiritual and other products as well as having a wide range of spiritualities represented in their articles.

Secondly, individual advertisements and articles frequently espouse a view point supportive of the celebration of diversity. One of the very first articles to appear in *Common Ground*, dealing with the meeting of the World Council of Churches which was

⁴¹Betty Didcoct, "How Does Your World View Affect the Planet?", *Common Ground*, Issue #11, Summer 1985, pp. 3, 32: 3.

to be held in Vancouver, emphasized the ecumenical aspect of the meeting.⁴² In the same issue, in an article dealing with the issue of nuclear arms the author wrote

"Somehow we must begin thinking of ourselves as a family on this small planet we inhabit. Somehow, we must begin enjoying the differences within the human family instead of nursing anachronistic hatreds"⁴³

In an article relating to an Ashram school, the author wrote,

"Just as there are many rivers that flow into the ocean, there are myriad [sic] paths that contain truth. All spiritual disciplines are respected, and the children begin their day with inspiring stories from great teachers such as Christ, Buddha, Thoreau, Saint Francis, Yogananda, Mother Theresa, Ghandi...Through Sharing, uplifting stories of these spiritual teachers the students are encouraged to awaken their higher selves."⁴⁴

Other articles dealt with the inevitability of the uniting of all expressions of spirituality, adhering to a world view representing macro-social shifts according to astrological determinant.

"Esotericists say contemporary religions were formed or re-interpreted during the Piscean Age under the influence of the '6th Ray' (Idealistic Devotion), which tends to manifest somewhat fanatically in disparate, often dogmatic forms...

"However, all is not lost; there is good news. There are numerous people within each of the distinct world faiths, who have had mystical or unitive experiences...

"Esoterically this is the pre-figuring of the Aquarian Age in the influence of the '7th Ray' (Ordered Activity) which aids the manifestation of synthesis, unity, sharing, cooperation, and goodwill."⁴⁵

There are also opinions voiced which represent a desire to bring world religions, cultures, and traditions together, but which do not see it as so inevitable, but rather something to be worked towards.

⁴²"World Churches Meet in Vancouver", *Common Ground*, Issue #3, Summer, 1983, p. 34.

⁴³I.F. Stone, "Send in the Machines", *Common Ground*, Issue #3, Summer, 1983, pp. 3, 35: 35.

⁴⁴Judy Shannon, "Ashram School Encourages Service", *Common Ground*, Issue #4, Fall, 1983, p. 35.

⁴⁵Colin Cole, "Religions of the World, Unite!", *Common Ground*, Issue #8, Fall, 1984, pp. 8, 43: 8.

"The big trick now is to have an open vision that includes other cultures and other styles and other ways of being in the world and at the same time be rooted to the center where one is. The fantasy to run and become global I think lacks craftiness, it lacks in-touchness and it lacks a real sense of humanness because people are in a place."⁴⁶

Excommunicated Catholic priest and Creation spiritualist, Matthew Fox, represents his perspective on the issue as such,

"...I talk about deep ecumenism and by that I mean all world religions, including the goddess religions and Native religions, coming forward with their mystical tradition."⁴⁷

Throughout the pages of *Common Ground*, there is a consistent call for all religions to unite. There is a basic belief in the unity of all forms of spirituality, a general feeling that all religions radiate from the same source and essentially teach the same principles. Despite this view, however, there is some indication of hostility towards perspectives which do not advocate unity amongst all religions. The relativism which New Age proposes, actually stops short when called upon to embrace view points which are unsympathetic to New Age style relativism. This is most evident in *Common Ground* in regards to many authors' opinions on traditional Christianity.

The most positive opinions largely come in reference to ecumenical movements, and with implicit criticisms of right-wing Christianity.⁴⁸

"If mainstream religion could get honest about what it's been denying for centuries, which is the mystical tradition, the Cosmic Christ tradition, in fact, then things could happen much faster, because you have to change a culture ultimately from inside.

"The Cosmic Christ is an archetype that's far older than Christianity. It's present in the Hebrew scriptures and it's present in Native American and in Buddhism: the Buddha nature in all things is an archetype."⁴⁹

⁴⁶Bertrand, (1989/90): 18.

⁴⁷Bertrand, (1988, (1)): 7.

⁴⁸"World Churches Meet in Vancouver", *Common Ground*, Issue #3, Summer, 1983, p. 34.

⁴⁹Bertrand, (1988, (1)): 7.

"[Renn Butler] Does this [altered states of consciousness] usually enhance or support a mainstream religious orientation?

"[Stanislav Grof] No. If people have those experiences in a Christian framework, they would identify with the mystical or monastic branches of Christianity, rather than the Vatican hierarchy, for example."⁵⁰

There are many subtle criticisms of Christian principles:

"Where does [the] pressure to deceive either oneself or others regarding one's capacity to do evil come from? Part of the answer may be found in much of the Judeo-Christian tradition. This tradition holds that there is only one God and that God is good. Because we are creations of God, it is our ultimate task in life to somehow conform to His image. The implication is that we must dedicate ourselves to the total elimination of evil."⁵¹

"Believe it or not there are still religious people today who think dowsing for water is the work of the devil."⁵²

"In some of my work I say that the God/Man of the East receives his illumination sitting under the tree in an agony of ecstasy and in the west the God/Man or the Man/God receives his illumination being nailed to a tree in an ecstasy of agony. Therein lies the great difference between the East and the West."⁵³

Some seem to be openly hostile to Christianity.

"We're destroying the planet because we're not connected, we're not intelligent enough to understand. We keep on making the same mistakes. The Bible isn't helping at all. The Bible is man's history. We continue destroying, killing and hurting each other when we shouldn't be doing that and

⁵⁰Renn Butler, "Interview with: Stanislav Grof, MD", *Common Ground*, Issue #41, Winter 1992/93, pp. 10-13: 11.

⁵¹Erika Bukkfalvi Hilliard, "Living with the Dark Side: Gods Have Anuses Too", *Common Ground*, Issue #12, Fall 1985, p. 37.

⁵²A.J. Parker, "All You Want to Know About Power Rocks Now", *Common Ground*, Issue #15, pp 47, 50: 47.

⁵³Joseph Roberts, "Jean Houston: The Tree of Life", *Common Ground*, Issue #24, Fall 1988, pp. 12-13, 17: 12.

it's because we're not connected to the right-brain hemisphere, which means we're not spiritual enough.

"[Jesus] had found the formula: Seek the kingdom within you. So he had the keys to enter the kingdom and he gave them to Peter and they messed it up. It wasn't passed on."⁵⁴

"..don't believe what you read in the Bible - it has nothing to do with the natural or divine ideas about male/female."⁵⁵

Since Christianity is seen as being the religion of western society it is consequently is linked inextricably with the global domination and oppression. This, in turn seems to make it the most prominent target spiritual criticism. The New Age does not appear to be a critical of other spiritual traditions.

Recovery of Meaning: The Distant and the Past

The Distant

Within the pages of *Common Ground* we also find the general belief that cultures which survive today, untouched by modern civilization are necessarily preserves of a more pure and authentic humanity. For example in an article dealing with the Efe Pygmies of Zaire, in providing a general account of their life, the author stated,

"What emerges is a picture of a loving, good-natured people, attuned to nature and untouched by the stresses, diseases and conflicts which besiege so-called civilized societies."⁵⁶

Related to this theme is a renewed interest in, and respect for, society's elders, specifically those who grew up in traditions outside western industrialized, youth-centered, culture. For example there is discussion of a society organized to allow meaningful contact between native elders and the general population.

⁵⁴Joseph Roberts, "José Silva: an interview", *Common Ground*, Issue #33, Winter 1990/91, pp. 15, 66-67: 15.

⁵⁵Barbara Booher, "Reclaiming the Goddess: An Interview with Merlin Stone", *Common Ground*, Issue #29, Winter 1989/90, pp. 8, 10-11, 17: 8.

⁵⁶Ushanda io Elima, "The Efe Pygmies of Zaire: Culture and Spirit", *Common Ground*, Issue #41, Winter 1992/93, pp. 8,30-31: 8.

"The goal of the society is that indigenous elders around the world regain their rightful place in modern society, sharing their wisdom and awakening a global reverence for Mother Earth."⁵⁷

In keeping with this general theme many of the people in the New Age, have themselves gone on pilgrimages to the East in order to seek out spiritual enlightenment. Ironically they go away in order to find out where they are.

Consider Paul Horn, a New Age musician,

"I was over in India, spiritually searching, on my own inner quest..."⁵⁸

Or Ram Dass, who even changed his name, with his identity to an eastern one from Richard Alpert,

"What the East offered me was people who were living a philosophy that I had experienced through chemicals that I had not experienced as a psychologist and as a human in the West"⁵⁹

Many other, less famous people have gone on the same trek.

"Three months and fourteen countries after leaving London, I arrived in Kathmandu just before the hippie influx of Christmas, 1966. Many were looking to the ancient religions of the East for inspiration, seeing the West as spiritually bankrupt. We were affected by centuries of spiritual practices that electrified the air."⁶⁰

One of the goals of New Age is undoubtedly to bring change to western culture (a paradigm shift) and the models on which the new society is to be based on are in part found in the more "simple" and authentic peoples who live more "basic" and more "spiritual" lives.

⁵⁷Janice Foster, "Our Elders Speak: A Tribute to Native Elders", *Common Ground*, Issue # 35, Summer 1991, pp. 66-68: 67.

⁵⁸"Inside Paul Horn", *Common Ground*, Issue #38, Spring 1992, p. 5.

⁵⁹DeBeck: 5, 38.

⁶⁰Kami Kanetsuka, "Ramblings of a Committed Traveler", *Common Ground*, Issue #23, Summer 1988, pp. 8-9: 8.

The Past

While the cultures of distant peoples offer fruitful examples to New Agers, few, if any cultures are completely untouched by the ravages of modern western society. Similarly, if one is to recover meaning, the traditions, practices and beliefs of past cultures serve as a wealth of potential to the New Age culture. The perceived spiritual void of the present is filled by the hope of recovering meaning from the past. In *Common Ground* the exaltation of ancient societies, ancient forms of knowledge, ancient ways of being and ancient traditions are ever-present.

"I think a lot of men, because of the forced losses and separations from the sense of community, the sense of family, the sense of proper work, the sense of meaning in life, start to seek meaning, and the place that meaning has always been sought is in mythology. Men wind up moving towards stories which carry old forms of wisdom and which carry possible new or renewed ways of being in the world."⁶¹

This sentiment is repeated in the words of the channeled entity, "Aurorra":

"When you reach into the ancient times of history, the poeple [sic] who lived then devoted the whole of their being and their work to the graciousness of that celebration, and what they could do next to acknowledge the presence of the earth. They continuously formatted traditions and expressions that gave forth this true celebration.

"When we look to ancient times, we recognize that when people were purely this essence of truth, and that happiness and the glow which comes from this attitude towards life, it was a turning in history, when all that celebration was looked upon with a great deal of scrutiny. The focus of the emotions then became a belief in guilt, a belief in impurity, a belief in the anger that man has in not being able to fulfill his dreams. And a whole belief system came forth into that reality and lived itself out in your plane, on earth."⁶²

⁶¹Bertrand, (1989/90): 9.

⁶²Aurorra, "Celebrations of Life", *Common Ground*, Issue # 16, Fall 1986, p. 47.

The past is idealized in New Age thinking, while the contemporary is often berated. It is generally assumed that something of the past has been lost and is in desperate need of recovery.

"PYTHAGOREAN FIGURES AND THE FOUR FACES OF GOD / It is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot depend on our politicians and business leaders to provide solutions to the problems which threaten our continued survival. Our ideas are based on false premises which have never been questioned. In the result [sic] we are beginning to experience personal distress as well as global disturbance. We must change our thinking patterns before it is too late...

The music of the Pythagorean Spheres fills us with a sense of joy and wonderment; it electrifies our consciousness and acts as a catalyst in rediscovering what has sadly been missing from our lives: **THE HOLY GRAIL -- THE LOST WISDOM.**

A moving experience in itself, **PYTHAGOREAN FIGURES & THE FOUR FACES OF GOD** is a personal exploration into the Lost Wisdom. The Prisca Sapientia, once possessed by the ancients, Homo Sapiens, is now lost from the sight of modern man."⁶³ (Capital letters and boldface in original)

It seems that the past is used by New Agers as a justification of anything which might seem new or unusual. Historical precedent seems to be drawn upon as a means of providing contemporary validity to many New Age beliefs and practices.

The past is also used to justify alternate states of consciousness:

"Shamanic practices have existed for possibly 40,000 years. If you look at the history of humanity you see that Western industrial civilization is the only group that does not hold non-ordinary states of consciousness in high esteem. All other ancient and pre-industrial cultures systematically used non-ordinary states of consciousness for a variety of reasons",⁶⁴

alternate / ancient forms of worship:

⁶³*Common Ground*, Issue #34, Spring 1991: 80.

⁶⁴Butler, 10.

"I think it's really important to establish the historicity of goddess worship, to know that it was part of religions of past time...";⁶⁵

"The rituals, especially in these ancient traditions, are much richer than ours because they always worship cosmology. We started worshipping in the anthropocentric churches, with benches that prevent you from dancing and moving your body.";⁶⁶

the use of ancient wisdom/knowledge:

"I like the phrase that Joseph Campbell used more and more as he got older, 'mythological thinking'. Our ancestors knew how to do it. We've lost it. We do concrete thinking, just as most fundamentalists do.";⁶⁷

health care:

"In the ancient world the health and well-being of the people and the fertility of the land were seen to be intimately related to the society as a whole. If there was disease or famine this was taken as a sign that the governance of the land and the direction of the people were against the harmony of nature, of which man was the steward. Underlying the health crisis of this century is unwellness which is planetary in scope. Behind the physical illness of every individual can be found a neurosis whose roots run deep through family and environment into the culture itself..."⁶⁸

"...the concept of the human body being animated by an unseen force is ancient, with roots in prehistory. It is also cross-cultural, having appeared in different forms in all societies and establishing a basis for many religious beliefs.";⁶⁹

alternate diets:

⁶⁵Booher, 8.

⁶⁶Bertrand, (1988, (1)): 7

⁶⁷"True Tales: Exploring Mythological Thinking, an Interview with Robert Bly", *Common Ground*, Issue #23, Summer 1988, pp. 10, 15. (p. 15)

⁶⁸Neil Tessler, "Conscientious Health Care", Issue # 18, Spring 1987, pp. 52, 54: 54.

⁶⁹Howard Kiewe, "Balancing the Chakras", *Common Ground*, Issue #24, Fall 1988, p. 54.

"Vegetarianism is not a modern phenomenon. The priestly classes of ancient Aztecs and Incas ate no meat, while Hindus and Buddhists have traditionally been vegetarians."⁷⁰

and environmentalism:

"The great mythic traditions are rising again. The larger stories of humanity's cultures are rising, and with that a much deeper appreciation of our relationship to ecology."⁷¹

Few of the articles in *Common Ground* promote any belief system, spiritual practice, philosophy, or psychological or social opinion without an invocation to previous cultures, individuals or religions which practised it or something similar at a previous time in history. The past is used to condemn the present and justify whatever future the author is calling for. The past serves as a ready provider of whatever meaning is being sought.

Recovery of Meaning: Nature

As the past and the distant is a locus of meaning, so too nature provides for the New Ager, a source of purpose and meaning. Considering that most of the ancient or distant cultures which are discussed in *Common Ground* had intimate and vital connections with nature, it is no surprise that the study of past and distant cultures would produce a search for meaning in nature.

"...I think what haunts most men is...an absence of meaning. Most men in our culture are doing things with their lives they don't have a great deal of respect for, so there is a sense of purposelessness.

"Clearly the ecological movement has suggested we need a new myth - that of the husbandman, the one who tends the planet. So far we have not recognized this."⁷²

⁷⁰Alexa Petrenko, "One Potato, Two Potato", *Common Ground*, Issue #42, Spring 1993, pp. 62, 64: 62.

⁷¹Joseph Roberts, "Jean Houston: the Tree of Life", *Common Ground*, Issue #24, Fall 1988, pp. 12-13, 17: 13.

⁷²Joseph Roberts, "Finding Your Meaning in Life. A Mythic Journey: Sam Keen", *Common Ground*, Issue #35, Summer 1991, pp. 8, 70: 70.

Perhaps the most prominent theme which arises out of the search for meaning in nature is that of Gaia, Mother Earth. There is an overwhelming consistency of belief in the interconnectedness of all the earth. The earth is seen as being alive, sentient, and purposeful.

"We see our planet as a living entity, Gaia (The Greek 'Goddess of the Earth'), what James Lovelock has called the Gaia principle. Then you have relationship with the earth, as we have relationship with other human beings.

"We need to work on spiritual and personal transformation on the self, because unless we understand the ecology of the mind and the ecology of soul and the ecology of love, we cannot understand the ecology of nature.

"Personal transformation and the ecology of the mind is as important as deep ecology.

"...the Gaia Goddess, is an enduring spirit, an enduring Goddess. However terrible catastrophic activities the industrial society has brought upon this earth to bear, ultimately the Earth Goddess will win.⁷³

"The shift to the new, Aquarian age brings new energies, new possibilities, and new relationships. These include the opportunity and the urgent need to seek attunement with the Life surrounding and within us in a myriad forms, visible and invisible. Not as ruler and ruled but as co-habitants and indeed, as intelligent co-creators, of our world...Nature is not a blind force...it is conscious and has inner vehicles. 'These unseen beings', called Devas or by other names, have long been denied. But they are there willing and eager to work with us in harmony when we will acknowledge and become in tune with them and help them."⁷⁴

"Paradoxically, in these times of extreme materialism, many of us are being called to remember our connections with the true Material World, the Earth, Mother Nature, Gaia. A desire resurges to remember and honour our intimate ties with nature, and in that remembering, a desire comes to act out those ties...People from all religions and walks of life

⁷³Michael Bertrand, "Personal Transformation is Key to Environmental Harmony: Interview with Satish Kumar", *Common Ground*, Issue # 19, Summer 1987, pp. 6, 51: 6, 51.

⁷⁴Sheila Weaver, "Trees: Guardians Of The Earth", *Common Ground*, Issue #11, Summer 1985, p. 3.

are gathering to sing, dance, feast and meditate together - enjoying and putting joy into joining with our nature."⁷⁵

A related theme to the concept of Gaia is "Atman is Brahman", where the soul of the individual is the soul of the cosmos. All things are part of the universal One.

"I am filled with the joy of being and I feel like a child again; one with the universe, one with every tree, every blossom, every dog and every bug. I am all of them and they are all of me. All the dichotomies have melted away; there is just the we."⁷⁶

"Instead of trying to repress my thought processes I align my spirit with my thoughts and use my thoughts to consciously love everything around me. If I'm sitting in the forest I will begin by loving my own body, the clothes I'm wearing, the rock that I'm sitting on, the moss that's around me, the grass, the wildflowers, the trees. I find that as I'm able to open my heart in love and appreciation for everything that's around me, I stop seeing them as separate from who I am. As I enfold them, so to speak, in my love, I feel them inside me. I find that it's love that connects me with the surrounding world and the creator."⁷⁷

"...each and every human being is a microcosm of the whole universe. We have the embodiment of all bodies in creation in our body...Our body is a microcosm of the macrocosm. Therefore if we can intimately, on the intimate self, [sic] and have self-transformation we will be able to create a universal transformation, for intimate and ultimate are two ends of the same stick or two sides of the same coin."⁷⁸

Nature, nature worship, and the belief in the interconnectedness of all life is an essential component of New Age. Nature and its endless variety provides a rich and varied locus of meaning. Like the past, nature condemns the modern world, and justifies a host of beliefs and practices. In the end, nature has become the displacer of the

⁷⁵Susan Davidson, et al, "Celebrating the Seasons: A Natural Cycle", *Common Ground*, Issue # 11, Summer 1985, pp. 33-34: 33.

⁷⁶Edita Koenig-Mill, "Ode to Joy", *Common Ground*, Issue # 14, Spring 1986, p. 6.

⁷⁷Michael Bertrand, "Moving Into Spirit: an interview with Ken Carey", *Common Ground*, Issue #25, Winter 1989/90, pp. 7, 50: 50.

⁷⁸Michael Bertrand, "Personal Transformation is Key to Environmental Harmony: Interview with Satish Kumar", *Common Ground*, Issue # 19, Summer 1987, pp. 6, 51: 6.

allegiances of the modern world, replacing them with a religious devotion to Mother Earth, as the following song illustrates:

Planetary Anthem (*Tune: O Canada*)

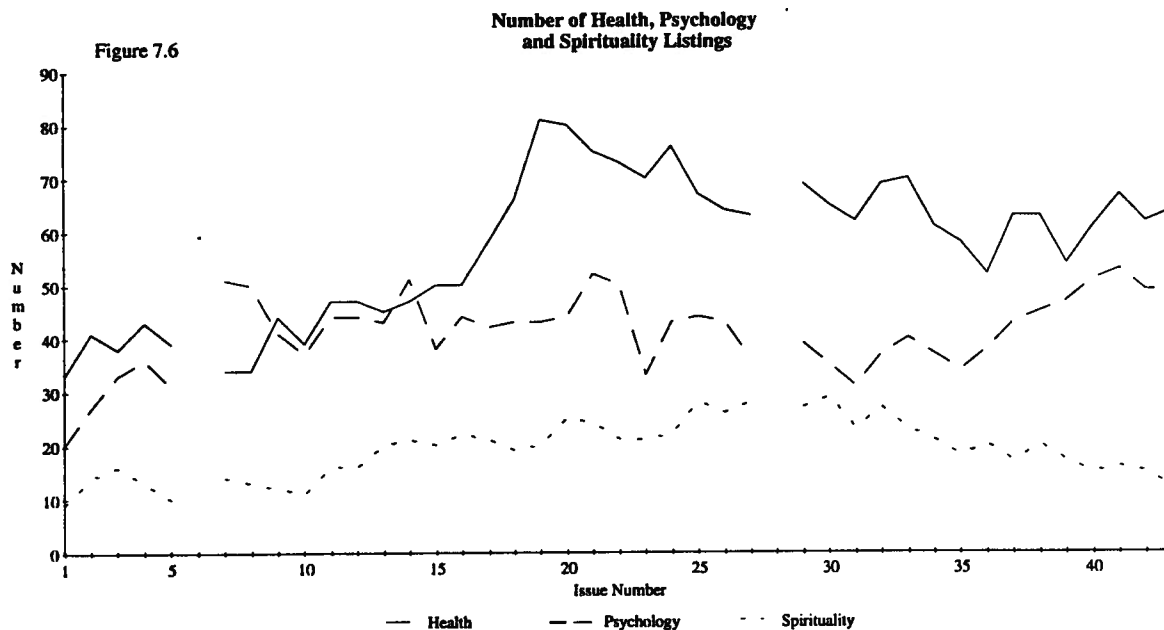
*O Zemlya, our planetary home
From pole to pole,
a nuclear-free zone
With glowing hearts the people rise
united, strong and free
And pledge our lives, O Zemlya
we pledge our lives to thee.
Justice shall reign, and liberty
All beings on our planet
shall be free
O Mother Earth,
we pledge our lives to thee.*

Note: 'Zemlya' is the Russian name for Earth.⁷⁹
(Italics and boldface in original, "Note..." is part
of the original quotation.)

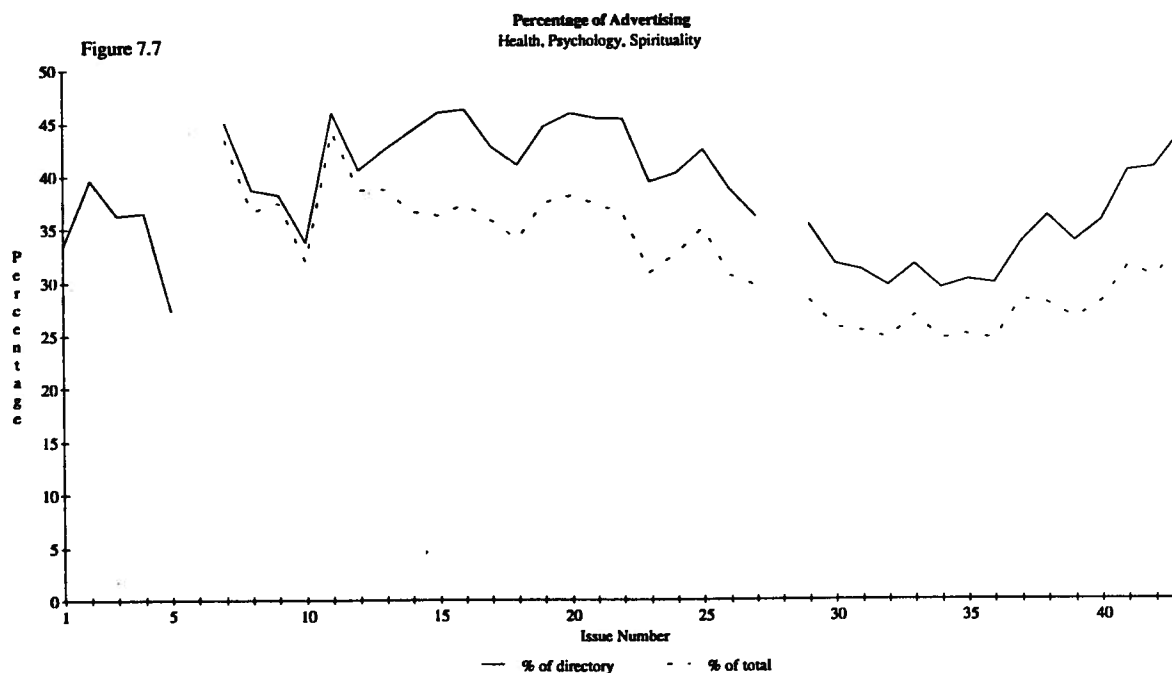
Recovery of Meaning: Self (Spirit, Mind and Body)

While the distant, the past, and nature serve as sources for the recovery of meaning, ultimately they seem only to provide a place to find meaning, which is then transferred into the ultimate locus of meaning, the self. In *Common Ground*, more than anything, the care and improvement of the self stands as supreme. In the directory advertising, we see that the three components of self occupy the top three advertising topics. The body is represented by the category "Health, Healing & Bodywork", the emotions/mind are represented in the category "Psychology, Therapy and Counseling", and the spirit in the category, "Spiritual Practices". Figure 7.6 illustrates that "Health, Healing and Bodywork" is consistently the largest of the three, with "Psychology, Therapy and Counseling" consistently second and "Spiritual Practices" most often third.

⁷⁹Debbi Nehr, "Planetary Anthem", *Common Ground*, Issue #11, Summer 1985, p. 35.



The three categories combined consistently account for 35% to 45% of all advertising in the resource directory. In total, there are between 18 and 28 different categories of listings per issue, meaning that these three categories account for a disproportionately large percentage of the resource directory advertising (Figure 7.7).



Spirit: Self as God

A basic New Age premise is that we are all part of god, or to say it more strongly, we are all god. The spiritual self is both divine and infinite. The problem however is that humans have forgotten their divinity, and it is the task of New Age to help us get over our cosmic amnesia.

"The reason and justification of our human birth is for linking our soul with God. This is the discovery and declaration of the great minds. Our Scriptures - the Vedas, the Shastras, the Adi Granth, the Bible, and the Koran - offer the same opinion. The scriptures are the writings or utterances of those who have found God. They agree that a human being is the highest of all species and that during human existence the most essential task is to realize God."⁸⁰

"...from being a very devout atheist I've come all the way to the point of just trusting this inner guidance, which to me is the goddess."⁸¹

"I see myself as taking birth, in which I have curriculum that I in my higher-self designed, but then I in my incarnation am the stuff itself of experience. [sic] You always feel you have the choice of being the victim or the creator. You can be that which incarnates, which becomes the victim because you are part of the law, part of the unfolding karma or you can be the creator which is that which creates the whole thing.

"It takes terrible 'chuzpa' in the West to say 'I am God'..."⁸²

"...part of the magic of [Findhorn] is the communal aspiration...to discover our own inner wizardry (divinity)."⁸³

⁸⁰Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj, "A Matter of Experience", *Common Ground*, Issue # 36, Fall 1991, p. 10.

⁸¹Booher, 10.

⁸²DeBeck: 38.

⁸³Alex Walker, "The Yoga of Findhorn", *One Earth*. Quoted in: Michael Bertrand, "Return to Findhorn: the Magic Continues", *Common Ground*, Issue #16, Fall 1986, pp. 8, 46: 8.

"...I just don't think people take the time to be quiet, to be still, to go within and make that contact with the highest part of themselves, which I call the God-self."⁸⁴

"The source of creation is yourself. It's self-interaction. There's a Vedic expression, 'Curving back within myself, I create again and again.' I first create the mind, then I create the body, then I create the universe, and through that, the experience of the universe.

"I used to be an atheist until I realized I was God."⁸⁵

"**DISCOVER YOUR INNER LIGHT / 'You are your own universe. / you create your own reality.'**"⁸⁶ (Capital letters and boldface in original)

*"The mission of the Vancouver Church of Religious Science is to embody our life as the life of God. Each of us is a special, empowered and unlimited expression of God - the love, intelligence and source of the universe. Through the teaching of Science of Mind and the energy of unconditional love, we are committed not only to the theoretical understanding of our union in God, but also to the transformation of our daily lives into expressions of love, health and abundance. We Choose to Live as God!"*⁸⁷ (Italics and boldface in original)

"Experience the Goddess in all her faces and discover her as your inmost self!"⁸⁸

If it is assumed that the individual is God, with the ability to access infinite power, then the other components of self, the body and the mind (emotions) must therefore be controllable by this divinity. If we are to worship ourselves as God, we must make ourselves whole. To worship an emotionally distraught or physically weak divinity is hardly appealing. Therefore it appears that the assumption that we have infinite spirits seems to have spurred the desire to have infinite bodies and minds.

⁸⁴Michael Bertrand, "Choose to Change: An Interview with Eileen Caddy", *Common Ground*, Issue #23, Summer 1988 (2), pp. 6-7, 52: 7.

⁸⁵Marilyn Knipp, "Between the Thoughts: Interview with Deepak Chopra", *Common Ground*, Issue #39, Summer 1992, pp. 58-60: 60.

⁸⁶*Common Ground*, Issue #39, Summer 1992: 36.

⁸⁷*Common Ground*, Issue #29, Winter 1989/90: 17.

⁸⁸*Common Ground*, Issue #30, Spring 1990: 3.

Mind/Emotions: Self in control

Assuming that the spirit is divine, it is logical to assert that the mind and emotions must be fully aware of that reality in order to operate holistically. Proper mental health derives from an appropriate opinion of self. We must see our minds and emotions as totally part of the divine, totally well and healed. Stress, anguish, fear and all negative feelings and emotions are again unnatural. Once someone has fully realized his or her potential as a divine being, he or she then contains the power to heal his or her self and achieve total wellness and harmony within.

"Do we truly love ourselves just as we are at any given moment in time? Or does our well-being and self worth depend on the judgment of others? The following affirmations, on a daily basis, can help: 'love myself unconditionally.' 'I accept myself unconditionally'.

"Whenever you do a praise worthy deed, make sure that you do it because you want to. That in itself should make you feel good. Feel free to praise yourself.

"Now, all of a sudden, you are a free individual again...you hold the 'power of acknowledgment' within yourself."⁸⁹

"There is a growing conviction that whatever our personal trauma, dysfunctional background or status of 'recovery', with the right facilitator or guide, access to the appropriate literature and a commitment to creating 'Ease' for our disEase, we can 'Do It Ourselves'.

"On the west coast, we are privileged to have many leaders in the field...

"Some of them represented Holistic, or 'New Age' approaches to health and self-help; others espouse aspects of traditional medicine-psychology and emotional and mental health practices. The common thread is the commitment to the idea that change of health comes from self, comes from within."⁹⁰

"Explore you past lives through hypnosis to release fears, old belief patterns, blocked relationships and karma which

⁸⁹Barbara Cryne, "Acknowledgment", *Common Ground*, Issue #41, Winter 1992/93: 54.

⁹⁰Lois A. Wraight, "Healing From Within", *Common Ground*, Issue #32, Fall 1990, pp. 80-82: 80.

you may be carrying forward into your present life. Explore your past lives to bring forward knowledge, skills, and wisdom to a new place of understanding, clarity and empowerment.

"Unlock, release, and change the individual, familial, and social issues which are affecting you, while connecting with your Goddess-Self to receive the boundless love and power awaiting you."⁹¹

"[*Common Ground*] What are we healing ourselves of?

"[Louise Hay] Well, in my opinion it is self-hatred. I think that all of us are dealing with that issue on one level or another. That's why the only thing I teach people is 'loving yourself', because I find when we do, it is amazing the things that change."⁹²

"Essential to a holistic philosophy is an understanding that the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of a person are dynamically interrelated and inseparable, just as are the form, colour, texture and contact of a piece of art.

"One way of describing this relationship is that a person's attitude and way of being in the world (spiritual aspect) is reflected in the degree of harmony that that person has in their thoughts (mental aspect), feelings (emotional aspect) and body (physical aspect)."⁹³

A New Age equivalent to Ann Landers, which was added to the paper in issue #43, offers her readers (and letter writers) positive affirmations in order to deal with any situation.⁹⁴ The people requesting help are told to repeat the affirmations daily.

To the person with low-self esteem:

"I AM BEAUTIFUL AND EVERYBODY LOVES ME."⁹⁵
(Capitals in original)

To the person whose spouse died:

⁹¹*Common Ground*, Issue #33, Winter 1991: 50.

⁹²Joseph Roberts, "Louise Hay on Loving Ourselves", *Common Ground*, Issue #25, Winter 1988/89, pp. 8, 51: 8.

⁹³Chris Shirley, "What's the Holistic Approach", *Common Ground*, Issue # 32, Fall 1990: 78.

⁹⁴"Dear Louise", *Common Ground*, Issue #43, Summer 1993: 10.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

"I ALLOW EACH DAY TO SHOW ME THE BEAUTY
OF A NEW LIFE. I AM AT PEACE."⁹⁶
(Capitals in original)

To the person who has problems with family members:

*"I always have a good, loving relationship with all my
family."*⁹⁷ (Italics in original)

And ironically, to the person for whom positive affirmations don't seem to work:

"I LOVE MYSELF AND I AM SAFE."⁹⁸
(Capitals in original)

The letter writers are encouraged to heal themselves through loving themselves and repeating positive, self-affirming thoughts.

Body: Self as Incorruptible

Once someone has achieved self-healing of spirit and mind/emotions, the next logical step is to realize that the body is merely an extension of the spirit and the mind. Hence as one is able to realize godhood and total mental and emotional health, so too physical health can be self-achieved. Illness is essentially the physical manifestation of spiritual or mental/emotional imbalance. Physical weakness is symptomatic of deeper problems.

"...TRANSFORMATIONAL BODYWORK is more than a technique. It can lead you to a **new way of being** within yourself so that pain and stress can be dissolved. Almost all illness, stress and disease are simply a holding away - or separation - from love."⁹⁹ (Capitals and Boldface in original)

"[*Common Ground*] What do we have to learn from illness?
"[Deepak Chopra] Illness is just a self-correcting mechanism that brings us back in tune with nature, and

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹*Common Ground*, Issue # 39, Summer 1992: 31.

restores the intimate relationship we were meant to have with the universe. There's a love affair going on, and when we deviate from that, illness comes."¹⁰⁰

"Illnesses usually are thoughts and emotions we hold over a long period of time and then come to produce symptoms in our body which we then call illness. Sometimes our state of mind leaves our body weakened to surrender germs. Illnesses can give us a good excuse to avoid certain issues we are facing or we use it to reach a desired end. So in that manner you could say that all illness actually is psychological, and therefore has to be treated on the mental and emotional level simultaneously before any treatment on the physical level can be effective."¹⁰¹

"...the center of [peoples] problems directly pertain to their person issues in some way. Yet from the patient's point of view they have come in merely because of a troubling physical problem, little realizing that its threads led deep into their life."¹⁰²

"We believe that everyone has the power within themselves to heal every circumstance and situation in their lives."¹⁰³

There are no apparent limits to physical self-healing, indeed, an admission of limits would be a rejection of innate divinity. Hence we see claims of miracle self-healings from diseases such as AIDS¹⁰⁴ and cancer¹⁰⁵. We also can see offers of panaceas, for example:

"Trager™ is beneficial for anyone suffering from backache, headache, asthma, arthritis, chronic pain and fatigue, MS, Parkinson's disease, post-polio, AIDS, sexual abuse, depression, general neuro-muscular disorders, or simply

¹⁰⁰Knipp: 58.

¹⁰¹James Daniels, "Mind/Body Integration: a counselor's perspective", *Common Ground*, Issue #20, Fall 1987, pp. 10, 49: 10.

¹⁰²Neil Tessler, "Conscientious Health Care", *Common Ground*, Issue # 18, Spring 1987, pp. 52, 54: 52.

¹⁰³*Common Ground*, Issue #29, Winter 1989: 14.

¹⁰⁴Editors note from: Gordon, William. "Out of AIDS: A Commitment to-life", *Common Ground*, Issue #17, Winter 1986/87: 48.

¹⁰⁵Claude Dosdall, "An Attitude of Hope: Triumph over Cancer", *Common Ground*, Issue #20, Fall 1987, pp. 6-8.

personal development awareness and a need for grounding."¹⁰⁶

If the self is god, then the self needs to be perfect. Deities need to be emotionally balanced and completely self-aware. The incorruptible New Age physical self is the goal of New Age health-care and it is not announced shyly, as is evident in this advertisement for a 1986 conference in Arizona:

**"PHYSICAL IMMORTALITY...OUR NEXT STEP a
gathering of those who know. 1986 NATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF THE ETERNAL FLAME."**¹⁰⁷
(Italics, capitals and boldface in original)

Deities need to be physically perfect, or at least self-healing. And most importantly, deities need to believe in and continually affirm their own god-hood. A weak or failing god is hardly worth worshipping.

CONCLUSION

Common Ground has served as Vancouver's most prominent voice for the New Age for over ten years. It represents many of the themes, trend, strengths, weaknesses, commonalties and contradictions of the New Age Movement. Since its inception the magazine has seen, and perhaps has contributed to, the growth of the New Age Movement in Vancouver. The popular magazine is certainly a barometer for change and development within the movement. The fact that it is primarily a venue for advertisers is almost a guarantee that it will represent an accurate portrayal of how the movement is growing and changing locally. So too, the magazine's interviews with New Age leaders from around the world keep the readership in touch with the movement as a whole. It can properly be said that *Common Ground* has both changed and been changed by the local

¹⁰⁶Louise Morin, "Tragertm", *Common Ground*, Issue #41, Winter 1992/93: 54.

¹⁰⁷*Common Ground*, Issue #15, Summer 1986: 51.

New Age scene. Its importance to the New Age in Vancouver can scarcely be underestimated.

As a voice for the New Age, *Common Ground* serves to confirm the assumptions about the New Age which were raised in previous chapters. In any one issue of *Common Ground* such themes as the connection with the 1960s counterculture (both ideologically and substantially); the idea of diversity and fragmentation; and the recovery of meaning in the distant/past, nature and the self are displayed with astonishing clarity. Beyond this, however, the New Age adds a spiritual element, something which remains largely unexplored in postmodernism. For the New Age this exploration inevitably leads to the search for the perfect self. The New Age individual is seemingly in constant pursuit for a self which is perfect in body, mind and spirit. The inevitable result of this is, of course, godhood.

Chapter Eight -

THE GEOGRAPHY OF NEW AGE IN VANCOUVER

GENTRIFICATION

Over the last twenty to thirty years there has been an ever growing and more refined body of literature dealing with a phenomenon which has been identified in cities across North America and beyond. This phenomenon involves the social upgrading of inner city districts and has been called "gentrification". It is marked by the influx of the new rising social class of white collar professionals into previously lower-income, blue collar neighbourhoods and the transformation of the existing housing stock, "...through renovation, deconversion, condominium conversion or renovation."¹ The result of this process is the significant raising of land values and rents, forcing the existing populations from the area, making it accessible only to wealthier households.

In this chapter we will explore the point of interaction between the phenomenon of gentrification and the New Age Movement. Far from being an experiment in the combining of disparate ideas, the marriage of these two concepts actually provides a strong basis for understanding more about New Age and its proponents.

Gentrifiers and the Culture of Gentrification

As the twentieth century proceeded, a fundamental shift occurred in the proportion of people who were working in various segments of the economy. In general the pattern that became evident was a dramatic proportional decrease in employment in primary and secondary industries corresponding with a rise in tertiary and quaternary industries. Located primarily in cities, this shift caused theorists (primarily sociologist Daniel Bell²)

¹David Ley, "Social Upgrading in Six Canadian Inner Cities", *The Canadian Geographer*, 32 (1), 1988, pp. 31-45: 31.

²See: Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973) and, Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1976)

to classify the transition as being a shift from the industrial to the post-industrial city. An urban landscape which was once dominated by the smoke-stacks of industry has become dominated by the office towers of modern business.

With the advent of the post-industrial city and the rise in white collar professionals there began to emerge a new urban culture and a new economy oriented towards the tastes, preferences and ideals of this group. By the 1960s and early 1970s many of the children of the Baby-Boom era, having passed through the hippy culture, found their niche in this segment of the economy. As a result, many of the aesthetic preferences and ideological principles of this new class were rooted in those of the counterculture.

With the youth culture of the 1960s and the consequential shifts in public awareness of social issues, politics took a dramatic swing towards liberalism, manifest in Canada with the election of Pierre Trudeau in 1968.³ This new liberalism which swept Canada was also present at the civic level in Vancouver with the election in 1972 of a new liberal reform party named TEAM (The Electors Action Movement), which reflected some of the ideals expressed by the counterculture. In keeping with the ideals of the 1960s, this new party sought to emphasize quality of life and the concept of the "livable city" over the previous manifestos of urban growth and "progress". Made up of "...predominantly youthful, highly educated, middle and upper middle income, and heavily professional..."⁴ members, TEAM was a profile of the new class of people which was going to change both urban policy and social taste.

The ideals of the counterculture and the wealth and status of the new elite combined to create a new culture. This culture was characterized by "...alternative values which emphasize the realm of experience, man's emotional, spiritual, and aesthetic nature. There [was] an insistence that the realm of meaning and the quality of experience are

³David Ley, "Liberal Ideology and the Post-Industrial City", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 70(2), 1980, pp. 238-258: 238.

⁴Ley, 1980, 238.

central concerns."⁵ Hence there was a renewed concern for amenity, art, leisure and pleasure, and sometimes pure hedonism. Seeking to remove themselves from the plasticity and drudgery of suburban life, this new culture pursued exotic food, art and music. With style as imperative, this new culture was concerned with the "art of living",⁶ and sought to maximize their cultural capital through consuming and "appreciating" only the finest life has to offer. The new white collar professional class sought to maximize themselves through self-expression, personal experience, self-realization and total physical health. "...[And thus] the old personal ethic is...rejected for a cult of personal health and psychological therapy."⁷ Similarly, religious tradition, and specifically the Christian church, a staple of suburban life, were replaced by exotic spiritualities and self-actualisation.

The Location of Gentrification

As could reasonably be expected, the locational choices made by this new class are intimately connected with the identities of taste, consumption and good living which they have so carefully crafted for themselves.

The Midas Touch: Artists and Location Leaders for Gentrification

Given the particular social demands of this segment of the population, it is logical that their choice of places to live would in some ways reflect their personal tastes. Rejecting suburban life, this segment of the population saw economic and cultural potential in the inner city. The preference for inner city locations which was expressed by the new professional classes was not played out in an arbitrary fashion. As could be

⁵Ley, 1980, 242.

⁶Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Jugement of Taste*, (Trans. Richard Nice), (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984): 366.

⁷Bourdieu, 367.

expected, the areas which have been gentrified are ones where the cultural needs of this new class are best met.

As we have already seen, the counterculture of the 1960s was instrumental in influencing the political and social atmosphere of the 1970s and 1980s. With such a strong impact in these realms, it does not seem so unusual to consider what impact the counterculture might have had on the formation of both conceptual and concrete images of the city. The baby-boom children of the 1950s grew-up in the suburbs, but went to university in the city. Hence in many Canadian cities, such as Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Edmonton and Halifax, the youth culture found itself forming an urban (and urbane) lifestyle in the neighbourhoods near the universities.⁸ For many years the suburbs had been the domain of the white-collar worker and the nuclear family, in contrast to inner city districts which were populated by blue collar and service workers. This working-class orientation made for an extraordinarily affordable housing market in districts near to universities, which students took advantage of.

This influx of students changed the demographics of such inner city neighbourhoods significantly, adding many 15-24 year olds to their populations between 1960 and 1970.⁹ (See Figure 6.1) The inevitable result of the influx of youth into these neighbourhoods was to alter the economy and the general atmosphere in order to suit their particular needs, wants and styles. This precipitated the introduction of coffee bars, youth culture clothing stores, health food stores, bookstores, counterculture newspapers and eastern religious organizations (all of which were hallmarks of countercultural life) in these areas.

Concerned with self-realization and experience, these countercultural neighbourhoods became synonymous with artistic expression, crafts, music, new religious experience, narcotic experimentation, and philosophical discussion. The result of this

⁸David Ley, "Follow the Hippies: The Cultural Politics of Gentrification"

⁹Ley, "Follow...."

was that the cultural identity of these neighbourhoods began shifting from that of blue collar working class homes, to the milieu of educated bohemians. These countercultural districts were isolated areas of cultural critique, the polar opposite of the supposedly dreary and routinized suburbs. In effect, the districts themselves became statements of dissatisfaction with society, refuges away from the establishment.

The growing population of young, liberal arts educated white-collar workers, many of whom were the products of the counterculture, associated themselves with ideas of creativity, originality and refinement. Hence, seeing the institutionalization, routinization and lack of creativity of the suburbs they sought to locate themselves in districts which did not compromise their self conceived notions of taste, namely the districts populated by the counterculture and its creative proponents.

It is not surprising therefore that the presence of artists in an area has proven to be a significant early indicator for determining what areas within a city will become gentrified. The irony, however, is that it is also well documented that the gentrification of a neighbourhood will raise land and rent prices to such a degree that artists, who are generally a financially underprivileged segment of the population, will not be able to afford to live there and will be forced to relocate. Much like the story of King Midas, areas touched by artists become gold, thus rendering the areas unusable for them.

Locational Indicators

While the existence of the counterculture and the presence of artists in a district serve as significant leading indicators of gentrification, there also exist some other factors which seem to influence heavily what areas will be gentrified and which ones will not. While some might suggest that the availability of inexpensive housing is significant in the up-scaling of a neighbourhood, it is apparent that this is not as powerful an attraction as some others.¹⁰ Remembering that aesthetics and life-style are significant influences in the

¹⁰Ley, 1988, 35.

lives of people associated with gentrification, it is then also logical to assume that their choice of neighbourhood will be made in accordance with these ideals. In fact, existing research strongly suggests that this is the case.

One of the most significant correlates of gentrification is proximity to existing elite neighbourhoods. In early research this was predominantly evident in the location of gentrifying neighbourhoods near pre-existent elite neighbourhoods, such as Vancouver's Shaughnessy, which have always been high status districts.¹¹ This tendency is counter-balanced by an equally strong negative correlation against proximity to low-status districts.¹² Later research indicates that social up-grading is also beginning to occur near areas which have been extensively gentrified and have become prohibitively expensive as a result. Dubbed "contagious diffusion", this process is marked by the exploration and development of areas which are near enough to already gentrified areas to take advantage of their ambiance.¹³

Another significant correlate with gentrified areas is proximity to institutions such as hospitals and universities.¹⁴ As we have already discussed, the existence of universities was significant in the creation of the pre-gentrified counterculture neighbourhoods of the 1960s. In institutions such as hospitals and universities a significant number of the highly educated professionals will be employed, thus making surrounding neighbourhoods prime targets for gentrification. A third correlate of the location of gentrified areas is amenities. Parks, waterfronts and views serve as significant positive correlates of gentrified areas, while industrially zoned land use serves as a strong negative correlate to these same areas.¹⁵

¹¹Ley, 1988: 40.

¹²David Ley, "Gentrification in Recession: Social Change in Six Canadian Inner Cities, 1981-1986", *Urban Geography*, 13 (3) 1993a, pp. 230-256: 237.

¹³Ibid, 240.

¹⁴Ley, 1988, 40.

¹⁵Ibid.

In keeping with the theme of the desire to locate near people who represent the anti-establishment ideals, there are significant locational correlates between gentrified neighbourhoods and areas of alternative lifestyles for example, countercultural, gay, or artistic districts.¹⁶ Another correlate to gentrification is the style of the existing housing stock. Fitting with the cultural propensity towards particular styles which suggest "authenticity", architectural signatures like "Georgian squares, Victorian gingerbread and gables, and Edwardian bays and turrets are painstakingly restored and embellished as an important credential of a distinctive taste culture."¹⁷ Similarly, in places where an appropriate housing stock does not exist, and where condominium development is more frequent, architects will design buildings to suit the postmodern stylistic tastes of the consumer, utilizing all manner of indigenous or international icons and architectural styles.¹⁸

In short, it becomes clear that areas of inner city up-grading are often the product of the gentrifier's desires to create, promote and preserve particular lifestyle patterns and images. Indeed, wise developers in gentrified and gentrifying districts put heavy emphasis on lifestyle when advertising their latest condominiums and apartments.¹⁹

GENTRIFICATION, KITSILANO AND THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

History: From Native to Hippy.

The area of Vancouver which is now referred to as Kitsilano was initially populated by indigenous peoples and derives its present name from the name of Squamish chief, Khaatsa-lag-nough. First owned by Sam Greer in 1884, who bought 320 acres from the natives, the property was taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway only a year

¹⁶Ley, 1993a, 238.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Caroline Mills, "Myths and Meanings of Gentrification", in James Duncan and David Ley, *Place/Culture/Representation*, (New York: Routledge, 1993) pp. 149-170.

later. The completion of the Granville Bridge in 1888 made feasible the development of portions of the area farthest east. Later, streetcar service extended the reach of people interested in living in the area to as far west as present-day Balsam Street.

As Kitsilano grew over the years it became largely, (but not exclusively) a lower middle-class neighbourhood. Initially made-up of mostly single family dwellings, the area began to see some change by the 1940s as large homes became sub-divided and some were torn down to make room for walk-up apartments.²⁰ The population density of the area increased as the area became more eclectic in style of both dwellings and residents. By the 1960s, "Socially it...was a mixed working- and lower- middle-class district with a large student population, many elderly people, and a good proportion of the city's artists and writers."²¹

As was developed earlier (see chapter six) the Kitsilano area became the principal location of the 1960s counterculture. At this time the population in Kitsilano changed drastically in its make-up. There was a huge increase in the proportion of residents aged 25-34 (See figure 6.1). This population was taking advantage of the fact that Kitsilano was primarily an area of low rents as well as being an area near to the beach where the hippies could live the lifestyle they were generating for themselves. One interviewee remembers the nature of Kitsilano during this time.

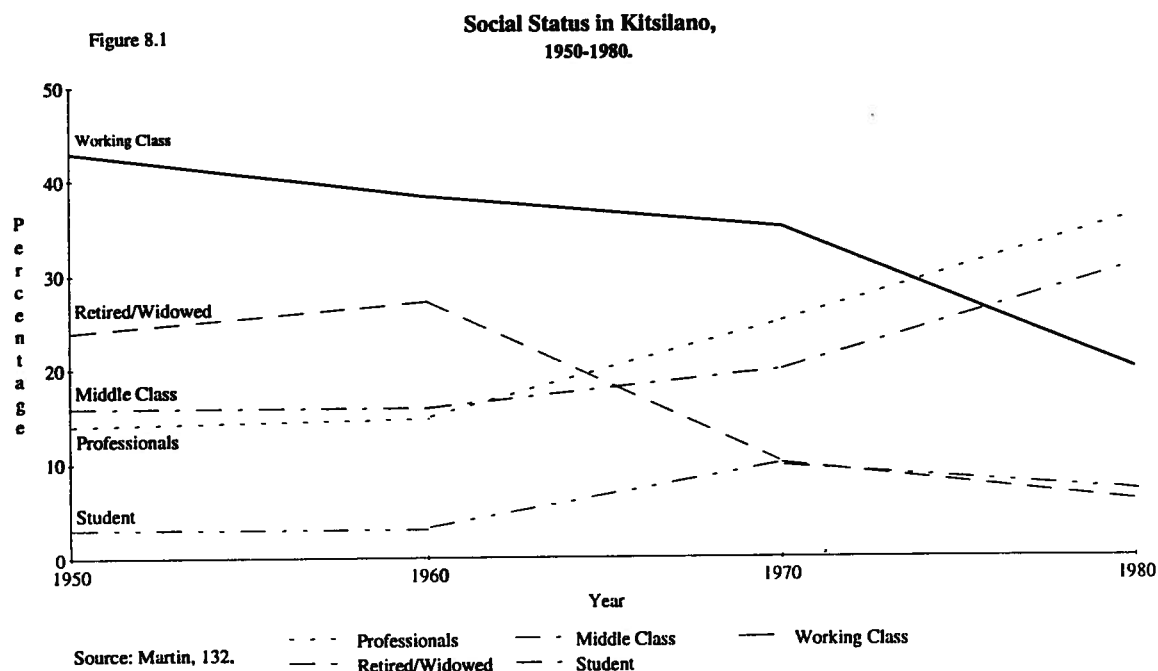
"Kitsilano was the Haight-Ashbury of Canada, it was the Berkeley of Canada...So the intelligentsia and the artists and the musicians and the poets, the radicals, the visionaries the dreamers, the lovers the dancers were here; Kitsilano. ("Boris")

In the 1970s, however, as the hippies became yuppies, Kitsilano went through some dramatic transformations in the form of embourgeoisement. The new elite discovered that Kitsilano was a neighbourhood which could be transformed to satisfy their particular

²⁰Bruce Martin, "Faith without Focus: Neighbourhood transition and Changing Inner-City Belief in Vancouver", Unpublished M.A. Thesis, U.B.C., 1991: 133.

²¹Stan Persky, "But that was another decade," *Vancouver Sun*, September 12, 1980: A5. Quoted in Martin, 134.

lifestyle demands and thus began the process of gentrification in Kitsilano. The transformation of the area from a working class district to a white collar district is evident in figure 8.1 which shows the transformation of the social status of Kitsilano residents in the area from 1950 to 1980.



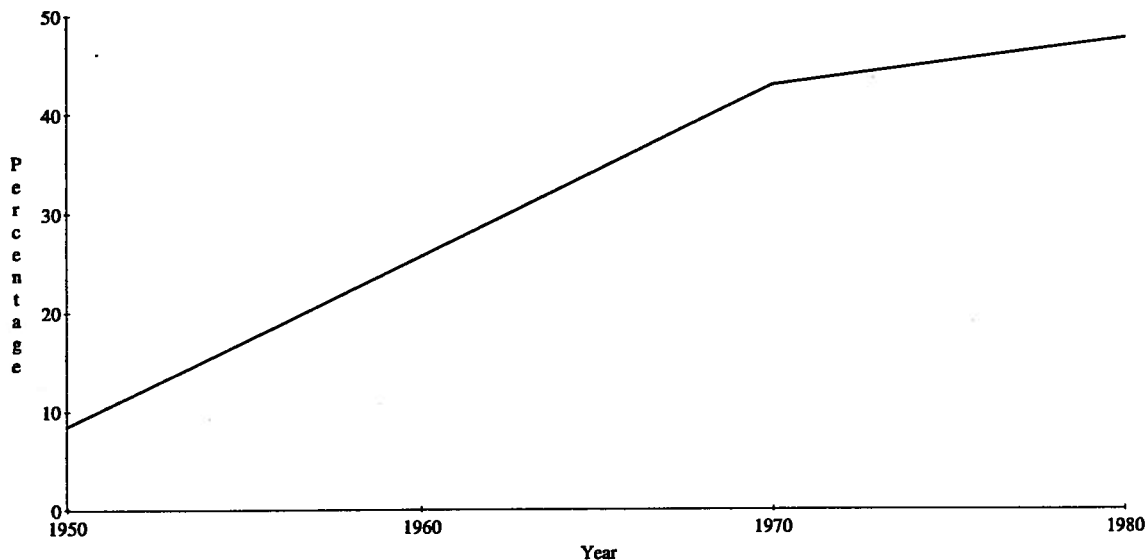
Similarly, figure 8.2 shows this same transformation from the perspective of the level of education amongst Kitsilano residents over the same time period.

Kitsilano fits almost all of the known characteristics of neighbourhoods which will become gentrified. The locational leader of a countercultural presence was in place. So too, it was a community which had low rents and land prices and an existing housing stock made-up of traditionally styled homes suitable for renovation, as well as suitable locations for condominium construction. Likewise, Kitsilano was near the existing elite community of Shaughnessy, near institutions like the University of British Columbia, and the Vancouver General Hospital. It was also an area with significant park land, including Jericho Park and the nearby 7.8 square kilometer Pacific Spirit Park, a beach and

waterfront, and a spectacular view of Vancouver's North Shore mountains. In short, Kitsilano was a text-book location for gentrification.

Figure 8.2

Percentage of Kitsilano Population with
University Education, 1950 - 1980.



Source: Martin, 135.

Kitsilano, however, by the 1980s was also the recognized centre of New Age activity in Vancouver. Far from being a mere coincidence, this fact can tell us much about the nature of the New Age Movement and also much about the lifestyle of many New Agers themselves. For the remainder of this chapter we will look at the geography of the New Age in Vancouver, with particular emphasis on the relationships between the New Age Movement and the gentrified nature of Kitsilano.

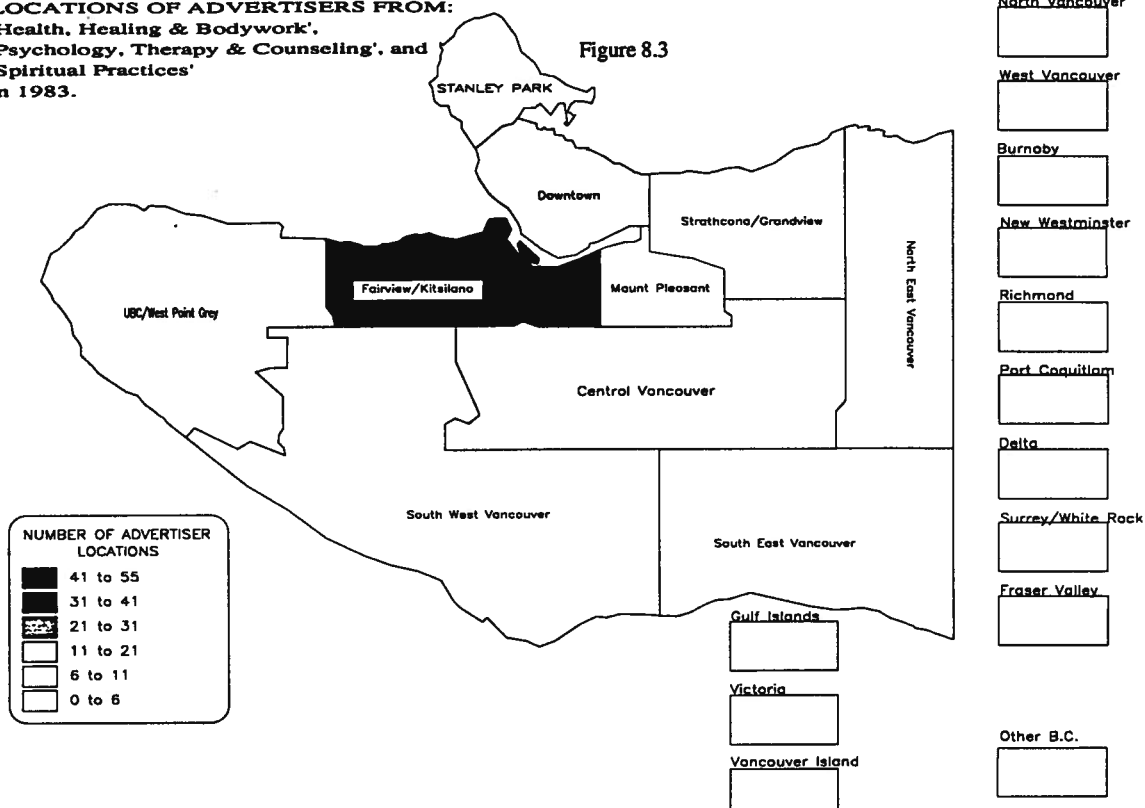
Mapping *Common Ground*

As *Common Ground* magazine serves as a voice for the New Age Movement in Vancouver, it is reasonable to expect that it would represent a reasonable sample of New Age services and retail outlets in Vancouver.²² By mapping the location of the advertisers in *Common Ground* it is possible to establish an overview of the geography of New Age in Vancouver.

²²For a discussion of representation see chapter one.

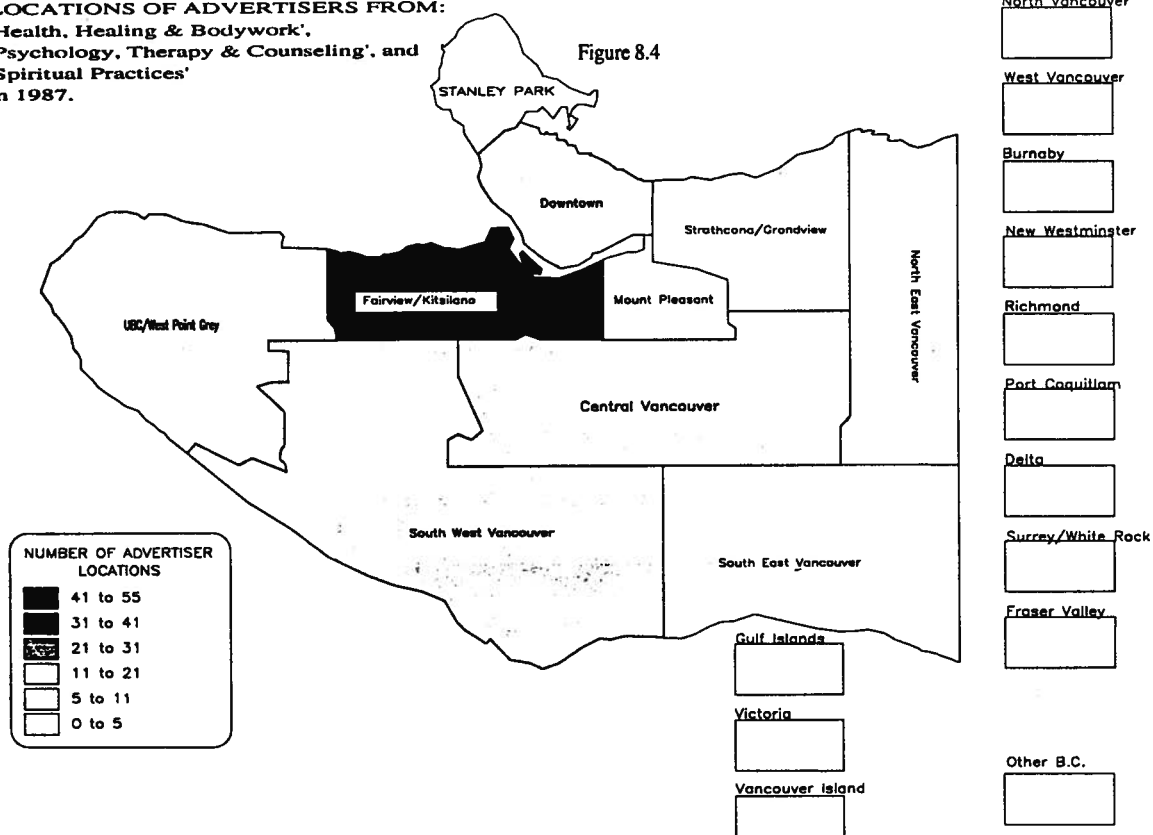
LOCATIONS OF ADVERTISERS FROM:
 'Health, Healing & Bodywork',
 'Psychology, Therapy & Counseling', and
 'Spiritual Practices'
 in 1983.

Figure 8.3



LOCATIONS OF ADVERTISERS FROM:
 'Health, Healing & Bodywork',
 'Psychology, Therapy & Counseling', and
 'Spiritual Practices'
 in 1987.

Figure 8.4

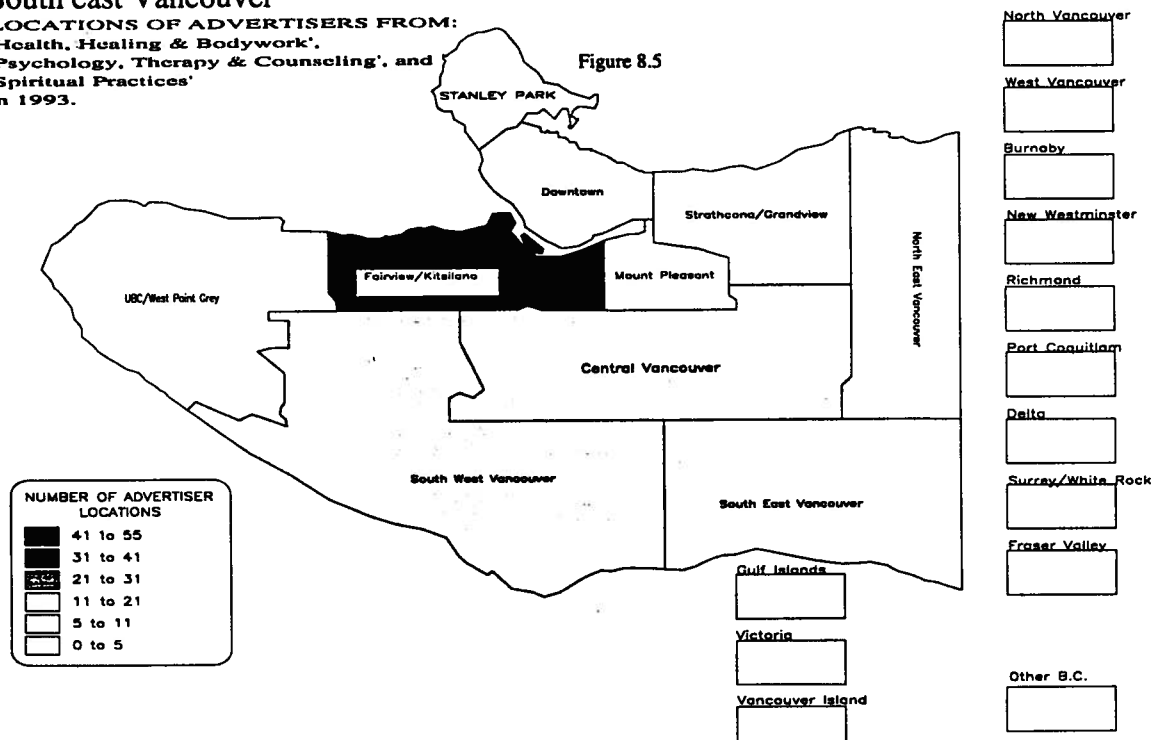


Consistently over the ten year history of *Common Ground* the top two sections in the resource directory, in terms of the number of advertisements are, "Health, Healing & Bodywork" and "Psychology, Therapy & Counselling", while the most frequent section which occupied the third position is the section entitled, "Spiritual Practices". These three sections are also the ones with the highest percentages of advertisements which overtly present New Age services, that is they are advertisements that are identifiably New Age.

Figure 8.3 shows the distribution of advertisers from these three categories in 1983 (Issue #2). Clearly the overwhelming majority of advertisers are located in the Kitsilano district. By 1987, a map of the same variables shows that while Kitsilano remains dominant, there has been significant growth in surrounding areas (Figure 8.4). The suburbs of North Vancouver and Burnaby are directly adjacent to Vancouver and also represent this pattern of outward expansion. By 1993, the pattern seems to have stabilized, with some continued outward growth, (Figure 8.5). Specifically the areas of

South east Vancouver

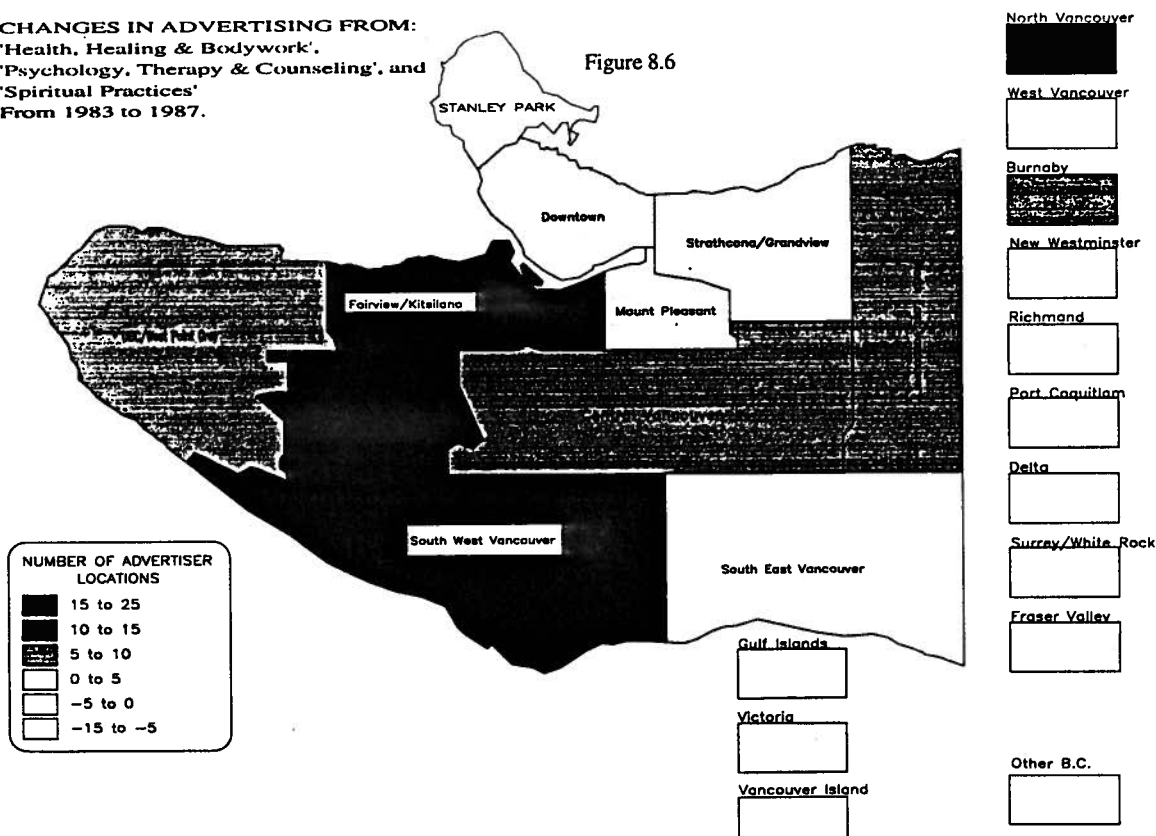
LOCATIONS OF ADVERTISERS FROM:
'Health, Healing & Bodywork',
'Psychology, Therapy & Counseling', and
'Spiritual Practices'
in 1993.



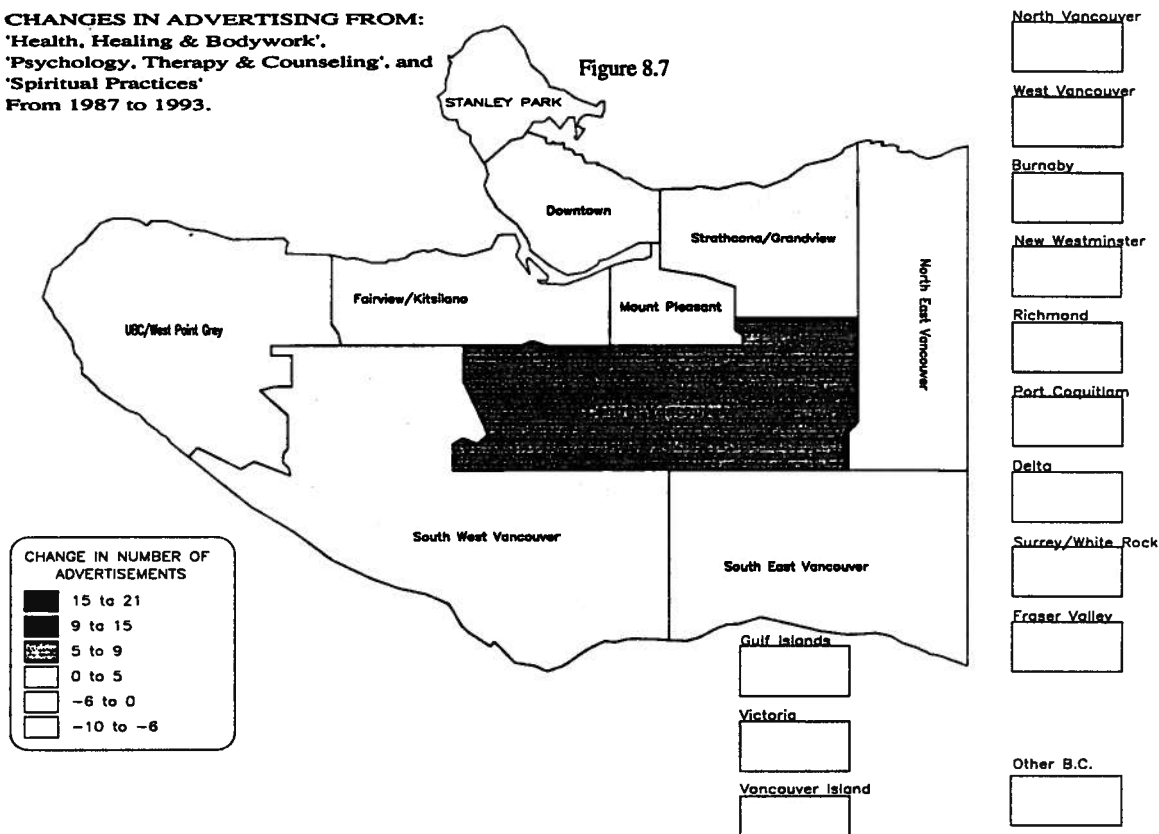
and Surrey/White Rock have increased, while UBC/west Point Grey, North east Vancouver, and Downtown have all shown decreasing numbers of outlets.

As the previous maps indicate, there seems to be a pattern of New Age growing outwards from the Kitsilano district, which serves as a central hub. In order to accentuate this pattern, Figures 8.6, 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9 show the change over time in the number of advertisers in *Common Ground*. Figures 8.6 and 8.7 show the changes from 1983-87 and 1987-93 of advertisers from "Health, Healing & Bodywork", "Psychology, Therapy & Counseling", and "Spiritual Practices". From 1983 to 1987 there was significant growth city wide, with the heaviest growth indicated in Kitsilano and South west Vancouver. This pattern changes, however from 1987-1993. During this period the Kitsilano area shows a slight decrease in real numbers, with the most significant growth occurring in the areas adjacent to Kitsilano and in the more distant suburbs.

CHANGES IN ADVERTISING FROM:
'Health, Healing & Bodywork',
'Psychology, Therapy & Counseling', and
'Spiritual Practices'
From 1983 to 1987.



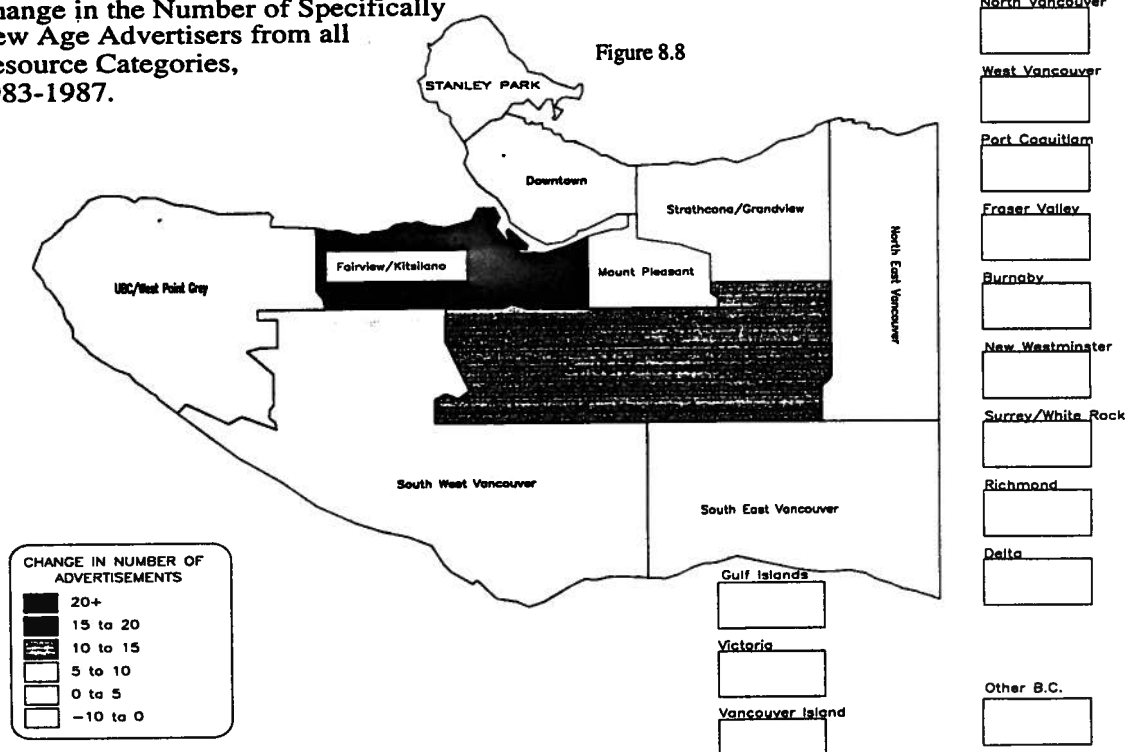
CHANGES IN ADVERTISING FROM:
'Health, Healing & Bodywork',
'Psychology, Therapy & Counseling', and
'Spiritual Practices'
From 1987 to 1993.



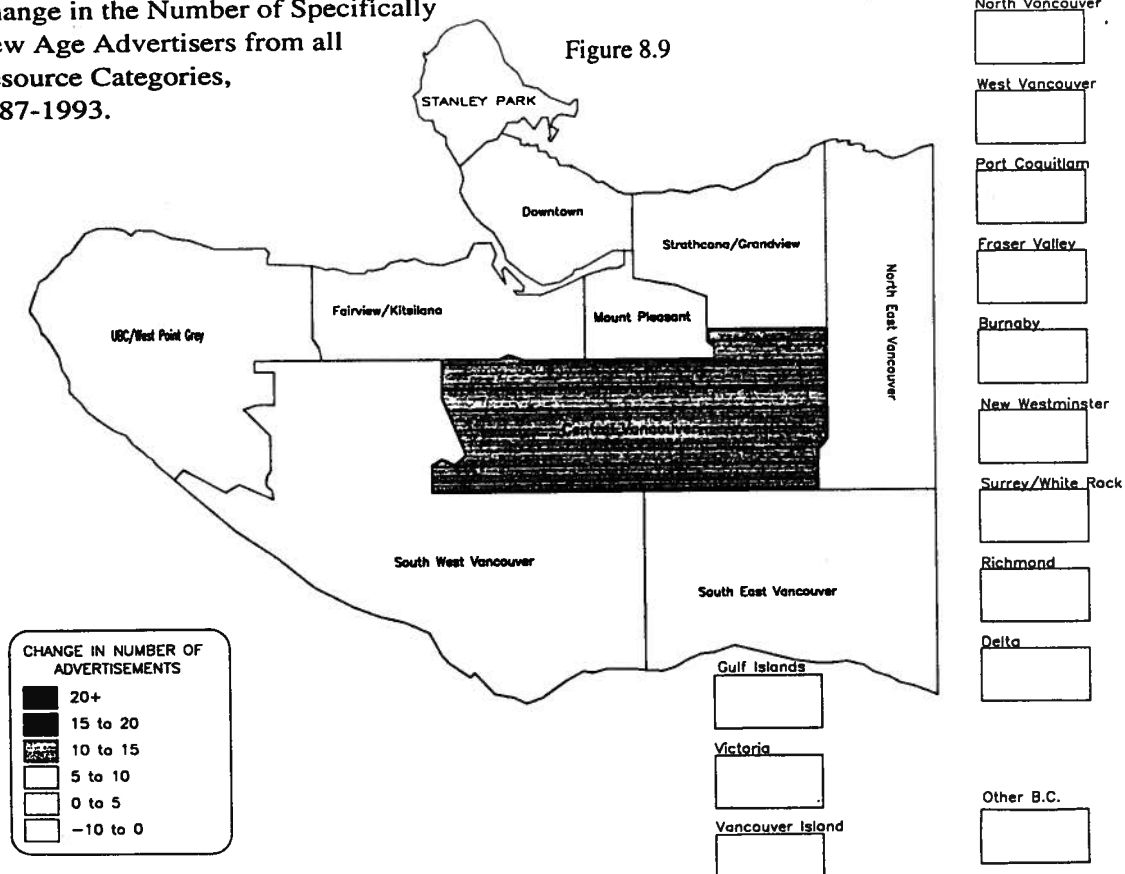
When the statistical base is widened to include all advertisers in *Common Ground* who are identifiably New Age, the pattern described above becomes more evident. Figure 8.8 shows the change of New Age advertisers from 1983 to 1987. During this period, by far the most concentrated growth of New Age retail and service outlets is in the Kitsilano area, with some growth occurring in the adjacent districts within Vancouver city and Burnaby.

From 1987-1993 this pattern again changes dramatically (Figure 8.9). During this period Kitsilano shows a decline while most of the remainder of Vancouver shows significant growth and perhaps most significantly there is an increase in most of the adjacent suburbs and also the more distant ones.

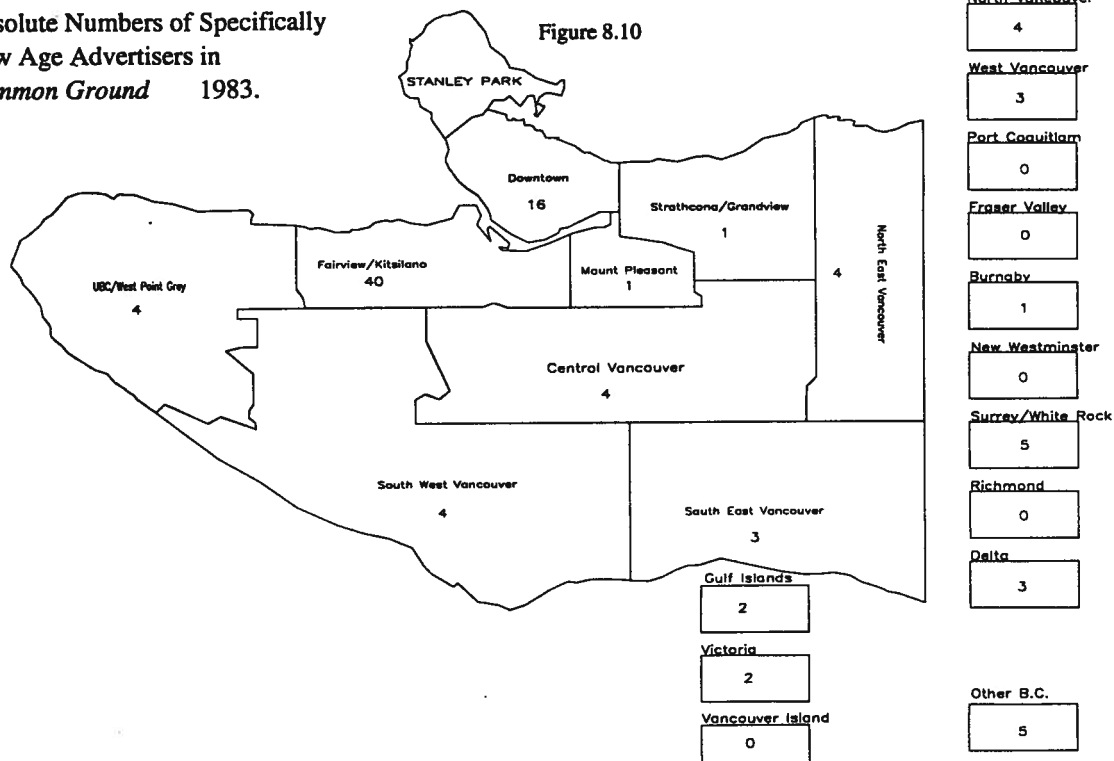
Change in the Number of Specifically
New Age Advertisers from all
Resource Categories,
1983-1987.



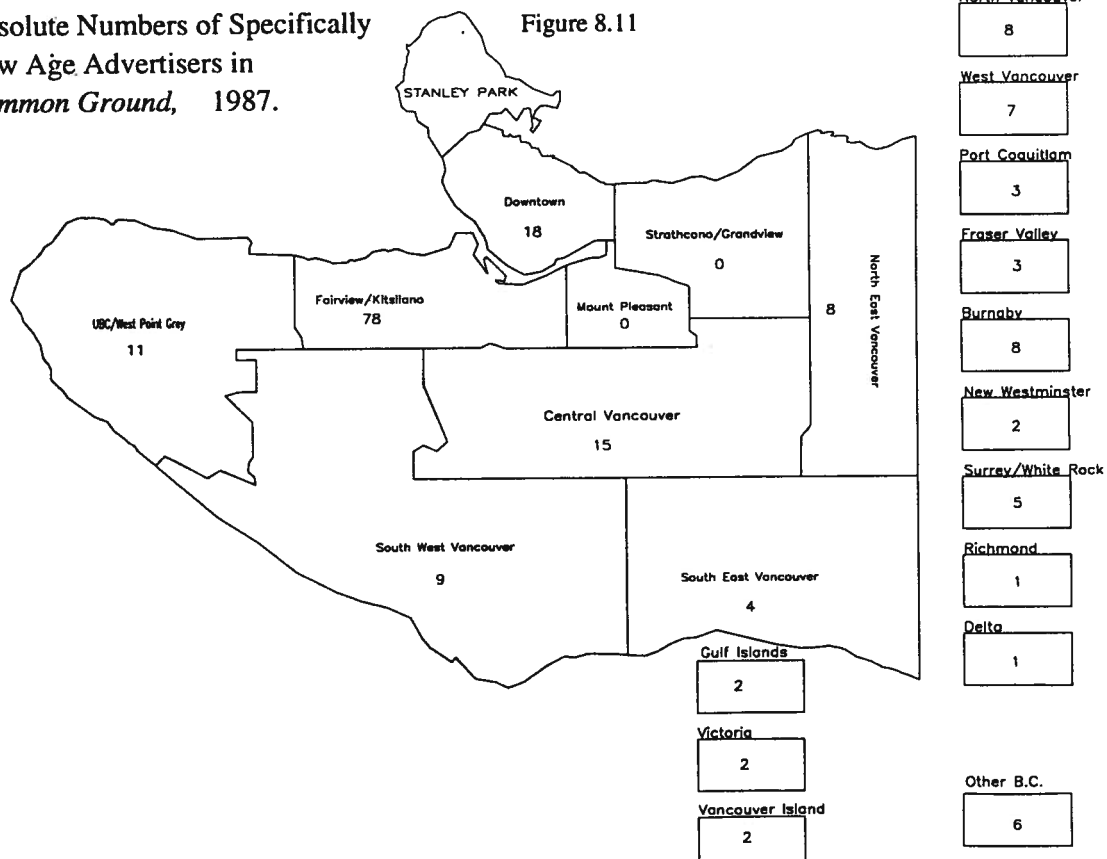
Change in the Number of Specifically
New Age Advertisers from all
Resource Categories,
1987-1993.



**Absolute Numbers of Specifically
New Age Advertisers in
Common Ground 1983.**

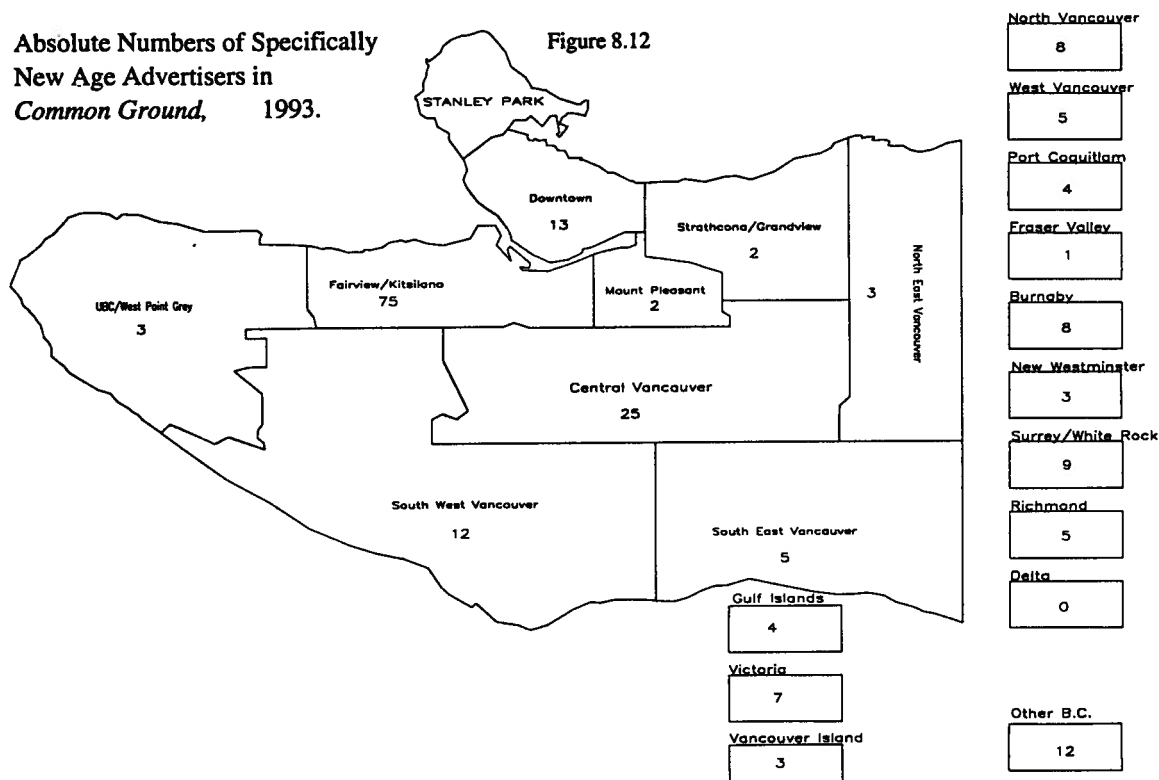


**Absolute Numbers of Specifically
New Age Advertisers in
Common Ground, 1987.**



Absolute Numbers of Specifically
New Age Advertisers in
Common Ground, 1993.

Figure 8.12



For a more detailed picture of these changes, Figures 8.10, 8.11 and 8.12, show the figures for 1983, 1987 and 1993 with absolute numbers.

The previous maps demonstrate that there is a pattern of radiating growth of the New Age beginning in the Kitsilano district. Acting as a central hub, Kitsilano saw tremendous growth from 1983 to 1987. Subsequently, most growth has taken place in Vancouver's other districts and in Vancouver's suburbs. It is evident therefore that over the years, while Kitsilano has remained central for New Age in Vancouver, interest has moved outward into adjacent districts and the suburban areas of the Lower-Mainland.

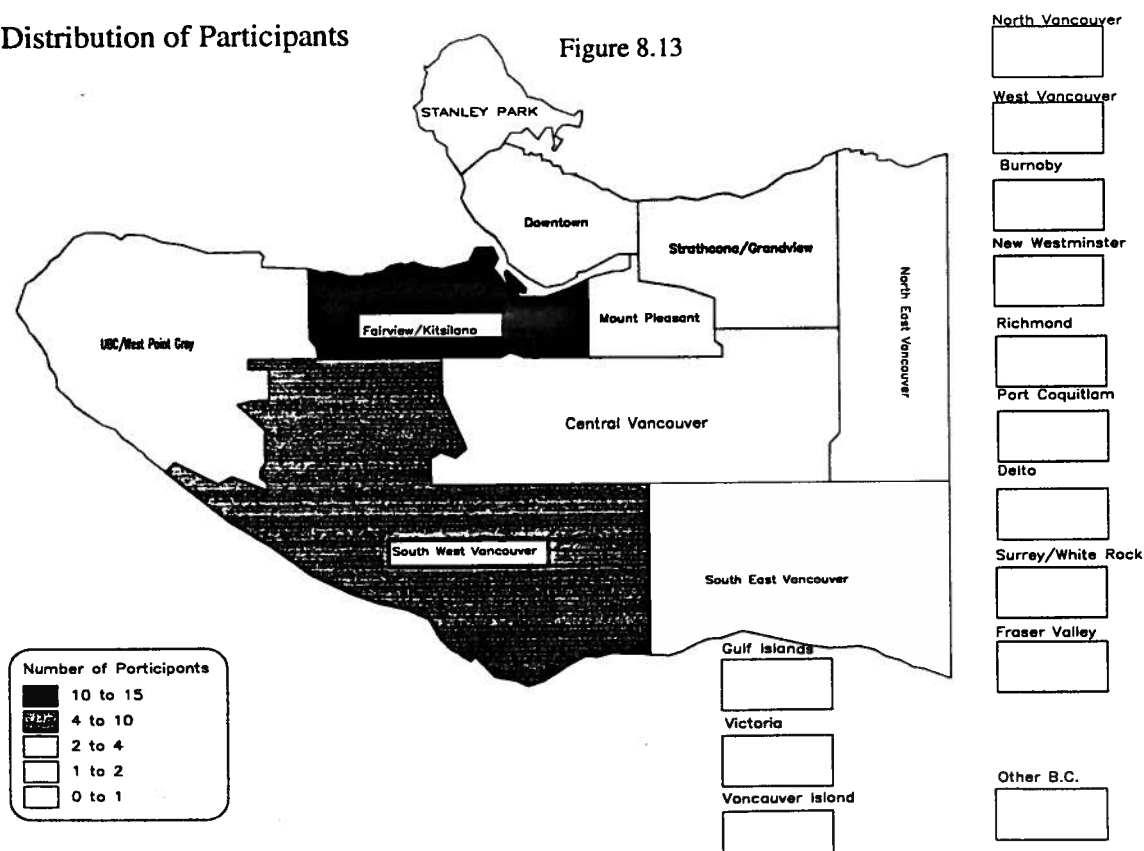
This would possibly indicate a pattern of the growing acceptance and the growing size of the New Age. Initially it was almost exclusively located in a single district, Kitsilano. Following this, it has become more widespread with smaller numbers of New Age venues opening up in more conservative neighbourhoods.

Mapping the Participants

While the data gathered from *Common Ground* strongly suggests that Kitsilano has long been the hub of New Age activity in Vancouver, there are some potential biases inherent in that data source which need to be accounted for. Primarily the problem with the *Common Ground* data is that the magazine has been published from Kitsilano, for most of its existence. It is important to point out, however, that the location of *Common Ground* may be as strong a statement regarding Kitsilano's centrality of the New Age Movement as a publication with such a focus would most certainly seek to locate itself near its target audience. Even if this is so, the argument for Kitsilano's centrality of New Age can be further buttressed by other data.

Another locational indicator for the New Age can be found in the length of time New Age services and businesses have been in operation. Figure 8.13 shows the

Distribution of Participants

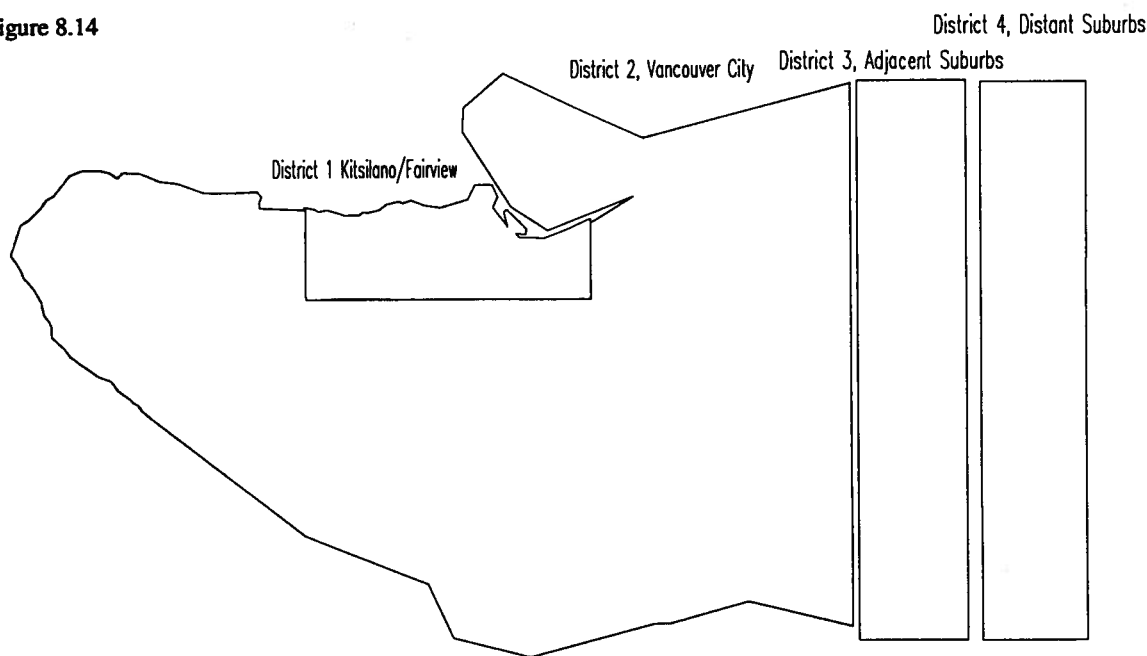


geographical distribution of the interview participants. These locations are that of the participants place of work, which in many cases is also the residence since many New Agers work from their homes.

This distribution, when combined with the length of time the individuals had been in business provides an opportunity to look at the patterns of growth of New Age from another perspective. In an effort to maintain the anonymity of the participants as well as to provide a more generalized map of regions around the Vancouver area, this data set will be plotted on a generalized map of Greater Vancouver. (Figure 8.14) On this map Kitsilano/Fairview is labeled "District #1", the remainder of the City of Vancouver is labeled "District #2". "District #3" is made up of all the municipalities and cities which border on Vancouver. This category includes west Vancouver, North Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond. "District #4" consists of suburban districts which lie beyond that. (This category does not include the districts labelled "Gulf Islands", "Victoria", "Vancouver Island" and "Other B.C.")

Base Map of Generalized Districts.

Figure 8.14

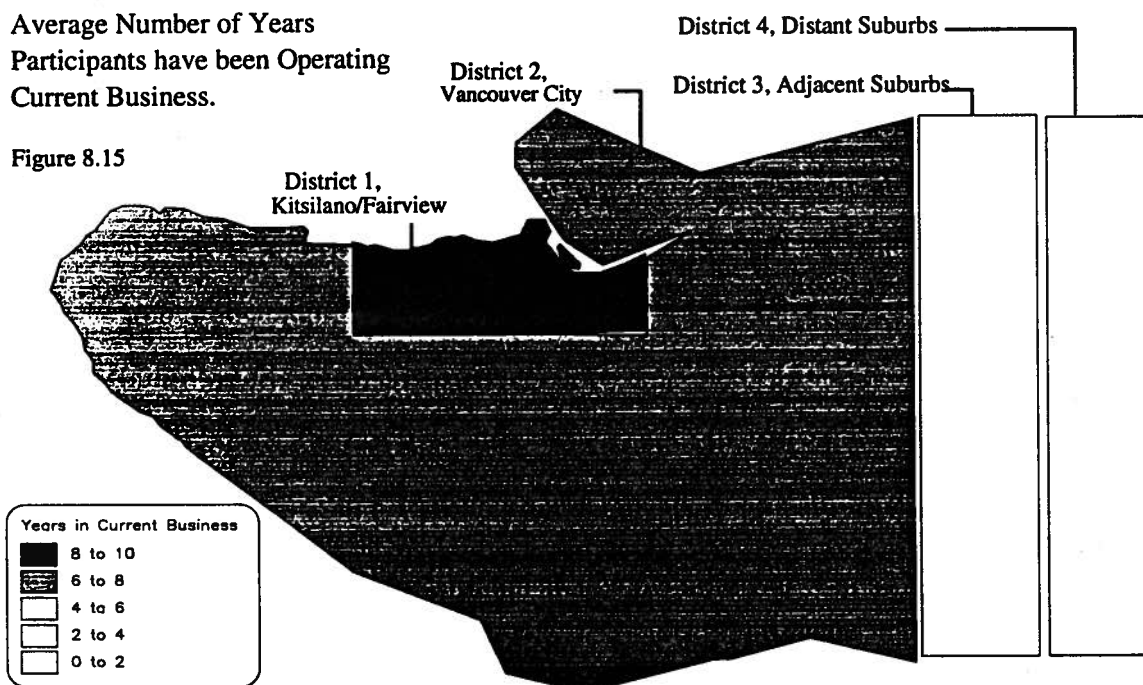


Consistent with the pattern indicated above, on average the businesses located in the Kitsilano district have been in business considerably longer than those in more removed areas, (See Figure 8.15). In fact it appears that there is a generalized pattern that with distance from the Kitsilano centre, the length of time the participants have been in business decreases. This anomaly of district #4 is reduced significantly when one particularly extreme outlier is removed from the measurement. Even when this adjustment is made, however, the average business in district #4 has been operating for 0.5 years longer than those in district #3.

Both the series of maps of *Common Ground* and of the participants demonstrate that in Vancouver, New Age retail and service outlets have been historically concentrated in the Kitsilano area. While Kitsilano has remained the centre of New Age activity in Vancouver, it is evident that in more recent years (since at least 1987) there has been a slow but consistent pattern of growth radiating out from this central hub.

Average Number of Years
Participants have been Operating
Current Business.

Figure 8.15



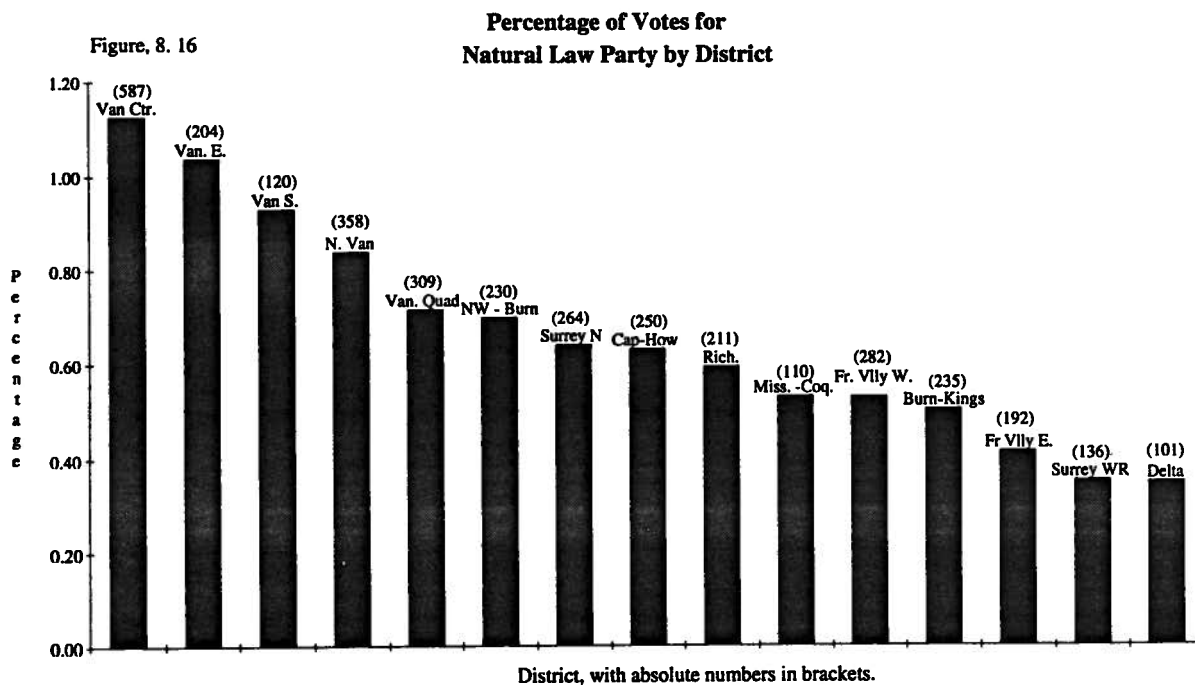
The Politics of Kitsilano: Natural Law Party Support

Another indicator of Kitsilano's centrality for New Age spirituality was made clear during the 1993 Canadian General Election. Figure 8.16 shows the percentage of the popular vote which was given to the Natural Law Party in Vancouver.²³ Vancouver Centre (Van Ctr.) registered the highest percentage of Natural Law Party support in the Lower Mainland with 1.15 percent, or 587 votes. The Vancouver Centre riding includes the Kitsilano and Fairview districts. The next two electoral districts in terms of popular vote, Vancouver east, (Van. E.) and Vancouver South, (Van. S.) are within the city of Vancouver. The following districts North Vancouver (N. Van), is a municipality adjacent to Vancouver. The next district, Vancouver-Quadra (Van. Quad.) is within the city of Vancouver. Following this were the electoral districts of North west Burnaby, (NW - Burn), Surrey North (Surrey N) Capilano-Howe Sound, (Cap-How), Richmond (Rich.) are all districts surrounding or close to Vancouver, with the exception of Surrey which is slightly further from Vancouver than the others. The districts with the lowest support for the Natural Law Party are districts such as Mission (Miss -Coq), Surrey west (Surrey W.), Delta and Fraser Valley west (Fr. Villy W.). With voting percentages of less than 0.4 percent these districts are the furthest districts from central Vancouver. The geography of the support for the Natural Law Party in Vancouver reproduces the general pattern of the geography of the New Age in Vancouver, with the most intense support being the Kitsilano district and decreasing support the further one moves from this point.

Lifestyle, Kitsilano and the Spiritual Geography of New Age

Among New Agers the concept of "energy" is one which receives much attention. Believing that all reality is essentially made up of fields of energy (a concept derived from

²³The Natural Law Party is the political arm of Transcendental Meditation. For a more full discussion see Chapter Two.



physics) New Agers emphasize being able to feel and interpret the multitude of energy fields which they come into contact with on a daily, and even a moment to moment basis. Personal energies (termed auras), global and universal energies, among many others, become the focus of an individual's attention. Of no less importance, regional energies become significant in determining where a New Ager would want to live, work or even visit. For each individual, these energies are interpreted according to their own principles, hence an energy one person might consider to be oppressive or negative, another might perceive as being light and freeing. As a result, each individual will have their own personal opinion as to what areas of a city they would prefer to live in. For example, contrast the following statements from participants regarding their impressions of the energies in the Vancouver area.

"In general the Lower Mainland is a very difficult place to work in terms of energy. The energy is actually pretty thick and heavy here..." ("Celeste")

"Vancouver is itself is somewhat of a spiritual centre, somewhat of a New Age centre. In fact I can't find a place

in North America that I would say would be more suitable for a New Age business like [this one] than in Vancouver. It is the most suitable location in North America. I am convinced of that." ("Herb")

Throughout the course of the interviews, many of the participants made references to the spiritual energy qualities of specific geographical areas within Vancouver. Interestingly, however, these spiritual preference bore striking similarities to the ideals and lifestyle preferences of gentrifiers.

There was a strong preference among the interviewees for Vancouver's westside, and particularly the Kitsilano district, even amongst those who did not live there. This preference for the westside of Vancouver was mirrored by a dislike for other portions of the Lower Mainland, with a particular emphasis on the eastside of the city.

"I feel close to [Kits]...I'm connected to it more by a spirit of connectedness, rather the geographical connection...

"I would probably be more influenced by the quote, unquote, New Age focus [if I was in Kits]. I choose not to be part of that identity, mainly because I think my calling, if you will, is more a bridging one, which permits a credibility from either side.

"Definitely the highest energy of consciousness and light, if you will, is in the Kitsilano area. The whole Kits area...

"By far the brightest and clearest energy seems to come from what we would call the Kitsilano area." ("Peter")

"...I had a feeling of the best place in the Vancouver area to have an organization like this it would be Kitsilano. So when we were looking for a new location in the last six months, every time we went out of Kitsilano, I felt it was wrong. We have had some very nice heritage buildings offered to us in the downtown, I didn't like them. I didn't feel right about those locations. Even though they made good business sense they did not make good feeling sense. Kitsilano makes good feelings sense for this kind of thing." ("Herb")

"Personally I am so sensitive to energy, as soon as I go...to Vancouver, I feel the difference. I like Kitsilano, I do and I

like going over there and tripping up and down west Broadway or west 4th and I like the energy of it." ("Stephanie")

"[Oh yea, Kits is central to New Age.] Besides, it just feels good. Back to the feeling. Kits feels really good. I know if I drive along, lets say Broadway, and then as...well it starts changing around...well Oak is still OK, but closer to Cambie it starts to go down, and then Main St., 'Oh brother, where am I?'...the further east you get. I am a westside snob.

"Well it is just energy. I don't know if it is energy lines in the earth or what. There could very well be a very powerful spot in Kitsilano. Why was that chosen? Why does Commercial street have political people there and a lot of lesbians and why is the West End has gay guys. You know it is just a different energy vortex, or I don't know." ("Sally")

"As far as east Vancouver, I got that as a sales territory one time, and it was a very good financial territory for what the product was, but I don't particularly like that area. I am not that comfortable in that area. I mean I can be comfortable anywhere really, but just you know I wouldn't openly go and choose to go and hang out there for the day." ("Carmen")

"It seems like the people...like you know how Kits has always had its stuff...and it seems like it's the people in the suburbs now that really are so keen. Port Coquitlam, Coquitlam, Burnaby...but I don't want to live there." ("Glory")

Aside from general feelings of preference for the westside of the city, the interviewees made reference to many of the specific things which draw them to the westside. Interestingly, many of the particulars that they mentioned corresponded with the list of locational indicators discussed earlier in relation to gentrification.

For example, many of the interviewees made reference to one or more amenities which they perceive as being significant to their choice of location, or even what location they would prefer to live in, if they could afford it.

"I know that on Burnaby mountain there is a power vortex up there. I also know that there is a power vortex in English Bay that is a release point...And that is the prime reason I wanted to be down near the Bay, because the vortex was there and we work with the vortex energies a lot....

"I would prefer to be by the water...

"I am more drawn to the west [of the city] generally and I attribute that to the fact that it is on the water. Because water has the clearing effect...That it's clearer there for me than it is going further up the valley, because energies, they do collect." ("Celeste")

"I also derive a lot of inspiration from the element water. I don't know how to describe that other than, I like to be close to flowing water. I live near the sea, I like rivers. To me that is a metaphor of the moving quality of life, that we're constantly moving. That nothing is ever the same and yet the illusion of our mechanical world view certainly is that we just want to get it right and make it permanent whatever it is. And that is just not the way it is. Things keep moving. So that is a reminder and an inspiration for me. It is more like the quality of flow, it's not just water, but that helps me to be in touch with it." ("David")

"I like the westside because I like to be by the water. And it is reasonably central...The energy of the area you are in is really important. It is important to what you do. It would be hard to do in certain places. Places that are positive are places that there are trees around, that the community has a certain openness about it. It is very hard to describe, it is just the energy of the place...

"So, plants, trees, which we do have an energy exchange with...water, the ocean being nearby...mountains. Vancouver as a whole is a power centre because of its surrounding." ("Leslie")

"For me having a nice surrounding is important. Being near the water. If I could live anywhere I'd live down near Spanish Banks. But this was a close second." ("Sara")

"I have friends that live in the east[side] and they say how much cheaper the rent is, but the energy is just so different and I don't know if it is a lack of trees or what...you grow in Kits, lots of trees...to me it seems like there is more energy, there's more social things, it's just brighter. It's hard to

describe...It's just a different energy. It's OK for me to go and visit, but not to live there." ("Glory")

"I don't really like east Vancouver all that much. I don't know why, I just...well for one thing I find it aesthetically...some parts of it aesthetically barren, if you will. It just seems...anyway I've just never been able to identify with...except if you are talking about the Commercial area, which is kind of a quaint area." ("Jill")

"Kits is really important. Because of the proximity to the water and just feels more like being in the country. Gastown is just too built up, it is like where I came from. I don't want to do that anymore. I enjoy having the grass." ("Rose")

The elite status of the Kitsilano area is manifest in economic terms by high housing costs and in cultural terms through the presence of a highly educated population. A few of the participants recognized this and to them it is a significant and attractive component of the neighbourhood.

"I think that it helps to be near the westside or near a place that has two universities that has people who are thinking and growing and there is movement. There's people moving into the city and moving through it. I think all those things help." ("Sara")

"David" too recognized that much of his clientele and also much of the surrounding population was part of the aforementioned educated, professional elite.

"I would say there are more middle-class to well-to-do, quote, New Agers in the western part of the city. Because we dovetail very closely with healing and academic communities. On the surface people don't acknowledge that, or don't want to, but the fact is, we're a bookstore in post, post-graduate education in some respects in human education. Though we have a lot of things that academics don't want to have anything to do with. We have a number of other things that are quite central, so...

"So I think probably people, even professionals and others who have leanings in this direction and are...when moving to Vancouver or moving around the city would like

to live in the western part of the city. Particularly, I mean almost anywhere now it is difficult to but almost anything in this part of the city, you have to really have a significant livelihood to be able to do that. And I would say, more and more, those who were on the freaky edges in the sixties and seventies, depending on what their choices have been, they may be very well to do." ("David")

David also confirmed the westside elite status of the area in mentioning that many of his employees, who are lower-end service workers, have to live in the eastside of the city, while working in the westside.

"So yea I can see that. Most of the people who work in the store. Say, more than half, live in the east[side]. And part of that is financial, because it is low key and low rent. More like Kitsilano used to be in some respects, though it is much more multi-cultural and 90s. It is a different scene." ("David")

While the culture of New Age is still based in the Kitsilano district, it appears that, as "David" says, "It is a different scene", one which is no longer easily accessible by people outside of the wealthy professional class. Indeed parts of the eastside of Vancouver (particularly the Commercial Drive area), seem to now be serving much the same purpose that Kitsilano served in the 1960s and 1970s, an area of low rents serving students and other economically disadvantaged segments of the population.

For others there is a strong identification with the culture of the Kitsilano residents. For some this is a recognition that they fit in a neighbourhood like Kitsilano where alternative ideas and lifestyles are accepted. In general the Kitsilano population has a strong sense of lifestyle and this serves as an attractive feature to many New Agers in this district. This is a generalized feeling that they are in a community of like-minded people. Moreover, this community of ideas is made stronger by the fact that the ideas that they share are not fully accepted into the culture and hence by being close to each other they insulate each other from the critical outside world.

"What we have over in Kits is more money. I think you have generally got a greater awareness of the term 'stress' in Kits. Kits would be more of a...probably a higher level of education, probably a higher awareness of who they are, what their body is, their relationship to their work....

"Just the term 'life style', I think is something that's used more in Kits. To think in terms of being in control of your lives to be in a position, as we do with our hair, to style our life, to be able to go, 'Oh, I want more recreation in my life, I want more...'

"If we are looking at two identical situations where you have an average [person from this area] who gets in a car accident and is referred by their [doctor from this area] to come to this...location for a massage and the Kits counterpart. Chances are the Kits counterpart would be able to understand the concept of the car accident as being something that they created as opposed to just being an accident..." ("Chris")

"I grew up in the east[side] and I went to school and all and used to feel uncomfortable going to the westside. Now I go to the east[side] and I don't like it. So I think if I live somewhere else I will live somewhere on the westside. I think this is something that was very important to me is to be in a group where spiritually it is not about suffering or about, you know, asceticism. Its about saying 'Hey'. To enjoy life. To have the good life - balanced. It's not denial, how about that. That's a good word. It's about being happy and about love and stuff like that. So I say in the olden days it was about how much I could suffer, now it is how much of the good stuff can I handle." ("Raj")

"There is a difference. It just seems to be more peaceful over here. More open-minded. Certainly the people in Kitsilano in general tend to be more focused on the New Age Movement. You know, I am always meeting clients in Kitsilano, I am always meeting friends when I am shopping up there. It is more artistic, I find. There are a lot of artists, there's a lot of musicians on the westside and it just seems to be...I find you know, when I am driving, I'm driving from Burnaby across town, I find when I cross Cambie and then I cross Oak it just seems to change, something seems to change. The whole energy, sensations in my skin change. So I feel like I am coming into a more loving environment.

"[I] was in Burnaby originally and I was in a duplex and I moved to Cambie from there because I had neighbors downstairs and they were too noisy for me. I need complete silence for my work...So I moved to Cambie, that place was too noisy as well, there was too much traffic. I always wanted to move to [this neighbourhood], just because it is so quiet and peaceful and the neighbours are really nice, and it is close to Kitsilano, which is, you know, my favourite health food stores are there...so I just put out then for what I wanted and I got it the next day. This neighbourhood is perfect for me. It is very quiet.

("Lorrie")

"I love Kitsilano. Well there was one time that I wasn't [living in Kits]...or twice...and I didn't feel very happy living where I was, I was at 15th and Granville, which is pretty close. The other time I was at 4th and Granville, but this is my area. I just identify with the subculture which is happening here. Everyone seems to know people by first name all the little shops on west 4th. I know them all by name. It is a nice ambiance." ("Jill")

"[I] would feel isolated if I was way off in Marpole or something. It is like Banyen Books is the New Age corner...it is just a gathering place. 'Greens and Gourmet' is a good place to bump into old friends that you haven't seen for ages. It is like a gathering place." ("Jill")

"I moved up the street (this is quite funny) to Oak and 17th and it was...people were different. My friends didn't think I would last long there and I didn't. Six weeks and I moved out. Just people walking down the street were different than South Granville, just different people, too many motorcycles a bit too noisy, too much traffic..." ("Glory")

"This is what we don't like about it here [eastside]...It is not an esoteric sort of energy, but I know there is a major truck route less than a block away...and so it is noisy and there is an energy... just an energy that is intense...and definitely Kitsilano feels more mellow...And there is a lot more poverty, prostitution, drug deals. You go to the corner store to get milk and you see drug deals happening...so it has a whole different sociological energy. So it just seems, a place like Kits, there's probably a...healthier people, psychologically and physically too, not so much sleaze. I

don't know if I would use the word spiritual as being better in one place or another." ("John")

Others prudently recognize that this community of like mindedness also serves as somewhat of the advantage of agglomeration, where people will come from some distance, knowing that this neighbourhood will offer a variety of products and services relating to the New Age Movement. Similarly, the nature of the people living in the district is almost a guarantee that New Age services and products will be in demand.

"If I had lived somewhere else I still would have still planned to move to Kitsilano and I have even recommended to a number of people, 'Why would you leave Vancouver and move to Penticton, there isn't a market for your skills there?' There is a market here. So I may have lost my ability to do numbers, but I haven't lost my ability to find where the dollar is." ("DC")

For a few others there was also a strong element of safety associated with the Kitsilano community. Stark contrasts were drawn between the potential danger present in the west and eastsides of the city.

"...even in Vancouver there are places I wouldn't want to be, especially late at night. And again, this is something my intuition told me before I even found out about Kits, that Kits was the place to be. I have found the people, the people that are here...I feel comfortable, they all seem to be like-minded. There's four grocery stores that are health-food stores within a two mile area. It is just choosing to be in the right place.

"When I chose to move, I guess it was the January a year ago and I had a map of Vancouver and I did dowsing and the first place I dowsed (actually I didn't even know anyone here) it was where I ended up staying for two weeks when I first got here, it was in the Gastown area. The other place was, again, here [Kits]. When I started to investigate more and more, reading up on it was, 'Yes this is where I should be living.'

"Davie and Granville at night isn't too nice, or Main and Hastings, even in the day time I don't like being around there. I don't know if they are necessarily negative areas, it is just that people, I mean there is still that spark within

them that's goodness but it is through pain and suffering, things that have happened to them throughout their life, they've just degenerated to such a degree that...it is like there is a blackness, a cloud that sort of...and using alcohol or whatever else...it is sad." ("Rose")

"After I was raped I knew I was to move to the westside. Absolutely! It was...get over here as soon as I could. Because there's way more light for me and I feel...I can walk the street at night here and feel totally safe. Sometimes I have to remind myself to lock the doors...See over there I was robbed about three times and being raped...I lived at 49th and Boundary and it was enough, 'OK, I'm out of here'. So since I've been on the westside, I have not been a victim.

"I definitely feel an east - west, definitely. Although it is shifting a little...I have friends that live on the eastside...you know, people create safety around them, you know...I knew I didn't want to bring-up my family there. ("Lisa")

"I cannot live in the suburbs. I hate the suburbs. To me it represents routine, it represents...three bedroom house that looks kind of like the house next door and the house next-door to that and where you have a car parked in the driveway and the guy gets up and goes to work in the morning, comes back in the evening...two children, it is too regulated." ("Leslie")

At its very core, New Age is about lifestyle. Eating healthy food, relating in a healthy manner with others, being physically in shape, being mentally self-exploring and being spiritually aware are all part of the New Age Movement, as they also among members of the new middle class. Similarly, there is also an orientation amongst the new elite to be aware of the world of arts. An offshoot of this is the penchant towards self-expression through art amongst this segment of the population. People like "Lorrie" and "David" made mention in their interview of the importance of art in their work and personal lives.

"Basically, I guess the focus of my work is teaching people to find their power, learning how to trust that they are one with everything around them, learning how to release fear so they can create love and prosperity and ease in living and

release the struggle. That is really important to me. And teaching people to open to their creativity, because going through previous lives, so many people have been musicians, artists, writers, everything, I think it is important for me to help people reawaken their talents and gifts, bringing it out into the world." ("Lorrie")

"And for me, I have a personal practice of balancing the intellectual intensity of the work I do with physical work or with less focused activities. It could be art of various kinds, music, poetry, just play, bodywork of different kinds, so that I don't take so seriously everything that happens on the level of the intellect.

"...Increasingly as I grow older the sense of creating is very inspiring. Of being...of showing up as whoever I am. Who I am, and my unique qualities and creating. Each one of us is an original, never to be duplicated, so there is something in that. Something wonderful, you know, we're not just meant to find the great meaning someone else dishes out and then leave the line forever. One phrase that means a lot to me is called, 'original medicine'. Each one of us is an original medicine and yet it takes work. It doesn't happen all by itself. It is a creative thing. That's what's hard about it. It is going against the stream, in a way, for some people maybe it isn't. That is a strong source of inspiration for me too." ("David")

This type of artistic expression, however, had a specific geography to it. In total, almost 55% of the participants who lived or worked in the Kitsilano area made mention, without prompting, of some kind of artistic expression in their lives. By contrast, only 11% of participants who did not live or work in the Kitsilano district made reference to some sort of artistic outlet.

This spare-time, self-expressive artistry which Kitsilano residents are able to indulge in is very different from the lives of most full-time artists. Today career artists have been pushed from the Kitsilano area due to the prohibitive cost of housing in the area. This was recognized by one of the participants, who indicated that the area where the artists are being pushed to is the Commercial Drive district.

"Kitsilano used to have incredibly cheap rent at one time, so it was easy for artists lofts to exist here. It is much harder for artists lofts to exist here...A lot of them were forced out by gentrification and higher rents. So scenes are shifting scenes...there's a lot of young talented people over on Commercial, its kind of a hang-out out there." ("Boris")

Some of the participants just seemed to blend a little bit of everything in their reasoning for preferring the Kitsilano area.

"If spiritual principles really work you should be able to open your practice anywhere where you feel drawn to and it should work. I don't know if I trust quite to that level. There's someone else who's got a bookstore...like there's Serendipity, there's Reflections in Coquitlam...there's stuff happening in Langley, but...

"The westside, Kitsilano, it has a kind of an air about it, a freedom about it, although there is that pocket in the eastside that's really quite wonderful too. Although they tend to have an incredibly stubborn poverty-consciousness there. It is better for my business that that's not incredibly strong, because I charge \$80 a session which is quite cheap.

"Although [Kits] is changing, it's moving more. I guess eventually it will sort of blend-in. Probably the suburbs would be...I might even do that if I feel I could really make it. My children don't want to move right now...suburbs could be a good place to have this really really work. But my main motivation for living here is that I've liked the westside, I like the ocean. I like to be near the ocean. I like the people. The people tend to be open and free-thinking. I had to move from the house I was living in Point Grey because it got sold, and I moved here. It is more citified than I like, but it's adequate." ("Sara")

Of course, not everyone likes Kitsilano. A few of the participants expressed having feelings of negative energies in the Kitsilano area. None of these participants actually lived in Kitsilano, however.

"[In Kitsilano]...there is a spiritual openness, but there is also a very yucky atmosphere in Kits right now. I started to get a feeling eight months ago that I wanted to move out of that area. I felt actually that there is a very strange energy around Kits right now. That it's becoming somewhat

aggressive, hostile and...it's a very changing population.
The kind of double income no kids type." ("Leslie")

Water, trees, mountains, grass, universities, safety, economics, lifestyle, open-mindedness: the New Agers interviewed, those from Kitsilano and those from outside of the district, were largely attracted to the westside. Their reasoning for this, although frequently put into spiritual or energy based terms, had a striking resemblance to the list of features most frequently cited as being significant indicators of gentrification. This does not say that New Agers are necessarily gentrifiers themselves, as indeed many of the people who offer New Age services or run retail outlets would not be in a financial position to be part of this population, rather it says that the cultural tastes and preferences of the New Age Movement are the same as those held by the new white collar urban elite.

National Geography - East and West

For a long time it has been recognized that there is a substantial difference in North America between the east and the west. In the U.S., California has long been a bastion of experimentation, leisure and is frequently the birth place of trends. In this same way, Vancouver serves as Canada's city of leisure, often given the label "Lotus Land". This is in contrast to eastern cities such as New York and Toronto which are perceived as being more established and conservative. While these differences are often discussed, it was still interesting to see how the members of the local New Age community saw these differences from the perspective of spirituality. Chris for example, began his practice in Ottawa but soon found that the region was too conservative for him to be able to operate a successful practice.

"I had to move from Ottawa, it was way too conservative. Ottawa everyone works for government...[and there is lots of medical coverage]. It wasn't that there wasn't a need, because if there are bodies, there's a need. It wasn't that it was an economically depressed area, because everybody has money, because everybody was working for the government. There was that incredible medical plan. I

worked with clients with that medical plan that didn't want to use it. It was like, 'weeell, I'm not really siiick, you knowwww. Yea my back hurts...'. 'Well doesn't that interfere with your ability to do your job?', 'Well it doeees, but you Knowwww.'...

"What it is...is it's like the medical procedure that I am doing is too soft. 'Well, if you were using a knife and you were pulling my kidney out, that is something that would be OK. The fact that you are just, cleaning my muscle tissue out so my back doesn't hurt anymore and I can concentrate at work...UhUh it didn't fit.

'So I did OK, but my practice wasn't as lucrative as it could have been. I had an incredible population there, you know, lots of people hurting. No reason why I shouldn't be busy... So, I was there for two years and then moved out here. Marked difference, [snap] full practice, just like that." ("Chris")

"I don't know if there was something happened that changed *me* here, but I have noticed that the west coast, just, is more really relaxed. People tend to gravitate to the west coast that are more artistic, more open to the feminine energy. The energy of seeking and receiving. Growing-up in Montreal it is just push, push, push, push the energy is much more focused on masculine energy, moving out creating outwardly, where people here are more interested in looking around. I really noticed that changing...

"What I have learned from my spirit guides is the whole west coast of North America is part of an ancient civilization called Lemuria and the energy here is still very much active from that time. It is a very feminine energy and I think that it pulls people here that are more interested in that. I don't know if it is anything that specifically happened here, but I think the energy was always in the west coast, it is just naturally....that is why everybody in California has always been thought of as kind of wacky. It's not the people that's born there...and change...people naturally go there because they want to be part of that energy." ("Lorrie")

"[I came here because...] I like the attitude of openness to explore. There seemed to be a willingness here among people to just be willing to check it out. Check it out. Check out what's going down, what's goin' on. It's certainly a much more fertile climate than the Maritimes were. I was

trying to...it felt like opening a liquor store in the Bible belt....

"I think people's readiness is important and Vancouver felt more ready." ("Peter")

"And I get a lot of people who just blow into town. So geographically there is something here that isn't available in Ottawa...Winnipeg consciousness..." ("Becky")

"...I keep hearing slow down, slow down, slow down. You know people say Vancouverites are - and we are - much slower than back east, like I felt that someone held me back when I got here. I'd go for a walk and people were thinking I was going to a fire." ("Carmen")

Missionaries: The New Age Beyond Kitsilano

Another interesting component to the geography of the New Age Movement in Vancouver relates to the attitudes of the New Age retail and service providers who live outside the city of Vancouver. It appears that among this portion of the New Age community, there is somewhat of a missionary mentality.

"See when I moved here I moved right near [this suburb] and I just remember the first day I walked into [this area]. I just loved this little village, it was just so cute, it just felt really at home, guess. Yet it is really close to the city. I do love going downtown to a movie or a play or whatever, you know I really like downtown too. But I like being just outside of town too. I don't think I ever want to be...I could be on west 4th, doing great, or west Broadway, doing even better than I am here, but again, that is going to where everybody is. You are guaranteed that New Age metaphysical people are going to walk into your store and buy things. Here, I get all kinds of new people who walk in, who have never experienced any of this and they come in and they might light a candle or something this time, but they like the atmosphere here and they come back, because they find a bit of peace here, I think. That is why I have devoted you know this much room to a sitting area. Most retailers would think this is lost space, including my husband at times and it is not to me, because there's sometimes local people who work in the village and they will bring their lunch in the winter time and I'll make them a

cup of tea and they'll listen to [music]...but I always have nice music on and the incense. It is just a very calming, relaxed atmosphere, I don't hassle them and they just sit and regroup for the rest of the day... I had a woman come in on Saturday and she spent the whole day here. The whole day. I mean I am not a Banyen books, I don't have that many titles and I was amazed. And she said, 'I still haven't seen half of it'...And she didn't even buy that much, but she had a wonderful day, I could tell. It doesn't bother me that she didn't buy a lot of things. I know she got what she needed, which was some peace, I don't know what she does for a living or what her life is like, or whatever, but obviously she needed some peace." ("Carmen")

"It seems that the further east you go, the more primitive, if you will, it becomes. For instance Chilliwack is still Bible belt. (And by primitive I have to admit there's a little bit of a judgment here.) The closer you are to the coast or to the metropolitan area the more there is an openness to different ways of seeing and thinking. Like Banyen books for instance has far more...is able to handle far more of the esoteric and the more eastern religions because there is far more of a call for it. Whereas [this suburb] has always been...we've always considered ourselves the bridge between the beer drinker who is finally saying, 'Hey, is this all there is to life; beer drinking and TV, maybe there's something more?' So we've always felt we've provided the next step beyond that and we've tried to provide the higher levels too, but there is very little call for it. There's been more call for it, but most of our more...like the eastern and the more harder to read esoteric teachings gather dust, so we concentrate on the more popular stuff that people read and buy. So there is definitely a real difference between...like, what sells at Banyen could gather dust here. Like our eastern section is very small compared to Banyen's because there is very little interest in the eastern philosophies here. We've tried." ("Christine")

"We feel like we are sort of on the outer fringes. I kind of like the idea, feeling like a pioneer, you know? When we first opened-up we never...we weren't really sure if people would know what we were and the first day we opened the door we thought, 'Is anybody gonna walk in?' We really didn't know. I had my group in my home, I knew a few people who would support us, but it really was a risk we

were taking. We didn't do any surveys or anything, we just trusted it was gonna be fine.

"There are a lot of people in the west[side] who like the eastern culture a lot, out here it might be just a passing interest. Here they are more into co-dependency, dysfunctional families, parenting...so we gear it around the suburbs more. And the spiritual is more of an outlying thing that people get into once they work through their dysfunctional family stuff. They think, 'maybe there's more than just healing our family, maybe there's the bigger family'." ("Claire")

"I questioned this area quite a bit...But my husband pointed out, this is where we live and this is where we need a store, instead of going into town all the time. So here we are.

"At first I was concerned because of the fact that this is a very Christian area. Very fundamentalist. I had heard rumors that a store in Langley, even had been picketed before. They are no longer there. I have heard rumors in other towns of how people have been so upset and considered it a negative thing that I thought we might run up against some problems and I am not one for confrontation. So that was my concern about this area. There have been, in used bookstores a person who has a small area, he has been told he'd better not sell those kind of books in this area or there would be problems.

"We do believe there are enough of us here who want this store. We also believe there are other people having other questions and awakening and we are going to be here for everybody, including the Christians who may judge us at this point. They may want us later." ("Barb")

"You have a lot of lumber-jacks and miners and fishermen, primary industry individuals living week to week, day to day just getting revved up for the weekend so that they can go out and get hammered. There is not really a great sense of what am I doing for myself or, 'Who is that girl that I met? Have I met her before? Why does she look familiar?', or, 'I must have met her in high school?' instead of, 'Oh Jesus I must have met her in a past incarnation, why do I feel so comfortable with her?'" ("Stephanie")

"It seems like the people...like you know how Kits has always had its stuff...and it seems like it's the people in the suburbs now that really are so keen. Port Coquitlam,

Coquitlam, Burnaby...but I don't want to live there."
("Glory")

"When I first started saying, 'I'm thinking of opening a store in [this suburb]', people in metaphysical stores said, 'Woo, you are?'...People have wondered about opening here, but the timing is right because there are more and more people out here now. The community has grown to include a lot of other people, whereas it was a very closed community years and years ago, I guess." ("Barb")

Although not located in the suburbs, "Jewel", who operates her business outside the Kitsilano area expressed the same feelings of wanting to be outside the New Age heartland in order to reach people who are not familiar with the New Age Movement.

"I was in business in Kits for about six months. There was no specific reason for being in Kits. It wasn't even really Kits, it was more that Granville and Broadway area...For me part of what I like to do is get myself into places with people who may not be that aware of it. It is part of my personal thing to want to do, because I find that most people that do this are congregated around Kitsilano and they are all health-food freaks. I don't know, there is a certain type of person. I don't fit that mould, or model. In some ways I do, I suppose, but not completely." ("Jewel")

There is a recognition amongst this segment of the New Age population that they are venturing into uncharted waters, that they are reaching out to the ignorant natives. These people recognize that they have established their forts in alien territory. The friendly homeland is located in Kits and they are in the hinterland of New Age ideas. The New Agers in the suburbs see themselves as part of the urban educated white-collar work force which is taking the message of enlightenment and right-living to the backward and uneducated blue-collar suburban work force which is still caught in the primitive Christian world-view.

This missionary mentality is further confirmed by the fact that some of these New Age explorers return to the homeland for rejuvenation and to meet with their own kind.

"I have never lived in that community [Kits] at all. I've been attracted to it. I've thought, if I ever lived in Vancouver I'd love to come and spend some time in there. I'm very attracted to the area and certainly go there on occasion." ("Barb")

"I don't know if it is just because it is just where things are that I like, or where the energy is that I like. But where do I go when I get a day off? I hang out down in Kits, or I do my organic shopping and that kind of stuff in the area that I can get it which is Kits. I really like the North Shore too. I love the energy on the North Shore. I don't know if it's personal or if it is energy and I believe everything is energy, so really, it is energy." ("Carmen")

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen another point of connection between the New Age Movement and contemporary culture. We have already established considerable connection between the New Age Movement and the counterculture of the 1960s. Similarly we have seen the links between the culture of the New Age Movement and the culture associated with the process of gentrification (which has also been connected to the counterculture). These points of contact allow us to consider a number of intriguing ideas.

The first and possibly most significant product of this connection is that it provides a substantially supported basis for challenging an assumption which has long been made. Amongst secularization theorists and urban geographers there has been a long-standing connection between the ideas of urbanization and secularization. Similarly, and more recently there has also been an assertion that the process of gentrification can also be associated with secularization.²⁴

While these ideas are based on significant amounts of research and are largely correct, we must go back to the points raised in chapter three relating to how one defines

²⁴David Ley and Bruce Martin, "Gentrification as Secularization: The Status of Religious Belief in the Post-Industrial City, *Social Compass*, 40 (2), 1993b, pp. 217-232.

the concepts of religion and sacredness which then causes us to ask what exactly is the process which has been called secularization. If we narrow our definitions of religion and the sacred to include only those which are expressed in church attendance and associations with some organized religious grouping, then indeed it is unarguably true that as urbanization has continued so to has the extent of religious disaffiliation amongst the urban population. If, however, we broaden our definition of religion and the sacred to encompass whatever it is that gives meaning and purpose to a person's life, as Ellul suggests, then secularization as a theory becomes much weaker and the connection between urbanization and secularization becomes much more difficult to substantiate. Urbanization, in the modern era was very much associated with the embracing of the sacralized domain of science and similarly, as we move into this postmodern era, the dawning of new sacred expressions, such as the New Age seem also to be connected intimately with a highly urbanized segment of the population.

If one uses the standard measure for religious affiliation (church attendance and census data) areas of gentrification consistently show the lowest percentages of affiliation. Despite this, however, this chapter has demonstrated that, in Vancouver at the very least, an area of intense gentrification is at the same time the very heartland of a new form of spirituality, namely the New Age Movement. This should cause us to question the effectiveness of the existing indicators of religious disaffiliation in determining degrees of spirituality in an area. It may also suggest that gentrification and urbanization are not the guarantors of secularization as has been assumed, but rather that they may be the indicators of spiritual pursuits which lie beyond the grasp of more conventional data collection techniques.

Another implication of this research is that the New Age has a strong cultural bond with the new professional white-collar elite, popularly classifiable as "The Yuppies". This cultural connection is ideologically identifiable through the connection that both "Yuppie" culture and the New Age share with the 1960s counterculture

movement. The connection is made concrete through the identification of the geographical similarities which both share.

We can take this research a step further, and by using the locational leaders which have already been discovered regarding gentrification (for example the presence of artists²⁵), we can then predict which areas will next become areas of New Age activity. Toward this end it appears that many of the indicators are pointing towards the east Vancouver district of Commercial Drive as being one of the most promising spots for both gentrification and future New Age activity.

²⁵Ibid.

Chapter Nine -

CONCLUSION

Within the literature dealing with the New Age Movement, very few sources deal in any depth with its cultural origins or social implications. Instead each of the most significant bodies of literature reaches inside the movement. For instance, New Agers themselves are generally concerned with such topics as methods of health-care, certain religious traditions, or the bettering of one's personal relationships. At the same time, however, the perspective that the New Age is not actually a definable phenomenon, but has a seemingly limitless range, because it is an attitude not a set of beliefs, further reduces the likelihood of there being much literature dealing with the culture of New Age. As a result while most New Agers have a greater sense of the culture around them than the average person, it is also true that this sense of "global community" is the major reason why they are unable to see the peculiarities of their own community and how it might differ from society at large.

In academic circles there is remarkably little research to date on the New Age Movement. There may be a few different reasons for this. In an article published in 1976, Patricia Hartman made some observations regarding the absence of significant work on the social meaning of occult participation.¹ She proposed three possible reasons for this neglect and it is apparent that these same reasons are also applicable to the current situation relating to the New Age Movement. First she proposes that the difficulties associated with researching such a phenomenon are themselves prohibitive.² The absence of census material and other official documents relating to population statistics and other potential indicators make the gathering of information difficult. It is indeed true that the challenges associated with determining appropriate definitions of who may or may not fit

¹Patricia A Hartman, "Social Dimensions of Occult Participation: the Gnostica Study", *British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (2), 1976, pp. 169- 183.

²Ibid, 170.

into the category of New Age, along with the lack of a concrete definition for New Age itself, made research for this thesis difficult. Second, Hartman suggests that, "...there remains some sense among the majority of....academic sociologists that much serious study of 'weirdos' is probably a poor allocation of scarce resources."³ Given the financial restraint in Canadian universities, it is true that researchers might opt for more conservative research topics which are more likely to be funded. In so far as this is true, Hartman's third suggestion only adds to the problems generated by fiscal restraint. She asserts that there is an ideological bias against such research based on the assumption that the apparent renewal of the occult (or the existence of the New Age) is merely a fad and will simply go away and is therefore of very little research value.⁴ Andrew Greely (from whom Hartman derived her third assertion) suggests that there is an additional reason for this lack of funding and interest from sociologists. An ideological bias arises from the fact that it is sociologists who are responsible for the secularization thesis. Therefore,

"One need not delve too deeply to find the reasons why the neo-sacral is embarrassing: it simply should not have happened. For, in the classical model according to which most social scientists approach religion, we are now in the late phases of the 'secularization' process."⁵

Indeed for sociologists to research the New Age Movement, and possibly discover that it is more than a passing fancy, or worse yet, discover that it has significant social implications, would be to deny the sacred cow of the sociology of religion, the secularization thesis. As we saw in the last chapter, the presence of the New Age in districts of inner city gentrification attacks the heart of the secularization thesis. To assert that there is a spiritual revival in the districts populated by the people who are the most urban, the most privileged, the most blessed by modern conveniences and the most

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

This assertion is based on comments made by Greely in: Andrew M. Greely, "Implications for the Sociology of Religion of Occult Behavior in the Youth Culture", *Youth and Society*, Dec, 1970, pp. 131-140.

⁵Greely, 132.

educated, is to seriously undermine the whole body of literature on which the sociology of religion was built.

In the large body of evangelical Christian literature dealing with the New Age there is also a significant lack of related cultural analysis. Indeed there is a rather narrow perspective, one primarily concerned with exploring New Age beliefs, which are then compared and contrasted with the Christian world view. This literature is primarily designed to give the Christian reader an understanding of the New Age Movement from a theological rather than a sociological perspective.

Given this lack of relevant literature, it was my purpose in this thesis to provide some understanding of the origins of the New Age and explain why it appeared in particular places at a particular point in history. As we saw in chapters three and four, the New Age Movement appears to have arisen largely as a reaction to modernism. The modern world view began during the Enlightenment when the sacred canopy of Christianity in western society began to be replaced by the ideas and inventions of modern science and technology. As a result, science and technology became exalted to the position of being sacred and hence, the hopes of society were placed in science and technology to protect, facilitate living and ultimately to provide meaning.

The social effect of this newly ascended sacred expression was that people no longer felt compelled to believe in or support the sacred canopy of Christianity. The new sacred canopy of modern science and technology, however, was one which operated largely in the public realm, namely at the work place. In fact some people still adhered to Christian beliefs in their private life, while others began to explore other forms of spirituality. So appeared a division in social life worlds. In the public realm of work and bureaucracy people operated under the expectations and presuppositions of a modern scientific world view, and in their private lives they were able pursue ideas of meaning and purpose, religion and spirituality. This produced a situation of fragmented life-worlds, in which a person was able (and perhaps expected) to move between different

world views according to the context in which they found themselves. This created an open door for the introduction of all manner of spiritual and other world views into western society. In a person's home life they were able to experiment with and move between different belief systems.

The modern scientific world view, meanwhile engendered growing scepticism. With the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the continuation of famines and droughts, environmental degradation, some significant failures in the world of medicine (for example thalidomide) and accidents such as Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, there has been a constantly growing sense of dissatisfaction with and even distrust of the products of science and technology. This dissatisfaction was most forcefully expressed in the 1960s. During this time the youth culture reacted strongly to the presuppositions and expectations of the modern world. They rejected the authority of scientific experts and the governments which had legitimized them. They actively dissented from the view that science and technology were saviours and that utilitarian individualism was an appropriate way to structure society. As a result they rejected the products of modern industry and led more simple lives. They rejected the social expectations of utilitarian individualism by living in communes. They rejected the political structures and ethics of the day by protesting the Vietnam War. They rejected the institutionalized Christian church (seen as being yet another modern institution) by adopting the spiritualities of the East and by experimenting with the instant spirituality of hallucinogenic drugs. In short the counterculture of the 1960s tried to shed the mantle of modernism by contradicting and replacing all of its institutions and principles.

Although the counterculture of the 1960s seemed to pass away in the mid 1970s, it is also true that many of its ideals did not. In the later 1970s and early 1980s there emerged in western culture a movement which bore many striking similarities to the counterculture at the level of ideals, while differing from it significantly at the level of methodology. Of course, this new expression of countercultural ideas is now known as

the New Age Movement. The academic concept of postmodernism also arose from the ashes of the counterculture and bears striking parallels to the New Age Movement.

Far from being a mere fad or the activities of an isolated few, the New Age Movement has grown considerably and is finding its place in many sectors of contemporary western culture. The New Age Movement, like the counterculture consciously rejects the ideas and practices of modernism. New Age, aware of modernism's failings, is largely concerned with spiritual and social exploration towards the end of bringing about a new era (the age of Aquarius) of spiritual, social and physical satisfaction.

Like many versions of postmodernism, "The Age of Aquarius" is a peculiar ideological mixture between anti-modern and modern ideas. The New Age hope is opposed to the modern and pre-modern concept of the meta-narrative. While modernism sought to explain the entire cosmos through the methods and principles of the scientific world view, and while the pre-Enlightenment world was held together under the sacred canopy of Christianity, the New Age seeks a harmony based on the conscious recognition that each individual's own narrative is self-validating. In other words, the New Age seeks a sacred canopy made up of the coming together of each individual's sacred hand-held umbrella.

At the same time and at a deeper ideological level, the New Age and postmodernism are committed to the same project. As opposed to the pre-Enlightenment dependence on God as saviour, the modern project, postmodernism and the New Age are all committed to the idea of the self-saving abilities of human-kind. At this level the apparent differences between new Age, modernism and postmodernism become, at least in part, primarily differences of method. Modernism sought to solve the world's problems via science and technology. New Age seeks self-salvation through the spiritual belief in the power and ultimate deity of the human spirit. Postmodernism seeks to better

the world through equality, individual empowerment and the ultimate recognition of each individual's narrative.

It is true that at the level of method the New Age differs considerably from modernism. In many respects the New Age Movement is characterised in its concerted attempts to right the wrongs of modernism. In so far as this is true, there are two significant characteristics of the New Age which give the movement its shape. The first is the search for meaning. The New Age seeks to explore the realm of spirituality in an attempt to discover meaning and purpose in human existence. This contrasts with modernism which reduced the world to a mechanical model, operating purely on the principles of cause and effect, orchestrated only by natural laws and thus rendering existence ultimately meaningless. The second significant characteristic is the attempt to recover personal control over life. Under the modern system, the individual became merely the subject of expert opinion and the power of others. The high priests of society were those select individuals who had been trained in the ways of science and technology and had been granted the title "expert" by society. In reaction both to the complete loss of personal control and the blatant errors of the experts, New Age seeks to place the power of divinity into the hand of each individual.

In the pursuit of these goals, the New Age has turned to three sources: the past and the distant, the meaning-laden natural world, and the subjective self. Significantly, these three realms are preserved from the invasion of modernism, or perhaps more accurately they are sites from which modernism has removed itself.

Regarding the first realm, the past and the distant, modernism sought to make a conscious break with history, asserting that the primitive superstitious ways of the pre-modern world had little or nothing to teach the modern world. Similarly, the western world cut itself off from the equal exchange of ideas with non-modern cultures. The only interactions with non-modern cultures took the form of attempts to modernize them. The New Age looks at past and distant cultures in an effort to glean wisdom, learning and

spirituality. Free from the corruption of the modern world these places and times are seen as being the hope for contemporary western culture. New Age seeks to recover meaning from the past and the distant by exploring and deriving from them the things that created meaning for those cultures. Some control is exerted, however, by choosing only selectively from these same places. Uncomfortable traditions, unsavory practices, unacceptable beliefs are all discarded with little ceremony in favour of preserving only those aspects of the past or distant culture that suit the tastes and preferences of the contemporary cultural climate.

Modernism also removed itself off from non-instrumental interaction with the natural world, the second realm of New Age focus. Seeing the environment as being a resource base to be utilized by modern industry and as a hostile realm from which humans were to remove themselves, the modern world became spiritually disconnected from the natural environment. In reaction, the New Age is re-exploring the natural world, seeing it as a single organism from which humans derive life, not simply resources. The natural world is being reinvested with spiritual qualities and has become the object of veneration and worship. The New Age is also anxious to wrestle control of the natural environment away from modern industry, in order to apply its own more environmentally respectful ideas of resource management.

In regards to the self, the third realm of exploration, New Age seeks personal empowerment through the assertion that the individual is god and has ultimate physical, mental and spiritual control over self. Similarly the New Age attributes meaning to the individual through the same routes with a particular emphasis on the self as self-validating, self-created (divine) source of meaning.

While this discussion may serve as a valid description of the history and character of the New Age Movement, it is important that we consider also the cultural significance of this movement. The New Age Movement represents a significant shift away from the modern world view, a shift mirrored at a broader level in postmodernism. Its

implications are being felt at many levels of society where modern medical, political, and scientific institutions are being challenged, changed or abandoned by many people. There is a broad cultural distrust for the high priests of modernism the "authorities" and "experts". These experts are being replaced by the individual who is making decisions based on their own intuition, or with alternative, non-traditional techniques.

This cultural shift is also characterized by a renewed interest in the roles of myth, religion and spirituality in society. It appears that western society is reinvesting energy in the notion of transcendence, and ultimate purpose and meaning. This is not necessarily however a return to a pre-scientific Christian world view. There are two fundamental differences. First, there is the profound difference, which we have already discussed, regarding the pre-modern dependence on God and the modern, postmodern and New Age perspective on the ultimate role of humans as determiners of their own destiny. Second, like postmodernism, this renewed spirituality is eclectic in nature rather than being based on any one spiritual system, is characterized by extreme variability. Not only are people more free to choose any spiritual expression, but frequently they will move from one to another as they become disinterested or saturated. It is also possible that they may hold in balance two or more spiritual systems in their lives, even if those systems are apparently contradictory in nature.

In this thesis we have also been able to see that New Age has a particular social geography. The geography of New Age is characterized by a strong centrality in areas of gentrification, and thus areas populated by young urban professionals. The connections between these two groups is quite strong, as they have a shared history in the 1960s counterculture and a shared set of values. In Vancouver this is manifest in the fact that the New Age Movement and the new middle elite class share as their home territory the gentrified neighbourhood of Kitsilano, site of Vancouver's counterculture during the 1960's.

This connection between gentrification and the New Age serves as a significant challenge to previous assumptions regarding the secularization thesis and urbanization. Traditionally it has been assumed that urbanization is associated with the process of secularization, wherein it is postulated that the more heavily urbanized an area, the more secular that area will be. However, this thesis has demonstrated that Kitsilano, an area of intense gentrification and supposed secularization, is actually an area of intense spiritual activity. This may be used as evidence that the measurements which have traditionally been used to gauge secularization are unable to measure new religious movements and difficult to categorize spiritual activities, such as the New Age Movement. Similarly this thesis tells us that gentrified areas, such as Kitsilano, may be highly spiritual, albeit in untraditional ways, and therefore contradict the secularization thesis.

As this research is concerned with a relatively unexplored phenomenon, it is only appropriate that it should generate at least as many questions as it has answered. Three questions in particular stem from this research. First, would a similar examination of the New Age Movement in another city yield the same results? Second, although it is obvious that the New Age is a sizable and widely recognized phenomenon, more research needs to be carried out in order to determine more fully the extent of its presence in western culture. Third, much more research needs to be completed regarding the relationship between New Age, gentrification and secularization. More research in this area might form the basis for a significant challenge to the secularization thesis.

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