

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF NEW AGE THOUGHT FOR  
THE QUEST FOR TRUTH: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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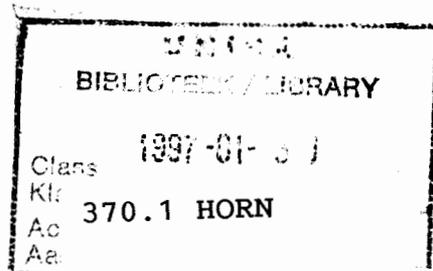
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## SUMMARY

This thesis tries to give a critically considered view of what New Age thought is about, where it came from, and where it takes education and the scientific quest for truth. The interest of this study lies in exposing the underlying New Age beliefs and premises so that the implications that New Age thought has for truly meaningful human development and the educational and scientific quest for truth can be determined. A historical investigation which proceeds from the assumption that New Age thought is a phenomenon with philosophical underpinnings that lie in Western historical dynamics is utilised in order to extract and give context to the beliefs and premises in which New Age thought is anchored.

Firstly, the movements in the West's alternative mystical and magical spiritual tradition from which current New Age spiritual approaches issue are scrutinized. This is followed by an exploration of mainstream Western history. Foundational premises and central ideas concerning New Age anthropology, morality, cosmology, and epistemology which issue forth from theories in Western philosophy, psychology, and science are identified and critically analysed.

From these analyses, the meaning and direction that New Age thought circumscribes for human development and learning are fully explored and evaluated. It is found that New Age thought upholds a magical worldview in which the objective existence of truth is denied. Because New Age thought does not create educational space in which the quest for truth as obedience to truth can be learnt and practised, emotional, moral, and cognitive development is arrested and the real, educational value in scientific inquiry is defeated.

This study is concluded with suggestions that are personal yet grounded in the findings of this research as to the defense and upholdment of the idea of objective truth in moral and intellectual education.

**KEY WORDS**

New Age; truth; subjectivism/relativism; constructivism/idealism; education; mysticism/occultism; morality; philosophy; psychology; epistemology; positivism/scientism; evolution; new physics.

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*This world's no blot for us,*

*Nor blank; it means intensely, and means  
good:*

*To find its meaning is my meat and drink.*

Robert Browning: *Fra Lippo Lippi*

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## CHAPTER 1

### ORIENTATION TO RESEARCH

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

New Age thought, which is closely linked to the rising tide of interest in the mystical and the supernatural, is currently dispersed throughout Western culture. Its ideas about the mystical and the supernatural, perhaps because they lend themselves so easily and so well to fantasising, have been woven into films, television programmes, and books. In this way, the close relationship between mystical and supernatural concepts and beliefs and their incorporation into the New Age thought pattern is strengthened. Critics of the 'new' way of thinking, this New Age disposition, have directed themselves mainly towards the spiritual beliefs of New Age thinkers. This thesis will concentrate, however, on exposing the philosophical presuppositions that underlie New Age thought. In other words, although the various spiritual beliefs of the New Age will be examined, the main aim of this thesis is to determine what basic, foundational presuppositions regarding the nature of God, humanity, and the physical world undergird New Age thought. By probing and analysing the presuppositions, it will be attempted to determine the implications that New Age thought has for the educational, scientific quest for truth.

#### 1.2 MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

The why and wherefore of the New Age worldview is to heal humanity by ascribing a higher, spiritual meaning to life (see section 2.2.1). This is praiseworthy. Unfortunately, however, noble ideals, irrespective of the group that advocates them, do not necessarily ensure that the desired outcome, namely, a more meaningful existence will actually be realised. It first has to be determined whether particular presuppositions concerning human nature and the world correspond to reality. Only if this proves to be the case can the beliefs of a particular worldview be considered as a valid replacement of another set of beliefs.

The underlying presuppositions of a worldview can and should, therefore, be exposed to

examination and criticism. Criticism should, however, not be contemptuous. The truth should be sought without malice. Theories need to be challenged in order to avoid mindless acceptance or rejection thereof. They should be approached with an open mind yet also with scepticism and healthy suspicion.

Critical analysis of worldviews is, moreover, a task with which educationists should concern themselves. The impact that education has on society is primarily determined by the beliefs and values that underlie and direct educational practice and not by transferred factual knowledge per se.

The New Age way of thinking is optimistic, flattering to the human condition (see section 4.4.1) and, therefore, very emotionally appealing. Yet it is precisely these characteristics that make analysis of the New Age worldview so important. Emotional appeal always calls for scepticism because it easily undermines the logical reasoning processes. Emotional appeal muddles thinking. Educational theory cannot tolerate muddled thinking for the simple reason that when things go wrong in education, it reverberates throughout society. Educational theory requires that one go beyond emotional appeal to a reasoned analysis and interpretation of fundamental principles in terms of which a theory is constructed.

The rationale which gears this study is to understand the premises and presuppositions which undergird New Age thought by tracing their historical roots. These roots are sought in Western history - the reason being that New Age thought is a typically Western frame of reference in that it underwrites individual autonomy, individual power, and linear, evolutionary progress to earthly perfectibility (see sections 4.3, 4.4). My preliminary study of primary New Age literature revealed that although ideas from other cultures are incorporated into their spiritual beliefs, these ideas are reinterpreted within the above mentioned Western frame of reference.

The motivation behind this study is that the explicit, readily seen concern with spiritual phenomena which is found among New Agers, is only a surface expression of an underlying thought pattern based on foundational premises which have also permeated contemporary Western culture. It was, therefore, decided to seek elements of historical continuity between New

Age thought and Western religious and/or intellectual evolution. Ideas borrowed from other cultures are for this reason only referred to when they are relevant. By critically analysing the interactive patterns between the West's historical development and contemporary New Age thought, I attempted to establish a background against which the educational implications of New Age thought could be identified and evaluated.

Although deductions and argumentative conclusions are inherent components of further chapters in this study, it is necessary even at this early stage, to point out what the New Age view of truth is in order to illuminate further the motivation for research. In New Age thought, the quest for truth is a quest for individual, subjective 'truth' (see section 3.4.2) that each learner must autonomously construct for himself (see sections 6.2.1.2, 6.2.2.3, 6.3). At a time when alternatives to traditional education - regarded as the regimentation of the young into conformity and passivity (see section 6.2.2.2) - are being sought, New Age thought seems to offer a viable alternative.

Having students organise their own learning processes and constructing their own 'truths' is a vision which requires an answer to the question whether it allows for truly meaningful human development and intellectual inquiry. A reliable answer to this question can only be given when New Age thought is viewed in its whole historical context and evolution. The intention is not to attack the integrity of New Age thinkers nor to arbitrarily and subjectively accept or dismiss their ideas. Rather, the intention is to reflect - in a spirit of critical enquiry and respect - on the implications that New Age premises and presuppositions have for education and science as quests for truth.

The implications of a worldview with the presupposition that truth (on all levels of reality and human existence) is a personal, subjective construction is crucial to society, to education, and to the scientific enterprise. The disclosure of these implications is the rationale behind this study.

### **1.3 OVERALL AIM OF THIS STUDY**

The overall aim of this study is to progress beyond description of New Age ideas to critical

interpretation. The aim is to disclose and understand the various philosophical premises undergirding New Age thought in order to determine the impact that New Age premises may have on human development and the intellectual pursuit of truth.

The New Age thought pattern is a human phenomenon with its own complex and dynamic meaning-structure. It is this meaning-structure that I am trying to understand, analyse, and interpret. In analysis and interpretation, I have, therefore, attempted to avoid assigning my own meaning to the New Age meaning-structure.

Nevertheless, the aim of this study is to progress beyond an analysis of the internal, logical coherence between the various foundational New Age premises and ideas, although such analysis necessarily forms part of this study. My ultimate aim is to determine the validity of New Age philosophical presuppositions, that is, whether these presuppositions correspond to reality. Although internal, logical coherence may appear to legitimate a theory or worldview and the underpinning philosophical premises, it is not sufficient. The flat earth theory was coherent yet it turned out to be wrong.

The intention of this study is to seek explanations in history and to therefrom identify and evaluate possible implications that the New Age worldview may have for human development and the educational, scientific quest for truth. I am not claiming that this study will provide final and dogmatically certain answers. Questions about the philosophical premises which underpin a worldview cannot simply be treated as rational problem-solving exercises. But at the same time, the uncertain nature of philosophical presuppositions, that is, the difficulty in establishing their validity, does not remove the educationist's task to make presuppositions explicit and to examine the viability of meeting the claims made on the basis of the relevant presuppositions. In this task, the examination of the historical process which influenced and shaped the form of a worldview's presuppositions is an invaluable tool as is explained in the following section.

#### **1.4 THE NEED FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH IN THIS STUDY**

What happens today is always the result of historical dynamics and New Age thought is no

exception. Rather than viewing New Age thought as an aberration which is foreign to Western ideas, it can be regarded as a product of Western philosophical development. Another product of Western philosophical development is the, at present, reigning materialistic, rationalistic, mechanistic, and scientific worldview to which New Age thinkers are opposed (see sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 3.4.1). This study will explore the historical dynamics that led to these polarities in order to understand the New Age worldview as a critique of and reaction to its opposite pole, and as the fruit of the same philosophical tree.

The New Age way of thinking is an essentially Western frame of reference (see section 1.2) and has thus the same historical genealogy as the rest of modern Western culture. It is, therefore, only from the vantage point of history, specifically Western history, that an attempt can be made to establish whether New Age thought is, in actual fact, an alternative to modern culture or whether it ultimately meshes so well with modern culture that it compounds the very problems which it wants to overcome. Instead of an abrupt and discontinuous change, the New Age worldview could be the fulfilment, the potential of which was already contained in the historical dynamics of Western intellectual evolution.

The historical approach, because it is comprehensive, is especially suited to the discovery of what New Age thought really transcends in contemporary Western culture and what it fails to transcend. History will not provide simplistic, pat answers, but it goes beyond emotional and/or parochial, present-orientated appeal by providing the material on which analysis and interpretation can work. Against the background of the whole historical genealogy of New Age thought (spiritual, philosophical, psychological, scientific, and epistemological), a justified and well-grounded perspective on New Age thought and its implications for the quest for truth can be reached.

Studying the New Age worldview from a historical perspective which takes into account the historical dynamics that influenced and shaped it, contributes to and enhances a sense of its significance in contemporary education. Its educational implications can be more accurately identified, interpreted, and understood when its genesis is known and grasped.

Divorced from history, New Age thought may appear to have acquired its characteristics independently from the forces that shaped Western thought. The historical approach leads to the connecting threads with the origins and also takes into account the nuances and the often subtle but crucial shifts of meaning that have arisen over the course of time. The past is the clarifying factor in identifying the complex causal relationships of historical dynamics. Placing the New Age way of thinking into its proper place in the network of historical meaning reveals the source of its philosophical, epistemological, and psychological assumptions. To have these revealed is not only clarificatory - it also assists assessment of their educational viability by providing the material for appropriate questioning.

This thesis emanated, therefore, from the specific viewpoint that it is only within an awareness of the historic process that the full implications of a worldview's grounding premises can be identified, analysed, and interpreted.

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.5.1 Research approach**

In this study, the problem-historical approach was used. This approach implies that present day issues can only be clearly understood if they are seen from a historical perspective (Venter 1979:174ff; Venter & Van Heerden 1989:57). The problem that was studied was the New Age worldview; its relationship with Western thought in general and its significance and implications for the educational and scientific quest for truth.

The problem-historical approach implies a search in the temporal-spatial dimension (Venter 1979:203-205) which, in this study, meant a search for the genesis and historical evolution of New Age ideas. Certain fundamental structures that are related to historical-educational research had to be considered. A study of a worldview, its historical roots, and its implications for education and science meant that fundamental structures such as the variable, the social, the cultural, the normative, the anthropological, and the antinomial had to be taken into account, not as independent entities, but with due consideration given to their mutual interaction (Venter

1979:94ff, 152ff, 205ff, 233ff).

An orthodox method, namely the historical-educational method (Venter & Van Heerden 1989:111ff) which is usually implemented in conjunction with the problem-historical approach was not strictly adhered to although some components of this method were adopted - the reason being that the aim of this research necessitates different steps. The aim of this research - to determine the educational significance of New Age thought by establishing its relationship with Western thought in general - does not lend itself to the orthodox historical-educational method which usually includes a comparative study of one or more historical exemplars in order to address contemporary educational problems by rooting out universal educational verities. To reach my aim, I had to seek an interpretative understanding of the historical course which progressively led to the worldview of New Age thinkers. This interpretative understanding lies in the origins and the relationship that New Age premises have with the historical progression of Western thought in general.

This called for a research mode that emphasises the dynamic flow of history rather than comparison between the past and the present. Because historical dynamics are complex and intricately intertwined, the search in this study was for an interconnected web of ideas and theories that have now knitted themselves together in the New Age worldview.

Definite methodological steps were, however, followed in this research process. These are explained in the following subsections and each subsection represents a specific research step.

### **1.5.2 Problem postulation**

Considering the aim of this study, namely to progress beyond description to interpretative evaluation of New Age thought, the pivotal problems which this thesis addresses can be postulated as follows:

Which core ideas in the historical development of Western thought in general influenced the development and manifestation of the New Age worldview?

How were historical theories, philosophies, and scientific discoveries interpreted (or misinterpreted) to culminate eventually in the New Age worldview?

What are the implications of New Age premises for truly meaningful human development and for the quest for truth as a personal, individual activity and as the communal activity of academics and scientists?

### 1.5.3 Data search

The problem-historical approach was applied in this study as a systematic research of New Age thought and its historical antecedents by means of primary and secondary sources. The directive was the identification of core issues which in Western history influenced the foundational premises of New Age thought.

The most readily seen expression of New Age thought is in the spiritual, supernatural arena of mysticism and 'higher', psychic powers. Relevant data was therefore sought in the alternative (that is, to orthodox Christianity) mystical and esoteric branch of Western spiritual history. To search out and bring to the surface these New Age roots was important in order to understand current New Age approaches to spiritual development and to assess the desirability of incorporating such approaches into classroom practices.

It is important not to dismiss New Age thought as merely a dilettante concern for mystical spirituality that may eventually fall by the wayside. Many of the proponents of the New Age worldview are scientists, psychologists, educationists, and other intellectuals. The field of study shifted, therefore, to mainstream Western history beginning with a search for relevant data in the development of Western philosophical thought. Special attention was first given to data which is relevant to the moral stance of New Age thinkers.

Thereafter I searched for data in Western psychology and science. A reinterpretation of psychology and science in spiritual terms and a reinterpretation of the spiritual in psychological and scientific terms are essential items in the New Age bill of fare.

In Western psychology, data was sought which explains New Age psychological ideas, in particular transpersonal psychology which is the specific brand of New Age psychology.

In Western science, the search for data focused on three aspects: evolutionary theories; the discoveries and interpretative theories of the new physics; and Western epistemology. Relevant data concerning the first two aspects was sought since it is these theories that allegedly substantiate and support the New Age worldview. Data as to Western epistemology in general and New Age epistemology in particular was required in order to understand the New Age view on knowledge and truth, and how they are attained.

The search for historical data as to the foundational premises of New Age thought was followed by a search for data concerning authentic child development, education, and intellectual research. This data together with the historical data provided the material for the identification and evaluation of the educational implications of the foundational New Age premises and ideas.

Having collected, sifted, and weighed the large amount of data which was amassed, the next step was to record the data in a written report.

#### **1.5.4 Data recording and report writing**

In the recording of the collected historical data, I decided on a combination of the thematic and chronological approaches (Venter 1979:167ff). Each chapter covers a specific theme and relevant subthemes, but in each of the chapters, the historical theories which are relevant to a particular theme or subtheme are presented in chronological order. In other words, each chapter presents a series of brief accounts of periods and figures and their theories which have been taken as significant in the development of the New Age worldview. The chapter sequence in the report follows the same sequence that the search for data followed.

The recording and analysis of the collected historical data which paved the way for New Age thought is divided into four chapters, each of which deals respectively with New Age ideas that are either obtained or extrapolated from theories in the alternative Western spiritual tradition

(chapter 2), Western philosophy (chapter 3), psychology (chapter 4), and science (chapter 5). Because the aim of this study was to go beyond mere description of the New Age worldview (see section 1.3), critical, analytical interpretation was incorporated throughout chapters 2 to 5. Such ongoing interpretation clarified the historical conditions which were propitious for the manifestation of the New Age worldview and, most importantly, helped to assess the validity of the original reasoning in which New Age premises and ideas are grounded.

Having analysed the foundational reasoning processes which gave rise to and support the New Age worldview, the following step (reported in chapter 6) was a detailed exploration of the implications that New Age thought has for education and intellectual inquiry. In other words, the search for historical data and the recording and analysis of such data precipitated into conclusions drawn regarding the implications that the New Age thought pattern has, firstly, for human development in its totality (spiritual, emotional, moral, and cognitive), and secondly, as a framework for learning and research.

As an academic analysis and interpretation in the science of education, the recording and analysis of data throughout chapters 2 to 6 was geared towards conceptualisation which employed both rational reasoning and judgement. Rational reasoning involved taking scrupulous care to at least minimise if not eliminate personal bias. Judgement involved 'an imaginative projection into the human implications of ... [a] proposed "solution"' (Bantock 1981:22). Bias as 'a set to perceive events in such a way that certain types of facts are habitually overlooked, distorted, or falsified' (Borg & Gall 1989:823) was avoided because it leads to judgements that are unscholarly, unreliable, and, therefore, irrelevant.

### **1.5.5 Personal suggestions**

This study is concluded with personal suggestions and proposals as to meeting the challenge that New Age thought poses to truly meaningful education and intellectual, scientific inquiry. These suggestions are all grounded in the research that I undertook and are offered as matters to be pondered and weighed. The aim is to provoke academic dialogue about basic ideas and principles which should guide education and the scientific pursuit of truth.

## 1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

As indicated in the section on research methodology, the demarcated historical field of study was those theories in Western religious and intellectual history which either explain or appear to support the New Age worldview. In order to restrict the historical data to a workable amount, only the most influential and seminal theories (for Western thought in general and New Age thought in particular) were finally incorporated into the report. Furthermore, each theory which was studied was limited in the report to the outlines of those aspects that are directly relevant to the New Age way of thinking. The aim in this study was not an understanding of the precise meaning which a specific theorist (religious, philosophical, psychological, or scientific) had in mind, but rather an understanding of how the theory lends itself to and thus prepared the way for the New Age way of thinking.

Since my thesis focuses on New Age thought as an outgrowth of ideas and theories in Western history, the history and precise creeds of Eastern and/or pagan religions from which New Agers borrow, were not studied in detail. Although these religions provide New Age religious seekers with alternatives to orthodox Christianity (the West's traditional religion), it is the reason why alternatives are sought in the first place which I tried to establish. Hence, apart from the West's esoteric spiritual tradition in which alternatives to orthodox Christianity were conserved, my demarcated field of study included the causal dynamics in mainstream Western history which progressively led to the spiritual emptiness that New Agers perceive and subsequently cover over with Eastern and/or pagan ideas.

A preliminary study of New Age literature led to the problem postulation which determined the demarcated field of study and thereafter directed the course of this research. This directive led to a demarcation of New Age thought to its foundational premises and to those ideas which are relevant to education and the pursuit of truth. The subtle differences that exist among the multifarious New Age groups necessarily fell into the research field, but they were not reported in detail - the reason being that the final educational implications lie in the shared religious and/or philosophical presuppositions about the nature of God, humanity, and the universe, and not in the superficial differences found among New Age thinkers. Such differences tend to be concerned

with the different spiritual paths which can be followed, but the starting point of each path lies in the common religious and/or philosophical premises which I am seeking to disclose.

Another important field of study was the critical analyses of both the New Age worldview and the historical theories that fed into New Age thought. These analyses provided the necessary material for a full understanding of the explicit and implicit implications that New Age thought has for education and scientific research. A study of these critical analyses also opened the mind to views which oppose those ideas which, throughout the course of Western history, have been absorbed into conventional 'wisdom' and standard thought patterns to such an extent that New Age thinkers (and others) accept them unquestioningly.

## 1.7 EXPLANATION OF SOME TERMS

*Occult*: In this thesis, the use of this term bears no relation to the demonic and the Satanic. It is used strictly according to the Concise Oxford dictionary, namely, 'Kept secret, esoteric; recondite, mysterious, beyond the range of ordinary knowledge; involving the supernatural, mystical, magical'.

*Magic*: In this thesis, the use of this term excludes stage magic. It refers either to attempts that are made to effect changes in reality and the course of events through an occult power which is ascribed to the mind and its thought processes, or to ascend progressive levels of consciousness in order to attain union with the Deity and, through this union, godlike powers.

*Supernatural*: In this thesis, this term is used to refer to the locating of God and spiritual reality within nature and the cosmos. The term *spiritual naturalism* is also used to refer to this view of God and spiritual reality.

*Supranatural*: In this thesis, this term is used to refer to the locating of God and spiritual reality outside of nature and the cosmos.

*Philosophical idealism/constructivism*: In this thesis, the term 'idealism' has nothing to do with aspirations for social betterment, that is, to go beyond the way society is to the way it ought to be. It refers to the philosophical and epistemological stance that questions whether the reality we experience has an existence independent of our perceptions. In its most extreme form, it denies the very existence of a reality external to the perceiving mind. Its less extreme form concedes that an external reality *might* exist, but maintains that it is, nevertheless, completely unknowable. But both forms propagate the doctrine that the mind is constitutive of the reality it experiences.

*Philosophical realism*: This term is the antonym of the preceding term. In this thesis, it refers to the philosophical and epistemological stance which holds that reality exists objectively, that is, external to and in complete independence of the mind, and that reality can be known. Philosophical realists believe that even though perceptions of things differ, such differences can be overcome and true knowledge - which corresponds to the way things really are - can be attained.

*Evolution*: In this thesis, the term 'evolution' refers to macroevolution, that is, that life evolved progressively from inert matter right up to humankind and, therefore, that all the different phylic species derive from one common ancestor. In other words, evolution as macroevolution goes beyond microevolution, that is, beyond the fact that changes occur and have occurred within a phylic species. Microevolutionary changes have not been found to give rise to new phylic species. Macroevolution, however, posits that phylic species can change (and have changed) into completely new and different species.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken against the background that history can put into sharper focus the implications that New Age thought has for the quest for truth and for the whole interrelated moral and intellectual fibre of education. As Bantock (1981:6) points out: '[I]t is ... [the] pioneers we should question when we wish to achieve the fullest understanding of what their successors are about.'

## CHAPTER 2

### NEW AGE THOUGHT AND SPIRITUAL TRUTH: A SEARCH FOR MYSTICAL GNOSIS

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary vision of the New Age worldview is the respiritualisation of the secular, modern world. My contention is that New Age spirituality represents a return to gnostic mysticism, to rehabilitate it in the hope that it will lead to the mastering of our secular, scientific age (discussed in section 6.3.3). The routes followed in the New Age spiritual search are diverse and involve Eastern religions,<sup>1</sup> pagan religions,<sup>2</sup> ancient goddess religions,<sup>3</sup> and Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Because the open and subjective attitude to truth found in New Age thought (see section 3.4.2) allows each individual to choose a potpourri of religious beliefs, the aim of this chapter is not a theological understanding of each of the borrowed religions. Rather, the aim is to penetrate into the way of thinking which is specifically New Age in order to ultimately determine the implications that it has for the educational and scientific quest for truth. This is dealt with in chapter 6. Thus it is viewed as unnecessary and irrelevant to explore the history and creed of each of the religions from which New Age spirituality draws. Instead, historical data for understanding New Age spirituality will be sought among those persons and groups in Western history that have also held a subjective, esoteric, and mystical approach to spiritual knowledge.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to make explicit the essential nature of New Age spirituality by situating this nature in a broader historical framework. Only once one is certain of what New Age spirituality really entails can an attempt be made (see section 6.3.3.1) to determine whether there is substance in the claim - made, for example, by Capra (1975:passim), Talbot (1981:passim), and Zukav (1979:passim) - that science and mysticism are two complementary modes of knowledge that amplify and enrich one another.

## **2.2. THE NEW AGE FAITH: A RECOURSE TO MYSTICISM AND GNOSTICISM**

### **2.2.1 The New Age faith**

New Age spirituality is an eclectic stance that borrows from a large variety of religions or spiritual traditions. In the words of New Age author, Nevill Drury (Millikan & Drury 1991:54), the view is that: 'There can be no final "revelation", no single path to the Godhead, for "God" is everywhere - potentially available to all.' Yet, in spite of this religious smorgasbord, there is a common faith that is shared by and thus serves as an informal link between the multifarious groups (see section 2.6 notes 1, 2, 3, 4) that identify with the idea of a new spiritual paradigm even if they do not regard themselves as part of the New Age movement.

In his critical essay on the New Age movement, Fowler (Van der Walt, Fowler & Venter 1990:34) gives a concise description of the New Age faith:

This is the belief that human life is definitively spiritual and that this human spirituality is one with the spirituality of all life forms. Linked with this is the common belief that the earth itself is definitively spiritual so that the future of human life on this earth depends on our developing our lives in harmony with the spiritual forces of the earth.

The New Age faith is, in other words, one of spiritual wholeness. The world is essentially spiritual. God, humans, and nature are essentially one that together constitute the whole cosmos. This unavoidably means that the cosmos is the supreme Godhead - the divine source of all that is within the cosmos (natural and spiritual) and the divine spirit (energy) that animates nature. Since everything is within and part of the cosmos (the deity), spiritual separation is an illusion; an error of consciousness that must be transcended. What is called for is a paradigm shift; a new worldview of holism and spiritual awareness as explained, for example, by Capra (1990:285ff).

The vision of New Age thinkers is to transform human consciousness and to thereby reactify an awareness of the world's sacredness. The world, they claim, was desacralised and despiritualised

by the negative forces that were generated by the rationalism, individualism, materialism, and secularism of the era of modernity (Capra 1990:37ff, 93ff).<sup>5</sup> The spiritual powers in and of the world must be reawakened and the starting point of this transformative process is with the self; with personal, intuitive, and subjective spiritual experiences that are attained in an altered state of consciousness. This is the central theme of New Age spirituality (see, for example, Ferguson 1989:397ff). The premises behind this notion are *mysticism* and *gnosticism*; two terms which refer to a mystical awareness of esoteric, spiritual knowledge.

In the following two sections the concepts *mysticism* and *gnosticism* will be discussed.

### 2.2.2 Mysticism

Mysticism, according to the Concise Oxford dictionary, is derived from Greek word *mustes* which means 'one initiated into mysteries'. According to the explanations given by religious scholars, mysticism is a mode of religious experience that can be summarised as consisting of four common characteristics.

*Insight into a world beyond ordinary reality* is the first. Mystical experiences or 'light-experiences', as Eliade (1976:94) calls them, 'bring a man out of his profane universe or historical situation, and project him into a universe different in quality, an entirely different world, transcendent and holy'. Thus, in the mystical state, the mind appears to enter a vibrant world of meaning with intensely real significance. For the mystic, this world reveals the true nature of reality; the way things really are. 'Not how we wish them to be,' says Ferguson (1989:417) 'not how we analyse them to be, not as we have been taught, but the *nature* of things - the Way.'

The second of these characteristics is a *profound sense of unity*; a 'sense of the oneness of all feelings and perceptions' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:31). Opened to the world of the spirit, the ontological condition of the subject is believed to change (Eliade 1976:94). The distinction between part and whole, self and Spirit collapses (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:30). The leitmotiv of mysticism is, therefore, a striving to reveal the hidden path that will bridge the abyss between God and humans. It strives to restore the unity between God and humans that

institutionalised religion purportedly destroyed, but on a plane where the worlds of mythology and revelation meet in the human soul (Scholem 1955:8). The mystical motif thus encompasses more than mere communion with God. It represents an attempt to achieve integral union and identity with the luminous world of the spirit. Because mysticism seems to provide this ultimate transformation from the mere mortal to the mortal who is essentially one with the deity, it can satisfy the human yearning for significance and intimate relatedness to a higher order. This is the purpose that it fulfils for the New Ager. 'Now millions are attempting direct personal contact with a deeper creative reality through meditation, prayer, yoga. We want to feel the Force. We want to work with the Force. We want to become the Force' (Hubbard 1982:68).

Thirdly, the mystical experience is *attained through personal, intuitive, and esoteric experience* which perceives spiritual reality 'apart from the human intellect and natural senses' (MacArthur 1991:32). As such, it holds out 'the promise of a direct unmediated experience of ultimate reality' (Osborn 1992:41). This is in accordance with Capra's (1975:35-36) description of mystical illumination which he describes as 'a direct insight which lies outside the realm of the intellect and is obtained by watching rather than thinking, by looking inside oneself, by observation'. This observation, he continues, 'has to be understood in a metaphorical sense, since the mystical experience of reality is an essentially non-sensory experience'. All mystics desire intense, subjective, experiential rather than rational, intellectual knowledge of God (Scholem 1955:4-5). Mysticism supplies what New Agers are looking for - a spiritual paradigm which excludes allegiance to any one religion (see section 2.2.1). It allows the participant free expression of his own inner, intuitive feelings and sensations. It permits the revival of spirituality without the fetters of rigid religious creeds. Alienated by religious orthodoxy and dogmatism, the New Age individual finds spiritual well-being and spiritual truth in his own personal mystical revelation (Ferguson 1989:403ff).

This brings one to the last aspect or characteristic of mysticism which concerns its *subjective source of truth*. MacArthur (1991:32) is unambiguous when he states that it looks for truth internally: 'Mysticism ultimately derives its authority from a self-actualised, self-authenticated light rising from within. Its source of truth is spontaneous feeling rather than objective fact.' To the mystic, his secret, inner revelation rather than sacred texts, is the real and decisive

revelation (Scholem 1955:9). In the new spiritual paradigm which is being sought, subjective experience as the source of truth features prominently. The belief is held that questions about God and the cosmos can only be answered through personal revelation. 'The answer has to be found in our own experience' (Steindl-Rast in Capra, Steindl-Rast & Matus 1991:99). The diversity and individual differences of the techniques (see section 2.4.1) that are employed in order to attain the altered, mystical form of consciousness reinforce the religious syncretism of New Age spirituality. All spiritual experiences are believed to lead to the same God and are, therefore, held as equally true (see section 2.2.1). Freed from dependence on a symbolically structured form of religion, the self can apparently enter a boundless expanse of inarticulate, ineffable, esoteric illumination. This seems to me to feed directly into the desire for individual autonomy that can be discerned in New Age thought (see section 3.3.2.4c). Inspired by his mystical voyage, the individual can create his own reality and his own truth. He can autonomously actualise his divine potential and can fashion his own subjective realm of meaning; a realm which cannot be measured by any external or objective criteria. The only criteria are those of the mystical experience itself, ecstatic, esoteric feelings of spiritual enlightenment, cosmic participation, and the oneness of all life and reality. The attainment of this state, contemporary New Age mystical voyagers believe, represents evolution to higher consciousness and spiritual maturity (Knight 1978:15).

"The fruits" can be measured! - and are there for all to see -  
Check out the life works of Steindl-Rast!

### 2.2.3 Gnosticism

In the preceding section, the deep-seated mystical essence of the New Age stress on and search for spirituality was identified. The other essence of the New Age approach to spirituality is that of gnosticism.

Strictly speaking, gnosticism does not differ radically from mysticism as they are closely related: 'Gnostik ist weitgehend mit Mystik identisch und darum sind Mystiker in gewissen Sinn auch Gnostiker' (Keller in Müller ... [et al] 1988:75).<sup>6</sup> Keller's (Müller ... [et al] 1988:75-76) motivation is that any theory, be it expressed in religious-theological, philosophical, or scientific terms, which upholds a close correspondence or identity between human being and the ultimate ground of all being (God) based on secret or hidden, esoteric revelations is a form of gnosticism.

Not  
true

In Western religio-cultural history, the foundations for gnosticism were laid by the Gnostics, a grouping of sects that existed during the early Christian era. To clarify gnosticism and to identify New Age thought as quintessentially gnostical, it will, therefore, be necessary to refer to the communal tenets of these ancient sects and to compare them with those of the New Age. Before embarking on this venture, the term *gnosis* must first be clarified.

The ancient Gnostic sects derived their name from the Greek word *gnōsis* which according to the Concise Oxford dictionary, means 'knowledge'. Within the context of systems that reveal a nostalgia for authentic divine origins, gnosis 'refers not to cognitive or intellectual knowledge, but to a special, revealed knowledge necessary for salvation' (McRoberts 1989:55), namely knowledge of God and the relationship of essential correspondence between humanity's inner nature and God. Attainment of gnosis signifies knowledge of the Whole and the 'purification' of the individual's spiritual being (Filoramo 1990:39).

The way to achieve gnosis is not through the ordinary faculties of the mind, that is, the five senses and rational thought. To these faculties, the secrets of the invisible and intangible realities remain an incomprehensible mystery. Gnosis is privileged, esoteric knowledge that can only be intuitively perceived. 'It stems from the immediate perception of a transformed consciousness' (Walker 1983:100). The altered mystical consciousness can allegedly do what the natural senses cannot do, namely directly penetrate the enigmas of the hidden worlds by receiving 'an immediate glimpse of the inner workings of the cosmos, a decisive clue that deciphers the riddles of heaven and earth' (Raschke 1980:26).

Having explained the term gnosis, one can now turn to the historical roots of New Age spirituality. In the following sections the roots of New Age spirituality in the gnostic quest in the religious history of the West will be explored. The groups and individuals involved in this quest and the societies in which it was harboured, created the structure from which New Age spirituality as the contemporary manifestation of gnostic mysticism could arise. Though the discussion will of necessity be concise, it affords a perspective without which the emergence of New Age spirituality in the demystified Western world cannot be fully understood.

## **2.3 THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY: FROM THE ERA OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY TO THE AMERICAN COUNTERCULTURE**

### **2.3.1 Gnosticism during the early Christian era**

The myths of the ancient Gnostics were many and varied, but what they all recorded was

the fate of the divine spark present in humanity and its fall into a hostile world of shadows, where it forgets its true home, while unconsciously longing to return there; its wanderings and hopes and the eventual arrival of a [visionary] Saviour who will reveal its true origin and thus enable it to regain consciousness of its essential alienation from this world of shadows (Filoramo 1990:38).

The ancient Gnostics conceived of the material world as dark and irrevocably flawed. They posited a radical dualism between the evil of this physical realm and the goodness of the divine, spiritual realm (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:82). According to them, the material realm was not created by the supreme and perfect Godhead, but by the corrupt demiurge and it is to the demiurge that this realm belongs. Humans, however, were conceived of in the mind of the Godhead and thus they came forth in the divine, upper realm of light and goodness (Walker 1983:55).

The Gnostic image of human being was, therefore, an image of 'the exiled soul' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:81); a spark of divinity captured in the physical body. Salvation or liberation from this condition was purportedly effected through the gnostical realisation of humanity's 'inherent identity with the sphere of light that allows the self's recognition of its fundamental alienation from the domain of darkness' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:83). This, the Gnostic believed, enabled him to rejoin 'the Godhead from which he sprang' (Webb in Basil (ed) 1988:54). In Gnostic vocabulary 'to know' meant therefore to recognise one's true nature as divine, the recognition of which effected salvific release from the corrupt material realm.

From the above discussion, three central themes that joined the different strains of ancient Gnosticism can be identified. These are the divine origins and nature of the human being; the salvific power of gnosis; and a radical dualism between the spiritual and the physical realms and which holds the material realm to be evil.

Of these Gnostic themes, the first two are taken up into New Age thought. The *sine qua non* of the New Age is the belief that humanity's inner nature is divine; each person has a spark of divinity. Like the ancient Gnostics, New Agers equate spiritual healing and wholeness. In other words, salvation is equated with the mystical discovery of the divine inner self. 'The consensual vision, whatever its variations sees this transformation of consciousness as ... the awakening of increasing numbers of human beings to their godlike potential' (Ferguson 1989:423). Spangler (Lochhaas 1988:14) defines the New Age as 'a rebirth of our sense of the sacred, an inner impulse to understand and express our own divinity within creation and with the Source of that divinity'. The means for releasing the divine quiddity is the same as it was for the ancient Gnostics, namely the attainment of gnosis.

In this new state of spiritual enlightenment, the Gnostic believed he had been freed from 'the suffering and travail that life in this world imposes' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:83). This gnostic liberation, says Webb (Basil (ed) 1988:54), is of a mystical nature and seeks freedom 'from *the condition of being human* - a rejection of the helplessness, mutual isolation and mortality of man'. In the New Age one also finds a predominant desire for release from the human condition itself. Human limitation is replaced with unlimited human potential (see section 4.4.1); human isolation is ameliorated by the interconnectedness of all (God, humans, and nature) (see section 2.2.1); and immortality as well as ultimate perfection is attained in the divinity of the inner self and, for many, in reincarnation. These ideas are found in all New Age literature.

To awaken man from his slumber, the ancient Gnostics required the intervention of a saviour in the form of a visionary, celestial mediator (Eliade 1976:109; Filoramo 1990:40). The New Age individual, on the other hand, is encouraged to take responsibility for his own development, to be self-reliant and to draw on his own insights for personal empowerment (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:19). In actual practice, however, New Agers place great reliance on channelling and

the messages from the spirit-guides that are allegedly contacted. The large number of books available that were supposedly channelled and not written independently testify to this.<sup>7</sup> Discerning New Agers like Drury (Millikan & Drury 1991:113) have realised that the exotic glamour of occult phenomena such as channelling can attract charlatans and prefer, therefore, to trust their own inner process. But even whilst being suspicious, they still maintain that they uphold an open mind; one that, they say, can appreciate the value of and the help from psychics (Bloom in Bloom (ed) 1991:41). With regard to such practices, the outside observer should bear in mind that the New Age individual always has the freedom to choose his own spiritual beliefs: 'The only true New Age guide is you' (Acknowledgements in Clancy ... [et al] 1988). Lewis and Melton (1992:xii) also point out that:

One of the traits of the New Age is that major subjects of interest vary from time to time ... The movement away from the prominence of Eastern spiritual teachers (particularly characteristic of the seventies) to an emphasis on channeled entities (in the eighties) ... [T]he interest in channeling seems to be waning as we move into the nineties, and the new emphasis appears to be shamanism and Native American spirituality.

What does remain constant even as individual or group interests change, is the underlying gnostic theme of inner divinity.

Returning again to the ancients, the divine messenger brought knowledge of the order of things, of the good spiritual things from the Godhead as well as of the evil material things from the demiurge. Yet, Gnosticism 'was not concerned with a moral life' (Walker 1983:100). The *pneumatikoi* (the persons in possession of gnosis) considered themselves free from the evil of this world and, therefore, beyond social rules, ethics, and conventions (Eliade 1976:109; Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:30). Raschke (1980:40) speaks of 'the two faces of Gnosticism, its insistence on spiritual purity alongside its indifference to an ethical regime' - a situation which has its parallel in New Age thought. In juxtaposition to the certitude that in the New Age all persons will live a life ruled by the values of love, joy, peace, and harmony is the autonomous self who can create his own ethical system (see section 3.4.2). This is not perceived as an innate antimony since the

correct relationship between God, humans, and nature is the integral result of the metamorphosis from the mere human to the divine human. 'The emergence of a more wholistic [sic] morality, an ecological ethic, is inherent in the transformation' (Hubbard 1982:87). An external and imposed system of norms as contained in structured religions is, therefore, considered unnecessary for these self-actualised persons.

The discussion hitherto explored the similarities between ancient Gnosticism and New Age thought as revealed in the human image which both uphold and in the power which both ascribe to inner, intuitive, and esoteric knowledge. The third tenet of radical dualism between God and the world is, however, firmly rejected by New Agers. They accept the hellenistic idea which regards the cosmos as a divine organism (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:88; see section 2.2.1). New Age thinkers believe in the absolute goodness of nature and not, as the ancient Gnostics, that nature is evil since it (but not humans) was created by the demiurge. The evil with which New Agers are concerned is the technological, exploitation of nature that they ascribe to the Newtonian worldview which regards the cosmos as a machine created by an external God (Capra 1990:37ff, 93ff; Roszak 1973:3ff, 109ff). New Agers do not want science and technology to come to an end. Their aim, explained by the physicist Fritjof Capra (1990:285ff) and the historian Theodore Roszak (1973:74ff, 277ff), is to stop the exploitation of nature by restoring as scientific paradigm, the ancient hellenistic (but not Gnostic) view of the cosmos as one divine, interconnected whole which is the deity (preferably viewed as feminine) and the inner, animating spirit of nature (see section 2.2.1). However, Prof Hooykaas (1972:1ff), by calling on 'his vast knowledge of the history of philosophy, religion, science, technology and culture' (Hooykaas 1972:back cover), shows that it was the hellenistic view of nature which, despite the rational thought of the ancient Greeks, prevented an empirical, scientific study of nature (see also Jaki 1974:102ff). It is, therefore, doubtful whether empirical science will continue to flourish in the worldview that prevented it in the first place.

In New Age thought the ancient Greek stress on rational thought is, however, abandoned. The emphasis on rational thought in Western science and culture which arose after Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) (see section 3.3.2.1) is regarded as part and parcel of the Newtonian worldview (Capra 1990:21ff, 44ff). The New Age emphasis is on mystical intuition

(esoteric, inner knowledge) as a balancing, harmonising influence on rational thought (Capra 1990:21ff). This, together with the marked predilection for divine origins, places a distinctive, gnostic cast on New Age thought.

In the following sections the discussion of the gnostic roots of New Age thought will continue.

### **2.3.2 Hermeticism and the quest for gnosis**

#### **2.3.2.1 *The Hermetic texts***

The continual reappearance of the gnostic endeavour in Western history can be ascribed to the Hermetic texts. The teachings contained in these texts were believed to have been guided by the Greek god Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes the three times greatest) who was identified with Egyptian god Thoth, the god of wisdom and scribe of the gods. The Hermetic texts divide into two branches - philosophical treatises and astrological, alchemical, and magical literature. The latter is contained in the *Emerald Table* which Frances Yates (1964:150), an authority on European occultism, calls 'the bible of the alchemists'.

It was believed that there had been a real man of the name Hermes, an Egyptian priest who predated Moses in the times of remote antiquity. The claim that the Hermetic texts were of a very ancient date was proved incorrect by Casauban in 1614. After a long and detailed textual analysis, this erudite scholar of classical learning exposed these works as being written not in the times of extreme antiquity, but in early Christian times (Yates 1964:170, 398ff, 422ff).

The Hermetic principles which have undergirded Western gnostic thought upto and including New Age thought are elucidated by Finger (1989:55) as follows:

The divine, spiritual world is reflected in the physical world: 'As above, so below'.

Mystical initiation into a higher, secret sphere of knowledge leads to new awareness and new life.

There exist hierarchical spiritual spheres or levels of consciousness which can be ascended by the soul or mind.

There exists an astral body in an astral realm which expresses an organic bond between the

physical body and its inner, spiritual core. Furthermore, the astral body of one person can enter the astral realm of another person.

Finger (1989:55-56) also identifies as Hermetic the idea of polar opposites (male-female, light-dark, above-below) that complement each other and together form a new whole, as well as the idea that the nature of all cosmic processes is rhythmic and cyclic and underlies the law of harmonious balance. These two ideas are also Taoist (Capra 1975:111ff) and Tantric principles (see section 2.4.1.2). Interest in the Hermetic texts was revived during the Renaissance, but the quest for gnosis in medieval Europe will first be briefly discussed.

### *2.3.2.2 The quest for gnosis in medieval Europe*

#### *a) Meister Eckhart*

In New Age literature the name of the monk Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) is frequently mentioned as a representative or exponent of medieval mysticism and gnosticism (Ferguson 1989:47; Fox 1980:passim; Schmidt 1976:passim; Spangler 1984:57). Eckhart's teachings contained elements of pantheism and to those in sympathy with pantheism, he can, therefore, as Clark (1957:119) points out, appear as a welcome ally. Eckhart also taught that the way to God was a path that turned inward to the essence of the soul (Clark 1957:passim).

Among New Age thinkers, it is the creation-centred spirituality of Matthew Fox (see section 2.6 note 4) that depends most heavily on Meister Eckhart's teachings (Fox 1980:passim).

Other mystical belief systems of the Middle Ages that can be regarded as antecedents of New Age spirituality are Kabbalism and alchemy (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:10-11).

#### *b) Kabbalism*

The noted authority on Kabbalism (a word which according to the Concise Oxford dictionary means 'Jewish oral tradition' or 'esoteric doctrine') Gersham Scholem (1955:205ff) explains the

gnostic framework that Kabbalists follow. This framework is the *Tree of God or Life* and it is depicted in the 13th century *Sefer Ho-Zohar* (Book of Light). The Tree of God consists of ten *Sefiroth* or divine powers which the Kabbalist believes exist also in humans. Through mystical meditation and magical invocation, the Kabbalist seeks to awaken his alleged mysterious, divine powers.

The awakening of divine powers is the essence of visionary, symbolic magic which is best explained in the words of the New Age magician Nevill Drury (1982:43, 27-28, 29-30):

Essentially the trance meditation technique involves a transfer of consciousness to the visionary world of symbols through an act of willed imagination ...

The magician endeavours to enter a mythical context [sic] created according to the requirements of the Tree of Life or a comparable magical system. He builds up imagery appropriate to the symbolic domain ... and then tries through an act of will-power to transfer his consciousness to it, thus producing a dissociational state. His body lapses into deep trance and must not be disturbed. By an act of will the magician pursues his magical journey among the 'god-forms' of the Tree ...

Essentially the magician imagines that he has become the deity whose forms he imitates in ritual. The process of god ruling man is thus reversed so that the magician now controls the gods [attributes of God in Kabbalism]. It is now the magician himself and not the gods [God] of the creation drama who utters the sacred names [of God's attributes, the Sefiroth] which sustain the universe. The occultist invokes symbolic experiences ... and he proceeds eventually through levels which will take him ... towards mystical rebirth.

Visionary magic is thus mystical illumination. The magician, by means of will and imagination, puts himself in touch with his own alleged spiritual powers which he can use for good purposes, that is, white magic, or for bad purposes, that is, black magic (Knight 1978:8-9).

The other mystical tradition of the Middle Ages, namely alchemy, also carried the theory and praxis of visionary magic into the quest for gnosis and ultimately into New Age thought (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:11).

### c) *Alchemy*

Alchemy as a means to spiritual purification is based on the ancient Egyptian belief that pure gold could be derived from the less precious metals through magical songs and incantations (Frost 1992:64-65). This belief set the tone for the medieval spiritual alchemists who believed that humanity could be transformed from a 'leaden', impure state to a 'golden', pure state (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:11; Knight 1978:3).

The practice of spiritual alchemy can also be ascribed to the Hermetic texts (Knight 1978:119). Because the philosophical Hermetic texts presuppose an astrological pattern in the universe and, moreover, describe magical practices, Yates (1964:44) maintains that '[g]nosticism and magic go together'.

As a mystical and magical philosophy, alchemy 'saw all forms of existence, even the inanimate, as rooted in one basic ground of beingness and capable of growth, evolution and transformation' (Knight 1978:65). This corresponds to the New Age theory of evolution of human consciousness (Knight 1978:65).

#### 2.3.2.3 *The Renaissance magicians*

Moving into the Renaissance, one finds a distinct predilection for Plato and the Neoplatonism<sup>8</sup> of Plotinus, a third century philosopher who held that the Platonic world of Ideas, of which this world is but a shadow,<sup>9</sup> can only be penetrated by the *nous*, that is, the mind's higher faculty of spiritual intuition. The Renaissance Neoplatonists, influenced also by the Hermetic principle of 'As above, so below' (see section 2.3.2.1), reasoned that because the lower world reflects the higher world, the *nous* could penetrate the physical image of the Idea and enable them to transform the physical image to accord perfectly with the Idea (Churton 1987:102-103). Such

a spiritual transformation of nature is the utopian ideal of New Age spirituality (see section 2.2.1).

Among the Renaissance magician-philosophers were the following:

Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) who led the revival of interest in Neoplatonism and Hermeticism and who had a concept of a universal, natural religion which, says Kristeller (1964:49), makes him a fore-runner of the Deists (see section 3.3.2.4b) and other advocates of a universal religion;

Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola (1463-1494), referred to by Ferguson (1989:47), who developed Christian Kabbalism and was responsible for bringing together Hermetic and Kabbalist magic (Yates 1964:86);

Paracelsus (1493-1541) whose theory of a pervasive, influential force between celestial and terrestrial bodies which could be used in medicine (Knight 1978:111) was echoed by Mesmer (see section 2.3.3.1b); and

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), usually regarded as a martyr for science since he was burnt alive for having said the world was infinite, but who had motives which were principally religious (Knight 1978:106).

During the Renaissance, the mystical, magical strands of Hermeticism, Kabbalism, alchemy, and Neoplatonism merged into the concept of *magus* - man as magician. The magus wished to penetrate beyond the appearance of nature. He was not concerned with rational structure, but with the integration of matter and spirit (Churton 1987:122). *Mageia* or magic was the method proposed for taking command of the inner powers of nature and to transform them by raising them to the level of the spirit. This required the inner (imaginary) process of mystical illumination (see section 2.3.2.2b). The Renaissance magicians believed that they could acquire privileged information (gnosis) about the spiritual domain and this belief is echoed in the New Age aim to penetrate beyond the world of appearances (see sections 2.2.2, 2.2.3).

The Renaissance magicians accepted the Hermetic and Gnostic human image which places humans among the celestials (see section 2.3.1). In the Hermetic account of the world's genesis, humans were divinely created and were given divine creative powers. The descent into Nature was a voluntary act based on the love for the Nature which humans co-created with God and the other celestial beings. (Yates 1964:27-28.)

Thus, the Renaissance magicians elevated humans above sinfulness and viewed them as gods possessing all the powers of God (Yates 1964:27-28). This enabled them to regard their magic not as black magic, but as a benign form of white magic, 'a reformed and learned magic' (Yates 1964:17). This is, however, a naive belief since the concern of all magic is 'power and the will to power, not with reflective understanding of an objective, faithfully consistent reality' (Thorson in Henry (ed) 1978:225).

During the sixteenth century there came a growing outcry against magical practices (Yates 1964:157) till in the seventeenth century, the tide finally turned against the magical dimension of Renaissance philosophy. In the after-wake of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, Europe was again 'witch-hunting' (Churton 1987:121). Consequently, magic went underground into secret societies such as the Rosicrucians,<sup>10</sup> the Freemasons,<sup>11</sup> and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (see section 2.3.2.4). However, the quest for gnosis (without its magical element) was not restricted to secret societies. Rudolph (1983:368) cites F C Baur (a student of Hegel) who identified the Romanticism of Schelling and Schleiermacher and the Absolute Idealism of Hegel as heirs of ancient Gnosticism (cf also Filoramo 1990:xv-xvi).

In the following section, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn as representative of secret societies shall be briefly explored.

#### ***2.3.2.4 The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn***

Founded in 1887 by two British Freemasons, Dr Wynn Westcott and Samuel MacGregor Mathers, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn attracted a number of renowned persons among whom was the poet W B Yeats (Knight 1978:162). The most notorious member was Aleister Crowley (1875-1945) who, because of his radical political views, sexual escapades, and hubric blasphemy, was dubbed by the British press as 'the wickedest man in the world' (Drury 1985:108ff; Knight 1978:163-164; Osborn 1992:47). Crowley's magical rituals are believed among Neopagans to have been one of the sources of the witchcraft revival in England started by Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) in 1939 (Adler 1981:61ff, 82).

Using the symbolism of the Kabbalist Tree of Life, the Tarot,<sup>12</sup> and the Zodiac, the members of the Golden Dawn developed elaborate ritual and ceremonial systems for the practice of visionary magic (see 2.3.2.2b).

The aims of the Golden Dawn which resemble New Age aims are, according to Drury (1985:95), the following:

An account of how man could become god-like by eventually encountering and embodying in a visionary state the archetype of rebirth ...

A teaching which did not require faith, but progress through self effort ...

[Objectives which placed a] strong emphasis on evolution towards a higher state of being ...

A systematic doctrine of 'laws' said to embrace the whole manifested Universe, but not in conflict with known principles of Science.

A system of techniques ... which offered [to] adherents the next stage of evolution in advance, namely *the god-man*.

Techniques for exploring consciousness ...

The magical tradition of the Golden Dawn was carried forward into its many off-shoots of which one was the *Fraternity of Inner Light* founded by Dion Fortune in London in 1922. Dion Fortune trained W E Butler, a previous leader of the Fraternity's off-shoot, the contemporary magical order *Servants of the Light* (SOL). Drury (1982:80), a member of an Australian SOL group, informs us that the system of pathworking (see section 2.4.1.4) or visionary, magical journeys is similar to the mind game technique of the psychologists and New Age thinkers, Robert Masters and Jean Houston. Knight (1978:161), also a magician, describes the mind game technique as 'a series of carefully developed exercises in self-exploration and education'. Such magical practices as pathworking are promoted for classroom use as visualisation exercises for stimulating self-knowledge, creativity, and learning (see sections 6.2.1.3, 6.3.2.1).

This study will now turn to other nineteenth century occult, spiritual groups which fed into New Age spirituality. These groups were primarily interested in extrasensory perception and the

development of paranormal mind-power as a power for adjusting one's personal quality of life. They precede, therefore, the interest in channelling and other paranormal phenomena (see section 2.4.2) as well as pragmatic creative visualisation (see section 2.4.3) found among New Agers.

### **2.3.3 Esoteric spiritualism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries**

#### ***2.3.3.1 The precursors in eighteenth century Europe***

The way for this group of New Age spiritual precursors was paved by the Swedish scientist turned spiritual seer Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) and the Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). Their theories were seminal in the interest in psychic, paranormal (*psi*) phenomena and latent, occult powers of the mind.

##### *a) Swedenborg*

The vogue of spiritualism that swept through Europe and America in the nineteenth century can be traced back to Swedenborg. He was a specialist in mining and metallurgy who developed a fascination for questions concerning the soul. From about 1743 he claimed that he had been experiencing astral out-of-body journeys and that he had communicated with angels, the dead, and extraterrestrials. (Wilson 1989:62.) He was a gnostic in the sense that he believed that his visions gave him privileged insight into the hidden, esoteric meaning of the Bible, a meaning which did, however, often contradict orthodox Christianity (Wilson 1989:62ff). Scholem (1955:9) points out that mysticism often leads to conscious or unconscious heresy. The mystic experiences his vision so intensely that he accepts the revelation even if it requires that the Bible's message be reinterpreted. In other words, the mystical experience becomes more important than the historical Jesus who is relegated to the background (Scholem 1955:19-20).

The Swedenborgian concepts which were incorporated into New Age spirituality can be summarised as follows:

channelling or communication with spiritual beings and/or extraterrestrials;  
out-of-body journeys;

religious syncretism - Swedenborg believed that all religions were given by one and the same God (Swedenborg *in Divine Providence* 1985:114-115); and a restatement of the Hermetic principle 'As above, so below' (see section 2.3.2.1) as the doctrine of correspondence, namely, that the physical realm reflects and responds to the spiritual realm (Swedenborg *in Arcana Coelestia* 1984:38).

The philosophy that in the mind lies the power to correct physical ills has as its source the doctrine of correspondence. But it was Mesmer's theory of *Animal Magnetism* that esoteric spiritualists used to explain the alleged interaction between the mind and the body.

b) *Mesmer*

On successfully treating patients suffering from what today would be called psychosomatic illnesses, Mesmer theorised that the curative agent was an invisible and universally pervasive 'fluid' by means of which all natural processes, celestial and terrestrial, interact. Having used magnets in his treatment, he called this interaction between the celestial and the terrestrial 'animal magnetism' (Mesmer 1980:67-69). A less mysterious explanation is simply that Mesmer discovered the power of suggestion, that is, 'the subject's tendency to subconsciously comply with the operator' (Fuller 1982:55).

A student of Mesmer, the Marquis de Puységur, discovered that in a deep mesmerised (or hypnotic) trance some persons performed psychic feats such as clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition (Fuller 1982:10; Nee 1972:25). Thus, through Mesmer, hypnotism (the means for inducing an altered, paranormal state of consciousness) was popularised.

The theory of animal magnetism was a theory of the power of the mind or soul that, in the mesmerised trance, puts individuals into 'direct connection with the ontological source of their physical and mental being' (Fuller 1982:71). At the same time that Mesmerism proved that there was more to the mind and to human experience than that which could be alluded to sense impressions, it also disposed individuals to accept mystical revelations and psychic phenomena not as fanciful irrationalities, but as scientifically legitimate phenomena (Fuller 1982:82-83).

Mesmerism was especially popular in nineteenth century America (Fuller 1982:passim). During this time, American religious thought was stepping outside the confines of the orthodox Christian tenets of human sinfulness and God's judgement. The new breed of religious thinkers of whom the first were the American Transcendentalists were dedicated to a favourable reassessment of human nature and universal salvation (Steyn 1992:86). They can be divided into three groups - the Transcendentalists, New Thought, and Spiritualism. The American Transcendentalists and their similarities with New Age thought shall now be scrutinised.

### 2.3.3.2 *Esoteric, spiritual systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*

#### a) *Transcendentalism*

Among the first Americans to explore religious territories other than Christianity were the New England Transcendentalists of whom the chief spokesperson was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). Using the newly translated Hindu texts, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*, Emerson and the Transcendentalists created what Melton (Basil (ed) 1988:38) calls 'a uniquely American form of ... pagan nature mysticism ... the first substantial religious movement in North America with a prominent Asian component'. Among the beliefs of the Transcendentalists that correspond to New Age beliefs are:

a pantheistic interconnectedness between God (the Over-Soul), humans, and nature (Emerson in *The Over-Soul* 1968:196ff);

inflow from the Divine mind into the human mind (which is similar to Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondence (see section 2.3.3.1a)) and, therefore, the validity of inner intuitive knowledge (Emerson in *The Over-Soul* 1968:202-203);

an exaltation of human potential where the only sin is the acceptance of limitations (Emerson in *Circles* 1968:215);

harmony with nature as the way to virtuous living (Emerson in *Nature* 1968:316ff); and

the world as thought precipitated (Emerson in *Nature* 1968:339).

The influence of the Transcendentalists at the same time that Swedenborgianism (see section 2.3.3.1a) and Mesmerism (see section 2.3.3.1b) were gaining ground in America ushered in a

burgeoning interest in the paranormal, psychic powers of the mind in order to ‘unite the forms of both ecstatic [spiritual] experience [in Swedenborgianism] and “scientific” thinking [in Mesmerism]’ (Fuller 1982:81). This interest manifested itself in two separate but concurrent movements - New Thought and Spiritualism.

*b) New Thought*

New Thought, the new name for Mesmerism in America, was a form of mind-cure philosophy, that is, a doctrine of the mind’s power to heal the body and the soul (Fuller 1982:136). The apotheosis of Mesmerism from a scientific theory to a source of religiosity can be ascribed to Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866) who was a man tutored in the theory and practice of animal magnetism (see section 2.3.3.1b). Quimby ‘insisted that what distinguished irrational faith from true religion was that the latter demonstrated itself as a science of cause and effect’ (Fuller 1982:127). In other words, he held that the spiritual powers of the mind could be discharged for the attainment and restoration of health and prosperity. To put the mind’s spiritual powers into action required, therefore, a spiritual direction that was turned inward to the mind. Quimby (1961:319) reasoned that ‘if ... [the mind’s] spiritual life can be revealed to us, in other words, if we can understand ourselves, we shall then have our happiness or misery in our own hands’. In other words, by realigning the mind with its spiritual power, disease and suffering can supposedly be thought away.

This type of reasoning features prominently in New Age thought (see section 2.4.3). Its attraction probably lies in the feeling of personal power that it generates. The individual believes that he is in control of his life. Merely by thinking the right thoughts, physical health, material prosperity, and spiritual well-being can be achieved. The desired result is either visualised or verbally affirmed as already achieved which supposedly makes its ‘creative power work in the real world’ (Orr & Ray 1983:186).

Quimby’s philosophy of idealism, a position which holds that ‘mind, consciousness, ideas and thought are the basis of reality and the causal force(s) behind material objects, events and conditions’ (Melton, Clark & Kelly 1991:344), was the key idea behind the founding of New

Thought religious denominations which still exist such as Christian Science (founded in 1879 by a patient and follower of Quimby, Mary Baker Eddy), the Church of Religious Science, the Church of Divine Science, and the Unity School for Christianity. New Thought denominations and New Age groups converge thus in their teachings of prosperity consciousness and mental healing; in their interests such as firewalking, crystals, amulets, and charms; and in their therapies such as rebirthing (see section 2.4.1.5) (Melton, Clark & Kelly 1991:346).

c) *Spiritualism*

The other movement that developed concurrently with New Thought was Spiritualism. The beginning of modern Spiritualism is credited to the Fox sisters who in 1848 allegedly communicated, via a rapping method, with a spirit in their home in Hydesville, New York State. Given much publicity, it launched in America and Europe a wave of enthusiasm for psychic phenomena such as table rapping, table turning (levitation), automatic writing, materialisation of spirits and of physical objects, clairvoyance, and telepathy (Wilson 1989:70-71).

The religious framework for Spiritualism was constructed by Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910). Introduced to Mesmerism in 1843, he became adept at self-induced trance mediumship and claimed communication with, among others, the spirit of Swedenborg (see section 2.3.3.1a). Based on his spiritual visions, he developed a metaphysical philosophy of harmony which held that the universe was ruled by divine principles and, furthermore, stressed that harmonious reintegration and a life without discord were gained by those who had learnt to develop their physical senses in accordance with their spiritual senses (Fuller 1982:98-99; Raschke 1980:187-188).

In ideology, therefore, Spiritualism and New Thought (see section 2.3.3.2b) shared the same premises which were rooted in Swedenborgianism (see section 2.3.3.1a), Mesmerism (see section 2.3.3.1b), and occult mind-power (Raschke 1980:188). The spiritual mediums were, however, primarily concerned with attracting a paying clientele which depended on reassuring platitudes about the well-being of dead relatives and not on promoting inner spirituality (Fuller 1982:100). When one medium after another were exposed as frauds (Wilson 1989:73), the movement

declined. The interest of the true believer was syphoned into the Theosophical Society.

d) *The Theosophical Society*

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City in 1875 by Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907). The objectives of the Society were three-fold:

the investigation of the laws which govern the universe and the psychical powers latent in humans;  
 the promotion of a universal brotherhood of humanity; and  
 the comparative study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies, and sciences (Cranston 1993:xviii, 146-147).

The key point of the Theosophical Society was Western occultism which Campbell (1980:10) defines as follows: 'The occultist is one who operates outside established religion and has a concern for theories and practices based on esoteric knowledge. Occultism often includes the study of writings felt to contain secrets known to ancient [pagan] civilizations but subsequently forgotten.' Theosophy shares, therefore, with gnosticism (see section 2.3.1) the quest for 'personal salvation through a gnosis or wisdom rather than through the aid of a personal God or Saviour' (Campbell 1980:10).

Influenced by Hinduism and Darwin's theory of evolution (see section 5.2.2), Blavatsky formulated a theory of spiritual evolution (Osborn 1992:81). Apart from the usual theme of inner divinity, New Age spirituality inherited from Blavatsky the following ideas:

**Involution and evolution:** Involution refers to the process of consciousness (or spirit) becoming physical matter and evolution refers to matter's return to the level of spirit (see section 4.4.2.1).

**Reincarnation and *karma*:** Karma is believed to be an impartial law of cause and effect 'that restores complete justice to life and the dignity of self-responsibility to man' in that wrongdoings in one life will require retribution in a subsequent life (Theosophical Society in Southern Africa 1948:19).

**Masters of Wisdom:** They are believed to be highly evolved beings, incarnate or disincarnate, who have 'transcended the realms of ordinary karma' and can thus help individual and group

karmas (Ellwood 1986:120).

An ancient wisdom religion: This was supposedly the source of all religions and philosophies and which Aldous Huxley (1950:passim), who greatly influenced the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2), calls the *Perennial Philosophy*, a term coined by Augustinus Steuchus (a sixteenth century Catholic theologian) for the Hermetic, Neoplatonic tradition (Kristeller 1965:50).

Blavatsky divided cosmic evolution into seven stages or Root Races of which we are supposedly in the fifth (Ellwood 1986:88ff). To lead humanity into the next age, Annie Besant, Blavatsky's successor, and Charles Leadbeater identified an Indian boy, Jiddu Krishnamurti, as 'one who in his life is literally perfect ... The world Teacher is Here' (Campbell 1980:129). Thus, Krishnamurti was believed to be the physical vehicle for the Avator, the Lord Maitreya, and the universal Christ of all people, irrespective of their religious affiliation. However, in 1930, Krishnamurti left the Theosophical society to teach his own philosophy which included a rejection of all organised religions.

Krishnamurti (1954:34ff), who died in 1986, taught that the real individual is free from all authority except that of his own unique, inner experience. Furthermore, the acceptance of external authority is the cause of social disintegration. Virtuous living as the feeling of brotherhood with all of humanity is not the result of external imposition and conditioning, but of inner legitimation through self-knowledge. The task of education is, therefore, to awaken an individual who can actualise his freedom. In other words, education should turn the person inward to his own source of individual truth, namely the divine inner self.

The novelist-philosopher, Aldous Huxley (referred to earlier in this section) who is greatly admired by New Age thinkers as is Krishnamurti himself (Ferguson 1989:463), was among those who were influenced by Krishnamurti's teachings (Taylor 1992:328). David Bohm - the physicist whose theory of the implicate order (see section 5.3.2) 'without resulting in any doctrine ... promotes a sense of oneness which creates a mystical spirituality' (Frost 1992:27) - tells in his book *A brief introduction to the work of Krishnamurti* that, in his drive to break free from conventional philosophical and religious ideas, he was inspired by Krishnamurti with whom he had a lasting friendship for 25 years prior to Krishnamurti's death (Frost 1992:27, 160).

Another significant Theosophist was Alice Bailey (1880-1949) who, in 1923, founded the Arcane School for training in esoteric principles. Bailey is known for her teachings that revolved round the Maitreya, the Christ whose coming would usher in a new age,<sup>13</sup> and for her prayer *The Great Invocation*,<sup>14</sup> the purpose of which is to establish the goodwill necessary for the appearance of the Christ.

Among those inspired by Bailey's teachings were Benjamin Creme (Wessinger 1988:332) whose announcement in 1982 of the Maitreya's arrival came to nothing, and the psychologist Dr Roberto Assagioli (Wessinger 1988:337) who, in turn, influenced contemporary New Age thinkers (Ferguson 1989:463; see sections 4.3.2, 4.4.1).

Contemporary New Agers are not Theosophists per se, but they do share the idea of the progressive evolution of consciousness and the goal of universal brotherhood. They also believe that humanity is on the brink of a new age, in astrological terms, the Aquarian age of harmony which heralds out the old Piscean age of strife. The purpose of the Harmonic Convergence (see section 2.6 note 2) celebrated on 16 and 17 August 1987 at supposedly sacred sites throughout the world was 'to create a resonating link between Universal Energies and the Earth' (Publicity brochure of *Global Family/Harmonic Convergence* quoted in Wessinger 1982:339) which would facilitate the emergence of the new era.

At the height of the Theosophical Society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, interest in Theosophy was worldwide. It influenced the German, Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925). He was a Theosophist prior to establishing his own society. Together with Blavatsky, Steiner and the Russian George Gurdjieff (1872-1949) are identified by Roszak (1976:115-117) as the three major occult evolutionists of recent times whose evolutionary image of the spiritual potential of human consciousness is used in Western psychology.

e) *Rudolf Steiner (Anthroposophy)*

The Anthroposophical Society was founded by Rudolf Steiner in 1913 when he broke away from the German Theosophical Society of which he had been the head. Known especially for its

alternative private education system (the Waldorf Schools), Anthroposophy is rooted in Theosophy, Western occultism, Christianity, and German Idealism of which Goethe and Hegel are exponents (Campbell 1980:157).

Steiner regarded his spiritual system as a spiritual science. To him, the supersensible world of soul and spirit presents itself to the intuitive consciousness in the same way that the physical world presents itself to the bodily senses (Steiner 1969:280-281). Originally a physicist tutored in positivism (see section 3.3.4.3) and scientific materialism (Raschke 1980:122), Steiner, at the age of about 40, turned against mechanistic and behaviouristic philosophies which deny the reality of the human soul (Raschke 1980:123).

Steiner's philosophy stressed the human being in his totality. To develop the physical body was as important as developing the spirit. Thus, the Waldorf schools emphasise the body, mind, and spirit (Finger 1991:61).

Furthermore, according to Steiner, humans do not only have an essential kinship with the spiritual realm, but also with the mineral, plant, and animal realm. Both kinships (the physical and the spiritual) must be regained. Roszak (1976:127) calls this 'a kind of visionary neopaganism' while Raschke (1980:124-125) maintains that it displays 'the quintessence of the modern Gnostic attitude', to rise 'to a state of a psychic oneness with all of creation'.

#### *f) Gurdjieff*

Turning to Gurdjieff, one finds that his contribution to the development of New Age thought lies not so much in his Eastern influenced cosmology which Roszak (1976:138) calls 'meager and poorly developed snippets', but in that he introduced (supposedly) psychotherapeutic methods which have become part of contemporary psychotherapy (Roszak 1976:139, 147). Couched in occult terms, Gurdjieff's aim was to develop a person into an autonomous individual; the one who has evolved to the highest level, on a par with the divine (Raschke 1980:129ff).

Various contemporary eupsychian therapies, for example, encounter groups, Gestalt therapy, and

Erhard Seminar Training (see section 4.3.2) are heirs to the unusual experiments in human relations and personal growth that were practised in Gurdjieff's *Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man* near Fontainebleau in France during the 1920s (Roszak 1976:139).

According to Storm (1991:23), the intelligentsia of the United States, Britain, and Europe flocked to Gurdjieff's institute to be humiliated and slave-driven. The clientele was subjected to hard labour and extreme physical exercise especially a form of dancing in which robot-like obedience was required. In full flight and at breakneck speeds, the dancers were commanded to freeze into immobility. Combined with physical hardship, such shock tactics would purportedly break down the buffers of acquired patterns of behaviour and, by drawing the energy away from the mind, would pitch the empty mind into a higher state of consciousness. (Storm 1991:23-25.) But it does appear to me as if the moulding of human automatons rather than highly spiritually evolved individuals was the actual result.

Notwithstanding my above remark, the purpose of Gurdjieff's theory was to shock individuals out of their routine existence, which is supposedly a state of sleep, to become 'supermen' who have no need for social rules. Morality, according to Gurdjieff, is only for the unawakened. In its place is substituted the illumined 'superman' who has the gnosis which is gained through his own self-realisation. (Raschke 1980:129-131.)

Gurdjieff's philosophy and his shock tactics were a self-admitted influence on the guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Strelley 1987:12) to whose ashram in Poona, India, leading figures in the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2) made their pilgrimages (Storm 1991:101). Among these was Richard Price, the co-founder with Michael Murphy, of the Esalen Institute (see section 4.3.2).

By following Gurdjieff's reasoning, namely that moral and social limits are constraints that inhibit human potential for enlightenment and creative self-realisation, the individual is freed from social obedience and social accountability. But warns Raschke (1980:131), through such self-glorification, '[d]ecadence turns into holiness; self-interest becomes a matchless destiny'.

Raschke's warning is precisely what happened in the mid-1980s in Rajneesh's American ashram. This ashram which was characterised by corrupt, amoral leaders and subservient followers collapsed into a morass of corruption and crime. Kate Strelley (1987:12-13), for nine years an insider in Rajneesh's organisation, writes as follows:

If one can accept the game [life] on its own terms, and not impose one's point of view on what form the game should or should not take, then one can tolerate many things. This, I think now, explains how Bhagwan might have been able to condone drug dealings and other illegal activities. From this point of view [that obedience to social laws is unnecessary] where Sheela [Rajneesh's chief administrator], Bhagwan, and the rest fell down, quite simply, was in getting caught.

Rajneesh's American ashram existed and collapsed during the afterwake of the 1960s, the time of the counterculture when the young ripped their ties with the established society and opted instead for nonconformity and revolutionary, political change. In the early 1970s the counterculture abandoned its revolutionary activities and engaged instead in a neognostic flight from the perceived evil of the establishment into cults and sects that explored the inner realms of the self. The counterculture and its subsequent recourse to gnostic mysticism is the immediate precursor of New Age spirituality as will be illustrated in the discussion to follow.

#### **2.3.4 The American counterculture**

Prior to the late 1950s, the metaphysical groups were not countercultural (Judah 1974:106). They reflected the American culture and abided by its established lifestyle. What they did was to relate the American culture's emphasis on science, health, prosperity, and individual freedom of choice to the religious realm (Judah 1974:107). In contrast to this, in the late 1950s, there sprung up in America a youthful subculture which Roszak (1970:passim) labelled the 'counterculture' which subsequently became a worldwide phenomenon. It represented youth's rejection of technocracy, the domination of humans through technological development. Raschke (1980:208) describes it as a 'wholesale apostasy ... from the standard culture of respectability, upward mobility, and economic success'. Thus, together with material greed, youth also tossed

away the moral-ethical norms of work and discipline.

The resentment against the distortions of technocracy and in particular the Vietnam War involvement turned the young firstly to political activism (Horn 1983:17ff). When the world is perceived as sick, Judah (1974:133) says that there are two responses - 'either to seek to transform the world [via political activism], or to escape from the world to *real life* in a spiritual world through a transcendental experience'. Thus, when political activism failed to change society, the counterculture, like the Gnostics of old (see section 2.3.1), chose the path of inward voyaging (Judah 1974:133; Raschke 1980:229), first through drugs and then through esoteric religions.

In the world of the West that was marked by 'the absence of a genuine sense of God' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:236) yet 'dominated by social engineering and technology', the surrender of religion to reason was called off by the young counterculture's 'thirst for transcendence' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:237) which in their idiom denoted 'any *extraordinary* intuition, insight, feeling, or state of awareness' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:238). All of these were legitimated by the new definitions of experience and truth. No longer accepted as 'a set of *learned* perceptual habits', experience as the test for truth was purely personal; 'a private and intense conviction' that verified theories and conjectures by the 'dictum that "truth is subjectivity"' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:241). By equating experience which is necessarily subjective and truth which is not subjective, the Existentialist tenet that religious and/or moral commitment is an arbitrary choice for which no objective, rational justification can be given (see section 3.3.4.2) became a truism and, therefore, an apparently valid way of systematising intuitive emotions and feelings into a personal system of meaning.

Cults which sought an alternative to the prevalent rationalism, secularism and materialism, and also to institutionalised religion flourished. Any path that represented a gateway to the inner self and its supposed divinity, be it an Eastern religion, pagan shamanism or Western occultism, became a subject of interest. Models for self-realisation and inspiration for experimentation into modes of mystical ecstasy and inner exploration were drawn from the philosophies of Krishnamurti (see section 2.3.3.2d); Gurdjieff (see section 2.3.3.2f); the mescaline-user Aldous

Huxley; the Zen-philosophers Jack Kerouac and Alan Watts, the latter an LSD-user; the mystical poet Allen Ginsberg; the subsequently fired Harvard psychologists and LSD-users Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (the latter called himself Ram Dass after his conversion to drug-free self-illumination in the early 1970s); the shamanist philosopher Carlos Castaneda; and from the multitude of Asian gurus who spread their teachings in America after the rescinding of *Oriental Exclusion Act* in 1965.

The result was an occult/spiritual explosion that carried the innumerable forms of neognosticism onwards into what was subsequently labelled the New Age movement. The turn inward can, therefore, be regarded as the crystallisation of contemporary New Age spirituality - 'an awakening ... of individuals' which New Agers believe 'results in the shift of the whole worldview of a culture' (Ferguson 1989:217).

Unlike the counterculture, the New Age spiritual groups are not countercultural with regard to the values of science, technology, and material success. They believe that within the worldview of their faith, where nature is regarded as sacred, the application of science and technology will work with nature and not against it (see section 2.3.1). Veith (1987:110) questions this. While he praises the environmentalists for attempting to control humanity's exploitation of nature, he adds:

Yet, I notice the religious overtones of many environmentalists, the idea that nature is sacred and that therefore research of various kinds must be stopped lest we violate something in nature. This is a reemergence of the old taboo way of thinking, which is extremely common in mythological societies and which prevented scientific investigation of nature for centuries. Similar investing of nature with religious powers such as healing and salvation is evident in the health food movement. Whatever is ultimate will be understood as sacred, and what is sacred will be hedged with restrictions, rituals, and warnings against blasphemy. Those who worship nature, paradoxically, tend to resist its being studied.

The sacred approach to nature is the definitive characteristic of the New Age faith (see sections

2.2.1, 3.4.1).

Among New Agers, mystical practices are used to overcome the rationalism of Western science by including and developing the power of intuitive spirituality. The viability of this approach is discussed in section 6.3.3.1. The purpose of mystical, inner journeys is to purify and heal the whole consciousness by developing the intuitive mind to such a degree that distractions from the rational mind can be controlled and suppressed. The mystical experiences promise, therefore, liberation from the 'bondage' of the rational mind to establish contact with the inner, spiritual realm and the god within (see section 2.2.2). A representative number of New Age mystical practices are the subject of the next section.

#### 2.4 CURRENT APPROACHES TO AND PRACTICES OF NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY

Viewed against the backdrop of the historical precursors of New Age spirituality described in the previous section, it is evident that New Age spirituality does not involve the sanctifying presence of a divine Spirit who is a personal Being external to the cosmos and who calls upon humans to carry out His will. What it does involve, is faith in a divine potency buried in the mind that can be awakened in conjunction with the invocation of supernatural forces that impregnate the deified universe. Since New Agers define the cosmos as a divine organism (see sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1), all the supernatural forces are, by definition, good. The possibility of demon contact is, therefore, ruled out.

Of the many practices in which New Agers engage, a representative number of the techniques for inducing an altered, mystical state of consciousness will be discussed first. These techniques are collectively called *psychotechnologies* and they are believed to 'help people connect to new sources of personal energy, integration, harmony' (Ferguson 1989:32).

## 2.4.1 Psychotechnologies

### 2.4.1.1 *Yoga and Transcendental Meditation*

‘Yoga may be defined as mystical absorption’ (Hewitt 1978:389). While Yoga also includes exercises for perfecting the body (called *Hatha* Yoga), its end goal is always spiritual - ‘the union ... of the individual spirit [*Atman*] with the universal spirit [*Brahman*], the finding of one’s essential nature (Self) beyond empirical ego, which has to be dissolved, and the seeing and experiencing of the ground of one’s being’ (Hewitt 1978:371). In the Hindu teachings that underlie Yoga, one rule dominates, namely the ‘equation, *Brahman* [the cosmic deity] equals *Atman* [the individual]’ (Hewitt 1978:386).

The key that opens the door to the cosmic mysteries is, therefore, the inner self. This can account for Yoga’s popularity among New Age thinkers. It satisfies their longing for divine identification and, at the same time, the idea of finding one’s essential nature is used to support self-actualisation (see sections 4.2.2.4, 4.3). New Agers believe that in a mystical, altered state of consciousness, the rational, socially conditioned self is stripped away and the real, purportedly good self is exposed. The claimed result is a transformed individual:

As the innate nature reasserts itself, emotional turbulence diminishes. Spontaneity, freedom, poise, and harmony seem to increase ... This perfection, this wholeness does not refer to superior achievement, moral rectitude ... it is an insight into nature - the integrity of form and function in life itself, connection with a perfect process ... we recognize ourselves as children of nature (Ferguson 1989:105-106).

What is claimed is that the consequence of mystical self-actualisation is emotional healing and, though ‘fiercely autonomous’ (Ferguson 1989:104) and without imposed moral rectitude, the individual will have a new, noncompetitive attitude towards others and nature.

Of the meditative Yogas, the most popular form in the West is *Mantra* Yoga or *Transcendental Meditation* (TM) where concentration is focused by the incantation of a word or phrase, the

*mantra*. Osborn (1992:45) notes that '[s]ince the word is often the name of [a] Hindu deity its repetition is an act of religious devotion as well as an exercise in concentration'. TM is, however, promoted as nonreligious.

TM is Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's version of Mantra Yoga. TM dispenses with the discipline of orthodox Yoga (Hewitt 1978:449; Needleman 1970:133), and promises its practitioners an easy and effortless means to 'decreased stress, increased productivity, heightened creativity, and overall peace of mind' (Chandler 1988:69). By extolling this method as scientific (Burrows in Hoyt (ed) 1987:38) and by not asking the meditators to renounce their own religious viewpoints nor their worldly pleasures (Hewitt 1978:448), TM is given out as a nonreligious means for releasing one's untapped potential (Burrows in Hoyt (ed) 1987:38-39).

#### 2.4.1.2 *Tantrism and the male and female principles*

Another Eastern teaching which is upheld in New Age spirituality 'even when not named or recognized' is Tantrism, the Yoga of sex (Alexander in Hoyt (ed) 1987:132). The philosophy of Tantrism is rooted in the principle of polar opposites (see section 2.3.2.1). The sexual act exemplifies the cosmic union of opposites, the latter being the goal of all Yogas (Hewitt 1978:501). New Agers, like the Tantrists, also revere the female principle (the *yin*) which represents the negative, dark, intuitive, receptive, restful, and earthy (or organic) aspects of the universe as opposed to the male principle (the *yang*) which represents the positive, clear, rational, unyielding, restless, and inorganic aspects of the universe (Capra 1975:113). Alan Watts (Hewitt 1978:513) regards the female principle and the Tantra in which it is embedded as a 'welcome corrective' to Western civilisation: 'We over-accentuate the positive, think of the negative as "bad" ... But through understanding the creative power of the female, of the negative ... we may ... become completely alive in the present.'

Tantric morality 'holds that what is natural cannot be wrong' (Storm 1991:41). This morality as well as the power of sex to alter consciousness informed Western occultism through Aleister Crowley (Drury 1985:108, 114; Storm 1991:41; see section 2.3.2.4), and through him, it was taken up into contemporary Neopagan witchcraft or *Wicca* (Adler 1981:64). Crowley's law of

'Do what thou wilt' which he proclaimed supreme (Drury 1985:119) is mirrored in the Wiccan Creed, 'An' ye harm none, do what ye will' (Adler 1981:99, 137-138; Storm 1991:41; Warren-Clarke 1987:135). In interviews conducted with Wiccans, Storm (1991:41) was told that the Great Rite of sexual intercourse is like Tantric Yoga. It is a sacred ceremony that releases a power that can supposedly transform reality.

Hewitt (1978:500) who clearly identifies with New Age thought, believes that Tantric morality is not 'a licence to "do what you will"'. He concedes though that 'inevitably, it has sometimes been taken as such'. Hewitt (1978:513) maintains that it is the spirit of Tantrism which is valuable; 'its insight that the physical union between partners in love ... represents a mystical way is valuable, and can be reinterpreted for our times and circumstances in ways productive of human happiness and self-actualization'. It is, however, an open question whether elevating sexual union to the level of spiritual enlightenment is not in itself, an invitation to self-indulgent sensuality.

A possible answer to this question can be found in the history of Western gnosticism. It is not only in Eastern teachings (Tantrism and Taoism) that the union of polar opposites and the female principle in God are found. Androgyny, divine and human, was the underlying philosophy of the ancient Gnostic schools, Hermetic and unorthodox Christian (Walker 1983:121). When, as Walker (1983:123-125) illustrates, the divine syzygies (or opposites) were accorded sexual significance by some of the Gnostic sects, ritual sexual union became part of the rite of the bridal chamber. And among many of these 'enlightened' Gnostic sects, sexual excess and perversion was rife (Walker 1983:127-129).

The sexual aspect has been expanded on because sexual permissiveness among adolescents is a very real problem for today's educators, not only in terms of a puritan sexual morality, but also in view of the AIDS threat. Hewitt (1978:513) qualifies the enlightening function of sexual union with the words 'between partners in love', but New Age relationships do not necessarily include monogamy. They can be polygamous yet intimate, a combination which New Agers do not view as a contradiction in terms. Ferguson (1989:437-438) explains:

In new-paradigm relationships, the emphasis is not so much on sexuality as intimacy.

Intimacy is prized for its shared psychic intensity and transformative possibilities, of which sex is only a part - and often a latent part at that.

For many people, giving up the idea of exclusive relationships is the most difficult paradigm shift in their transformation. Some choose to limit their sexual expression to a primary relationship. Others may give priority but not exclusivity to the primary relationship ... For many people, giving up the old need for exclusivity was the most difficult paradigm shift of all, yet necessary if they were to be true to their own mores.

Ferguson emphasises, and correctly so, that sexual union is only a part of an intimate, loving relationship. But can a relationship be truly intimate if it is not also exclusive?

Ferguson (1989:436) admits that '[t]he old familiar emotions like jealousy, fear, insecurity and guilt are unlikely to evaporate'. These must be confronted and transcended by learning 'that you can love more than one person, that you may be jealous, but you can never possess someone' (Respondent to *Aquarian Conspiracy questionnaire* quoted in Ferguson 1989:437). Non-possessiveness is in itself a laudable virtue, but should it imply infidelity?

These are crucial issues in educational theory. They relate directly to the family structure and a child's real *need* for a stable and secure home environment since 'stable human development and a meaningful existence are virtually impossible without the family as a basic social institution' (Lidz 1975:129).

Having thus illustrated the ultimate interconnectedness between what may appear to be a purely spiritual teaching (Tantrism) and educational issues, one will, before proceeding with the next section, provide a historical example of how a highly disciplined Eastern teaching became an aberration among Western youth.

When Western youth rejected the Establishment in the late 1950s (see section 2.3.4), they turned, among others, to Zen Buddhism. But their version was a far cry from the discipline of the Japanese Zen monks. Immersion in *samsara* (the flow of life) became a trip into emotion,

sensuality, sensation, and self-indulgent abuse of drugs, liquor, and sex, whilst *dharma* (the rule for living life) became a rule of instant and complete sensual enjoyment (Raschke 1980:209-212).

### 2.4.1.3 *Shamanic visualisation*

As mentioned previously (see section 2.3.1), Lewis and Melton (1992:xii) have noticed that the emphasis in New Age spirituality is shifting to shamanism. A possible explanation for this shift could lie in the two distinctions between shamans and other mystics that Eliade (1989:passim) draws in his extensive study on shamanism (both ancient and modern). The first distinction is that the shaman goes to the spirits in their world. They do not come to him:

[A]ny ecstatic [mystic] cannot be considered a shaman; the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld (Eliade 1989:5).

The second distinction is in control:

[A] shaman differs from a 'possessed' person, for example; the shaman controls his 'spirits' in the sense that he, a human being, is able to communicate with the dead, 'demons', and 'nature spirits', without thereby becoming their instrument (Eliade 1989:6).

In shamanic cultures, it is believed, therefore, that the shaman actually enters into the spirit world where he controls and uses the spirits instead of being controlled and used by them. In other words, in the extraordinary realm of the spirit, the shaman personifies personal empowerment. The point that I am making is that by means of shamanism, the New Ager, who is very much a part of today's prevalent desire for empowerment of the individual in all fields of life, perceives the opportunity to enter the spiritual world and, even as he experiences unmediated communication with spiritual beings, he, not they, is in control.

Shamanism was introduced into the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2) by the

anthropologist, Michael Harner whose fieldwork among South American and North American Indians taught him shamanism firsthand. The Harner method is taught at the Esalen Institute (see section 4.3.2) and at other personal growth centres in the United States and Europe. Its purpose is primarily spiritual and emotional healing, but it is also used for physical healing (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:44ff).

In a state of deep relaxation and accompanied by monotonous drumming which serves as a focusing device, the shamanic voyager visualises passing into and through a thick and deep root of a huge tree whose branches reach to the sky. The vision is thus connected both to the sky and to the underworld. The participant must visualise a light at the bottom of the root through which he is travelling. On reaching the light, he summons a guide - an animal, a spirit, or a mythic being - who assists him in exploring the 'shamanic' level of consciousness that has been reached and entered. It is in this realm that the archetypal, spiritual dimension of being in all its cosmic dimensions can, purportedly, be uncovered and explored. Here myth becomes reality. (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:48ff)

One can conclude, therefore, that in the New Age frame of reference, the spiritual realm is not conceived of as one that exists in a dimension separate and apart from physical reality or the mind. It is conceived of solely as inner-space situated within the deepest recesses of the individual's mind. The spiritual beings are forces and potencies within the mind. Therefore, each person's experience is valid and 'true'. It reflects his spiritual reality and since this reality has no existence over and above its existence in the individual mind, the individual's experience is the truth. Objective spiritual Truth cannot exist within the New Age paradigm.

Furthermore, one can also conclude that since the inner self is regarded as divine, its space is the abode of God. This is, however, a god who has no objective existence. His existence depends solely on the individual human mind. The individual is no longer a mere spark of divinity. Gnostic reasoning has reached its ultimate conclusion in the New Age where the Godhead is finally reasoned away. Every individual is God, supreme and absolute.

My above conclusions explain why one finds references to absolute truth in New Age literature which differ profoundly from the conventional meaning that depends on the objective and real existence of truth. New Age truth is a 'truth' that is held to be absolute even while it is subjective (see section 3.4.2). The New Age psychotherapists, Orr and Ray (1983:52-53) express these ideas as follows:

Our purpose is to get everyone spiritually enlightened. And enlightenment is *certain knowledge of the absolute truth*. 'Absolute truth' is that one and only truth that is true throughout all time and space for everyone. And what is *the absolute truth*? The absolute truth is: *The thinker is creative with his thoughts ...* You could use different words to describe the thinker, like Being, Spirit, Space or God ... The thinker is beyond all thought. It [the use of the word 'it' illustrates that God is conceived of as impersonal] is beyond thought in that is [sic] controls thought and creates thought ... Infinite Intelligence represents all possible thoughts in the universe, all the possible thoughts that have ever been thought, plus all the ones that have not yet been thought. Your thinker is the ultimate guru. The ultimate guru is you.

Having made this necessary diversion from the actual subject of shamanic visualisation into the reasoning that ultimately underlies New Age spirituality and its practices, we now turn to another technique that is employed for inner-space exploration, namely pathworking.

#### **2.4.1.4 Pathworking**

Pathworking closely resembles Harner's technique of shamanic visualisation (see section 2.4.1.3) in that it too is a technique for guided visionary journeys. The participant uses a familiar figure (a mythic being, a historical person, or an animal) as guide and either actively follows a fixed symbolic path or passively allows images to present themselves. Passive pathworking entails a greater risk of allowing 'unknown and potentially frightening symbols from the unconscious to present themselves' (Drury 1982:77).

In active pathworking, two categories of paths can be followed. In the first, the symbolism of the Kabbalist Tree of Life (see section 2.3.2.2b), the Tarot cards (see section 2.6 note 12), or the Zodiac is used as landmarks on the journey. The guide leads the visionary to each archetypal symbol so that a relationship can be established with it and its principle more fully expressed in outer life (Knight 1978:187). This method stems directly from Hermetic and Kabbalist visionary, occult magic (see sections 2.3.2.2b,c, 2.3.2.4).

In pathworking, the imagery invoked need not be the traditional occult symbolism, but can also be appealing nature scenery which 'heightens the personal sense of well-being and peace with nature' (Drury 1982:77). Throughout the meditative fantasy, the natural senses and the emotions are incorporated to move the mind progressively into deeper states of consciousness (Drury 1982:77).

Visionary magicians and New Agers believe that pathworking 'stimulates imagery from the deep mythic resource of the unconsciousness' (Drury 1982:67) and can, therefore, be used for 'personal integration and conscious cooperation with inner dynamics, be they psychological or religious' (Knight 1978:185). Other methods that are used for mystical psychological integration are rebirthing and its offshoot holotropic breathing as well as the so-called float-tank experience.

#### **2.4.1.5 *Rebirthing and holotropic breathing***

The basic principle behind rebirthing, developed by the New Age psychologist Leonard Orr, is to pass through emotional traumas that act as blockages to the bliss of inner reintegration and wholeness, the primary trauma of all persons being the original, physical birth process. There are two methods that are used - a wet and a dry method.

Wet rebirthing is done naked by either lying in a full tub of water (which simulates the womb) with the head back so that the eyes and ears are immersed, or by floating face down with a snorkel on. Dry rebirthing is based on the yoga of breathing (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:45). It is a continuous, connected breathing technique - no pauses between in and out breaths - which produces hyperventilation and 'a natural "high"' (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:47-48).

In both wet and dry rebirthing, the individual is projected into a state of altered consciousness in which he supposedly works through the original birth 'trauma', and other traumas, and this, New Agers believe, brings about 'a significant emotional transformation ... [through] insights, new thoughts, and understanding of life and oneself' (Orr & Ray 1983:xviii).

Holotropic breathing uses the same breathing technique as dry rebirthing, but is accompanied by music - African rhythms, Sufi chants, Indian ragas, Japanese flutes, and various other forms of New Age music - 'to produce more intense and dramatic breakthroughs to transpersonal states of consciousness' (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:47). Holotropic breathing was developed by the New Age psychologist Stanislav Grof who coined the phrase 'holotropic' as meaning 'growing towards wholeness' (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:47).

#### **2.4.1.6 *The float-tank experience***

The float-tank experience was the idea of John Lilly, a neurophysiologist who is especially known for his study of dolphins and his experimentation with altered states of consciousness. During such experimentation (which included taking LSD), he was led by two 'guides' whom he had met in a near-death experience (Lilly 1972:38-39).

During the float-tank experience, the individual, equipped with breathing apparatus, floats naked in a sensory isolated tank that is filled with saline water to create buoyancy. The idea is to silence the conscious mind for deep relaxation and meditation. Vivid hallucinations, which are associated with spiritual enlightenment, are triggered by the sensory deprivation (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:51-53; Lilly 1972:52; Melton, Clark & Kelly 1991:412).

It is evident from the above psychotechnologies that attunement with the spiritual, the psychic, and the supernatural is dominant in New Age spirituality. A prominent place is, therefore, also given to psychic or paranormal phenomena.

## 2.4.2 Paranormal phenomena

Because any extraordinary phenomenon that defies rational explanation is regarded by New Age spiritual seekers as a potential source for spiritual growth and healing, this list of interests is virtually inexhaustible, for example, astral projection, extrasensory perception, past-life regression, dream therapy, firewalking, crystal power, pyramid power, UFOs, divination, and many more. Of the many, only two will be briefly discussed, namely channelling and the near-death experience (NDE).

My reason for choosing channelling is that it appears to illustrate that although the authority of religious scriptures is rejected, the desire for authoritative spiritual guidance remains. My reason for choosing the NDE is that research into NDEs (see below) has shown that mystical experiences have a consistency which is unrelated to and tends to override distinct religious teachings (see sections 2.2.2, 2.3.3.1a).

Channelling is nineteenth century spiritualism (see section 2.3.3.2c) in a 'new' garb. The 'contracts' made vary from spiritual beings, ascended Masters (see section 2.3.3.2d), extraterrestrials to the 'Higher' self. The messages received exhibit a striking similarity:

Death is unreal through either physical immortality or reincarnation.

All is One, interconnected and interrelated in synergy (mutual cooperation).

We are divine beings who have chosen to exist in physical bodies.

We are in a process of apocalyptic transformation; on the brink of a quantum leap into full evolvment, biological and spiritual.

We are not alone; other highly evolved beings have come to guide us into the New Age.

In this life there are no victims, only opportunities.

We can control reality through the powers of the Universal or Cosmic Mind that are also our powers. (Chandler 1988:83, 92-93.)

These messages are reassuring as are near-death experiences (NDEs).

The remarkable feature of NDEs is the consistency in what is experienced irrespective of religious belief or unbelief (Ring 1984:85). After studying Ring's research and that of others, Wilson (1989:140-141) supports Ring's conclusion, namely, that what is experienced during an NDE cannot be regarded as unique, but 'should be regarded as one of a family of related mystical experiences' (Ring 1984:227). Ring (1984:227-228) supports his claim by providing the characteristics of 'ultraconsciousness' (mystical consciousness) that the psychiatrist, Stanley Dean identified before the explosion of interest in NDEs. These characteristics are also the common characteristics of NDEs. Summarised, they are awareness of a being of light, profound joy, union with God, intuitive understanding of life and creation, and spiritually transformed values. What is experienced in an NDE can, therefore, be induced by other means such as Yoga (Ring 1984:232).

For the person who experiences an NDE, the experience 'comes to take precedence over whatever he had been taught or had previously believed' (Ring 1984:50). This is in the fashion of all mystics (see sections 2.2.2, 2.3.3.1a) and is, therefore, very often the source of conscious or unconscious heresy (Scholem 1955:9).

Paranormal experiences provide, therefore, a solution to the problem of spiritual rootlessness in a worldview that, when followed through to its logical end, posits the self as the only absolute (see section 2.4.1.3). It appears that having no Absolute God who exists apart from the self whom one can cling to, the individual, who remains human, turns to comforting paranormal 'messages' and experiences. G K Chesterton (Burrows in Hoyt (ed) 1987:47) wrote: 'When a man ceases to believe in God, he does not believe in nothing, he believes in anything.'

Psychological comfort is not all that is sought in paranormal experiences. Magical powers are also sought, as we saw in section 2.3, and it is, therefore, the pragmatic use of magic in New Age spirituality that will be discussed next.

### **2.4.3 Pragmatic magic and creative visualisation**

The use of visionary magic in New Age thought is clearly seen in the spiritual antecedents of New

Age thought (see section 2.3). The definition of pragmatic magic is provided by Aleister Crowley (see section 2.3.2.4) when he (Adler 1981:8) says that magic is 'the Science and Art of causing change to occur in conformity with Will'. Adler (1981:6ff) and Starhawk (1989:27, *passim*) explain that magic is regarded as a natural exercise - a technique which controls hidden, occult forces which are held to be in nature. In other words, to effect a desired change in reality, magic is used to awaken and subsequently employ occult forces which allegedly reside in the human mind or in nature (for example, crystals). The technique involves the imagination's ability to visualise the desire.

The principle behind pragmatic creative visualization is the occult doctrine of correspondence (see sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.3.1a, 2.3.3.2e, 2.4.1.2) as explained (in very involved language) by the New Ager, Melita Denning (Osborn 1992:59):

*Truly by the power of this source [of magic] channelled through the conscious and unconscious levels of your own psyche, the action takes place on the corresponding levels of the external universe, to bring about the presentation to you on the earthly level of what you have imaged. That is WHY you can truly affirm that what you visualize IS YOURS NOW. Astrally it is YOURS; mentally and spiritually it is YOURS, because you are activating those levels by means of your own mental and spiritual forces so that what you create astrally shall be REALIZED materially.*

A leading proponent of creative visualisation, Shakti Gawain (1982:120), justifies the use of creative visualisation as the physical expression of the individual's divine creative power: 'Manifestation through creative visualisation is the process of realizing and making visible on the physical plane our divine potential.'

What this pragmatic exercise comes down to is the construction of mental imagery together with affirmative decrees to manifest desires on a communal or on an individual scale. The Harmonic Convergence celebrated worldwide in August 1987 (see section 2.6 note 2) was based on this type of visualisation - the awakening of the earth's spiritual forces, supposedly concentrated in specific power points, to usher in and manifest peace on earth. On the individual scale, the desires

behind creative visualisation range from high self-esteem and a positive attitude to life to physical health and material prosperity. The underpinning philosophy is that of Quimby (see section 2.3.3.2b); a philosophy with bottom line that happiness and emotional and spiritual health is not achieved by looking outward away from the self, but by looking inward and concentrating on the self and its desires. It is a philosophy that does not require 'its adherents to arrange their personal energies into a hierarchy of moral obligations' (Fuller 1982:182). The pivot is the individual self; the idea that one deserves only the best from life (Gawain 1982:49-52). Furthermore, it appears to be a philosophy which suggests that in life there are no circumstances beyond the individual's control.

The possible effects of cultivating these ideas in the young and the inexperienced are explored in sections 6.2.1.3 and 6.2.2.1.

This brings us to the last aspect to be discussed in this chapter, namely approaches (other than creative visualisation) to bring about physical health.

#### **2.4.4 New Age spirituality and physical health**

The attitude to physical health within the New Age worldview is holistic and is part of the broader movement to alternative health therapies (Osborn 1992:3). The least controversial are the natural remedies such as herbalism, homeopathy, aromatherapy (a form of herbalism that ascribes therapeutic abilities to aromatic oils), and the Bach flower remedies that are used to combat the negative emotions that are held to be the true cause of disease (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:32ff; Osborn 1992:4ff).

A more controversial aspect regarding physical health is Eastern medicine with its basis in the *yin-yang* philosophy of polar opposites (see section 2.4.1.2). According to this philosophy, all reality divides into polar opposites and, moreover, all reality derives from a vital force or energy that also permeates all reality. This vital force or energy is called *chi* in Chinese Taoism, *ki* in Japanese Buddhism, *prana* in Indian Hinduism, and *spiritual energy* in New Age thought. Physical health is assumed to depend on the unimpeded flow of this energy through meridian lines in the body.

When the supposed flow of energy is hampered (which is regarded as detrimental to physical health) the situation is rectified through acupuncture or acupressure. (Osborn 1992:7ff.) Western derivatives include a variety of bodywork techniques that manipulate the muscles and bone structure to maximise body use, to improve the flow of energy, and to release any psychological traumas that are expressed in muscle spasms or bad posture (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:39-40; Osborn 1992:11ff). Bodywork includes, among others, applied kinesiology, reflexology, physical yoga, the Alexander Technique, Rolfing, and Reichian therapy where spiritual energy is referred to as orgone energy (Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:40), and many more.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

From the discussion of the historical roots of New Age spirituality (see section 2.3), it became evident that the New Age search for spiritual truth is a search for an inner, esoteric 'truth' dependent only on subjective feelings. Furthermore, the spiritual antecedents of New Age thought reveal that such a quest for truth is accompanied with a belief in a deified cosmos and a spiritually infused nature that can, therefore, be regarded as subject to magical manipulation by occult powers latent in the human mind.

In the past, the alternative esoteric spiritual tradition existed on the fringes of Western society, but it grew considerably after 1970 within the groups that can collectively be called the New Age movement. Why this growth occurred cannot be explained purely in terms of the interpretation of spiritual ideas which was the pivotal point of discussion in this chapter. Other ideas and theories, philosophical, psychological, and scientific, that have been at work in Western culture must also be investigated. Only then can one try to come to an understanding of what is actually transpiring in the New Age worldview. In the next chapter, philosophical theories undergirding New Age thought, in particular its moral stance, will be explored so that further implications of New Age thought for the quest for truth can be brought to light.

## 2.6 NOTES

1 The United States of America rescinded the Oriental Exclusion Act in 1965. This gave rise to a rapid growth of Oriental traditions amongst the dissenting young of the American counterculture (see section 2.3.4) who, with great enthusiasm, took to Hindu and Buddhist based philosophies (see section 2.4.1.2), yoga and transcendental meditation (see section 2.4.1.1). This enthusiasm still abounds as the literature by both the proponents and critics of New Age thought reveals.

2 Interest in pagan nature religions links up with the Green movement and ecofeminism (both of which deal with environmental issues), alternative health therapy (specifically shamanic medicines), and shamanic visualisation (see section 2.4.1.3) (Albanese 1990:154-155). Seminal in the interest in shamans was the book by Carlos Castaneda, (1968) *The teachings of Don Juan*.

Nature worship is at the heart of the belief that the earth is a living being (see section 5.2.3.3a) whose need for deep cleansing was the leitmotiv of the New Age *Harmonic Convergence* of August 1987, celebrated also on Table Mountain.

Academic information on nature religions and the appropriation of Amerindian themes can be found in the book by Catherine Albanese, (1990) *Nature religion in America*.

3 Goddess worship has in recent years emerged as a new religious force, especially in feminist circles, like the Women's Spirituality Movement, and it is usually linked to Neopagan witchcraft (Wicca). Books on the Women's Spirituality Movement are those by Merlin Stone, (1976) *When God was a woman* and by Marija Gimbutas, (1989) *The language of the goddess*.

The connection between Wicca and Paganism on the one hand and the New Age movement on the other is a shared interest in psychical, magical power. Melton (1982:6) states that all

the members of the magical community acknowledge that despite their differences, they are part of the same movement with the same worldview.

- 4 Connections between Christianity and New Age thought can be found in Matthew Fox's *Creation-centred theology*. In his book, (1983) *Original blessing*, Fox replaces the concept of original sin with one of original blessing (which views humans as co-creators with God), ascribes a feminine aspect to God, and acknowledges a connection between his theology and Wicca.

Other Christians who also emphasise the esoteric, subjective dimension of religion and who actively support religious syncretism are Bede Griffiths (1989:passim), Thomas Merton ([S a]:passim), and David Steindl-Rast (Capra, Steindl-Rast & Matum 1991:passim).

- 5 Individuals who identify with the common New Age faith are not the only ones that recognise and express themselves against the destructive features in modern Western societies. See, for example, the books by Berger, Berger and Kellner (1974:passim), Illich (1973:passive), and Jiggins (1988:passim).
- 6 Freely translated: Gnosticism and mysticism are largely identical and, therefore, in a certain sense mystics are also gnostics.
- 7 Books that were allegedly channelled include, for example, JZ Knight, (1986) *Ramtha*; Sheila Petersen-Lowary, (1988) *The 5th dimension*; Jack Pursel, (1987) *The sacred journey*; and Jane Roberts, (1972) *Seth speaks*.
- 8 According to the Concise Oxford dictionary, Neoplatonism is a 3rd century 'mixture of Platonic ideas with Oriental mysticism'.
- 9 Plato describes his famous *Allegory of the cave* in *The Republic*, Book VII (1985:209ff).

- 10 Information on Rosicrucianism can be found in the book by Frances Yates, (1975) *The Rosicrucian enlightenment*.
- 11 Information on Freemasonry can be found in the book by Pick and Knight, (1977) *The pocket history of Freemasonry*.
- 12 The Tarot, widely used for divinatory purposes, is a system of cards. The 22 cards of the Major Arcana depict mythological religious imagery that represents the path to spiritual transformation. There are also 56 Minor Arcana cards of four suits. These are believed to be the origin of playing cards. Through Eliphas Levi, the pseudonym of a French Catholic deacon, Alphonse Louis Constant (1810-1875), the Major Arcana became a basis for magical invocation in the nineteenth century. For information on how the Tarot is used, see the books by Nevill Drury, (1982) *The Shaman and the magician* and (1985) *Don Juan, mescalito and modern magic*.
- 13 It was not only through Alice Bailey that the vision of a utopian new age of one world community and one world religion, was propagated. In the first decade of this century there appeared in England, a weekly magazine, *The New Age*, whose articles on spiritual matters were backed by George Bernard Shaw's belief that all religions are merely different versions of one universal religion. Another contributor to *The New Age* was H G Wells who had spread his vision of one world community through his book, (1905) *A modern utopia*. (Storm 1991:18.) In South Africa, Johanna Brandt (1876-1964), the visionary wife of the moderator of the *Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk in Afrika*, founded the *Order of Harmony* to promote peace and harmony between all the nations and religions so that a New Age could be summoned in. The ideas that she expresses in her writings correlate closely with Theosophical ideas. (Steyn 1992:111-113.)
- 14 Words of Bailey's prayer, *The Great Invocation*:
- From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let Light stream forth into the minds of men.  
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.  
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men -  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

- 15 More information on these health practices as well as other New Age practices can be found in the book by Melton, Clark and Kelly, (1991) *New Age almanac*.

## CHAPTER 3

### NEW AGE THOUGHT AND MORAL TRUTH: A CONTINUATION OF WESTERN MORAL SUBJECTIVISM

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the foregoing chapter it was established that a magical worldview is the end conclusion of the belief in the spirituality of all nature. This chapter will explore the implications that New Age thought has for the idea of moral truth by tracing the roots of the New Age moral stance in the evolution of Western philosophical thought. The following themes will be traced in the history of Western philosophy:

the division between natural knowledge (philosophy and science) and revealed knowledge (theology);

the supremacy of reason and its effect on Western philosophical thought in general and moral philosophical thought in particular;

the transition from objective to subjective moral truth; and

the supremacy of subjective feelings and intuition in the Western moral stance.

Within the framework of these themes, there are often apparently opposing philosophies. Yet they are ultimately interconnected in a web of meaning that, in addition to the New Age spiritual forerunners (see section 2.3), prepared the ground for the subjectivism of the New Age approach to truth.

In order to understand why many different philosophical systems could and did develop in Western thought, it is necessary to first note the unique nature of Western thought.

#### 3.2 THE UNIQUE NATURE OF WESTERN THOUGHT

The philosopher John Randall (1962:13) identifies the unique nature (and function) of Western philosophical inquiry as the expression and illumination of the process of cultural change:

‘Conflict, struggle and the compelling need for readaptation and reconstruction have been the factors that generated our philosophical inquiry.’ Unlike other cultures of the past and of the Orient, Occidental culture has never reached a stage of stable equilibrium. ‘It has always been “dynamic”, “progressive”; it has always found itself in an “age of transition”’ (Randall 1962:15). Reconstruction, assimilation of and readjustment to new ideas and new conditions have always challenged Western philosophers on to new harmonies and new syntheses (Randall 1962:15; Stromberg 1966:6-7). This has been a characteristic feature of the Western world during this era.

Another distinctive feature of Western thought is the separation that exists between philosophy and theology. In Eastern thought, no distinction between philosophy and religion is made. For example, ‘[t]he philosophers of Hinduism did not construct their systems alongside of or outside or as a substitute for Hindu religion’ (Copleston 1974:23). Though different interpretations of the religious texts did evolve, the point of departure was always within the religious texts and the distinctions were within the Hindu religion itself (Copleston 1974:22-24). All-embracing contradictory and opposing ideas which require that a distinction be drawn between philosophy and theology was, therefore, absent in Eastern thought. In other words, their philosophies never stood ‘apart from and over against Hinduism in the same way as some Western philosophies have stood apart from and over against Christianity’ (Copleston 1974:24).

The indistinguishable mixture of the secular and the sacred, philosophy and religion, is also a feature of Chinese thought on whose wisdom, together with Hinduism, the East Asian cultures were founded (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:154).

In the case of the early Christian West, the situation in which philosophy evolved was completely different. Christian theologians inherited philosophy from the ancient Greeks. ‘They had therefore to adopt an attitude towards philosophy’ (Copleston 1974:25). From its inception, the Christian religion was subjected to ideas of which the origins were not in the religious texts. First, Christianity was harmonised with Platonism among heretic Gnostic sects (Jaki 1974:165) and then, during the Middle Ages, this was readjusted to harmonise with Aristotelianism (see section 3.3.1) and ‘in that problem of fitting the contents of Faith to the results of Reason was born the characteristic dualism of modern thought, between ... moral and religious truth, and ... scientific

knowledge' (Randall 1962:19).

A third distinctive feature of Western thought is the Judeo-Christian belief in an orderly, secular, and potentially knowable universe. The Christian West could study nature through empirical scientific means because the Bible 'insists that God is distinct from his creation' (Veith 1987:22). The ancient Greeks also believed in an orderly universe. Sir Francis Bacon (Jaki 1974:282) and, more recently, Hooykaas (1972:1ff) and Jaki (1974:102ff)<sup>1</sup> explain that it was the Biblical deification of nature which was not present in ancient Greek thought that prevented the emergence of empirical science in ancient Greece (see sections 2.3.1, 5.4.1). Other ancient, pagan cultures did not arrive at empirical science because they perceived the universe as one 'of chance and caprice'; 'a chaos of wild, uncontrollable, mysterious forces' (Stromberg 1966:9; see also Jaki 1974:49ff). The study of nature in these cultures was solely in terms of omens and portents (Veith 1987:108). The forces of nature could possibly 'be magically manipulated, but never understood' (Veith 1987:22).

Thus, the Bible supported and, in fact, smoothed the way for science as the study of the material world. Nevertheless, a dualism between faith and reason (see above) - revealed knowledge and natural knowledge - developed in the West. This dualism allowed Western thinkers to consider questions about God and human nature and to make religious and moral judgements from independent, autonomous vantage points. How this came about will be discussed in the sections to follow.

### **3.3 THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE NEW AGE MORAL STANCE: FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

#### **3.3.1 The division between natural and revealed knowledge**

With the early Christian writers, one finds a notion of philosophy as the instrument which prepared the minds of the Gentiles for the gospel of Christ. For these writers, philosophy was part of the working out of a Christian worldview. (Copleston 1974:25-26.) During the course of the Middle Ages, sustained attempts were made to synthesise and harmonise Platonic and

Aristotelian principles with Christian ecclesiastical teachings. Platonism tended to predominate until the middle of the thirteenth century when a change of emphasis occurred and Aristotelianism came to the fore notably in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (Burkill 1971:164).

Using Aristotelian concepts such as matter and form, actuality and potentiality, Aquinas divided the world and knowledge of the world into two levels - a 'lower' level of nature which is explored via the natural senses and the reasoning intellect, and a 'higher' level of grace which he regarded as the legitimate place for the revealed theology of the Bible. As partners and equals, Reason and Faith (philosophy and theology), each had its own place and its own authoritative base - Aristotle and the Church respectively (Stromberg 1966:7-8). It was thus here where in Western thought, the sharp distinction between a 'higher' spiritual world of religion and a 'lower' physical world of philosophy and science originated (Ouweneel 1978:38). The question of God's existence belonged to the 'lower' level of nature in the form of natural theology, while doctrinal teachings belonged to the 'higher' level of revelation:

The fact that God exists and similar truths about him that are knowable by strict reasoning are not articles of faith but preambles to them. Just as grace presupposes nature, and perfection presupposes the capacity for perfection, so faith presupposes natural knowledge (Aquinas in *Summa of Theologiae* in Clark (ed) 1972:118-119).

Theology, as the science of which God is the subject, argues from the divine knowledge of God contained in the Scriptures, whose main aspects are summarized under specific articles of faith (Aquinas in *Summa of Theologiae* in Clark (ed) 1972:409).

Aquinas gave five ways by means of which God's existence could be proved by using reasoned arguments.<sup>2</sup> Proving God's existence through reasoning became firmly established as part of philosophical thought and, according to Ouweneel (1978:38), it led to a concept of God that was far removed from the loving Father who is intimately involved with those who love and worship him. Such estrangement from Christianity's God of love was not Aquinas' intention. He was a

Christian theologian and his intention was not the development of a separate philosophical system as a worldview. He was carrying on a programme of faith seeking understanding of faith and of the working out of a Christian worldview, but using sources other than the Bible in the process. (Copleston 1974:27.) Though Aquinas believed that philosophy and not only faith could answer the question, 'Is God?', he did not think that philosophy could answer the question, 'What is God?': 'Certainly we cannot by any reasoning process come to the knowledge of *what* God is' (Aquinas in *Summa of Theologiae* in Clark (ed) 1972:117).

Philosophy's self-sufficiency was declared four centuries later when reason was enshrined and the paradigm of rational logic alone (that is, without Biblical revelations) steered philosophical inquiry. Thereby, Western understanding freed itself in all domains, metaphysical as well as natural, from the yoke of the Bible and faith therein. For the rational philosophers who believed that one could, through reasoned argument, *know* God, 'God came to be thought of rather as an abstract First Cause than as the personal, everpresent God of religion' (Willey in Baumer (ed) 1965:61).

Furthermore, as Ouweneel (1978:38-39) points out, when the question of God's existence becomes a matter of logical acumen, then counter-arguments will, sooner or later, be brought forward to deny His existence as was subsequently done in the eighteenth century by David Hume (1711-1776) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Hume became an atheist while Kant became a Deist (see section 3.3.2.4b) and relegated knowledge of God to the intellectually unknowable world of the *noumena*, a world that lies beyond the reach of reason (see section 3.3.2.4c).

Aquinas had liberated rational philosophy from the requirements of scriptural authority (Stromberg 1966:13) and when reason became supreme, but failed to conclusively prove that God existed, no reasons for accepting the Christian faith remained (Ouweneel 1978:38). The Western individual was set free to choose his own subjective metaphysical truth and lodestar by which to direct his life.

The division between natural and revealed knowledge was thus far-reaching. Loosened from the shackles of the Christian religion, Aquinas' 'nature and grace' motif was transformed into a

'nature and freedom' motif with science in the 'lower' realm of nature, and freedom and autonomy for the individual in the 'higher' realm of metaphysics and philosophy (Ouweneel 1978:39). With no infinite, transcendent, and personal 'God for man to look to for final reality, man becomes ultimate in the quest for meaning in life' (McRoberts 1989:25). Instead of transcending this attitude which arose with and during the era of modernity, New Age spirituality allows it to come to its full flowering. Every individual can become his own supreme and absolute God (see section 2.4.1.3) who, because he conceives of himself as God, can determine his own standards in life.

This stance originated in the seventeenth century when René Descartes' rational philosophy marked the beginning of the era of modernity during which the above mentioned process was set in motion.

### **3.3.2 The supremacy of reason and its effect on moral philosophy**

#### ***3.3.2.1 Descartes' rational philosophy***

The Frenchman René Descartes (1596-1650) was educated at the Jesuit College of La Fleché. He had little liking for any subject except mathematics which 'he studied with great assiduity and success' (Bowen [S a]:223). After Descartes had three mystical visions in November 1619 which left him with the impression that 'the Spirit of Truth had opened to him the treasures of all the sciences' (*Biographical note* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:ix), he dedicated his life to the construction of a rational, mathematical philosophy, the rules of which he believed should be the basis of all the sciences. Descartes believed that the Spirit of Truth had 'bade him trust his intuition that the world is fundamentally mathematical in structure, that the laws of mathematics are indeed the key to the mysteries of nature' (Randall 1962:374).

Because mystical visions form an integral part of New Age thought (see sections 2.2.2, 2.4.1), it is important to say something more about the mystical visions that Descartes experienced. These visions came to him while 'shut up alone in a stove-heated room where', he (in *Discourse on method* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:44) says, 'I had complete leisure to occupy myself with my own thoughts'. That he experienced a mystical, altered state of consciousness is clear from his

writings (in *Discourse on method* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:51): ‘I do not know that I ought to tell you of the first meditations there made by me, for they are so metaphysical and so unusual that they may perhaps not be acceptable to everyone.’ These visions directed Descartes’ life.

It can thus be said that the strictly rational, mathematical reasoning process which, since Descartes, has dominated Western thinking and eventually relegated religion to opinion and elevated science to the only source of objective truth (see section 3.3.4.3) originated in a mystical experience. It is, therefore, ironical that Descartes’ intuitive grasp of what he thought to be Truth is rejected by New Age thinkers who, in fact, also accentuate intuitive, mystical visions as the way to Truth (see section 2.2). This reveals a well-concealed but innate dogmatism in their thought, that is, that intuition is only correct when the ideas arrived at agree with and support the New Age worldview.

Inspired by his visions and searching to discover a true principle on which to base his philosophy, Descartes resolved to reject everything that could be doubted. The indubitable that he came up with was his famous *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am):

But immediately afterwards I noticed that whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the ‘I’ who thought this should be somewhat, and remarking that this truth ‘*I think, therefore I am*’ was so certain and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions brought forward by the sceptics were incapable of shaking it, I came to the conclusion that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the Philosophy for which I was seeking (Descartes in *Discourse on method* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:51).

Descartes’ *Cogito ergo sum* expressed an ‘inseparable connection between consciousness and existence’ (Snyder 1955:27), namely, that everything which the (rational) mind can conceive of as a clear and distinct idea really exists.

With regard to God’s existence, Descartes (in *Meditations* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:88) argued that since God, the perfect Being, is an innate idea, it can be concluded that He really exists: ‘And the

whole strength of the argument which I have here made use of to prove the existence of God consists in this, that I recognise that it is not possible ... that I should have in myself the idea of a God, if God did not veritably exist.' In other words, God, being perfect and 'veracious, guarantees the truth of our clear and distinct ideas' (Curley 1978:198). Furthermore, Descartes (in *Meditations* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:69) believed that 'all that which can be known of God may be made manifest by means which are not derived from anywhere but from ourselves, and from the simple consideration of the nature of our minds'.

On the basis of his highly questionable argument about God's existence, Descartes decided to trust also his senses and to affirm the existence of the physical world as external to and separate from the human mind (Adler 1990a:96). Descartes upheld, therefore, a psycho-physical dualism; that the mind is different and separate from the physical, human body.

Judovitz (1988:118) contends that Descartes'

definition of the *cogito* [the thinking mind] not only competes with the arguments [of Aquinas (see section 3.3.1)] for the proof of God, but also announces a new order ... This new order will free man from his obligation to the Divinity, and thus emancipating him for a new form of obligation - to himself as a rational being.

Thus, Descartes established 'the existence of the self as a first principle' (Curley 1978:193-194, see also 77-78). His *Cogito ergo sum* shifted the starting point and locus of philosophical thought (about God and about nature) away from reality and into the individual, human mind (Cubitt 1990:46). This made the human mind and its power to think and reason an infallible source of certain and indubitable knowledge.

Descartes, in other words, regarded the human mind as absolute. Heim (1953:20ff) says, however, that when any phenomenon, be it the human mind or one of a physical or socio-cultural nature, is posited as an absolute, it takes away from one's view of God a measure of God's sole absoluteness.

For Descartes, the self (the rational mind) was the absolute condition both for the discovery of knowledge and truth and for the conduct of life (Joachim 1979:19-20). Descartes believed in moral self-effort and self-control which fitted in with his affirmation of the superiority of reason over the will and the emotions (Collins 1967:55-56). Versfeld (Collins 1967:56 note 41) suggests, therefore, that the centre of gravity in Cartesian morality is in the individual's independence of mind. In morality, as in his approach to God's existence and natural knowledge, Descartes confidently believed in the mind's autonomous ability to arrive at truth and to direct one's life accordingly. By changing the locus of autonomous moral control from the ability to reason to the feelings and intuitions of the individual who recognises his inner divinity, it is posited by New Agers that the competitiveness, abuse, and violence of the modern era will be replaced with a new age of love, joy, peace, and harmony (Ferguson 1989:355ff).

The ground for the switch from subjective reason to subjective feelings and intuition was prepared by the Deists, in particular Kant, who also saw, like Descartes, no need whatsoever for philosophical dependence upon the Bible (see section 3.3.2.4). This set the stage for Existentialism (see section 3.3.4.2) and Positivism (see section 3.3.4.3), two widely different philosophical trends with, however, the common denominator of human autonomy in choosing or creating one's own personal religious and moral truth.

Cartesian rationalism also provided the intellectual framework for Baruch Spinoza. Spinoza is important in understanding the implications of New Age thought because the philosophy that he formulated was a form of rational monism or pantheism. The critique that philosophers have directed towards Spinoza's system is, therefore, also applicable to the pantheism of the New Age worldview (see sections 2.2.1, 4.4.2.2, 4.4.2.3).

### ***3.3.2.2 Spinoza's rational pantheism***

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), who later changed his first name to Benedict, was of Jewish descent, but his pantheistic philosophy resulted in his expulsion from the synagogue in 1656. Spinoza's endeavour to present pantheism (a phrase coined by the eighteenth century English Deist, John Toland (Brown 1990:185; Burkill 1971:310)) as a reasonable, scientific philosophy

is comparable to Capra's (1975:passim, 1990:passim) endeavour to present his organic, holistic, and ultimately pantheistic worldview as scientifically grounded. Spinoza's philosophy rested on Cartesian logic while Capra and other New Agers support their ideas with metaphysical extrapolations made from the discoveries in the new physics (see section 5.3).

Setting out his philosophy in the form of a mathematical system with definitions, axioms, and propositions with proofs and corollaries, Spinoza (in *Ethics* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:355ff) 'proved' that God exists as an all-embracing Substance and that thought and physical matter are attributes of God. God, therefore, exists in all things and all things can only exist in God the One, the monistic, infinite, and rationally intelligible ground of all being.

Spinoza erected his pantheistic conclusions on the definition that he *arbitrarily* gave to the idea of 'substance':

By substance, I understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself, in other words, that, the conception of which does not need the conception of another thing from which it must be formed (Spinoza in *Ethics* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:355).

Since God is the only true Substance - only God can be conceived of as existing in himself and through himself - Spinoza (in *Ethics* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:359) argued that: 'Besides God, no substance can be nor can be conceived.' From this, he (in *Ethics* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:360) deduced that all material, corporeal substances exist in God and have no existence outside of God.

Bowen ([S a]:62-63) questions the validity of the conclusions that Spinoza draws from his definition of substance. Spinoza, says Bowen, has a right to consider God as the *only true* Substance in the highest, that is, in the ideal sense of the term. But, Bowen ([S a]:63) maintains, Spinoza should be consistent and employ his definition only when referring to God and not when referring to the world of physical things, and then to 'take for granted that he has proved human beings and other finite existences not to be Substance *in any sense, i.e.*, not to be realities, because he has shown that they are not Substance in his sense'. One cannot draw conclusions

from hypothetical assumptions and then claim that they are universally valid. This is what Spinoza did. Within the parameters of his definition of substance, Spinoza was logically obliged to deduce either that physical substances are a part of God, the only true Substance, or that they are nonentities. If not accepted as divine, physical reality in Spinoza's system would collapse into nothingness.

New Age thinkers commit the same type of logical error that Bowen identified in Spinoza's system. But whereas Spinoza came to his pantheistic worldview by deductive reasoning, New Age thinkers from the outset *subjectively* define God as pantheistically intertwined in nature and in human consciousness. The New Age thinker Ken Wilber (1981:4) defines God as follows:

[I]t is true that there is some sort of Infinite, some type of Absolute Godhead, but it cannot properly be conceived as a colossal Being, a great Daddy, or a big Creator set apart from its creations, from things and events and human beings themselves. Rather, it is best conceived (metaphorically) as the ground or suchness or condition of all things and events. It is not a Big Thing set apart from finite things, but rather the reality or suchness or ground of all things.

Ferguson's (1989:420) definition of God also confirms the basic and subjectively assumed premise of pantheism in the New Age worldview:

God is experienced as flow, wholeness, the infinite kaleidoscope of life and death, Ultimate Cause, the ground of being ... God is the consciousness that manifests as *lila*, the play of the universe. God is the organising matrix we can experience but not tell, that which enlivens matter.

In New Age thought God and nature are one. God is the divine potential of which nature is the vessel. Humanity as part of nature is, therefore, divine. Since the reality of life's tragedies and human perversity, imperfection, and sometimes nothing less than evil has no place in the goodness that being divine implies, the reality of these very real factors in life is ascribed to the isolation of 'heart and mind' (Ferguson 1989:83). The unbalanced development of the rational and analytical

modes of thought neglects the emotions and intuitive feelings and 'costs us our health and our capacity for intimacy' (Ferguson 1989:83).

This is in itself illogical. Rational and analytical thinking is an objective fact, an essential part of human nature and there can, therefore, be no reason for excluding it from the divinity of human nature.

The source of evil is not the only problem in pantheism. Referring to Spinoza's scheme, Brown (1990:188) draws our attention to the problem of evil as well as to the problems of free will and knowledge. Brown's arguments are best given in his own words:

If all reality is the manifestation of God, then evil must also be a manifestation of God. This applies to both physical evils like natural disasters and moral evils running the whole range of evil from petty theft to genocide. Good and evil are alike expressions of the divine nature. The idea of free will is likewise illusory, for in a pantheistic system all human actions are ultimately divine actions. No room is left for human autonomy of any kind. Nor is any place left for human autonomy in the process of acquiring knowledge, for the human mind is part of the Divine Mind which thinks its thoughts through human minds. This conclusion would seem to be required in pantheism, despite the apparent absurdity of different human minds thinking contradictory thoughts on the same subject and attributing the whole process to the Divine Mind thinking out its ideas through them.

The loss of free will and the resultant determinism was not problematic for Spinoza. He realised that the notion of free will is ultimately not compatible with pantheism. Determinism was his central insight and he (in *Ethics* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:366, 367, 391) believed that it resolved the problem of evil. According to Spinoza, everything is to be accepted 'as inevitable and just, however apparently evil ... What we call evil is only something the ultimate purpose of which in the cosmic scheme of things we cannot see' (Stromberg 1966:51). This same attitude of detached fatalism is displayed by New Agers in their acceptance of the law of Karma (see section 2.3.3.2d).

But New Agers are part of contemporary society where the drive is to personal empowerment. To transcend the loss of free will that is actually inherent in their worldview, some New Agers regard tragedies as learning experiences that the individual, perhaps unconsciously, but nevertheless freely chooses to undergo. The New Ager David Spangler (1984:158) realises that something is wrong in such an attitude and he warns:

For the New Age to prosper, it needs people willing to accept the reality of their creaturehood, the value of certain kinds of limits, ... it requires people who with loving and vigorous minds and hearts can exercise a rigorous and loving discrimination, who can call a fault a fault and a mistake a mistake, not just a 'learning experience' ... it needs people who can see and speak clearly, who can look evil in the eye and call it by its name.

While fully agreeing with Spangler, one does, however, wonder whether the 'reality of creaturehood' is really reconcilable with the implications of being God or even just a part of God. A discerning but loving heart and mind depend on the development, already in childhood, of a humble, contrite conscience which in turn depends on the acknowledgement of one's own permanently imperfect human nature with its own innate inclination to do wrong. The very idea of human divinity, which Spangler (1976:passim) himself propagates, could jettison his worthy ideals.

The reality of evil is intimately related to the problems of erroneous knowledge and misguided judgements about good and bad. Spinoza (in *Ethics* in Hutchins (ed) 1952:396, 398) solved these problems by tracing them to the (nondivine) passions or emotions which can deceive the mind. Stromberg (1966:51) makes an apt remark: 'It is not clear why, in Spinoza's necessary world [of divine immanence], the emotions are an exception.'

In the New Age worldview the divine essence and the path to the cosmic deity are located in mystical, intuitive feelings and emotions (see section 2.2), and purely rational and analytic thought is, therefore, excluded from divine immanence. No reasons are, however, given why rational thought is not blessed with divinity.

In these two systems of pantheism, Spinoza's and that of the New Age, one finds, therefore, a direct and irreconcilable contradiction in the locus of the divine quiddity. And within the parameters of pantheism itself, neither position can be justified. Partial divinity in itself contradicts and negates true divinity.

There is, furthermore, another problem with pantheism that Bowen ([S a]:67) identifies. According to Bowen, the ultimate result of pantheism is always nihilism. By resolving the universe into and as the deity, it annihilates the objective reality and separate existence of the universe. By resolving God into the universe, it can also annihilate the deity, the result of which is atheism and materialism. In other words, the New Age worldview carries in itself the seeds of atheism and secular materialism and could, therefore, reinforce the West's pervading malaise of meaninglessness that Raschke, Kirk and Taylor (1977:186) ascribe to the nihilistic denial of God in Western culture (see section 6.3.3).

New Agers believe unconditionally that when God, humanity, and nature coincide, the moral conduct of every individual will generate a meaningful social pattern of harmonious co-existence. Yet, in contrast with this optimistic view, Raschke, Kirk and Taylor (1977:7) contend that the will of God can only address and 'have a binding influence on mortal wills so long as it appears to be *more than* human'.

Whereas the New Age spiritual alternative attracts many people, Spinoza found few followers in his own day. His influence (as a propensity for pantheism) can, however, be seen in the late eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries among the Romantics and the German Idealists, for example, Coleridge, Schleiermacher, Goethe, and Hegel (Brown 1990:188; Snyder 1955:34). The primary interest of Western intellectuals in the late seventeenth century was in Newton's mechanistic worldview that rested on empirical science and inductive reasoning and not on the purely abstract, deductive reasoning that Spinoza employed. Newton's theory, which will be briefly discussed in the next section, turned the interest of the rational philosophers to Deism rather than to pantheism. The reason for including Newton's theory, albeit very briefly, is that it provided the necessary framework for the emergence of secularism and metaphysical naturalism in the West. To transcend the West's secularism, the pantheism of the New Age worldview

transforms the West's materialistic naturalism into spiritual naturalism (see section 5.2.1).

### ***3.3.2.3 Newton's clockwork universe***

The heliocentric theories of Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), and the empirical scientific method of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) found expression in the work of Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). In Newton's *Philosophia Naturalis Principia Mathematica* published in 1687, the Copernican Revolution issued into the concept of a vast cosmic mechanism of infinite and absolute space and time, and the activities of which obey universal laws capable of mathematical expression. To this mechanistic universe, God the Creator, the First Cause, stood in an external, transcendent relationship (Burkill 1971:294).

Newton's God was both Creator, Conserver, and Sustainer (Randall 1962:593), but with the advances made in scientific knowledge, there was soon no need for God as Conserver and Sustainer. The perfect world-machine could run by itself and God could be retired to his heavenly abode (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:190).

Newton's view of the universe as a vast and finely tuned machine that runs according to universal laws discoverable through rational inquiry took Britain and Western Europe into the period of Western history known as the Enlightenment. It was during this period that Western intellectual thought finally declared its own mental autonomy and, in the quest for truth, shook off the last shackles of subjection to Biblical revelation.

### ***3.3.2.4 The Enlightenment and human autonomy***

#### ***a) The character of the Enlightenment***

The Enlightenment's decisive character was defined in 1784 by Kant (Brown 1990:285-286; Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:187; Snyder 1955:14) as follows:

Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is the tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* [Dare to know!] 'Have courage to use your own reason!' - that is the motto of enlightenment.

Kant's definition reveals the characteristic strains which can be observed in the pattern of the Enlightenment. First and foremost was the Enlightenment's faith in Reason. Under the name of free, rational thought, the Enlightenment philosophers (for example, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Voltaire (1694-1778)) preached an optimistic and self-confident doctrine of humanity's coming of age. Both thinking and action could be made independent of external authority if humans were to use their rational intellect to discover the universal laws not only of nature but also of religion and morality.

In accordance with their veneration of political and religious freedom, the Enlightenment philosophers sought a universal, natural religion and universal principles of morality proper to all humankind (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:189-190). Typical of the spirit of Enlightenment was, therefore, the secularisation of moral thought and a 'scepticism that probed old myths and took nothing on faith' (Stromberg 1966:115). Gone was the Medieval and Reformation image of humans as fallen and corrupt sinners. Humanity's problem, the rational Enlightenment philosophers said, was not sin but ignorance. 'And ignorance, unlike sinfulness, can be overcome by man's own efforts' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:187). By upholding humans as beings of untainted goodness, the Enlightenment philosophers released Western humanity from the concept of divine grace. The enlightened person, they said, was morally autonomous; 'a law (*nomos*) to himself (*autos*)' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:187) and could, therefore, 'guide humanity along the road that leads to happiness and fulfillment' (Burkill 1971:328). Thus arose in the West, 'a hopeful belief in the steady improvement and ultimate [earthly] perfection of mankind' (Snyder 1955:14).

Because the above premises of the Enlightenment project, namely the enlightened human mind, moral autonomy, and progressive advancement to a state of earthly perfectibility, live on in New Age thought, a closer look at these premises needs to be taken. This task will be undertaken in the next section.

b) *Deism - the religion of reason*

Deism is 'the position that reason alone, without revelation, is sufficient to bring us to a right understanding of religion and morality' (Stromberg 1966:116). The Deists rejected the unique incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and advocated a natural religion of reason; a primordial and universal religion that underlies all religions and that can be discovered by the unaided exercise of reason (Burkill 1971:304; Stromberg 1966:120).

The father of Deism was Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648). Among the other English Deists were William Tindal (1655-1733), John Toland (1670-1722), Anthony Collins (1676-1729), and Thomas Chubb (1697-1747). Propagandists of Deism in France were, among others, Francois-Marie Arouet who is better known as Voltaire, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). In Germany, Deist tenets were supported by Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768), Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781), and Immanuel Kant. Among the American Deists were Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), Thomas Paine (1737-1809), and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826).

The god of the Deists was an abstract, remote, and impersonal being, the maker of the cosmic machine who did not interfere in the affairs of the world, but asked only human perfection and happiness (Snyder 1955:36). Religion was, therefore, purely utilitarian; the agency through which morality was promoted (Burkill 1971:306; Snyder 1955:36; Stromberg 1966:114).

Together with their obsession with reason, the Deists glorified human freedom. Nothing should be accepted on its own authority and 'if the Bible claimed to be the revealed word of God it would have to prove itself' (Stromberg 1966:113). They saw no need for the Bible and its 'mysterious and incomprehensible body of revelation' (Snyder 1955:36). God, they said, would not reveal anything that was not clear-cut and logical and, instead of accepting limitations on

human powers of reason, the Deists rejected rationally inexplicable issues in the Bible and accepted only its moral and ethical teachings (Snyder 1955:36). Averse to the doctrine of original sin (Burkill 1971:304), the Deists maintained that moral rules were rooted in nature and could be discovered and followed without the difficulties that the supranatural issues in the Bible imposed on the rational mind (Stromberg 1966:117).

The philosopher John Randall (1962:702) says, however, that the consequence of Deist logic, which regards God as an unconcerned Creator, is that the concept of God loses all moral qualities. Moral laws are then sought in nature, but 'nature has nothing to do with human standards of right or wrong' (Randall 1962:702). Nature cannot explain why its rational order should imply a moral order for humans nor can it give an answer to the perennial problem of evil (Randall 1962:701). The result was that after the first quarter of the eighteenth century, criticism was directed against the reasoning that supported Deism and its idea of a universal, natural religion discoverable through reason. Two groups undertook this task, firstly, the Christian traditionalists, for example, Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752), and secondly, the sceptics and materialists, for example, David Hume (Stromberg 1966:118).

In defending Christianity by questioning the natural religion of Deism, the Christian traditionalists, however, followed a course that completely denied reason a place in religion. Both orthodox Christianity and the Deists' natural religion, they claimed, were equally irrational. Though their (irrational) defense of the Christian religion became a part of Christian apologetics, it did not place the Christian religion on a firmer and more enduring foundation. By making all religious truths irrational and incomprehensible to reason, their defense led many to scepticism and the rejection of both orthodox Christianity and Deism. (Randall 1962:702-703; Snyder 1955:40-41.)

For the eighteenth century thinkers, who were predominantly rationalists, the choice was to 'decide between abandoning religion or abandoning reason ... [and many] naturally chose rather to abandon religion' (Randall 1962:703). Among those who were led to oppose religion per se were David Hume and the avowed materialist Baron Paul d'Holbach (1723-1789). Others such as Immanuel Kant did not deny religion. Though Kant supported the Deist tenet of a religion unsupported by Biblical revelation (Snyder 1955:39), he rejected a theology based on reason

(Snyder 1955:44) and laid thereby the foundation for the various attempts made in the nineteenth century Romantic movement to place religion solely on the basis of feelings and intuitions (Randall 1962:704; Snyder 1955:39).

The prominence that the Deists had assigned to the place of reason in religion did, therefore, not endure in Western philosophical thought. What did endure, however, were the following generally accepted repercussions of Deism:

The idea that God is essentially unknowable and, therefore, cannot be comprehended nor come into intimacy with and through the human mind (see next section). Henceforth religion was either abandoned (see section 3.3.4.3) or regarded as beyond reason, belonging exclusively to the domain of the irrational (see sections 3.3.4.1, 3.3.4.2).

The attack on the supranatural problematics of the Bible in which everything in the Bible that 'does not fit our understanding ... [is] discarded as myth, falsehood or pious fabrication' (Brown 1990:213).

From the above, it is clear that Deism marked the final dissolution of the alliance that had existed in the West between reason and Biblical revelation. In the line of argument that Aquinas had taken, namely to prove rationally the existence of God and to thereby present a rational defense of Christianity, the Bible had the upper hand in answering the question of what God is (see section 3.3.1). However, in Deism, reason was absolute and anything supranatural and rationally problematic was rejected.

As New Age thinkers recognise, the enshrinement of reason did lead to the secular eclipse of God and spiritual reality. But it also led to the relegation of the religious and the spiritual to the irrational domain of feelings and intuitions, and to the idea of the free moral agent who on attaining enlightenment can successfully act as arbiter of moral truth. These are the cornerstones of New Age spirituality (see section 2.2) and the New Age moral stance (see sections 3.3.2.4c, 3.4.2).

It was, furthermore, the rational but sceptical Enlightenment philosopher David Hume who argued (as New Age thinkers do (see section 3.4.2)) that morality is not the work of reason and

concluded therefrom that it must be the work of the emotions or feelings without adducing any positive arguments for this position (MacIntyre 1981:47).

Another Enlightenment philosopher and a Deist who rejected the rôle of reason in morality was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a man who 'revelled in the ecstasies of emotion and brooded incessantly over his own inner reactions to outer events' (Burkill 1971:332). Like Maslow (see section 4.3.1.2a), Rogers (see section 4.3.1.3), and the New Ager George Leonard (1981:passim), Rousseau held the development of civilisation responsible for humanity's moral degeneration. Rousseau also typifies New Age thought in his exaltation of feeling above the intellect and in his dreams of 'a golden age of unspoiled innocence in the distant past, when primitive man lived joyously in the freedom of his immediate instinctive responses' (Burkill 1971:333). As a romantic rather than a rational Deist, Rousseau supported a Deist god that is discovered in and through nature. His natural religion and morality were grounded in humanity's unspoiled nature to which it could return 'by repudiating intellectualism and returning to the pristine freshness of instinctive living' (Burkill 1971:333).

Stromberg (1966:137) notes a contradiction in Rousseau's reasoning, namely that 'Rousseau says that man is naturally [that is, by nature] good, yet lost his primal virtue because - he is bad! Or at least some men are, and the rest evidently cannot resist them'. Stromberg (1966:138) wonders, therefore, if the primal state of nature has any meaning other than simply as a figure of speech. The following contradictions in Rousseau's philosophy that Stromberg (1966:144) points out, also appear as unexplained and unresolved elements in the New Age worldview. They are:

Humans are born free and good, but enslave themselves in corrupt societies (see sections 4.3.1.2a, 4.3.1.3).

Humans are naturally good, yet at the same time naturally corrupt since purely rational thinking (which is natural in humans) is allegedly corrupt (see section 3.3.2.2).

Humans must have religion (spirituality), but as autonomous beings should not be subservient to the moral authority of God (see sections 3.3.2.4c, 3.4.2).

History is a record of horrors, but may end in utopia (Leonard 1981:passim).

The scepticism of Hume and the romantic apostasy of Rousseau did much to unravel the confident

rationalism of the Enlightenment, but it was the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant that finally undermined the competence of reason to construct metaphysical systems that effectively explained all the features of reality that are beyond sense experience. This will be explored in the next section.

c) *Kant and morality as a categorical imperative*

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was born and died at Königsberg, the capital city of East Prussia. Apart from a period of seven years as a private tutor, Kant spent the rest of his highly regulated life in Königsberg, lecturing at its university until 1796. Kant's critical philosophy examined the scope and limitations of human reason and to do this, he distinguished between two uses of reason. The first he called theoretical or speculative use of reason through which scientific knowledge is obtained, and the second he called practical use of reason, namely its employment in obtaining moral knowledge. This is explained below, by first elucidating what is meant by theoretical (speculative) reason since an understanding thereof is necessary to understand what is meant by practical reason and why Kant set the two apart.

With regard to the theoretical (speculative) use of reason, Kant (in *Critique of practical reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:361) says it is 'concerned with objects of the cognitive faculty only'. It belongs, therefore, only to the world of appearances, the *phenomenal* world, by which Kant means the physical world which we perceive through the senses. When any attempt is made to extend reason beyond the physical world of sense experience to the *noumenal*, metaphysical world of God, Freedom, and Immortality (Kant in *Critique of pure reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:46), reason passes its own limits and is 'lost among unattainable objects, or even contradictory notions' (Kant in *Critique of practical reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:361).

Science deals with the phenomenal world. Its knowledge is, however, not knowledge of reality as it is, but merely impressions, that is, reality as it appears to the perceiving mind. Impressions depend on both sense experience and the *a priori* conceptual forms which exist in the mind absolutely independent of all experience (Kant in *Critique of pure reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:43-44). In effect, Kant's *a priori* concepts seem to be similar to Descartes' innate ideas (see section

## 3.3.2.1).

Kant questioned the Aristotelian view that most philosophers had held, namely that the objects perceived were the fundamental realities, the *Ding-an-sich* (Liddell 1970:4). He maintained that one does not experience reality as it is. The phenomenon that one perceives is a representation and it depends on the experiencing subject and his own subjective, a priori qualification. In Kant's words (in *Critique of pure reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:191), 'the sphere of phenomena, is so limited by the understanding itself that it should not refer to things by themselves, but only to the mode in which things appear to us, in accordance with our own subjective qualification'. The object in itself is unknowable: 'What the objects are by themselves would never become known to us, even through the clearest knowledge of that which alone is given us, the phenomenon' (Kant in *Critique of pure reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:74).

Kant was, therefore, sceptical about the possibility of knowing material objects as they are, and he was even more sceptical about attaining knowledge of the nonmaterial domain of the noumena. These, he thought, can never be known since they lie beyond the categories or laws of thought:

If, therefore, we attempted to apply the categories to objects which are not considered as phenomena, we shall have to admit an intuition other than the sensuous ... As, however, such an intuition, namely, an intellectual one, is entirely beyond our faculty of knowledge, the use of the categories also can never reach beyond the limits of the objects of experience (Kant in *Critique of pure reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:193).

In other words, Kant regarded the nonmaterial, noumenal realm as beyond the reach of the mind (the senses and reason). As a supporter of Deist tenets (see section 3.3.2.4b), Kant never refers to the idea of Biblical, divinely revealed knowledge.

Kant proclaimed, therefore, that it is impossible to know anything beyond sense experience and even then things can only be known as they appear to the mind. Thus, knowledge of a natural moral standard or law is possible only 'in so far as it appears to have value' (Liddell 1970:5). But

to avoid purely subjective and arbitrary moral behaviour, Kant still appealed to reason as the guide of moral action (Liddell 1970:5). Such a use of reason, as pointed out in a previous paragraph, he set apart from theoretical reason and called it practical reason which 'is concerned with the grounds of determination of the will' (Kant in *Critique of practical reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:361). Practical reasoning in Kantian terms refers, therefore, to moral reasoning; the rational faculty whereby one determines what one ought to do.

For Kant, ethics was a moral science in which moral laws 'according to which everything ought to happen' are discovered through (practical) reason (Kant in *Fundamental principles of the metaphysics of morals* in Zweig (ed) 1970:295). The rational discovery of the supreme principle of morality was the motivation and theme of his book *Fundamental principles*: 'The present treatise is, however, nothing more than the investigation and establishment of *the supreme principle of morality*' (Kant in *Fundamental principles* in Zweig (ed) 1970:299). Kant (in *Fundamental principles* in Zweig (ed) 1970:324) formulated the 'supreme' moral law, the categorical imperative, in two ways:

Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

Act as if the maxim of thy action were to be by thy will a universal law of nature.

MacIntyre (1981:44) contends that a significant weakness in Kant's imperative is that one can as easily as moral maxims, also vindicate immoral and trivial, nonmoral maxims as universal laws.<sup>3</sup> Brown (1990:325) as well as MacIntyre (1981:45) identify as another weakness, the fact that the imperative (moral maxim) gives no reason why one should act as it demands due to its lack of appeal to a transcendent, absolute authority. Without a good reason for holding the imperative, the individual, as the free agent that Kant proclaims him to be, can 'without any inconsistency whatsoever flout it' (MacIntyre 1981:45).

Brown (1990:325) also says that Kant makes the imperative appear as 'the result of the

individual's resolve to act in accordance with a principle that the individual has evolved', but then the imperative is the subjective 'outcome of a value judgment on the part of the individual who has decided that acting in this way is a good thing'. If the imperative is, however, not a subjective decision, but a moral law that ought to be followed, then it is 'the expression of the recognition of a moral obligation which comes from outside us' (Brown 1990:326). As such, it refutes the notion of humans as autonomous, self-legislating moral agents.

In New Age thought one also finds this type of internal inconsistency between, on the one hand, an autonomous and free moral agent who can determine his own moral stance (see section 3.4.2), and on the other hand, universally accepted moral values of love, joy, peace, and harmony (see section 3.4.1) that ought to rule each individual's life if the aim of selfless, interdependent co-existence is to be realised.

Furthermore, the Neopagan (see section 2.6 notes 2, 3) attempt to found morality on the maxim 'An' ye harm none, do what ye will' (Adler 81:99; 137-138; Storm 1991:41; Warren-Clarke 1987:135) and Ferguson's (1989:104) maxim of linking 'with others as if they are oneself' whilst antinomically proclaiming that the self is 'fiercely autonomous' fail, as does Kant's categorical imperative, 'to cater for all contingencies' (Brown 1990:324). For example, '[b]oth supporters and opponents of abortion and euthanasia could justifiably appeal to Kant's [and Neopagan and Ferguson's] principles to legitimize their case. For both could claim that what they deem proper for themselves would be proper for others' (Brown 1990:324). What is missing in Kant's system, says Brown (1990:326), is the higher obligation to God which 'is true not only of Christianity but of other religions'. This sense of obligation to God, a God who is distinct from the individual, is also missing in the New Age moral stance (see section 3.4.2).

Kant did not rule God out, but by making ethical behaviour an autonomous activity of human beings who have been freed from their 'self-incurred tutelage', he made religious faith 'a corollary of moral activity' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:206). Kant insisted that humans need to believe in the existence of a god, yet the function of his (unknowable) Deist god was to apportion 'happiness to virtue, if not in this life, then in the next' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:206).

According to Kant, moral ideals and the categorical imperative are innate ideas in the mind situated a priori in reason; 'it is clear that all moral conceptions have their seat and origin completely *a priori* in the reason' (Kant in *Fundamental principles* in Zweig (ed) 1970:315); and 'this categorical imperative or law of morality ... is an *a priori* synthetical<sup>4</sup> practical proposition' (Kant in *Fundamental principles* in Zweig (ed) 1970:323). The individual who has come of age does not, therefore, strive towards duty and virtue because of his love for a personal and redeeming God which implies subservience. He recognises what his duty is solely through his reverence for the innate, a priori moral law:

So far as morality is based upon the conception of man as a free agent who, just because he is free, binds himself through his reason to unconditioned laws, it stands in need neither of the idea of another Being over him, for him to apprehend his duty, nor of an incentive other than the law itself, for him to do his duty (Kant in *Religion within the limits of reason alone* quoted in Brown 1990:323).

By excluding reason from religion, Kant actually wanted to make room for faith (Brandt 1968:44; Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:204; Stromberg 1966:201), but, by severing the connection between morality and an outer authority be it religion, custom, or social pressures, Kant made room for the secular theory of personal ethics that 'has been absorbed in the bloodstream of modern humanism' (Brown 1990:323).

New Age spirituality aspires to eliminate secularism and to overcome the historical forces that generated secularism in the West (see section 2.2.1). Yet the idea of a 'fiercely autonomous' self (Ferguson 1989:104) is retained. Capra (1990:88) identifies the superior rôle assigned to the rational mind and a transcendent God outside of the cosmos (labelled as the Judeo-Christian God, but actually descriptive of the Deist god) as the cause of the widespread egocentric competitiveness of the modern world. The New Age spiritual alternative is propagated as the appropriate transfigurative force (see sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1). Nevertheless, by simply replacing reason with intuition and adding the concept of a god within, it takes Kant's human image further and elevates the individual to the level of being his own supreme god (see section 2.4.1.3). The highest and

ultimate obligation that the New Age god can command remains, therefore, to the self. This obligation, as history has shown, tends to invoke rather than revoke immoral, egotistic individualism. If the young and inexperienced are brought to believe that the self 'possesses all wisdom, all truth, all innocence, and all power' (Goodman 1988:91), then the New Age moral maxims (given earlier in this section) which define one's duties towards others in terms of oneself and yet fail to command a higher duty over and above that to oneself could quite conceivably collapse into the immoral, dogmatic, and narcissistic attitude that vindicates the individual's own values as universal laws and which he hence deems as desirable and correct for all (see sections 6.2.2.1, 6.3.2.2, 6.3.3.2).

Kant's moral philosophy gave one occasion to discuss the ways in which the New Age human image corresponds to and takes the image of human autonomy that evolved during the Enlightenment to its very limits. Kant's efforts to found on innate, a priori reason, a moral law that is universal and unconditional yet, at the same time, self-imposed and independent from outer authority, freed the individual from external rules, conventions, and restraints. Kant did not intend to shake human confidence in the objective validity of his categorical imperative, but both in his moral philosophy and in his epistemology, Kant brought subjectivity into the picture.

Before discussing the continued appearance of subjectivism in its variety of philosophical guises, it is necessary to first describe how moral truth lost its claim to objectivity and allowed moral subjectivism, where what *is* right is equated with what is *thought* to be right, to become embodied as truth in Western thought. It is contended in this thesis that it is this historically acquired aspect of Western thought that the New Age worldview neither confronts nor transcends.

### **3.3.3 The transition from objective to subjective moral truth**

All the arguments in this section are indebted to the philosopher, Alisdair MacIntyre (1981:50ff).

MacIntyre points out that prior to the Enlightenment, the basic structure of the West's moral scheme was in accordance with Aristotle's analysis in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle's ethical system was essentially a teleological scheme with a fundamental contrast between the human as

he naturally is and the human as he should be if he realised his *telos* or true end. Within Aristotle's scheme, ethics as a rational science instructed humans both as to their *telos* and as to how to attain it. In other words, ethics described what ought to be and prescribed the moral precepts or virtues which enabled the individual to pass from the first state to the second.

Aristotle's scheme was added to although the structure was not altered by Aquinas (see section 3.3.1) who placed it within the framework of Christian theistic beliefs. Within the theistic framework, Aquinas replaced Aristotle's concept of moral ignorance with the concept of sin and the ethical precepts were conceived of as the expressions of the divinely ordered Law.

Within this scheme, both in its original Aristotelian, secular form and in its orthodox Christian form, the human *telos* (end or purpose) was defined as being, respectively, an objective common good binding on all persons and to live life in accordance with Christ's universal injunctions - love and respect for God and others. The *telos* was, therefore, regarded as knowable and of objective and universal validity. This allowed moral injunctions and judgements to be treated as factual statements which expressed and evaluated the type of conduct teleologically appropriate or inappropriate for all human beings. The correctness of various moral injunctions could, therefore, be debated in terms of the objective *telos*. What distinguishes Kant's secular moral stance from that of Aristotle is that Kant regarded the noumenal realm and thus also the teleological realm as unknowable. Aristotle, although he posited a secular moral stance, nevertheless, regarded the teleological realm (the common good) as knowable and as transcendent to individual desires.

Abandoning, at one and the same time, the knowability of the teleological realm (which Descartes had not done (see section 3.3.2.1)) and the orthodox Christian view of moral precepts as divinely ordained laws left Kant and those that were to follow with moral precepts that had lost their objective meaning and status. This meant that no reasons could be given why moral precepts, including Kant's categorical imperative, should be followed and not flouted by the autonomously free moral agent as the individual was henceforth conceived to be. There was no objective way of determining the truth or falsity of moral judgements.

From MacIntyre's arguments (given above), it becomes clear that in terms of morality, by the end

of the eighteenth century, the transition into modernity became a transition into the subjective determination of moral 'truth', whether of a religious or of a secular nature.

Subjectivism which replaced objective reasoning and Biblical authority in the noumenal, teleological realm with a route of subjective defense was expressed in *Romanticism* (Stromberg 1966:206) which linked subjectivism with mysticism, and in *Existentialism* (Liddel 1970:5) which sees the basis of religions and/or moral values as one's own personal 'truth' in subjective choice. Kant's limits on what he thought can be known also led the *Positivists* to urge that God and religious truth cannot be known (Stromberg 1966:202) and, therefore, that only the application of the experimental, scientific method 'purified of all metaphysical obscurantism will assure "the progress of humanity"' (Burkill 1971:378).

Of the above three philosophical movements, this thesis will first consider Romanticism which in its rejection of rationalism in favour of mystical intuitionism foreshadowed the New Age worldview.

### 3.3.4 The supremacy of subjectivism in the Western moral stance

#### 3.3.4.1 *Romanticism*

The era of Romanticism, which roughly stretched from 1780-1840, developed Kantian noumenalism (see section 3.3.2.4c) in a mystical direction which stressed the rôles of the imagination and the emotions in reaching the infinite world of the spirit. In its ethos, Romanticism anticipated the basic mystical concern of New Age spirituality (see section 2.2). The Romantics, who included philosophers or Idealist metaphysicians such as Fichte (1762-1814), Schelling (1775-1854), and Schleiermacher (1768-1834), and poets such as Goethe (1749-1827), Novalis (Herdenberg) (1772-1801), Blake (1757-1827), and Coleridge (1772-1834), revolted against the rationalism, empiricism, and mechanism of the Newtonian worldview. They were in favour of an organic worldview, of a spiritually alive nature, and the intuitive 'eliciting of truth at a flash' (Stromberg, 1966:211).

The late eighteenth century had brought the French Revolution to Europe and in that strife-torn age the Romantics yearned for healing, a 'mental healing in the bower of "nature" to which the refugee from history could flee' (Raschke 1980:53). Inspired by a 'pantheistic sense of spirit in nature' (Stromberg 1966:213) and the idea that 'nature is an organism in which consciousness is implicit' (Brandt 1968:64), the Romantics believed that humans can commune with nature, feel its basic kinship to the human soul (Stromberg 1966:214), and gain access to the mysteries of nature through the gnostical, mystical, and unbridled use of the imagination (Raschke 1980:53). There was thus among the Romantics a renewed interest in mystical, occult magic that the rationalism of the Enlightenment had largely countered (Ouweneel 1978:43-44). Mesmer's theory (see section 2.3.3.1b) too did not go unnoticed by the Romantics. The poet Novalis, for example, related the hypnotic trance state to 'intellectual intuition' and 'decided that philosophy could not get on without mystical ecstasy, in which the secrets of nature are laid bare' (Brandt 1968:64; cf also Raschke 1980:72).

With regard to morality, the Romantic position was that '[r]ight conduct was not an ideal realizable only by the assistance of God, but was viewed as the free expression of the spiritual nature of man' (Brandt 1968:61). The free activity of the individual was reflected in the Romantics' scorn of conformity and authority (Raschke 1980:74ff). The ideal was establishing differentness and idiosyncrasy; 'the value of diversity in human opinions, characters, tastes, arts and cultures' (Lovejoy in Baumer (ed) 1965:100). This ideal reached its apex in the Romantic conception of the free, creative genius who, bound by no rules, creates his own rules (Stromberg 1966:218).

Both Copleston (1975:6) and Stromberg (1966:218) recognise, therefore, in Romanticism a strong element of subjectivism. Stromberg (1966:218) continues that it is precisely in its subjectivism that Romanticism 'left its stamp on the contemporary Western world ... [where] subjectivism is the leading theme'.

Romanticism was a symptom of the change that had come over Western metaphysical thought at the end of the Enlightenment when the overly rationalism of the Age of Reason was displaced by metaphysical thought that denied reason any place and stressed instead the rôle of subjective

feelings. This attitude has crystallised itself fully in contemporary and New Age moral discourse (see section 3.4.2) where moral values are not measurable against an objective and fixed standard, but are a matter of free and personal choice where judgement as to truth or falsity is irrelevant and beyond the field of reason (MacIntyre 1981:11; Veith 1987:113).

The entrenchment of the above attitudes through Existentialism and Positivism will be discussed in the next two sections respectively.

### 3.3.4.2 *Existentialism*

Although Existentialism runs in two streams, theistic and atheistic, both streams conceive of life's ultimate meaning and purpose, the human *telos*, as rationally unintelligible. In Existentialist thought, religious and moral commitment is, therefore, a choice for which no rational justification can be given. The individual can only be guided by his own inner, nonrational, subjective feelings, and his choice constitutes his truth (Taylor in Taylor (ed) 1978:615). The Existentialist premise is, therefore, that truth is subjective and that beliefs and conduct are a criterionless choice. This premise has become a commonplace in modern moral discourse (MacIntyre 1981:38; Veith 1987:113).

Through the counterculture (see section 2.3.4) and humanistic psychology (see section 4.3), it was unconditionally and unquestioningly taken up into New Age thought (see sections 3.3.2.4c, 3.4.2, 6.2.2.1, 6.2.2.2, 6.2.2.3).

Subjective truth and criterionless moral choice are ideas that Kantian noumenalism together with the collapse of Biblical authority made possible (see section 3.3.3). Although the latent potency of subjective truth had already appeared in Romanticism, it was the Christian philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who first presented it as a practical and philosophical underpinning for ethical behaviour and religious commitment.

Referring to the teleological or existential issues of religious beliefs and moral values, Kierkegaard (1974:182) defined truth as: '*An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of*

*the most passionate inwardness is the truth*, the highest truth attainable for an *existing individual*.<sup>5</sup> This definition indicates that Kierkegaard thinks that all moral and religious issues are beyond the scope of objectivity (Diamond 1974:148). All that mattered to Kierkegaard (1974:178) was the inward, subjective appropriation of beliefs for then *'the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true'*.

But if truth is subjectivity, as Kierkegaard (1974:passim) repeatedly enjoins his readers to believe, then he is by his own standard not entitled to express himself in terms of truth or falsity of beliefs. If one pursues Kierkegaard's argument that beliefs are objective uncertainties and that truth can, therefore, only lie in the subjective appropriation of beliefs, and in view of the fact that the beliefs of one individual may contradict those of another individual, then it must follow that the truth of the beliefs is not an objective uncertainty, but an objective impossibility. There can then be no objective and absolute Truth, neither religious nor moral, which can be affirmed independently of the believer's subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> The individual has achieved the ultimate freedom. He can create his own 'truth' which will serve as his own value system. 'The individual, in other words, is god' (Veith 1987:114), which is also what the New Age worldview propagates (see sections 2.4.1.3, 4.3.1.2b, 4.4.2.1).

Since there is little, if any, evidence that human beings are gods, or can become gods, the New Age worldview could represent not a reorientation of values, but merely a new spiritual underpinning of mystical self-worship within the same whirling vortex of Western moral and religious rootlessness.

New Agers believe, however, that humans can evolve into gods, or at least perfectly good beings (see sections 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.3, 4.4.2.1). It is up to humanity to realise its purported potential: 'We are spiritually free ... the stewards of our own evolution. Humankind has a choice. We can awaken to our true nature. Drawing fully from our inner resources we can achieve a new dimension of mind' (Ferguson 1989:47). To achieve godhood, spiritual intuition must prevail over analytical reason (see sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1).

What is now required in this thesis is to determine exactly what moral stance was engendered by

the West's exaltation of reason as it manifested itself in Positivism.

### 3.3.4.3 *Positivism*

Positivism has two meanings. The first refers to the doctrine taught by Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and denominated by him as Positive Philosophy. The second meaning, included in Comte's philosophy, denotes a purely scientific approach to knowledge and truth (Bowen [S a]:264).

Comte theorised that humanity passed through three historical epochs or stages, those of fictitious theology, abstract metaphysics, and finally the third stage of positive science which he believed nineteenth century Europe had entered. To construct a civilisation based purely on science, Comte developed his theory into a religion of Humanity which admitted to no God and instead hero-worshipped great scientists and scholars (Bowen [S a]:264-265; Brown 1968:141-142; Stromberg 1966:266ff). Comte's religion did not survive and its details are not relevant to this study. What is relevant is the second meaning of positivism, namely Comte's central conception that the dominant attitude or mode of thinking in the modern epoch in the West is scientific or positive as he called it.

In the sense of a mode of thought or approach to reality, positivism or scientism renounces the search for absolute and normative ideas. It concentrates only on the discovery and description of scientific laws and refrains from drawing any conclusion about the meaning and purpose of reality. Positivistic thought is, therefore, not congenial to metaphysical ideas; ideas that are not verifiable by scientific experimentation or demonstration (Bowen [S a]:266ff; Stromberg 1966:267).

This attitude is traceable further back than Comte to the religious scepticism of Hume (Bowen [S a]:263, see section 3.3.2.4b), but it was Comte who first applied the scientific method to human conduct, the science he called sociology (Brennan 1991:87; Brown 1968:141; Stromberg 1966:268).

The rise of positivism in the West is ascribable to the advancement of science which gained

increased momentum during the nineteenth century. The discoveries in all fields of the natural sciences appeared to testify to the ability of science to disclose the principles of the universe. There arose thus a widespread confidence in science which 'rested on the belief that it was unfolding an accurate picture of reality, that it was solidly based and could not err, that other modes of knowledge such as metaphysics and religion were obsolete' (Stromberg 1966:344).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the bedrock of certainty on which science had rested received its first major jolt with the discovery and development of non-Euclidian geometries. These geometries raised doubts about the absolute validity of the theory of Euclidian space and about the theory being absolutely indispensable for doing physics (Gadol in Gadol (ed) 1982:13). The second major jolt came at the turn of the century when the precision of Newton's laws was discovered to break down at the levels of very small and very large masses. Einstein's Special and General Theories of Relativity (see sections 5.3.1.1, 5.3.1.2) appeared to constitute a refutation of the precision of Newtonian mechanics (Gadol in Gadol (ed) 1982:14).

As a bulwark against the scepticism that now threatened science and the very process of knowing, a group of mathematicians and physicists, the so-called Vienna Circle, founded in 1924 and headed by Moritz Schlick,<sup>6</sup> developed a philosophy of science, logical positivism that was to dispense with any sceptical doubt by clarifying the nature of knowledge (Popkin in Gadol (ed) 1982:195). Since the logical positivists regarded the natural world as the only world, the knowledge of which the sciences wholly covered, philosophy, they believed, should exclude metaphysics and function only as a logic of science (Ayer in Gadol (ed) 1982:49).

Philosophy was to abdicate its search for absolute answers. In its new rôle, philosophy's sole task was linguistic and logical analysis; to define and clarify the propositions of the sciences which were regarded as the only source of real, valid knowledge, that is, knowledge which can be scientifically verified (Feigl in Gadol (ed) 1982:63-64).

The Principle of Verifiability was the positivists' adaptation of scientific experimentation to philosophical purposes (Diamond 1974:23). The test for verification that the Vienna Circle devised depended on a statement's factual meaningfulness or logical validity or on a theory's

ability to specify empirical tests that would verify it. The theories in quantum physics (see section 5.3.2) although they contained paradoxical elements (for example, light and electrons have both wave and particle properties) could be accepted as true because the observations conformed with the anticipated results. However, theological and moral statements such as 'God exists' or 'Teenage sex is wrong' cannot be empirically verified and are, therefore, regarded as factually and logically meaningless. According to positivism, such statements have only emotive meaning, a meaning which is neither true nor false. They are regarded as mere expressions of belief or personal preference which have no place in genuine knowledge. (Diamond 1974:22; Stromberg 1966:385-386.)

Positivism had started in the Newtonian worldview, but it reached its most dogmatically scientific expression within the Einsteinian worldview through the Vienna Circle's efforts to meet the challenges and problems of the new theories in mathematics and physics. The logical positivists carried on the tradition of positivism 'with a greater rigor and clarity, of regarding "metaphysics" (absolute being and value, transcendent reality) as not a true object of knowledge' (Stromberg 1966:384).

Nevertheless, the very exclusion of religion is a metaphysical, religious judgement. The metaphysical, religious stance of positivism (scientism) is materialistic naturalism (see sections 5.2.1, 6.2.1.1) where '[s]cience becomes the religion, the scientist the high priest - or even the god, perhaps' (Stannard 1993:73). New Agers oppose positivism, but only the materialism thereof. They still uphold naturalism. The New Age 'transformation' spiritualises matter by positing that the cosmos is a spiritual, divine entity (see sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 5.2.1, 6.2.1.1, 6.3.3.1). Furthermore, New Agers uphold the same moral stance as positivists, as is argued below.

Stromberg (1966:386) sets forth the moral agenda that presents itself in logical positivism:

Applied to morality, Logical Positivism might be extremely subversive ... the frank equation of moral tastes with other kinds of personal taste might be construed as issuing an invitation to moral libertinism. Assumably I should

choose my conduct in the same sort of way I choose my neckties - all a matter of personal taste. And if I try to defend one sort of conduct against another by any sort of rational argument, I am talking nonsense.

Such irrational, criterionless moral choice is what the dictum 'truth is subjectivity' advocated by Existentialists (see section 3.3.4.2) and New Age thinkers (see section 3.4.2) also comes down to. The very ethos of morality within New Age thought is precisely the same ethos that has directed Western morality since the eighteenth century when moral truth and moral precepts were no longer regarded as matters of objective reasoning (see section 3.3.3).

At the heart of the dictum 'truth is subjectivity' lies a declaration of independence: Humans are autonomous beings who, despite the 'fact' that there is no objectively real meaning in the universe and in life and no objective ethics, must practice their freedom faithfully and create their own personal value system. Aldous Huxley (Chittick 1984:172), who inspired the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2), explains why the idea of an objectively meaningless world is so important:

I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption ... The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics, he is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do, or why his friends should not seize political power and govern in the way that they find advantageous to themselves ...

For myself as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom; we objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust ... There was one admirably simple method of confuting these people and at the same

time justifying ourselves in our political and erotic revolt: we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever.

As the above quotation illustrates, beneath the moral subjectivism of New Age thought lie, on the one hand, the desire to justify the idea that in one's personal life one can do just as one pleases and, on the other hand, the desire to transform society. What is needed in order to accomplish social transformation, New Agers say, 'is a deep re-examination of the main premises and values of our culture ... a thorough change in the mentality of Western culture' (Capra 1990:15).

Social transformation in view of today's rampant materialistic greed is a laudable vision. It remains, however, an open question whether all individuals, having been declared morally autonomous, will reject materialistic, exploitative values and opt for the New Age values of 'greenness' and interconnectedness.

At this stage it is appropriate to sketch the values towards which the moral sensibility of New Agers is directed.

### **3.4 MORALITY AND NEW AGE THOUGHT**

#### **3.4.1 The envisaged values in the New Age**

High on the New Age agenda of values are those which are related to feminist, environmental, and global political issues. A concern in these issues is not unique to New Age thought and a concern therein does not imply the endorsement of the New Age spiritual faith (see section 2.2.1).

In New Age spirituality, feminism ensues from the yin-yang doctrine of polar opposites (see section 2.4.1.2). As already mentioned, the yang (masculine) pole represents clear, rational, unyielding, restless, and inorganic aspects of the universe while the yin (feminine) represents intuitive, receptive, restful, and organic aspects of the universe. Aggressive and competitive self-assertion which has manifested itself as immoral power, control, and domination over other humans and over nature is related, therefore, to masculinity (Capra 1990:19ff). This purportedly

masculine behaviour is ascribed to

the belief in the superior role of the rational mind ... supported and encouraged by the Judeo-Christian tradition which adheres to the image of a male god, personification of supreme reason and source of ultimate power, who rules the world from above by imposing his divine law on it. The laws of nature searched for by the scientists were seen as reflections of this divine law, originating in the mind of God (Capra 1990:24).

It is a historic fact that empirical science stems from the orthodox Christian belief in a created, rationally ordered, and secular universe (see sections 2.3.1, 3.2, 5.4.1). In the eighteenth century, however, the orthodox Christian view of God as Creator, Conserver, and Sustainer of the universe was transformed by the Deists into a cold, distant, and uninvolved Creator (see section 3.3.2.4b) who was subsequently 'murdered [by Darwin (see section 5.2.2)] in the nineteenth century' (Randall 1962:594). One of the inevitable results was scientific materialism (see section 5.2.2.2) and positivism (see section 3.3.4.3) where only rational and purely naturalistic theories are regarded as authoritative.

To address the many social and environmental problems that arose together with positivism and scientism (Capra 1990:1-5), New Agers recommend an exaltation of the yin aspects of the universe (Capra 1990: 21ff). The spiritualisation (and deification) of nature (see section 2.2.1) is thus conceived of as ideally expressed in feminist spirituality since, in terms of the yin-yang philosophy, the image of the deity (the cosmos) as mother evokes values of 'harmony, warmth and affection, rather than challenge and drama' (Capra 1990:463).

Unfortunately, however, the conception of the cosmos as the deity (the Godhead), whether masculine or feminine, is at direct odds with the empirical, scientific study of nature (see sections 2.3.1, 3.2, 5.4.1). A deified cosmos is to be worshipped, not to be admired, studied, and carefully managed as the work of God who is not the world's soul but its omnipresent Lord and Creator (Hooykaas 1972:9).

New Age environmentalism entails ultimately something akin to nature worship. The planet Earth (as is the cosmos) is regarded as a self-regulating, living organism. This idea was first propounded by the British scientist, James Lovelock, as the *Gaia*<sup>7</sup> hypothesis (see section 5.2.3.3a). Looking on the Earth as a living Mother, New Agers believe, engenders 'deep' ecology 'that is life-centred rather than human-centred, biocentric rather than anthropocentric; an ecology which recognizes the interconnectedness of all life, and sees humanity as part of a larger living whole' (Sheldrake 1990:175).

Faced with the disaster scenarios that threaten life on Earth, they say, 'we need a spirit of repentance that is not just individual but collective' (Sheldrake 1990:177), and have 'to return compassion to the cosmos and all earthly beings, ourselves included' (Fox & Swimme 1982:28). 'But the [new] ethic is not one based on ... *duty* - it is more one based on the preservation of the awe and wonder and gratuity of creation (Fox in Ferguson (ed) 1993:205).

It is, furthermore, not only humanity's alienation from and destruction of the natural world that must be healed. A whole and healed world includes the vision of a spiritually and socially united humanity. Central is the promotion of spiritual unity; 'to see the sacred from a planetary perspective, one inclusive of the many faith traditions that share this world' (Spangler in Ferguson (ed) 1993:104-105).

The promotion of global social unity is expressed in the support of global political organisations such as the United Nations as well as organisations such as *Planetary Citizens*<sup>8</sup> and *World Goodwill*,<sup>9</sup> both of which have specifically New Age spiritual ideals.

The way to global social unity is, however, not through a totalitarian one-world government. The emphasis is on political decentralisation and on building communities - nonhierarchical networking rather than hierarchical, bureaucratic structures. The ideal is a decentralised planetary community whose members live in harmony with each other and with nature (Ferguson 1989:231ff).

The values of the New Age worldview are in themselves admirable and reflect the sincere desire for a better world as well as the enduring human yearning for meaningful relationships with God,

nature, and fellow human beings. What is problematic, however, is the deification of nature and the moral relativism and subjectivism. The former impacts negatively on science and the latter impacts negatively on social order. 'History', says Chandler (1988:18), 'provides evidence that relative standards of morality breed chaos and - ultimately - the downfall of society.'

Some of the implications of moral relativism and subjectivism are explored in the next section.

### 3.4.2 The implications of moral subjectivism

A foremost spokesperson for the New Age worldview, David Spangler (1976:84), defines truth as follows:

Truth in this sense [of determining consciousness and action] does not necessarily mean words that are true. It means the exercise of that faculty of discrimination which sees what is the right action at any given time. Truth does not accept all things to itself; it accepts only what is right and true for that time and place, but it does this without needing to judge on the ultimate rightness or wrongness of the person, thing or concept under its discrimination.

Spangler is not merely saying that an action *thought* to be right by one person, in one time and place, may be *thought* to be wrong by another person, in another time and place. This is a platitude, the truth of which everybody would admit. What Spangler is asserting is genuine and consistent ethical relativism, namely that the same kind of action *is* truly right for one person, in one time and place, and *is* truly wrong for another person, in another time and place. In this view, truth is not absolute and objective, applicable to everybody. It is affective, a part of one's feelings. Rightness is determined by how good the action makes one feel and requires, therefore, no objective verification. No one's truth can be judged as wrong, yet no one's truth is necessarily true for anyone but himself. Relativism and subjectivism is, in fact, posited by New Agers as relevant for all epistemological endeavours (see sections 4.4.3, 5.4.1, 6.2.1.2, 6.2.3, 6.3).

As the historical survey in this chapter revealed, this view of truth is not a new 'insight'. It is the

offspring of modern lines of thought which have taken the theories of Kant (see section 3.3.2.4c) down the alleys of relativity and subjectivism which 'can provide no coherent basis for a theory of value which must perforce rest on some account of what is objectively and in general right or wrong - regardless of personal and social prejudices' (Carr 1993:3).

Arguing against ethical relativity and subjectivism, Stace (Taylor (ed) 1978:57ff) maintains that no common standard is left and judgement to the effect that some behaviour is morally better than other behaviour becomes meaningless. 'All moral valuation thus vanishes. There is nothing to prevent each man from being a rule unto himself. The result will be moral chaos and the collapse of all effective standards' (Stace in Taylor (ed) 1978:61).

Although Stace was not analysing New Age thought, the New Ager Harman (Bloom (ed) 1991:19) would dismiss Stace's conclusion as inapplicable to the New Age which he (Harman) claims, would include the following:

It would assume the existence of a *spiritual order*, discoverable and explorable, and in some sense testable, against which human value choices could be assessed; emerging from this spirituality would be a creative work ethic, placing a high value on aware participation in both individual and social evolution. The primary emphasis would be on 'to be', rather than 'to have' or 'to control'.

In the New Age worldview the moral order as truth can, however, not be objective and independent of person, time, and place. This would contradict the very essence of truth as relative and subjective. The only possible way that a moral order can exist in the New Age is as an immanent, subjective order that somehow generates the same socially constructive values in all individuals.

This is a utopian dream which ignores the reality of human nature which is such that the doctrine of subjective truth makes it easier for individuals to dismiss the responsibility that social interconnectedness implies, to follow their own desires and to devise 'principles' to justify whatever they want to do. Ferguson (1989:430-431) provides such a 'principle' - the goal of self-

fulfilment:

Whatever the cost in personal relationships, we discover that our highest responsibility, finally unavoidably is the stewardship of our potential - being all we can be. We betray this trust at the peril of our mental and physical health.

In terms of personal fulfilment, vices can easily sound like virtues (Veith 1987:82-83). For example, parents can justify putting their own interests before their duty to their children; promiscuous sex can be justified; and many other forms of immoral and/or amoral behaviour which are harmful to one's fellow human beings (and to nature) can be justified in terms of self-fulfilment.

Furthermore, criticism of personal value-systems is undercut by the view that moral truth is relative and subjective. People may ultimately tolerate all the moral abominations of which humans are capable. This is a real possibility that emerges from the pen of Shirley MacLaine (1987:222-223):

Understanding the basic tenets of that principle [the balancing of polar opposites, in this case, good and evil] was helpful then in extending our understanding that 'evil' exists only in relation to the point of view: If a child steals to live, if a man kills to protect his family, if a woman aborts a fetus rather than give birth to an unwanted child, if a terrorist murders because he has been raised all his life to believe that killing is his right and proper duty - who is evil? And if a person kills 'simply' out of hatred or greed, *he* perceives his motives as *his need* - others make the judgment that his act is 'evil'.

What makes New Age thought (and contemporary thought) so vulnerable to MacLaine's extreme view point as well as 'the arrogance and narcissism [that] are there within the New Age' (Spangler in Ferguson (ed) 1993:96) is the combination of an essentially positive and trusting view of human nature and the subjective, inward approach to truth. Maureen O'Hara (Basil (ed) 1988:146) is a psychotherapist who for many years tried 'to put many of the principles highly

prized by New Age writers to the test of concrete action'. She (Basil (ed) 1988:160) has come to the conclusion that the above combination results in the following:

[T]he whole belief system folds in upon itself and ends up in a state of acritical solipsism [see section 5.4.2.1]. There is simply no need, if you are a believer, for any form of self-doubt, for external verification of personally held truth or for social structures and institutional practices that would contain, regulate, or arbitrate individual consciousness or actions based in it.

The above conclusions about the weaknesses in New Age and contemporary thought about moral truth are of the greatest moment for education. It is 'hardly possible', says Carr (1993:3-4), 'to have a coherent notion of education which is not ultimately grounded in an objective and universal notion of value - one that is directed towards what is right and true'. Since 'moral choice is not a matter of neutral rational calculation' (Carr 1993: 16), it would be a wrong move to conclude that children must subjectively discover their own values. On this matter, Carr (1993:16) expresses himself as follows:

The truth is rather that the very best way to avoid implanting moral bias in the hearts and minds of pupils is precisely to educate them in the knowledge, attitudes and habits of honesty, impartiality, courage, tolerance, self-control and concern for others. A firm grounding in the moral virtues is the surest route to the sort of honest and caring heart which is well prepared for both moral challenge and setback.

Implied in the list of virtues that Carr supplies, are also the virtues of integrity, respect, responsibility, and a conscientious duty to work. All of these are examples of moral virtues that have nothing to do with *distinct* religious beliefs, but agree with the ethics taught by all religions and responsible secular philosophies (Lewis 1946:15ff; Veith 1987:83; see Appendix).

In the plural schools of multicultural South Africa purposeful education in the common virtues whose objective meanings transcend the subjective human individual is also the surest route to

weaving the durable moral fabric that our society so desperately needs. It is the surest route to raising the general social morale because it is only when absolute and transcendent objectivity is accorded to the distinction between better and worse that the concepts of moral progress and human betterment acquire meaning (Adler 1988:14). When the existence of transcendent Truth is denied, values, including those of New Age thinkers, can only be asserted or posited with no foundation other than that of irrational choice. All that remains is power - the power 'of persuasion, coercion, and ultimately of force' (O'Hara in Basil (ed) 1988:157).

The discussion of this crucial issue is set forth in sections 6.2.2 and 6.3.2.2.

### 3.5 CONCLUSION

From the above historical exposition it is evident that the relativism and subjectivism within the New Age moral stance are components of the Western moral mindset that evolved during and since the Enlightenment. The heritage of the Enlightenment philosophers was the idea of an autonomous moral agent which enabled the West in general and New Age thinkers in particular to dismiss the objectivity of moral truth.

In New Age thought moral subjectivism is grounded in their view of human nature as basically unspoilt from which the correct moral stance emerges naturally. This Rousseauian view of human nature finds explicit expression in contemporary, Western humanistic psychology. It is, therefore, Western psychological theories and their link with New Age thought that will be addressed in the following chapter.

### 3.6 NOTES

1. The book by Prof Hooykaas, (1972) *Religion and the rise of modern science*, and the book by Prof Jaki, (1974) *Science and creation*, are excellent, well-documented studies that address the question why empirical science emerged in the Christian West. Prof Hooykaas contrasts the cosmology of orthodox Christianity only with that of ancient Greece. Prof Jaki's study is vast and covers the cosmology of Egyptian, Babylonian,

Hebrew, Indian, Chinese, and Muslim cultures. He also analyses the many Western cosmologies from the Renaissance up to the time that he wrote. Prof Jaki's (1974:357) final conclusion is that: 'The present and past of scientific history tell the very same lesson. It is the indispensability of a firm faith in the only lasting source of rationality and confidence, the Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.'

2. Aquinas' five ways of proving God's existence are given in the *Responsio* of the *Summa Theologiae* (Clark (ed) 1972:122). Briefly summarised they are:

God as the prime mover of change who is self not changed;

God as the first cause who was self not caused by any cause outside himself;

God as the first cause of all being;

God as the exemplary cause of gradation; and

God as the purpose towards which the order in nature is directed.

3. MacIntyre's (1981:44) example of a trivial maxim is: 'Always eat mussels on Mondays in March.'

His (1981:44) examples of immoral maxims are:

'Keep all your promises throughout your entire life except one.'

'Persecute all those who hold false religious beliefs.'

4. In Kant's system (in *Critique of pure reason* in Zweig (ed) 1970:48-50) 'synthetic' statements are statements that logically connect two concepts or propositions so that the truth of the connection (synthesis) can be established through reason or experience.

5. It never occurred to Kierkegaard to make a figure other than the Christian God the focus of his passionate subjectivity. He was addressing Christians who he thought took their Christianity for granted. 'Kierkegaard tried to shake them up ... he challenged them to decide what kind of Christian they were going to be' (Diamond 1974:167). Kierkegaard, however, regarded the very cornerstone of the Christian faith, namely the historical testimony of Jesus Christ's incarnation and resurrection as a hindrance to true Christian faith (Evans 1978:183). For Kierkegaard, religious commitment and inwardness are

intensified the greater the absurdity of the claim towards which they are directed (Diamond 1974:166). Thus, after the West had accepted Nietzsche's statement that God was dead, Kierkegaard's strategy made it far easier for persons oriented to science to dismiss Christian claims than to take them seriously (Diamond 1974:167).

6. Schlick (1882-1936) completed his doctoral dissertation in physics at the University of Berlin under the supervision of Max Planck, the founder of quantum theory (see section 5.3.1.1).
7. *Gaia* or *Ge* is the name the ancient Greeks gave to the earth goddess as Mother Earth.
8. Planetary Citizens, founded in 1972 by Donald Keys who was a consultant to the United Nations, promotes global consciousness-raising projects in order to achieve global spiritual and cultural unification (Groothuis in Hoyt (ed) 1987:94-95).
9. World Goodwill is led by Alice Bailey's teachings (see section 2.3.3.2d). Its purpose is the galvanisation of Bailey's prayer, *The Great Invocation* (see section 2.6 note 14) (Groothuis in Hoyt (ed) 1987:96).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE NEW AGE VISION OF HUMAN NATURE: PSYCHOLOGICAL EVOLUTION TO GODHOOD

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth century was the Age of Science (Bowen [S a]:260), but in reaction against the ensuing positivism or scientism (see section 3.3.4.3) there was also an increased interest in the irrational, intuitive, and instinctual elements of the human mind. In philosophy, this was exemplified by Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Nietzsche (1844-1900), and Bergson (1859-1941) (Stromberg 1966:332ff).

Strong winds were also blowing in the direction of religion, but these 'tended to be diverted to nonorthodox, even non-Christian varieties of faith' (Stromberg 1966:351). The Romantics (see section 3.3.4.1) had reinterpreted 'esoteric religious symbolism in terms of hazy psychic contents' (Raschke 1980:135), and the occult spiritual groups were seriously interested in psychic phenomena; the relationship between occult realities and the depths of the human mind (see sections 2.3.2.4, 2.3.3).

It was, however, psychoanalysis that 'gave this mysterious universe of the mind a "name"'. It was the Unconscious' (Raschke 1980:135). And it was psychoanalysis that gave scientific legitimacy to the study of the unconscious. In this chapter, a look will be taken at figures and schools of thought within the circle of psychology whose models of mental life and human nature have influenced New Age thought, either directly or indirectly. The aim is to ascertain the undergirding New Age assumptions (and their origins) about human nature and the abilities of the human mind. Since humans are a part of the natural world, the task that flows from the above aim includes ascertaining the assumptions about the natural world that, in turn, undergird the assumptions about human nature and the human mind. The origins of the assumptions about nature will be explored in chapter 5.

## 4.2 THE PIONEERS OF DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND NEW AGE THOUGHT

Depth psychology refers to the type of psychology wherein attempts are made 'to establish a dialogue between consciousness and the unconscious' (McNeely 1987:11).

The seminal figure in depth psychology was Freud. Though Freud was an avowed atheist and positivist, his psychological speculations left their mark on New Age thought (Drury 1989:17ff; Drury in Millikan & Drury 1991:17-18). But the revival of and the present preoccupation with mysticism is largely attributable to the psychology of Jung (Matzat 1990:104; Raschke 1980:143) since, as we shall see in section 4.2.2, his psychology is rooted in mysticism, gnosticism, and occultism. It is, therefore, with the theories of these two men and their contributions to the various tenets of New Age thought that this chapter will commence.

### 4.2.1 Freud's theory of psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), a Viennese physician, was 'one of those scientists who altered the fundamental conditions of thought and changed Western man's view of himself in basic ways' (Stromberg 1966:336). Freud thrust into prominence the irrational, unconscious region of the mind as well as the sexual, libidinous side of human nature. The West's open attitude to sexual matters and its blithe celebration of sexuality which is endorsed in the New Age worldview (see section 2.4.1.2) owe much to Freud's model of the human individual as a creature driven primarily by sexual desires, the repression of which is the source of neuroses (Stromberg 1966:337).

Freud identified three regions in the human psyche - the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego*. The *id* is the unconscious where dwell repressed memories, experiences and desires as well as lustful, antisocial drives and desires. The *superego* represents the inhibitions imposed on the individual since birth by his parents and which are later augmented by society at large. These inhibitions are internalised as the individual's conscience. The *ego* as the conscious mind is the centre of control between the conflicting forces of the *id* and the *superego*.

According to Freud, the repressed material in the unconscious, which is 'habitually one of a sexual nature', is responsible for the phenomena of neuroses (Freud in *An autobiographical study* in Gay (ed) 1989:14). To ferret out the repressed material and to thereby enable the individual to deal with repressions, Freud used a free association technique (the patient talks things out with the minimum of guidance from the analyst), hypnosis, and an exegetic method of dream analysis.

Of the above psychoanalytical tools, it is hypnosis as trance inducement in terms of channelling (see section 2.4.2) and shamanic voyaging (see section 2.4.1.3), and dream analysis which occupy important places in New Age thought (Drury 1989:20). Both hypnosis and dream analysis were already part of the esoteric spiritual tradition, but it was Freud's use thereof that gave them scientific and psychological legitimacy (Osborn 1992:22).

In contrast to New Agers whose worldview is essentially spiritual, Freud's outlook on life was materialistic and atheistic. He placed his faith in science and reason, and regarded religion as the 'universal obsessional neurosis of humanity' (Freud in *The future of an illusion* in Gay (ed) 1989:713). Yet Freud's utterances regarding religion had a significant impact on the feminist attitude of New Agers towards religion (see section 3.4.1) since Freud attacked specifically patriarchal religion. Freud (1950:148) believed that at 'the root of every form of religion' was 'a longing for the father'. Religion and patriarchal religion are, therefore, synonymous in Freud's writings.

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud (1950:141ff) portrays as historical facts, his conjectures as to the origin of religious ideas. In the beginning of history, according to Freud, humans lived in primal hordes and were led by one dominant male, the 'father', who alone monopolised the sexual favours of the females. Giving vent to their feelings of jealousy and fury, the other male members, the 'sons', killed the 'father'. To allay the guilt feelings that arose after the killing, the 'sons' venerated the memory of the slain 'father' and continued to restrict their sexual appetites as the 'father' had originally enforced.

Freud (1950:152) assumes that the filial sense of guilt and the feelings of rebelliousness against patriarchal authority never became extinct. The inherited sense of guilt gave rise to religion,

originally in the form of totemism,<sup>1</sup> but during the course of evolution, the totem animal was replaced with the concept of a divine Father. The hereditary feelings of rebelliousness reveal themselves in the individual's attitude towards authority and social control which in Freud's view, set out in *Civilisation and its discontents* (1979:passim), is always ambivalent. Freud did not believe that social control could be done away with, but he did believe that religious motives for civilised, that is disciplined, behaviour could be replaced with motives that arise from the rational operation of the intellect. In the spirit of atheistic positivism, Freud (in *The future of an illusion* in Gay (ed) 1989:709ff) expressed the view that with the expansion of scientific education, human beings would learn to stand on their own feet and grow out of the need for religion's escapist function where consolation from the problematics of life is sought in the concept of a divine Father. Freud was thus saying that the rational, scientifically educated human being would get along better without patriarchal religion.

New Agers also believe that humans should renounce patriarchal religion because they say, '[w]hen this image of the father is applied to God, it naturally evokes the notions of obedience, loyalty, and faith' (Capra 1990:462). In patriarchal religions, God is independent and absolute while humanity is dependent on and relative to the will of God (Capra 1990:462). It is, therefore, the image of humanity as subservient to God's will that is unacceptable to New Agers. The desire to be independent and free from a divine Father led Freud to atheism. Yet it is the arid meaninglessness that arose from atheism and secularism that turns New Agers back to religion, albeit as a private, inner spirituality that vaunts spiritual holism and unity with a god that 'is not Other, but ... sewn through the fabric of all that is' (Wilber 1981:4). They seek only connection with God, not obedience to God (Basil in Basil (ed) 1988:21).

In their antipathy to patriarchal religion, Freud and New Age thinkers are in agreement. There is, however, a radical difference in the assumptions regarding human nature (Leonard 1981:81). Freud scorned religion as a neurotic illusion, an infantile support and moral guide that 'is destined to be surmounted' (Freud in *The future of an illusion* in Gay (ed) 1989:717). He (in *The future of an illusion* in Gay (ed) 1989:720-721) admitted that: 'Education freed from the burden of religious doctrines will not, it may be, effect much change in men's psychological nature.' With regard to humanity's psychological nature, Freud was a realist with no illusions about the baser

instincts that reside in the depths of the id. However, in New Age terminology, the id is the spiritual region of the inner self wherein dwells the basic drive towards wholeness which the rational ego suppresses (see section 3.4.1). Thus where Freud taught 'the ascendancy of the ego ... the control of our instincts by reason' (Mindess 1988:59), New Age thinkers teach the ascendancy of the inner self, the control of reason by the instincts held to be good (see sections 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.3).

Freud (1979:passim) insisted that an extreme conflict exists between humans' basic nature (sexual and aggressive) and the suppression of the resultant instinctual desires which are regarded as antisocial and uncivilised. Freud, as mentioned, held that the suppression of the instincts leads to varying degrees of neurosis which implies that civilisation's progress has cost humans their mental health. This argument runs through New Age thought which claims that neuroses are already inflicted during childhood when the child is moulded to accept and fit into a social system which cripples and distorts the emotions and the instincts (Leonard 1981:69ff). In New Age thought, humans are not born with flawed and potentially harmful instincts as Freud suggested. Aggression is merely the outer expression of inner turmoil, frustration, anxiety, and fear (Leonard 1981:81ff).

Within the New Age theory it is, therefore, logical to conclude that society should permit the uninhibited satisfaction of instinctual desires. The task of education to teach children the value of controlling the instincts collapses. Imposed behavioural limits and restrictions become repressive obstacles rather than the means towards healthy development.

If, however, the New Age theory is wrong and humans are in their deepest instinctual nature flawed, then the theory becomes a potent force in promoting, at best, licentious sexual behaviour and, at worst, psychopathic behaviour. Nye (1986:21) explains that because psychopaths have not learnt and internalised a desirable set of values and moral standards, they do not follow social rules. Unperturbed by anxiety or guilt they seek unrestricted self-gratification.

The difficulty with the New Age theory of human nature is that while it seems to be contrary to reality, it presents itself as truth (see sections 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.3). The theory of unflawed human

nature is, however, a subjectively assumed premise and could represent nothing more than an attempt to cleave to and 'prove' the belief of inner godhood.

To support this belief and to legitimate the openness to the supernatural - the occult and the mystical - New Agers turn to Jung (Osborn 1992:23). The survey of American New Agers, conducted by Ferguson (1989:463), revealed that Jung was the second most important influence on their ideas after Teilhard de Chardin whose influence is discussed in section 5.2.3.1.

## 4.2.2 Jung's theory of analytical psychology

### 4.2.2.1 Jung's metaphysical and philosophical position

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) was a man who was deeply interested in the mystical and the occult. Jung was, in fact, as much a metaphysician as he was a psychologist (Mindess 1988:66). Transpersonal psychologists (see section 4.4) whose interests lie in altered states of consciousness (Tageson 1982:12) and the ultimate spiritual capacities and potentialities of humans (Tageson 1982:13) look to Jung for guiding ideas and inspiration (Tageson 1982:153).

What Mindess (1988:66) sums up as the essence of Jung's point of view is equally apt for New Age thought:

We have lost contact with our spirituality, he [Jung] tells us, and that is the core of our problems. Conventional religion has failed us; it no longer provides a convincing vehicle for the enlightened person; and in contradiction to Freud, science and reason are no substitute. Immersing oneself in the unconscious, however, as Jung himself felt compelled to do, may reconnect us to our souls.

The 'widespread and ever-growing interest in all sorts of psychic phenomena, including spiritualism, astrology, Theosophy, parapsychology and so forth' (Jung 1970:83) was regarded by Jung (1970:86) as 'a helpful light' called forth by the spiritual darkness of modern times. His

approval of these 'spiritual currents' lies in their 'deep affinity with Gnosticism' (Jung 1970:83). Jung (1967:230ff) regards the ancient Gnostics (see section 2.3.1) as his historical equivalent.

Jung was well versed in Oriental religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism - whose wisdom he preferred to Occidental logic, rationalism, and scientism (Raschke 1980:145-146). But since yoga is practised 'in order to obliterate completely the multitude of psychic contents and images' (Jung 1967:201), he did not look to yoga for a solution to the West's spiritual crisis.<sup>2</sup> He preferred the ancient Gnostics who confronted and dealt with the primal world of the unconscious, its contents and images (Jung 1967:226). He, furthermore, regarded his analytical psychology as akin in psychotherapeutic purpose to the medieval alchemists' (see section 2.3.2.2c) search for a panacea for souls caught in a net of suffering and travail (Jung 1967:231, 239). In fact, says Jung (1967:231), it was Gnosticism and alchemy that 'gave substance to my psychology'.

The guiding principle of Jung's psychology was that of complementary opposites, a principle found in Western occultism (see section 2.3.2.1), Taoism and Tantrism (see section 2.4.1.2). 'If his conception of the psyche could be portrayed in a visual symbol,' remarks Mindess (1988:66), 'it would undoubtedly be the yang-yin image of Oriental philosophy.' Intertwined in the totality of psychological being are opposites such as light and darkness, good and evil, conscious and unconscious, spirit and earth, male and female, reason and intuition (Mindess 1988:66; Moreno 1970:71).

In Jung's view, nothing could exist without its opposite. The one, he believed, balances and compensates the deficiencies of the other. All opposites should therefore be harmonised and integrated into a higher unitary synthesis and wholeness. Wholeness constitutes the goal of healthy personality development and as such, is intimately connected with the religious content in the psyche. (Moreno 1970:71.)

Jung thus set up a bridge between psychology and religion. But in venturing into religion and metaphysics, Jung's philosophical, epistemological position was essentially Kantian (Garrison 1982:138; Moreno 1970:82) as he, like Kant, believed that even if a transcendent God exists, he

cannot be known. The question whether a transcendent God exists outside the psyche as the cause of religious experiences is, for Jung (1970:293), futile since it 'lies beyond the range of human knowledge'. Yet the psyche asserts an experience of God and hence, says Jung (Moreno 1970:82), 'God is a psychic fact of immediate experience'.

The psyche experiences God as transcendent to itself (Jung 1967:368), and though Jung (1970:293, 463) does not exclude the possibility of such a transcendent being existing, he regards it as a transcendental problem which is futile to address. The truth about God is irrelevant since the sole value in the idea of God lies in its power to evoke the unusual experiences associated therewith (Jung 1968:34). For Jung (1967:368), the term God is, in essence, an invalidated mythological synonym for what his science (analytical psychology) calls the unconscious. According to Jung (1967:369), the advantage of employing the term God lies therein that it confers life and effectual emotions on the contents of the unconscious with which the individual can intimately and with his total being relate in his development towards psychological wholeness.

God and that part of the psyche in which the experience of God originates are, therefore, indistinguishable in Jung's system. 'To this extent', says the New Ager Drury (Millikan and Drury 1991:18), 'Jung personifies the central thrust of both the New Age and Gnosis.'

By positing that the experience of God is actually contact with unknown parts of the psyche, Jung psychologised religions and spiritual disciplines - an interpretation which 'enables modern secular westerners to engage in spiritual disciplines without feeling any embarrassment. It is a major factor in the New Age reappropriation of all kinds of spiritual practices' (Osborn 1992:31). Spangler (Ferguson (ed) 1993:90) can thus say that although the practices of the New Age 'appear to be spiritual, in many cases they are more appropriately seen as psychological'. This attitude allows the New Age practices (see section 2.4), be it the use of crystals, channelling, the search for past lives, attunement to the Higher Self, and so forth, to be defended by Spangler (Ferguson (ed) 1993:89-90) as psychotherapeutic exercises that focus one's spiritual energies, transform one's life, and lead to a deep relationship with the sacred.

Jung's metaphysical position, like that of the New Age, places God within the unconscious psyche, and within the grasp of the conscious psyche if the appropriate approach is pursued. Jung's approach hinges on his psychological theories, namely the *collective unconscious* and its contents, the *archetypes*, and the process of *individuation*.

#### 4.2.2.2 *The collective unconscious*

Jung (1969:139ff) distinguished three psychic levels: consciousness, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. Consciousness has as its centre the ego which, for Jung, is the individual's avenue of contact with reality and enables adaptation to the environment (Schultz & Schultz 1987:328). The personal unconscious (similar to Freud's id (see section 4.2.1)) contains forgotten and repressed aspects of the individual's life as well as impressions that entered the psyche without conscious awareness thereof (Jung 1969:151-152). Whereas the contents of the personal unconscious are individual and acquired during an individual's lifetime, Jung (1968:8, 1969:152) speculated that there was another, the deepest level of the unconscious, the contents of which are given at birth and are common to all humans. He called this level the *collective unconscious*.

Within the collective unconscious and, therefore, within the psyche of each individual is 'the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual' (Jung 1969:158). The spiritual history exists in the collective unconscious in the form of 'mythological motifs or primordial images' (Jung 1969:152) which Jung called the *archetypes* (see section 4.2.2.3). In invisible ways, the archetypes determine the individual's life (Jung 1940:14, 1969:153), and for psychological health or wholeness they should be assimilated and integrated into consciousness, a process which Jung (1969:223) calls *individuation* (see section 4.2.2.4).

The presence of the collective unconscious in every individual psyche implies that 'in one of its aspects the psyche is not individual, but is derived from the nation, from the collectivity, from humanity ... In some way or other we are part of a single all-embracing psyche' (Jung 1970:86). Among New Agers, the collective unconscious lends cogency to the channelling phenomenon 'as

a way of tapping into the pool of this shared, or collective, group memory' (Chandler 1988:173).

For Jung (1970:139), the spiritual or psychological history of humanity's supposed evolution - buried in the collective unconscious - is an evolution from an 'unbroken harmony of plant, animal, man and God, symbolized as Paradise, at the very beginning of all psychic development'. From this primal form emerged a gradual differentiation where humans perceived themselves as members of separate ethnic groups, separate families and finally as separate individuals, the last being 'a late product of man's development' (Jung 1970:136).

Furthermore, maintains Jung (1970:140), the splitting of 'the divine unity of consciousness ... was a hostile act of disharmony against harmony, a separation from the fusion of all with all'. This bears a remarkable resemblance to the evolution of consciousness which Theosophists (see section 2.3.2.2d) and New Agers subscribe to (see section 4.4.2). It is the disharmony and separation of the one, original psyche that the Christian idea of original sin symbolises for Jung (1970:139-140). Just as the primitive humans experienced the splitting of the psyche as 'unseemly and morbid', so do modern humans, but it is now associated with 'conflict, nervousness, or a mental breakdown' (Jung 1970:139). This theory of Jung explains the New Age belief that the idea of a separate self causes neuroses, be they expressed in forms of anxiety, personality disorders, or aggression. Ken Wilber's book, (1981) *Up from Eden*, is an exposition on the theme of psychological evolution and the problems that separateness and otherness between God, humans, and nature supposedly cause.

The theory of the collective unconscious also explains Jung's and New Agers' belief in events of synchronicity, (apparently meaningful coincidences) and divination (future foretelling devices such as the Chinese *I-Ching* (Book of changes))<sup>3</sup> (Osborn 1992:30-31). In a 1945 letter to J B Rhine, an extrasensory perception researcher, Jung (Bolen 1979:20) explained that the collective unconscious behaves as if it were one and not split among individuals, and manifests itself 'not only in human beings but also at the same time in animals and even in physical conditions'. Telepathic communication between people, animals, and things occurs thus via the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is Jung's term for the Chinese *Tao* to which influence Eastern mystics ascribe the mind's (alleged) power to influence the physical world (Bolen

1979:78). Tao is the 'unifying principle in the world to which everything relates', called *Brahman* in Hinduism and *Dharmakaya* in Buddhism (Bolen 1979:4). It is thus the divine source of the spiritual energy that is believed to permeate the universe (see section 2.4.4).

Jung's idea of the collective unconscious encourages Westerners to turn to other religions and to myths and fables for insight into the human condition (Drury 1989:25). It is the contents of the collective unconscious, the archetypes, that support the idea that God and spiritual reality are not external to humanity, but rise up from within the inner depths of the psyche.

#### 4.2.2.3 *The archetypes*

Jung (1969:133) defines the archetypes as '*a priori*, inborn forms of "intuition," ... the necessary *a priori* determinants of all psychic processes'. By definition, the archetypes are, therefore, transpersonal, intuitive forces within the psyche. Jung believes that these forces 'emerge into consciousness as universal ideas' (Jung 1969:218) and that the common motifs encountered in religions and mythological folklore lend support to the notion of archetypes (Jung 1970:449). Jung (1969:206) also holds that the archetypes represent the psyche's spiritual element and maintains, therefore, that the content of all religions is a mythological product of archetypal activity.

Jung conceived of many archetypes, for example, the *Old Wise Man*, the *Cthonic Mother*, the *Inner Child*, the *Trickster* (the name describes what each represents), but of the many archetypes, Jung (1968:8) regarded the following three as the most important since they exert the most disturbing psychological influence on the ego. These three are the *Shadow*, the *Anima/Animus* syzygy, and the *Self*.

Jung (1968:266) describes the shadow as 'that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors and so comprise the whole historical aspect of the unconscious'. The shadow is, however, not wholly bad, only inferior and unadapted (Jung 1968:266).

The anima/animus represents the feminine/masculine qualities in the male/female (Jung 1968:11ff). This syzygy in the psyche forms the basis for male and female deities (Jung 1968:268).

Jung recognised that humans have within themselves the idea that God exists. The archetype that corresponds to this idea he called the Self. The Self, says Jung (1968:22), 'is a God-image, or at least cannot be distinguished from one'. For Jung (1968:268), the Self represents psychological wholeness, the union of all opposites in the conscious and the unconscious mind. Jung discovered his notions of the Self in the East (Moreno 1970:61). In Hinduism, Atman (self) equals Brahman (the cosmic deity) (see section 2.4.1.1) while Taoism teaches that ultimate unity is the reconciliation of opposite but complementary forces. The American-Japanese, Jungian therapist, and feminist Jean Shinoda Bolen (1979:92-93) identifies the Self with the Tao, the unifying principle or the cosmic deity.

Whether Jung really believed that no conceptual distinction can be made between God and God-image (the Self) is not clear. At times Jung (1970:463) affirms the distinction explicitly. 'This "self" never at any time takes the place of God, though it may perhaps be a vessel for divine grace.' At other times, however, Jung (Moreno 1970:137) asserts that 'the God-image in man is *homoousia*, namely, of the same nature as God, and not *homoisia*, which is of a similar nature'. Furthermore, Jung's god reflects the same polar duality that he ascribes to the psyche. Jung's god unites good and evil in himself and his dual nature also expresses itself in androgyny as did the god of the ancient Gnostics (see section 2.4.1.2). This god of Jung, Martin Buber (Heaney (ed) 1973:89) informs us, 'is a Gnostic figure, which probably is to be traced back ultimately to the ancient Iranian divinity Zurvan ... as that out of which the light god and his dark counterpart arose'.

Does this prove that God is what the human psyche asserts he is? 'Not at all', says Moreno (1970:136), 'The revelation of the unconscious does not teach us theology; it merely manifests the basic craving of our nature.'

In other words, all that Jung's archetype of the Self actually 'proved' was that the mind senses that God exists. Nevertheless, Drury (Millikan and Drury 1991:18) claims that 'Jung was making

the momentous point that divinity is not external but lies within - that it is an aspect of our "humanness" which we all share and can have access to'. New Agers understand, therefore, the ultimate meaning in life in the same way that the Jungian theologian Garrison (1982:140) understands it, namely 'as the realization of the "divine" within us'.

Jung is not without blame that his archetypal theory is interpreted in this way. According to Jung (1969:205-206), the archetypes present themselves to the conscious mind as numinous, spiritual entities that exert an enormous power over the mind and the emotions. It is, however, not an alien power, but a 'power that lies fettered in each of us' (Jung 1969:206). 'A mind that is still childish', says Jung (1970:185), 'thinks of the gods [or spirits] as metaphysical entities existing in their own right, or else regards them as playful or superstitious inventions ... the gods are without doubt the personifications of psychic [inner] forces.'

In Jung's analytical psychology, the unconscious psyche is, therefore, a conglomerate of forces and powers (the archetypes) that deserve the epithet 'spiritual'. These forces, Jung believed, can never be permanently repressed. If repressed, they will sooner or later, and often with disastrous consequences, erupt out of the unconscious to take possession of the personality.<sup>4</sup> Central to Jung's psychology is, therefore, the individual's psychological need to assimilate the demands of the archetypes.

The archetypal figures and their demands arise spontaneously when the conscious mind is passive and its critical faculties eliminated, for example, in dreams and free fantasy activity (active imagination). These activities, according to Jung (1969:77-78, 142-143, 204-205), originate only in the unconscious mind. Free fantasy activity or active imagination is, therefore, not ordinary imagery and imagination. It requires the complete elimination of 'critical attention, thus producing a vacuum in consciousness' (Jung 1969:78). Ordinary thought, especially rational and reasoned thought, allegedly prevents the smooth transformation and development of the unconscious psyche's spiritual energy (Jung 1969:25).

Jung's visualisation technique delves into the irrational depths of the psyche and is grounded in the visionary magic employed by Kabbalist and alchemystical magicians (see section 2.3.2.2b,c).

Jung explains this method in his volume *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (Jung 1963:passim). Contemporary magicians and transpersonal psychologists (see section 4.4) refer to inner fantasy as pathworking (see section 2.4.1.4), 'guide meditation' (Steinbrecher 1977:passim), or shamanic visualisation (see section 2.4.1.3).

Like Jung, the advocates of fantasy exercises believe that it is not independent entities that are encountered but inner facets of the personality. These techniques are therefore also recommended for children; to help the child 'achieve a balance between intellectual and affective, conscious and unconscious, verbal and nonverbal, and among physical, emotional, mental and spiritual processes' (Weinhold & Elliott 1979:3). But even Jung (1970:42) warned: 'Nothing that is autonomous in the psyche is impersonal or neutral'. The manifestation of the archetypes may therefore 'assume grotesque and horrible forms in dreams and fantasies' (Moreno 1970:40). Steinbrecher also reported frightening experiences (Drury 1982:71). Thus, the fear of invoking psychologically disturbing experiences in children cannot be dismissed by the assumption 'that these forces are natural and ultimately benign' (Osborn 1992:78).

New Agers believe, as did Jung, that fantasy techniques enable dialogue between consciousness and archetypes. This supposedly promotes personal well-being and inner-directed growth towards wholeness and unity between the conscious and unconscious psyche. The process of integrating the unconscious archetypal forces into consciousness, Jung called *individuation*.

#### **4.2.2.4 Individuation**

Jung (1969:226) explains individuation as 'the coming-to-be of the self', that is, self-realisation. This, he continues, is not the same as the realisation of the conscious ego-personality which merely relates to the conscious mind (see section 4.2.2.2). The self is the total personality (Jung 1968:5). It is superordinate to the ego and embraces all aspects of the personality - conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational (Jung 1967:417). As individuation proceeds towards its goal - psychological wholeness - the demands and powers of the archetypes are assimilated into the personality. In this process, the centre of the personality shifts from the ego to the Self which emerges from the innermost recesses of the unconscious (Jung 1969:223ff). Jung (Garrison

1982:140) defines, therefore, individuation as 'the life in God'.

Moreno (1970:36) recognises two aspects - dispositive and perfective - in the process of individuation. On the one hand, individuation disposes the *persona*, the false socially conditioned personality. On the other hand, individuation is perfective in that it synthesises into the conscious personality, the material from the unconscious. As this material is brought to the surface and assimilated into the personality, via dream-analysis and active imagination, the individual (allegedly) undergoes a transformative 'rebirth' which is not the alteration of the original disposition, but a transformation of attitude, 'a state of wider and higher consciousness' (Jung 1969:393).

Individuation means, therefore, to become one's own authentic self, namely an individual who has freed himself from the type of social conditioning (the *collective consciousness*) which alienates the self from the spiritual life of the collective unconscious. During the process of individuation, the personality is divested of its attachment to the collective consciousness (Jung 1969:217ff). In the modern West collective consciousness refers to rationalism or scientism which rejects psychic, archetypal phenomena as irrational and meaningless (Jung 1969:218). This is identified by Jung (1970:74ff) as 'the spiritual problem of modern man'. By clinging to reason, the modern Western individual sundered himself from the collective unconscious and his own self. The result was absorption into the masses, the imposed collective morality, and the collective consciousness of hollow rationalism and secular materialism.

For Jung, the challenge of modernity is a psychological challenge (Raschke 1980:152). He reduces the modern Westerner's spiritual emptiness to a psychological problem which can be overcome through introspection and self-awareness. In Jung's estimate, the spiritual task of the individual is to conquer the alienation and division between the levels of the psyche by bringing the unconscious, spiritual archetypes into harmony on a higher, extended plane of consciousness (Raschke 1980:149). Raschke (1980:150) recognises, therefore, in Jung's discussion of individuation 'a reminiscence of the Romantic concept of "genius"' - the individual who rose above conventional ideas (Jung's collective consciousness) and determined his own life and moral standards (see section 3.3.4.1).

In New Age spiritual practices (see section 2.4), the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2), and transpersonal psychology (see section 4.4), Jung's ideas become a hothouse for the germination of new forms of spiritual experiences, all of which are generally regarded as legitimate psychotherapeutic paths towards autonomous self-discovery and heightened awareness.

For Jung (1969:59), heightened awareness (the expansion of consciousness to include the collective unconscious (see section 4.2.2.2) and the archetypes (see section 4.2.2.3)) was the key to social progress, the starting point of which is therefore personal self-realisation or individuation:

Every advance in culture is, psychologically, an extension of consciousness, a coming to consciousness ... Therefore an advance always begins with individuation, that is to say with the individual ... he must first return to the fundamental facts of his own being, irrespective of all authority and tradition.

Jung's orientation reinforces the New Age perceptions that the expansion of consciousness is an evolutionary 'transition in the human story' (Ferguson 1989:423), and 'that one must work on oneself first, before expanding the process of self-development to include others' (Drury 1989:25-26).

In the schemas of Jung and New Agers, the individual's primary responsibility is his own individuation. This will free the individual from the dominance of the collective consciousness of rationalism and scientific materialism and from blind obedience to conventional morality. Regarding morality, Jung (1969:73) maintains that during the process of individuation, the required moral attitude is not to condemn any content in the psyche even the morally reprehensible, but to recognise its compensatory significance for transcending the one-sidedness of consciousness.

Hence, Jung does not look to overcoming the dark, evil side of human nature, the shadow. This, Jung (1970:467) says, is impossible. His guiding principle is the union of opposites which are not absolute opposites but complementary opposites. The shadow in every individual is real, but it

exists to complement the good. The shadow must, therefore, be acknowledged and integrated into the personality (Jung 1940:153). This, as Osborn (1992:28) observes, is 'a disturbingly amoral approach'.

Moreno (1970:159) says that Jung does not 'distinguish between the fault we freely do, and the pain we undergo'. Both are forms of evil, but only the pain we undergo has psychological value and requires integration (Moreno 1970:157). Our faults, however, 'can never be a necessary factor with which we have to reckon for individuation. On the contrary, they [our faults] make individuation impossible to achieve' (Moreno 1970:158). Integration of pain leads to empathy, but what Jung overlooks is that integration of one's faults leads to self-justification and the denial of self-blame and guilt.

Jung's attitude to what good and evil are is one of relativism (Jung 1970:467) and psychotherapeutic pragmatism (Jung (1970:459). Absolute moral truth does not concern Jung. Not only does psychology not know what good and evil are (Jung 1968:53, 267), but the whole issue of truth is, in Jung's (1970:453) view, unanswerable and epistemologically obsolete. The touchstone of moral truth lies within (Jung 1970:437ff). Jung's only moral criterion is the individual's needs, and morality is subordinated to human 'health' and human needs (Moreno 1970:159).

Human needs are the cornerstone of Maslow's humanistic psychology in which self-actualisation is identified as the highest need (see section 4.3.1.2). But where Jung addressed the problem of evil in human nature (a problem he solved by ascribing a polar duality to the psyche), humanistic psychologists ascribe an essential goodness to the psyche and the human 'propensity for evil ... is subtly avoided' (Graham 1986:81).

### **4.3 HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY AND NEW AGE THOUGHT**

#### **4.3.1 Humanistic psychology**

#### *4.3.1.1 The origins of humanistic psychology*

Prior to the late 1950s, American psychology was dominated by two schools of thought neither of which showed interest in human spirituality. These were Freudian psychoanalysis (see section 4.2.1) and behaviourism. In reaction to the biological reductionism assumed by psychoanalysts and behaviorists, there emerged a third movement or force, namely humanistic psychology which aimed at a 'broader, open-at-the-top perspective toward the science of human experience and behavior' (Tageson 1982:11). In contrast to the Freudians and the behaviourists, humanistic psychologists have a holistic approach to the human organism and a basic trust in the essential integrity and altruism of human nature (Shaffer 1978:12-13, 16-17; Tageson 1982:33ff). Humanistic psychology was, however, not just a reaction to the prevalent psychological theories. It was also a protest against the alienation, meaninglessness, and dehumanisation that had infected the entire fabric of the technologically advanced but spiritually arid Western societies (Shaffer 1978:6). Proponents of humanistic psychology perceived it 'as a potential source of revitalization' to reunite people with their own feelings, their fellow humans, and with nature (Shaffer 1978:7).

Humanistic psychology blossomed during the 1960s, at the same time that the youthful counterculture was expressing its discontent with the dehumanising technocratic trends of American society (section 2.3.4). 'In many ways', says Coan (1977:277), 'the movement of humanistic psychology shared the spirit and concern of the counterculture.' Both movements represented the same set of values: freedom, authenticity, and openness to experience (Shaffer 1978:8).<sup>5</sup>

The values of freedom and authenticity, as well as humanistic psychology's 'concern with the subjective' (Shaffer 1978:11), indicate that humanistic psychology's philosophical roots lie in Existentialism (see section 3.3.4.2).

According to Existential thought, humans are born into a world whose meaning is not manifestly given and there exist, therefore, no guidelines as to what constitutes the meaning and purpose of life (Shaffer 1978:20). Cast adrift in a world without purpose and objectively meaningful

structures, the individual is responsible for taking the formlessness of life and building into it his own meaning and values. Truth is irrelevant. Any position or worldview that the individual adopts is regarded as his authentic way of giving meaning to his life (Veith 1987:113).

Central is, therefore, individual freedom which, to Existentialists, is absolute (Graham 1986:68). Values, purposes, and meanings are created and sustained by the individual's free choice and he must accept the burden of sole responsibility for actualising his possibilities and potentialities (Graham 1986:69).

The American field of humanistic psychology is, however, not synonymous with European Existentialism. The American format avoids the pessimism in European Existential thought as well as humanity's propensity for evil, exploitation, and failure. Instead, it carries with it an optimism about the individual's capacity for doing good. Where the European focus is on anxiety, limits, resignation, and acceptance, the American focus is on limitlessness and self-actualisation (Graham 1986:81). American humanistic psychologists believe that the limits of human potential are unknown and, therefore, assume that human potential is infinitely expandable (Shaffer 1978:17).

It is this point in particular, namely the possibility of transcending human boundaries and limits, which ties humanistic psychology with the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2). Many of the leading figures in humanistic psychology are, therefore, also leading figures in the human potential movement. These are, among others, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, William Schutz, and Fritz Perls. The proliferation of human potential or growth centres which started in America and spread from there to other parts of the world was a direct outgrowth of humanistic psychology (Tageson 1982:11).

It was, in particular, through the initiatives of Maslow and Rogers that the humanistic approach was widely disseminated (Graham 1986:66). This section concentrates, therefore, on their theories.

#### 4.3.1.2 Maslow's psychology of being

##### a) *A hierarchy of needs*

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) is regarded as the father of humanistic psychology and is also credited for spearheading transpersonal psychology (Graham 1986:52).

His model of authentic human being rests on two interrelated presuppositions - firstly, a hierarchy of needs that culminates in self-actualisation and, secondly, the assumption that all persons have an innate and unlimited potential for positive development and growth. Out of his study of persons whom he considered as the psychologically healthiest, Maslow developed a positive and optimistic image of human nature capable of reaching a state of perfection (Schultz & Schultz 1987:368). In other words, Maslow believed that humans could escape from all iniquitous tendencies. Maslow viewed psychological health as the fulfilment of a five-level motivational hierarchy of needs: physiological; safety; belongingness and love; esteem; and at the apex self-actualisation, the fulfilment of which supposedly results in the universal values of altruism and responsibility. The prepotency of the needs operates in a hierarchical and developmental way. The lower needs must be met before a higher need expresses itself. The gratification of each need opens consciousness to the next and higher need till the fullness of being is achieved in self-actualisation. (Maslow 1968:153ff.)

Maslow (1968:158) based his motivational need theory on the assumption that humans' 'deepest needs are *not*, in themselves, dangerous or evil or bad'. The major motivating force in human nature is need gratification. Need deprivation or frustration leads to pathologies and evil behaviour whereas need fulfilment leads to health and ethical action (Maslow 1968:176-178). There are, however, according to Maslow (1968:164), two sets of forces that act on the individual - the internal, forward pressure towards need fulfilment and self-actualisation, and the negative external, backward (regressive) pressure of traditional social and educational institutions which control, inhibit, and suppress human nature. An understanding of the latter pressure makes it possible for the individual to disassociate himself therefrom and to grow instead towards health (Maslow 1968:166). What Maslow does not explain, is how society composed of individuals

became corrupt and a negative force in human development. Rousseau also failed to explain this (see section 3.3.2.4b).

Disassociation from 'regressive' social and educational institutions was a major thrust in the counterculture (see section 2.3.4) and it remains a major thrust in New Age thought.

Maslow (1968:159) defines a healthy culture as one which fosters 'universal self-actualisation'. In Maslow's terms, self-actualisation does not refer to the controlled development and acquirement of good habits. Human nature is good or at worst neutral, but never bad (Maslow 1968:4,181). Therefore, 'it is best to bring it out and encourage it rather than to suppress it' (Maslow 1968:4).

Maslow (1968:157) describes the values and characteristics of psychologically healthy persons whom he calls self-actualised persons. These values and characteristics include the universal veracities of responsibility, a firm identity, spontaneity, creativity, joy, serenity, a democratic respect for others, the ability to love, and so forth. His conclusion is that good values and characteristics are innate, embryonic potentialities that reside in all humans. Education does not implant them. Ideally 'it permits, or fosters, or encourages or helps what exists in embryo to become real and actual' (Maslow 1968:161).

I think Maslow should also have considered that psychologically healthy humans may tend to have good values because they have learnt, through proper education, to suppress their bad traits while developing their good traits and perhaps acquiring some good attributes that were not inborn.

What Maslow actually did in his study of psychologically healthy persons was to search for evidence that 'proved' his initial premise, namely that humans are essentially good and that any iniquity is not innate but acquired. He excluded from the outset that the propensity to sin may be inherent, and, therefore, he takes it for granted that his study of individuals with good values proves his initial premise. From this, he decided that if his hierarchy of needs is fulfilled the essential goodness purportedly rooted in the fundamental nature of the human being would actualise itself.

Humanness, for Maslow, does not refer to weakness and fallibility. Instead he holds that human nature essentially is what it ought-to-be. Hence he posited the latter as an endemic need for self-actualisation; a need that is thwarted by social and educational institutions that impose restrictions on desires or needs as he calls them. He does not consider the ought-to-be as a striving that requires purposeful education for its development and that it may often be thwarted by human nature itself.

Maslow elevated personal 'need' satisfaction (self-actualisation) as the highest good. He echoes Jung (see section 4.2.2.4) when he (1968:207) says that part of self-actualisation is the integration and fusion of opposites 'into a higher, superordinate unity'. Opposites such as selfishness and unselfishness, the inner self and the outer self (the ego), the rational and the intuitive, non-rational processes, are seen as complementary, synergistic poles (Maslow 1968:207-209). Synergy, a popular term in New Age thought, is the idea that opposites work 'collaboratively without conflict to the same ends' (Maslow 1968:208). All of this has a marked resemblance to the occult, Taoist, and Tantric principle of polar opposites (see sections 2.3.2.1, 2.4.1.2) and the interconnecting spiritual energy (see section 2.4.4).

The synthesis of opposites is primarily achieved through peak-experiences, during which the person experiences the 'higher' consciousness of unity with the whole of reality. According to Maslow (1968:210), a peak-experience transcends and integrates 'the splits within the person, between persons, within the world, and between the person and the world'.

b) *Peak-experiences*

Maslow (Heaney (ed) 1973:98) defines peak-experiences as follows:

[S]ecularized religious or mystical or transcendent experiences; or, more precisely, peak-experiences are the raw materials out of which not only religions can be built but also philosophies of any kind: educational, political, aesthetic, etc. Not only are these experiences not dependent on churches or specific religions... they do not necessarily imply any supernatural concepts. They are

well within the realm of nature, and can be investigated and discussed in an entirely naturalistic way.

Graham (1986:52) points out that 'Maslow's particular focus on peak-experience reflected his concern with the spiritual aspects of humanity'. Graham (1986:52) finds therefore in Maslow's writings echoes of Jung: a concern for expanded consciousness, religious experience, and the spiritual need in humans. Like Jung before him, Maslow is only concerned with the experience and not with spiritual truth. For Maslow, a peak-experience is self-validating; a 'universal potentiality of human nature, not the supernatural breaking in via a transcendent and personal God' (Chandler 1988:174).

Maslow continued, therefore, what Jung had started, namely the reinterpretation of spirituality in natural, psychological terms which places spiritual healing within the province of psychologists and psychotherapists.

Maslow's model of the authentic, self-actualised human individual is an individual whose spiritual need is met in a peak-experience, and who has no need for organised religion nor for imposed moral systems (Maslow in Heaney (ed) 1973:98-99). A peak-experience generates the eternal verities of sacredness, wholeness, and goodness (Maslow in Heaney (ed) 1973:102ff), and in addition, it energises the drive to authentic self-actualisation. The individual feels himself to be 'the creative center of his own activities and of his own perceptions, more self-determined, more a free agent, with more "freewill" than at other times' (Maslow in Heaney (ed) 1973:104).

It appears therefore that Maslow thinks, as did Kant and the Enlightenment Deists, that humans should throw away all external authorities and trust their own thought processes (see section 3.3.2.4). But where Kant held that the enlightened individual 'must do what his own reason tells him is right' (Brown 1968:100), Maslow maintains that the enlightened, self-actualised person must do what his inner self tells him is right. The possibility of a 'naturalistic, psychological value system that could be derived from man's own nature, without the necessity of recourse to authority outside the human being himself' (Maslow 1968:149) is the theme of Maslow's psychology of being. He believes that self-actualisation, as the realisation of the inner self's

tendency toward good values (Maslow 1968:155), can accomplish what Kant thought the development of reason could accomplish (Maslow 1968:149ff).

Since 'need' gratification and ultimately self-actualisation culminate in peak-experiences (Maslow 1968:154), a peak-experience is for Maslow (Heaney (ed) 1973:102), a 'way of becoming "god-like"'. Maslow (1971:278-279) talks of *metahumanness* in order to stress his idea that becoming perfect or godlike is a part of human nature. This view is reminiscent of Gurdjieff (see section 2.3.3.2f) who also held that humans are slumbering godlike 'supermen' with no need for imposed moral systems.

Maslow's views on the unlimited, godlike nature of human potential and the key positions that self-actualisation and peak-experiences occupy in this theory found resonance within the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2) and in transpersonal psychology (see section 4.4).

Another humanistic psychologist whose views found a receptive setting in the human potential movement was Carl Rogers (Graham 1986:58).

#### *4.3.1.3 Rogers' self or person-centred theory*

Carl Rogers (1902-1988) took a broadly similar view to that of Maslow, namely that people are by nature good and that human potential is unlimited (Chandler 1988:174). Rogers, too, believed in the innate tendency towards self-actualisation, and also considered self-actualisation to be synonymous with psychological health. He regarded the latter to represent the realisation of positive (or at worst neutral) capacities for open unlimited growth and development (Graham 1986:54).

Rogers insisted that the potential for self-actualisation resides within and that it is healthy and nondestructive in its intentions albeit only in so far as it remains uncontaminated by false values especially as propagated by parents and teachers. Rogers shared thus Rousseau's belief (set out in *Emile*) in the child's natural goodness that requires protection from contamination. (Shaffer 1978:81). According to Rogers (Lundin 1991:353), 'each person has an inherent tendency to

actualize his unique potential'.

Rogers claims that amidst conditions of genuine respect, empathy, acceptance, and trust, persons move from

fear of inner feelings and defence of them to an encouragement and acceptance of them; from being out of touch with their feelings to greater awareness of them; from living life by the introjected values of others to those experienced by themselves in the present; from distrust of the spontaneous aspects of themselves to trust in them; towards greater freedom and more responsible choices (Graham 1986:56).

In other words, the individual must become free of all but his own feelings and inner wisdom. In these Rogerian terms, education is a non-directive, facilitative release of inner wisdom; a process in which the student becomes in touch with his feelings and autonomously formulates his own beliefs and values (see section 6.2.2.3). Rogers' essential theme is freedom; 'the student's freedom to select and pursue learning goals most meaningful to himself or herself' (Shaffer 1978:109).

Rogerian education is grounded in faith, not in evidence about human nature. The elements of faith and trust in human nature that are found in humanistic psychology carry with them a definite element of risk 'for if the humanists of psychology are mistaken, they may be liberating a race of monsters' (Matson in Royce & Mos (ed) 1981:303-304). Veith (1987:129) points out that there is very little evidence that human beings are in fact what the humanistic psychologists consider them to be.

Rogers (1986:43ff) promotes sexual freedom in the name of personal dignity and responsibility. This has further implications than the AIDS risk. When personal feelings are exalted as the sole measure of sexual (and other moral) responsibilities, and '[w]hen vices are made to sound like virtues', Veith (1987:83) observes that then 'we begin to cultivate the sin that is more damning than all the rest, the evil that is worse than any sexual perversion ... self-righteousness'. From

an attitude of self-righteousness 'we try to convince ourselves, even in the midst of our sins, that we are basically good' (Veith 1987:84).

Humanity's essential goodness and its liberation from inelastic moral codes (especially with regard to sexuality) laid the foundation for the human potential movement. By means of developmental training courses and seminars, the human potential movement extends humanistic psychology's cultivation of the individual self and the latent, unlimited potential that is believed to reside in every individual.

#### **4.3.2 The human potential movement**

Humanistic psychology's unlimited view of human possibilities and the counterculture's assumption of an altogether different philosophy of life from traditional Western philosophies, be it orthodox Christianity or the philosophy of scientific materialism (see sections 2.3.4, 4.3.1.1), coalesced in the human potential movement.

The human potential movement began in the 1960s when a large number of young people defected from the West's empty gospel of scientific progress and material success (see section 2.3.4). An active search for meaning in life was launched, but the needed source of meaning was not sought in orthodox Christianity. 'Christianity had been rejected at the outset' (Adeney in Hoyt (ed) 1987:110). But the abandonment of orthodox Christianity and traditional standards of morality reinforced life's perceived meaninglessness. In itself, it 'created a vacuum, an emptiness and a meaninglessness, and gave rise to a groping for orientation' (Graham 1986:32).

The upshot of the perceived meaninglessness was the Existentialist position which turns inward to the self as the centre and creative source of meanings and values (see section 3.3.4.2). This was accompanied with an openness towards esoteric spiritual systems, particularly Eastern religions whose techniques such as yoga, Zen and TM (see sections 2.4.1.1, 2.4.1.2) were freely borrowed and synthesised with the basic assumptions of humanistic psychology. Out of this synthesis there emerged the human potential movement which ascribed a number of subgoals related to the general aim of full personal development.

Coan (1977:280-281) lists these subgoals as:

full immediate awareness, sensory awareness, or awareness of feeling;  
 spontaneity of expression;  
 self-transcendence or 'ego death';  
 joy or the peak-experience;  
 autonomy, independence, or experience of individual will;  
 trust of others, relatedness, or intimacy; and  
 transparency or the disclosure of one's thoughts and feelings to others.

Part and parcel of personal growth within the philosophy of the human potential movement (and in New Age thought) is the development of a transformed, spiritually alive consciousness articulated in terms of Maslow's peak-experience (see section 4.3.1.2b) and in the mystical altered state of consciousness that Eastern meditation techniques induces. For the followers of the human potential movement, this kind of experience suggests 'a distinctive, qualitatively different ... leap forward in man's evolution' (Shaffer 1978:153). Borrowing terminology from quantum physics (see section 5.3.2), New Agers refer to this spurge as a 'quantum' leap in humanity's supposed evolution.

The key player in the growth of self-development courses and seminars is the *Esalen Institute* established by Michael Murphy and Richard Price in 1962 at Big Sur on the coast of California. All the human potential interests ranging between sensitivity training, bodywork, meditation, and extrasensory perception have found their way into the Esalen catalogue of workshops (Shaffer 1978: 4-5). Esalen has thus become the platform of leaders of the human potential movement and proponents of New Age thought (Osborn 1992:34). The roster of people who have taught at Esalen constitutes a guide to New Age personalities and is categorised in Melton, Clark and Kelly (1991:205).

Among the many human 'growth' courses offered the better known are:

The *Forum* (previously called *est*): It refers to Werner Erhard's seminar training in which 'the veneer of social politeness that masks these [social] games from ourselves and others is stripped

away' (Efran, Lukens & Lukens 1986:42). The underlying philosophy is that '[w]e exist in an Alice-in-Wonderland world where reality and illusion are *never* fully distinguishable' (Efran, Lukens & Lukens 1986:42), and where 'we each create and are, therefore, totally responsible for our own reality' (Osborn 1992:35). One implication of this assumption, which is also widespread among New Agers, is ethical relativism (Osborn 1992:35). 'The Forum encourages participants to embrace "the way it is"' (Efran, Lukens & Lukens 1986:42), therefore, 'whatever is, is right' (Osborn 1992:35).

*The Arica*: It was founded by Oscar Ichazo and is based on Gurdjieff's teachings (Graham 1986:37; Storm 1991:23, 67; see section 2.3.3.2f). Arica uses meditation, physical exercises, chanting, nonstructured music, and philosophic tracts (Margolis 1977:40) to break down habitual patterns in the body and mind (Storm 1991:23).

*Silva mind control*: Meditation and guided imagery (shamanic visualisation (see section 2.4.1.3) and pathworking (see section 2.4.1.4)) are used to gain control of paranormal abilities (Margolis 1977:40). Positive thinking and creative visualisation (see section 2.4.3) are used to take 'control of the reality which our minds create' (Osborn 1992:36).

Techniques proclaimed under the banner of the human potential movement other than the above, are the various forms of bodywork (section 2.4.4); Zen, yoga, and TM (see section 2.4.1.1); Eastern martial arts; biofeedback; creative fantasy techniques, for example, Jungian active imagination (see section 4.2.2.3); Assagioli's psychosynthesis to establish contact with the 'higher' self and psychic or spiritual energies (Tageson 1982:14); psychodrama (to enforce awareness of rôles and rôle playing (Ferguson 1989:90); rebirthing (see section 2.4.1.5); and so forth. The list can, in fact, be extended to include all training methods 'which affect the mind, body, consciousness, values and the purpose of life' (Margolis 1977:38).

The human potential movement is more than a collection of therapeutic or quasi-therapeutic techniques. As a path towards 'enlightenment', a new form of consciousness, it 'is by and large an *educational* effort' (Shaffer 1978:142). Esalen's founders were inspired by the novelist Aldous Huxley (Osborn 1992:34) who, besides advocating 'the use of psychotropic drugs [for example,

mescaline and LSD] as a means of enhancing consciousness' (Graham 1986:34), was also 'committed to the notion of educating the whole person, and perceived the aim of education to be the facilitation of a qualitative change in being' (Graham 1986:43).

To facilitate the desired 'qualitative' change, the human potential movement 'exhorts individuals to abandon their obstinate allegiances to fixed ideas about themselves, inelastic moral codes, and habitual patterns of behaviour' (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:257). From this perspective, the educational aim constitutes the release of inner sources of wisdom which moral standards and social demands have closed off (see section 4.3.1.3). The underlying assumption is that the individual is free to expand himself 'along any one of an infinite number of dimensions, and the responsibility for choosing these dimensions is his own'. The stress is, however, on emotional experience and not on the rational intellect for which William Schutz's (Shaffer 1978:137) rationale is 'that contemporary Western man has overdeveloped his intellectual faculties at the expense of his bodily and sensory experience'.

According to the human potential movement, contact with and strengthening of feelings is the first step towards the expansion of awareness and the attainment of wholeness and peak-experiences. Encounter groups play a significant rôle (Shaffer 1978:137-138). Primarily developed by Rogers (see section 4.3.1.3), it was 'a means whereby persons can break through the barriers erected by themselves and others in order that they can react openly and freely with one another' (Graham 1986:61).

It is also conceived of as an approach to facilitate group interaction in the classroom, but 'here the cautious instructor may well want to actively intervene at times in order to make sure that no procedures are used that will expose another student to unfortunate amounts of group pressure or emotional harassment' (Shaffer 1978:110).

Although Shaffer is an advocate of the encounter approach in classroom practice, the last part of the above quotation actually puts in question its classroom usage. The purpose of an encounter group is to encourage the free and spontaneous expression of feelings - also the negative ones (Rogers 1973:19). It is quite conceivable that, even under guidance, children would make hurtful

remarks to one another, especially to those they do not like.

Fritz Perls,<sup>6</sup> the 'chief guru or high priest' of the human potential movement (Graham 1986:63), developed *gestalt therapy*, a form of confrontational encounter. Reminiscent of Gurdjieff (see section 2.3.3.2f), the idea is to shock individuals 'out of their habitual thought patterns into a variety of self-realization, of living in the Now' (Storm 1991:69). The 'variety of self-realization' refers to the harmonisation of the various aspects of the self into wholeness where conflicting aspects are accepted and integrated (Shaffer 1978:90-91).

The Jungian approach of integrating rather than overcoming bad character traits (see section 4.2.2.4) is thus evident in Perls' *gestalt therapy*. Perls teaches that a bad character trait (for example, bullying) is merely a counterreaction to the 'tyrannical demands' of the good (for example, nonbullying) part of the personality (Shaffer 1978:91-92). But this approach implies the amoral idea that bad traits exist and need to exist in order to balance the 'tyranny' of 'overly' good traits. Perls' interpretation of self-discovery and self-acceptance sounds 'one of the keynotes of humanistic psychology', namely the person's 'trust in his own authoritativeness' (Shaffer 1978:90).

This effectively sums up the tacit promise of the therapies of the human potential movement - the promise of happiness through self-discovery, self-acceptance, and self-fulfilment. However, '[e]levation of personal growth as the highest good has been sharply criticized on grounds that its assumptions ultimately lead to a psychology of narcissicism, asocial irresponsibility and personal license' (Chandler 1988:175). Lasch (1977:passim) is one such critic. Whether these problems can be overcome by the dictum that individuals are fully and solely responsible for their lives is open to question. This dictum is in itself problematic. It tacitly proclaims that if one is unhappy one has only oneself to blame. But life is often brutal and the deepest pain not self-created or self-inflicted. It is to trivialise the depths of inner pain to suggest that the complexity of causes for human suffering can be reduced to personal responsibility (whether in this life or in a supposed past life). It is a theory which leaves the person abandoned when tragedy comes which requires real courage rather than a changed attitude, being in touch with one's feelings, body massage, and engagement in techniques to achieve peak-experiences and a 'higher', cosmic

awareness. Even an article in the *New Age Journal* (Hunt & McMahon 1988:210-211) in criticism of Shirley MacLaine, brands this simplistic philosophy as 'cruel and callous ... the perfect yuppie religion' (see also section 6.2.1.3).

Nevertheless, the idea of taking responsibility for creating one's own reality is implicit in the teachings of academically qualified transpersonal psychologists. In sections 4.4.3, 6.2.1.3, 6.2.3, and 6.3 this discussion is continued.

The stage within American psychology for the emergence of a fourth force - transpersonal or spiritual psychology - was set by Maslow's stress on 'the life-enhancing nature' of peak-experiences (Storm 1991:66; see section 4.3.1.2b). Other pioneers of transpersonal psychology were the psychologists who were connected with the human potential movement and, in the 1960's, experimented with psychedelic drugs as a means of inducing altered states of consciousness.<sup>7</sup> These were, among others, the Harvard colleagues Richard Alpert, Timothy Leary, and Ralph Metzner (see section 2.3.4),<sup>8</sup> Stanislav Grof (see section 2.4.1.5) who first used the term transpersonal psychology (Storm 1991:66); and John Lilly<sup>9</sup> (see section 2.4.1.6) who propagated that 'the limits of one's beliefs set the limits of the experiences' (Lilly 1972:31). For Lilly (1972:32) and others (Bolen 1979:76), this means that all beliefs are limiting handicaps that must be transcended for learning and growth.

The difficulty, however, with such openness is that it implies an unlimited, uncritical acceptance of new, unfamiliar ideas and then anything becomes acceptable solely because it is new or unfamiliar. This stance eventually results in the closed mind of absolute relativism of which Bloom (1987:passim) writes. It is the mind that cannot critically question any idea because there is no knowable truth. Veith (1987:138) observes that:

Relativism, with its skepticism for its own sake, calls itself into question - 'What is the point of all this research if what I am saying is just as relative and changeable as what I am criticizing?' Skepticism is important for learning, but without some commitment to the objective existence of truth, it becomes like the 'universal wolf' in Shakespeare, which devours the whole world and then

must consume itself (*Troilus and Cressida*, 1.iii.121-124).

Psychedelic research was short-lived. Leary was imprisoned for the possession of marijuana (Storm 1991:51). Alpert pursued his spiritual search in Tibet from which he returned as *Baba Ram Dass*. He found his alternative in Yoga (Drury 1989:69). Metzner's alternative was the *I-Ching* (see section 4.6 note 3), Tantra (see section 2.4.1.2), and astrology (Drury 1989:71). Grof developed holotropic breathing (see section 2.4.1.5) and Lilly devised the float tank experience (see section 2.4.1.6).

In 1969 the consciousness movement (as the human potential movement is also referred to) culminated in the publication of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (Graham 1986:52).

#### 4.4 TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

As an academic discipline, transpersonal psychology aims at an empirical study of mystical, spiritual experiences and altered states of consciousness. Tart (Tart (ed) 1975:58), a foremost proponent of transpersonal psychology, explains why: 'The realm of the spiritual, and the connected realm of altered states of consciousness, is one of the most powerful forces that shape man's life and destiny.' The aim is a new spiritual paradigm that bridges and unites the areas of empirical science and esoteric spiritual systems (Tart (ed) 1975:passim; Wilber 1983:passim).

To elucidate the implications of transpersonal psychology, the interests and premises of which encompass New Age thought (Drury 1989:32), it will be discussed in three sections.

The first section concerns itself with the interests of transpersonal psychologists, namely 'states of consciousness beyond the ego [ordinary consciousness]' (Drury 1989:32) and the unlimited, paranormal abilities associated with such states, the acquirement of which is regarded as an essential part of the spiritual enlightenment process (Tart 1987:passim, 1989:passim).

The second section examines transpersonal psychology's underlying premise, namely that all reality, physical and spiritual, is part of the universe and is the manifestation of one Mind

(Diespecker 1991:passim). Mind and spirit (higher mental energy and spiritual energy) are therefore interchangeable, and the physical is in the process of evolving back to Mind/Spirit.

The last section deals with some implications of the transpersonal maxim of creating one's own reality and truth.

#### 4.4.1 Unlimited human potential

As 'an offshoot from humanistic psychology' and in 'alliance with humanistic psychology' (Tageson 1982:12), one finds in transpersonal psychology the same basic assumptions that are found in humanistic psychology, namely the individual's essential goodness and his need to self-actualise and realise his full potential. Transpersonal psychology takes the ideas of humanity's evolution - 'nature to humanity to divinity' (Wilber 1983:214) - and unlimited potential to their logical conclusions - to reunite with the One, the Source, the Omega point of Teilhard de Chardin (see section 5.2.3.1) where humans have all the powers of God.

Transpersonal psychology's major concern as part of self-discovery is, therefore, the development of paranormal powers, 'as a *human potential* [emphasis mine] and not as coming from independent spirit entities' (Hunt & McMahon 1988:136). Thus, although transpersonal psychology is called a fourth force or trend in psychological circles (Tageson 1982:12), it is in many ways an extension of parapsychology. The Jungian psychiatrist and New Age feminist Jean Shinoda Bolen (1979:74) says that because Jung's concept of synchronicity (see section 4.2.2.2) included parapsychological phenomena, it is unnecessary to compartmentalise psychiatry, Jungian analysis, and parapsychology.

Anthony Sutich (1907-1976) (Tageson 1982:13), a founding editor of both the *Journal for humanistic psychology* and the *Journal for transpersonal psychology*, defines transpersonal psychology as 'concerning itself with those ultimate *human* [emphasis mine] capacities and potentialities that have no systematic place in the other three movements of contemporary psychology'. In transpersonal psychology, paranormal abilities are regarded as natural, latent powers of the mind, the actualisation of which is associated with the next, higher step in

humanity's (alleged) evolution (Wilber 1981:9-10, 1983:250-251). Prior to this stage in evolution, they appear to be supernatural.

Referring to these powers as occult, the implication is neither that transpersonal psychologists and New Agers are Satanists<sup>10</sup> nor that their intentions are satanic. These people view occult powers in the same way that Kabbalist and alchemystical magicians viewed them, namely as hidden, latent powers of the mind that can be awakened and should then be used in the service of humanity as white magic (see section 2.3.2).

Because occult, spiritual powers lie 'beyond the range of ordinary knowledge' (Concise Oxford dictionary), transpersonal psychology focuses on consciousness in its altered states ranging from nocturnal dreaming to active imagination to hypnosis to states of deep mystical trance. Altered states of consciousness apparently transcend the limits of ordinary consciousness. Shamans enter spiritual space; mediums communicate with spirits; yogis arouse kundalini which is thought of as the energy of 'a female serpent or goddess lying dormant at the base of the spine' (Wilson & Weldon 1980:74); extrasensory perception and other psi (paranormal) phenomena become realisable possibilities of everyday living.

The tacit message of transpersonal psychology is that the 'natural' potential to directly perceive spiritual reality and the acquirement of the psi powers associated therewith, needs to be developed for complete self-realisation. This position emerges clearly from the authors in Tart ((ed) 1975:passim), from Tart (1987:passim, 1989:passim), and from the Arica system (see section 4.3.2). Furthermore, Jung's psychology is based on Hermetic, alchemystical magic (see section 4.2.2.1). Assagioli's psychology of psychosynthesis posits in addition to Jung's three layers of the psyche, a fourth 'superconscious sphere' in which exist 'the higher, psychic functions and spiritual energies' and the 'higher, transpersonal Self' with which 'contact must be established and maintained for true self-actualisation to occur' (Tageson 1982:14).

If occult powers were innate talents rather than externally given powers and if humanity evolved and were still evolving, then the development of these powers could be seen as an evolutionary, quantum leap into a higher, more advanced state of being (Wilson & Weldon 1980:276-277). If

one adds to this, the belief in the ultimately benign character of spiritual energy, then the fear of demonic possession and/or psychologically harmful experiences is undercut. But even Jung (1968:10) warned of the possible trauma involved in facing the 'absolute evil' of the Shadow, although he, nevertheless, maintained that the person should stay with the process of dealing with the Shadow (Jung 1940:153). Yogis also warn that arousing kundalini can cause mental derangement (Wilson & Weldon 1980:74ff).

Even without the lure (risk) of occult powers, the stress is always on the self. This is the real issue - the focus upon self and the consciousness of self itself. This is part of Western culture's 'obsession with self-image and self-affirmation' (Osborn 1992:78), and was derived from the widespread impact of humanistic psychology (Matzat 1990:21). In itself, it is narcissistic (Lasch 1977:passim). Transpersonal psychology and the consciousness movement serve to reinforce it.

The powers of the mind that are sought and the techniques used revolve around the self. Self-esteem, physical health, and material prosperity are sought mainly through positive thinking, affirmations, and creative visualisation (Gawain 1982:passim; Hay 1984:passim; Orr & Ray 1983:65ff, 196ff; Siegel 1986:passim). To achieve holistic (physical, emotional, and spiritual) well-being and an affirmative self-understanding, the practices include those described in section 2.4, the programmes of the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2), as well as many others.

One of these practices, dubbed an 'exercise in evolutionary memory' (stored in Jung's collective unconscious), was devised by Jean Houston. She has doctorates in psychology and religion, and travels annually about 250 000 miles to promote the new consciousness and self-improvement agendas. The exercise promises insight into one's personality and emotional healing.

An excerpt from a participating reporter's account of such a session which housewives, therapists, artists, social workers, clergy, educators, and health professionals attended, is quoted in Hunt and McMahon (1988:218):

'Remember when you were a fish,' Houston suggested in Sacramento. Nearly a thousand people ... dropped to the floor and began moving their 'fins' as if to

propel themselves through water.

‘Notice your perception as you roll like a fish. How does your world look, feel, sound, smell, taste?’

‘Then you came on land,’ Houston recalled, taking us through the amphibian stage ...

Then Houston suggested, ‘Allow yourself to fully remember being a reptile ... Then some of you flew. Other climbed trees.’ ...

We became a zoo of sounds and movements made by early mammals, monkeys, and apes.

Houston then called us to remember being ‘the early human who loses his/her protective furry covering’ and ... evolves into modern human.

This is obviously not an exercise in higher consciousness, but ordinary fantasising which would be quite innocent if it did not promise healing to emotionally hurting people. One wonders, as do Hunt & McMahon (1988:218), ‘why ... pretending to heal emotional problems by conjuring up nonexistent memories of a past life as a fish or a lizard [is] accepted as valid science?’

Transpersonal techniques are offered not only to adults whose participation is their free choice, but are also advocated as classroom techniques for enhancing interpersonal and intrapersonal communication; for getting in touch with one’s feelings; for becoming real (actualising all potentialities); for facilitating peak experiences; and for creating one’s own values and one’s own reality (Weinhold & Elliott 1979:passim; see sections 6.2.1.3, 6.3.2.1).

The transpersonal educational imperative is to transcend the present limits on human abilities. This instruction derives from the evolutionary presuppositions in the New Age worldview. But evolution is more than evolvment of matter through a series of intermediate, unexplained

advances to a culmination in humanity and the human mind. In transpersonal, New Age thought the very substance of everything is mind, and evolution is development from 'subconscious [matter] to self-conscious [humanity] to super-conscious [divinity]' (Wilber 1983:204). It is the premise that reality is essentially one interconnected Mind (or Spirit) that is addressed in the next section.

#### **4.4.2 Reality - a holistic, interconnected Mind**

##### ***4.4.2.1 The perennial philosophy and evolution to godhood***

In transpersonal psychology everything is mind. This statement does not say that physical reality (nature) is the tangible, objectively real expression of a Mind, like works of art and technology are the physical expressions of the human mind. The statement says that the myriad of things, animate and inanimate, are all manifestations of the same substance and that substance is mind. The idea that all is mind belongs to the so-called perennial philosophy, the philosophy at the core of all esoteric spiritual systems (Wilber 1983:3; see section 2.3.3.2d).

Wilber (1983:126ff), a leading figure in transpersonal psychology, explains the perennial philosophy as one that regards reality as the manifestation of mind or consciousness. The manifestation supposedly takes place on a hierarchy of dimensional levels. Hinduism and Buddhism identify six levels:

1. Physical - nonliving matter/energy
2. Biological - living, sentient matter/energy
3. Psychological - mind, ego, logic, thinking
4. Subtle - archetypal, transindividual, intuitive
5. Causal - formless radiance, perfect transcendence
6. Ultimate - consciousness as such, the source and nature of all other levels (Wilber 1983: 128-129).

These levels are neither separate, discrete nor isolated. 'They are indeed *different* levels, but

different levels of Consciousness' (Wilber 1983:129).

Wilber (1983:130ff) explains that 'in the beginning', the highest level of Ultimate Consciousness involuted downward into progressively lower and smaller, separate modes of consciousness which, although still part of the whole, forget that they are not separate, but merely different aspects of the whole. At the end of the involutory process, the lowest level of consciousness (but not the other levels) manifested itself as physical matter. At this point, our universe's history and physical matter's evolutionary process upward through the various levels and back to wholeness and Ultimate Consciousness started.<sup>11</sup>

Within this philosophy the one Mind (the Godhead) is, therefore, an impersonal substance, force, or energy that penetrates and contains all of reality (Diespecker 1991:33), and humanity is evolving upwards towards godhood as represented by the reconnection with the one original source (which is actually the cosmos (see sections 2.2.1, 2.31)).

In the reconnection with the source one can identify two options for transpersonal and New Age thinkers: monistic pantheism and pluralistic pantheism.

#### 4.4.2.2 *Monistic pantheism*

Monistic pantheism holds that while things appear to be separate, separateness is an illusion, 'an artificial or psychological construct' (Diespecker 1991:36). The perception of things as separate is the result of conditioning which 'encourages us to regard the world, not as it is, but as experts, scientists, psychologists, and philosophers assert that it is' (Diespecker 1991:35).

Because Western science traditionally uses analytical categories in its quest for knowledge and stresses the activity of conscious, rational thought, reality in the West is equated with the divisions which are perceived in a state of ordinary consciousness. Transpersonal and New Age thinkers reject the notion that ordinary consciousness is the optimal condition for perceiving reality. They maintain that it is an unfortunate state of somnambulism which encapsulates the individual mind and cuts it off from the collective, transpersonal Mind that contains all and is in all (Diespecker

1991:33ff, 66ff). The cost of this 'culturally imposed trance', according to Tart (1987:33), is automatised which acts as a major obstacle to the awakening and full realisation of human potential.

Monistic pantheism is an essentially Eastern view where the physical world and not only the separate multiplicity thereof is ultimately a meaningless illusion (Veith 1987:121). The illusory, nonreal view of physical reality, says Veith (1987:122), explains 'why science and objective research as we know them in the West did not arise in Hindu or Buddhist cultures. They did not lack intelligence or analytical ability. They were simply not interested in the physical world as such'.

In monism, the only reality is an undivided oneness which, Osborn (1992:121) maintains, 'is a very tenuous basis for environmentalism'. The health of an ecosystem, he explains, is closely related to its diversity and, therefore, a concern for diversity is fundamental to environmental responsibility. Osborn (1992:122) holds that: 'It is true that environmental concern has emerged within contemporary Indian society but the environmental track record of monistic cultures is by no means as enviable as some western Greens make out.'

Monism also runs counter to the high value that all Westerners including New Agers place on individualism. Despite the latter's rhetoric of ego-loss, it is personal self-actualisation that is sought in human potential therapies (see section 4.3.2). But monism implies the destruction of the awareness of the self as a separate unique individual. Its goal 'is the loss (or transcendence) of personal identity in the One' (Osborn 1992:123).

The loss of a personal, separate identity is what Wilber (1981:335ff, 1985:passim) propagates. He maintains that the path to true transcendence is the 'nondual' (monistic) path of the Eastern mystic. 'When the self sense dies, all that dissolves is not a real entity, but a simple boundary, a boundary that was never real, a boundary that was only imaginary' (Wilber 1981:337). The cause of misery, unfreedom, and exploitation of others is the sense of being a separate self (Wilber 1981:336). The only way out is the 'release from space, time, self, and mortality [into the eternal self/Atman/Buddha nature]' (Wilber 1981:337).

Veith (1987:121) opposes this position. He maintains that while generalities such as 'We are all one' and 'There is a single global consciousness' sound affirmative and loving, they make love impossible. Osborn (1992:123) is in agreement with Veith: 'There can be no relationships within the One because relationships entails another with whom one relates.' Veith (1987:121-122) explains:

Love means a relationship between people who are different from each other. Otherwise, loving someone else means nothing more than loving oneself. If God, other people, pieces of quartz, individual dolphins, different planets, and one's own soul are all the same, then loving God, loving other people, and loving nature become just glorified ways of loving oneself. The whole universe becomes sucked into the black hole of introversion and egotism.

It appears, therefore, that consistent monism has implications that run counter to the values of Western science, environmentalism, personal self-realisation, and real love for others. A less radical option is pluralistic pantheism or panentheism.

#### *4.4.2.3 Pluralistic pantheism*

Pluralistic pantheism stresses interconnectedness rather than undividedness. It maintains the reality and divinity of the one all-encompassing and all-pervading Mind yet it does not deny multiplicity (Osborn 1992:124). The Wiccan Starhawk (1989:39) expresses this idea as follows:

All things are one, yet each is separate, individual, unique ... The world of separate things is the reflection of the One, the One is the reflection of the myriad separate things of the world. We are all 'swirls' of the same energy, yet each swirl is unique in its own form and pattern.

The same idea is expressed in the creation-centred spirituality (see section 2.6 note 4) of the Dominican priest Matthew Fox (1983:passim) as well as in the process thought of philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead and Paul Tillich (Garrison 1982:31ff). Whitehead and Tillich

both influenced New Age thought (Ferguson 1989:463).

Pluralistic pantheism, usually called *panentheism*, understands the universe not as God but in God (Garrison 1982:44). The world is, in other words, a part of God's body. The two concepts, God and the universe, can be distinguished between, but in essence they cannot be separated. The divine energy, which Fox (1983:passim) calls the 'original blessing', flows through everything, interconnects the multiplicity of nature, and causes everything to strive for divine unity. Garrison (1982:46), who is a Jungian and panentheistic theologian, explains that

panentheism is striving to overcome the classical duality that kept God and the world absolutely distinct ... it is as strenuously attempting to maintain the diversity that allows genuine autonomy on both sides and consequently meaningful creative advance for both.

Panentheism upholds, therefore, the diversity of nature which is required in environmental care and also upholds human autonomy which, since the Enlightenment (section 3.3.2.4), has become for many Westerners the highest value. Added to this, it also strives to overcome 'all the pernicious dualities of western thought. The distinctions [in essence] between body and soul, man and woman, human and nonhuman, creature and God are dissolved' (Osborn 1992:161-162). This contradictory combination (on the one hand, the affirmation of separateness and human autonomy and, on the other hand, the denial of essential distinctions) is not without problems.

Firstly, panentheism is a return to the worldview of ancient mythological cultures where 'the physical world is a part of a god's body ... nature and the gods are continuous' (Veith 1987:120). This must inevitably clash with the scientific study of nature; 'in mythological cultures, nature becomes sacred and often taboo, not to be touched lest one blaspheme something holy and anger the gods' (Veith 1987:120).

Secondly, while panentheism upholds human autonomy, it takes away God's sole and absolute autonomy. God too is in process or, as Whitehead (Garrison 1982:35) explains, in 'the creative advance into novelty'. Thus, panentheism has the potential to annihilate God (see section 3.3.2.2).

Thirdly, determinism, not freedom nor autonomy, is the logical end conclusion of the belief that everything is a part of God (see section 3.3.2.2). Determinism is consistent with the belief in reincarnation and karma (see section 2.3.3.2d) and with the view that tragedies are learning experiences (see section 3.3.2.2) which are found among some but not all New Age thinkers. Determinism is, however, not consistent with the idea that humans (individually or collectively) create their own reality. This idea is implicitly or explicitly affirmed by all New Age thinkers and also by all other persons who deny the existence of absolute truth (see section 6.3).

In the next section the idea of creating one's own reality is explored.

#### 4.4.3 Creating one's own reality

At this point it is important to remind ourselves that in transpersonal psychology and New Age thought, God is a universal, all-encompassing, and all-pervading consciousness. Because humans are both in universal 'consciousness and are that consciousness' and because 'consciousness manifests [reality, namely] that which is material or physical as well as that which we regard as mental' (Diespecker 1991:69), it follows that through its thoughts, the human mind can manifest or create reality.

This appears to be in accordance with the nonmechanistic explanation of reality of the new physics (see section 5.3). The eminent physicist Sir James Jeans (1931:137) expresses the new scientific view of reality as follows:

The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it [that is, mind] as the creator and governor of the realm of matter - *not of course our individual minds*, [emphasise mine] but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thought.

The crucial words in the above quotation are those which have been emphasised. These words

separate Jeans' view from New Age thought. What Jeans is saying, is that the universe is the tangible expression of God's mind. This is analogous to the way in which the human mind gives tangible expression to its thoughts in works of art and technology. In the same way that the expressions and creations of our minds are not us nor our minds, so is the universe, as the expression and creation of God's mind, not God nor God's mind. Jeans (1931:134) expresses this analogy as follows: 'Modern scientific theory compels us to think of the creator as working outside time and space, which are a part of his creation, just as the artist is outside his canvas.'

This conception was not arbitrarily assumed by Jeans. It is based on the way in which reality is experienced by all humans, namely as objective and real. Just as human creations, be they works of art or technology, are the objective and real expressions of the human mind yet are not the human mind itself, so also is everything in the universe including humans, the objective and real expression of the Creator Mind yet nothing is that Mind itself (Wilder-Smith 1970:174ff). In this view, the highest creative ability of the human mind is intelligent thought that cannot create reality, but can use what is given to create art and technology.

New Age thinkers maintain, however, that reality is more than the mere physical expression of a Mind. It is Mind or, at least, part of Mind. In this view, reality which is unconscious mind must necessarily be unstructured. Mind can only attain structure when it becomes conscious. If reality is unstructured, the events that constitute an individual's life are necessarily the subjective constructs of that individually conscious mind, and can be transcended and changed in a state of higher consciousness. In this state, the latent powers of the human mind have been actualised and each individual can create his own desired reality. *No* event will be beyond the control of any individual mind. There will be no suffering and no disease because these are merely the manifestations of negative thoughts (Hay 1984: passim; Orr & Ray 1983:53ff).

But are the material world and the reality we experience in the world subjective? Do they have no existence which is objective, independent, and beyond the control of even the 'enlightened' human mind? Sir James Jeans is helpful in this problem. Jeans (Hunt & McMahon 1988:204ff) presented three criteria for the objective existence of all natural reality. These criteria are *surprise, continuity, and change*:

The element of surprise reveals itself, for example, in natural disasters which strike unexpectedly. They are not conceived of nor can they be averted by the human mind. Even on an individual level, accidents and illnesses cannot be averted by positive thinking. The element of continuity is seen in the steadfastness of nature. Not only does it require no support from the human mind, but the human mind cannot alter the course of nature. But nature also changes. Once again, natural changes clearly occur without the human mind creating them nor can the human mind stop the natural process of change.

Even if the three elements of reality - surprise, continuity, and change - could be overcome by the full realisation of human potential as transpersonal psychology posits it, the results would not be desirable but chaotic. 'Whose "reality" would be dominant, and how often would one person's self-created "reality" suddenly be overturned by another's imposing itself?' (Hunt & McMahon 1988:205).

Notwithstanding that it appears that the evidence concerning reality refutes the notion that the human 'thinker causes everything to be, or to happen, with thought' (Orr & Ray 1983:53), it is true that within limits a person creates his own emotional world. He creates his attitudes through his thoughts, but even here the individual's rôle is not absolute. It is always limited by circumstances beyond his control. Using affirmations and creative visualisation *cannot* ensure that one's journey through life will be free from tragedy.

Transpersonal psychology teaches that: 'When we become fully aware that we are wilfully creating our reality out of our imagination all the time, we can become fully alive to the limitless power of the creative mind' (Weinhold & Elliott 1979:139). This statement comes from a book written by a professor of counsellor education at the University of Colorado, and by a counsellor/supervisor at Gemini House, a residential facility for abused adolescents in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. But their advice is highly irresponsible. A child from a prosperous home who is exceptionally gifted and excels in all he does, will be inclined to take this advice at face-value. This child will be left defenceless and may experience irreparable psychological damage if he is, for example, paralysed in an accident.

It is not true that we independently and autonomously create our own reality. Yet it is true that:

Whatever a man puts into his mind and *thinks* about determines what he will *feel* ... True, realistic thoughts will produce realistic emotions ... Therefore, it is absolutely critical that we think thoughts that are truth rather than thoughts that are error (George 1989:29).

Thinking thoughts that correspond to reality discourages psychological escapism into a newly 'created' reality and, instead, encourages a realistic attitude to one's problems, namely to confront them and to work out a real solution which may often mean that one must learn to live courageously with that which one cannot change.

The idea of creating one's own reality subverts moral conscience. The victim becomes the creator of his own misfortune, be it tragedy or the lack of exceptional talent. To the child whose mother has died or one who has been physically and mentally abused, the idea of creating one's own reality is cruel and amoral. These children need real support in their real suffering not an imaginary new reality. And to create a classroom environment that emphasises limitless potential and the idea of creating one's own reality when there is more often than not at least one child who works so very hard yet still fails to achieve high marks, is inexcusable.

Discussion of this important issue is continued in sections 6.2.1.3, 6.2.3 and 6.3.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the roots and features of New Age thought as they appear in Western psychology were reviewed. This enables one to identify in conclusion the two presuppositions on which the whole of the New Age worldview rests - mind as the substance of reality, and evolution. The former tries to explain the evolutionary emergence of the human mind which the mechanistic view of evolution (see section 5.2.2) has failed to explain (Gitt 1993:48ff; Wilder-Smith 1970:171ff). Evolution, on the other hand, justifies further lofty possibilities of the human mind, namely continued evolutionary progress to the ultimate - divinity.

These presuppositions as they are supported or not supported by scientific discoveries and theories, as well as other aspects of New Age thought that are related to or derived from Western science, will be examined in the following chapter.

#### 4.6 NOTES

1. Totemism is the belief that a tribe or group of people descended from an object in nature, usually an animal. This object is the totem and embodies a powerful protector of the tribe and is worshipped as a symbol of closeness of humans with nature (Gitt 1995:31).
2. Jung (1967:201) practised yoga, but to relax and to hold the emotions in check, not to deal with the voices that he believed arose from the unconscious.
3. The *I-Ching* is a Chinese divinatory tool consisting of sticks that are thrown and the configurations that the sticks form have specific meanings as to future events (Osborn 1992:30).
4. Disastrous archetypal possession of the mind, Jung believes, occurs not only on an individual level, but also on a national level. The latter is what Jung believes happened in Nazi Germany as he explains in his essay, *Wotan* (Jung 1970:179ff).
5. For a full description of the relationship between the counterculture and humanistic psychology consult Graham (1986:23ff) and Shaffer (1978:passim).
6. Perls (Drury 1989:44; Graham 1986:63; Storm 1991:69) penned the credo of the human potential movement, the Gestalt prayer:

I do my thing, and you do your thing.

I am not in this world to live up to your expectations.

And you are not in this world to live up to mine.

You are you, and I am I,

And if by chance we find each other, its beautiful.

If not, it can't be helped.

7. See Drury (1989:52ff) for a full account of the psychedelic revolution from the viewpoint of a New Ager. Storm (1991:47ff) also gives a full account, but she is not sympathetic to the search for enlightenment.
8. Alpert, Leary, and Metzner chose as their model for chemical enlightenment the *Bardo Thodol* or *Tibetan book of the dead*. This text was also prized by Aldous Huxley, a practising Buddhist, who alluded to it in his book, (1972) *The doors of perception*. (Drury 1989:66).
9. John Lilly (the deviser of the float-tank (see section 2.4.1.6)) received his spiritual training from Ichazo the founder of the Arica system (Storm 1991:67).
10. Occultism and Satanism do not refer to the same spiritual systems. A noted authority on occultism and what was traditionally in the West regarded as underground, alternative religions (see section 2.3), James Webb (1974:142-143) defines Satanism as 'Devil-worship: wanton propitiation of the Power of Evil in the hope that it will grant favors in this world'. Occultism, on the other hand, refers to an interest in 'archaic forms of belief' (Webb 1974:7), a 'concentration on superstitions' (Webb 1974:8), and subjects such as 'hypnotism, magic, astrology, water-diving, "secret" societies, and a multitude of similar topics of doubtful intellectual responsibility' (Webb 1974:11). Occultism tends to accompany a flight from reason, especially in circumstances of anxiety, discontent, and uncertainty (Webb 1974:5ff).

To orthodox Christians, occultism is heresy, as are all philosophies (spiritual and secular) that add to, take away, or change the message of the Bible (Webb 1974:143).

Wiccans and New Agers approach spiritual reality from within an overall concept of essential goodness (see sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1). The existence of Satan is not even

acknowledged. However, the New Age worldview embraces moral relativism (see section 3.4.2) and if relativism is consistently applied, it means that they cannot logically condemn Satanism. But, if one is consistent, neither can it be condemned by Existentialists (see section 3.3.4.2), logical positivists (see section 3.3.4.3), nor by any other person who endorses the idea that truth (not values) is not ahistorical, but relative to time, place, and society.

11. This theory leaves many unanswered questions:

If humans are evolving towards godhood, why are the buried minds in nonliving forms of matter, plants, and animals not also evolving to higher consciousness?

Why did only the last stage of involution manifest itself as matter while during evolution, levels 2 and 3 are also higher/different forms of matter?

Why does the change in material form from the nonliving to the human apparently stop at the human level?

Why did Buddha and Krishna who, Wilber (1983:131-132) says, achieved level 5 not undergo an accompanying evolutionary change in material form?

## CHAPTER 5

### NEW AGE THOUGHT AND WESTERN SCIENCE: THE 'SCIENTIFIC' GROUNDING OF NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding three chapters various premises of the New Age worldview were examined in the light of their roots in Western history. It was seen that important foundations of the New Age worldview were laid in the West's esoteric spiritual tradition (chapter 2); in the West's philosophical development towards moral relativism (chapter 3); and in the psychological explorations of Freud, Jung, and the humanistic psychologists (chapter 4). This chapter will complete the survey of the New Age worldview's roots in Western history by considering the influence that theories formulated in the natural sciences had on the shaping of the New Age worldview.

New Age thinkers see their worldview as one that encompasses a religion grounded in science (Starhawk 1989:203). New Age authors such as Capra (1975:passim), Talbot (1981:passim), and Zukav (1979:passim) draw extensive parallels between the new physics and mysticism. Their claim is that mystical thought provides 'a consistent and relevant philosophical background to the theories of contemporary science' (Capra 1975:24).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the necessary background material against which the above New Age claim will be examined in the following chapter (see sections 6.3.1, 6.3.3.1). To achieve this purpose, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first two sections deal with the theories in the natural sciences from which New Age thought draws. The first section considers evolution and the relevant evolutionary explanations for the origin of the cosmos and the life it contains. The second section examines discoveries and theories within the new physics which Capra (1990:xvii) asserts, 'have brought about ... a holistic and ecological view [concerning God and nature], a view which I [Capra] have found to be similar to the views of mystics of all ages and traditions'. The third section deals with the epistemology of New Age thought. In this

section the critique that is directed against rational thought as well as the essential experiential and subjective nature of New Age epistemology will be examined.

## 5.2 EVOLUTION: MATERIALISTIC AND VITALISTIC THEORIES OF ORIGINS

### 5.2.1 Evolution - a metaphysical frame of reference

The origin of the universe and the life that it contains is a question that every worldview attempts to answer. Less than one hundred and fifty years ago, the majority of Western people considered a supranatural, intelligent Mind to be the ultimate first cause behind the origin and design of the universe. This was based on the logic that a design requires a designer. This logic suffered, however, a practically total eclipse after Darwin's theory of evolution became the accepted orthodoxy. Darwin's theory rendered superfluous the introduction of any postulate of an exogenous Mind behind nature's complex biological design and order. (Wilder-Smith 1975:17-18.)

Throughout this thesis, the term 'evolution' refers solely to macroevolution, that is, evolution from nonliving matter right through to human life through natural causes only. These causes can be regarded either as specific, though still unknown, physico-chemical properties of matter (*materialism*) or as life-giving spiritual properties that reside in matter (*vitalism* or *organicism*). In the latter case, the life-giving spiritual property is in matter and it is, therefore, natural albeit spiritual and not supranatural and transcendent to the whole cosmos.

Macroevolution goes beyond microevolution, that is, beyond observable and demonstrable evolutionary changes such as variations, mutations, or speciation. Microevolution is a fact (Berry in Burke (ed) 1985:98; Hoover in Thomas (ed) 1988:16; Morris in Andrews, Gitt & Ouweneel (eds) 1986:179). Microevolution occurs both in nature and in the laboratory when a new breed of plant or animal species is bred, for example, a new rose or a new variety of dog (Hoover in Thomas (ed) 1988:16).

Evolution in the form of macroevolution is a hypothetical extrapolation from microevolution. From the factual evidence of variation within a species, the conclusion is drawn that radical changes in phylic form can occur. Thus, although all breeding experimentation has failed to produce phylic deviation (White 1978:117-118), macroevolution is assumed to have occurred in the past and to have led to the variety and complexity of life forms as they are known today (Wilder-Smith 1970:24). In this form, therefore, evolution is a theory of origins and it owes its acceptance into the realm of science to Charles Darwin (1809-1882).

Sir Karl Popper (Sunderland 1988:28) says the following about evolution:

I have come to the conclusion that Darwinism [by extension, any theory on origins] is not a testable scientific theory, but a *metaphysical research programme* [emphasis mine] - a possible framework for testable scientific theories. It suggests the existence of a mechanism of adaptation ...

This is of course the reason why Darwinism has been almost universally accepted. Its theory of adaptation was the first nontheistic one that was convincing, and theism was worse than an open admission of failure, for it created the impression that an ultimate explanation had been reached.

Thus Popper who is self an evolutionist accepts macroevolution neither as a scientific fact nor even as a scientific theory. According to Popper, evolution is a metaphysical frame of reference. In other words, it is a metaphysical model which science can use to account for the variety of living things. Its assumptions, however, that the cosmos contains all reality and that the origin and development of all the complex living systems are self-generated by processes innate in the very structure of matter are, nevertheless, scientifically untestable. Evolution in Popperian terms provides only a *potentially* true metaphysical model and its acceptance requires, therefore, an act of faith as is the case with creation.

Within the evolutionary framework, natural explanations are sought for abiogenesis (the genesis of life from nonlife) and phylogenesis (the appearance of the different phylic species). Axiomatic

to evolution is, therefore, a philosophical, metaphysical worldview of *naturalism* which can be subdivided into either:

*materialism* where the origin and development of life forms are reduced to physico-chemical processes; or

*vitalism/spiritualism* where the origin and development of life forms are reduced to inevitable, impersonal outworkings of indwelling, vital/spiritual properties of matter.

The latter form of naturalism is held, inter alia, in the New Age worldview in which everything is regarded as definitively spiritual (see section 2.2.1).

Both materialists and spiritualists 'seek the ground of all things *within visible* [that is, natural] *reality itself*' (Ouweneel in Andrews, Gitt & Ouweneel (eds) 1986:86). This means that although the envisaged New Age paradigm shift constitutes a shift from materialism to spiritualism, it still remains within the metaphysical framework of evolutionary naturalism.

The evolutionary theory of origins was not a discovery of modern science. Evolutionary theories preceded Darwin. These theories together with the climate of scepticism towards Biblical truth that the Enlightenment had generated (see section 3.3.2.4) prepared the ground for the acceptance of evolution into Western science in the nineteenth century.

## 5.2.2 Darwinism and Western thought

### 5.2.2.1 *The historical roots of Darwinism*

The idea of evolution, namely 'that everything had evolved by some natural process rather than being created by a Supernatural [in my terminology: Supranatural (see section 1.7)] Power', did not originate with Charles Darwin (Sunderland 1988:13). Evolutionary ideas can be traced in the ancient philosophies of the Chinese, Hindu, Egyptian, Assyrian, and Greek nations. In ancient Greek thought, the first name mentioned to elucidate a theory of origins involving a progressive evolution from simple elements into plants, then animals, and finally into humans, was Thales of Miletus (640-546 BC) (Sunderland 1988:13). These early evolutionary theories revolved around

the idea of the spontaneous generation of life from nothing or from nonliving matter (Goertz 1990:5; Sunderland 1988:13). For example, Aristotle believed that maggots and flies were generated from rotting flesh and slime (Goertz 1990:234), the Egyptians believed that frogs were spontaneously generated after the Nile had flooded (Sunderland 1988:13), and the Chinese and medieval Europeans believed that insects developed from nothing on plants (Goertz 1990:234-235; Sunderland 1988:13).<sup>1</sup>

Although Europe, in its time of domination by the Catholic Church, paid nominal allegiance to Biblical creationism (Morris 1989:199), evolutionary concepts were handed down through the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle (Sunderland 1988:13). Western thought also inherited from the ancient Greeks the idea of a *great chain of being*<sup>2</sup> (hierarchy of living earthly beings).

Prior to Darwin, the great chain of being was conceived of as a static, hierarchical structure ranging from the lowest, simplest form of life to the highest, most complex form of life, humanity. Below the great chain was inanimate matter and above it was God. This scheme was especially popular during the Middle Ages up to the late eighteenth century (Lovejoy 1942:59). It was held as a metaphysical principle, a plan emanating from the mind of God (Morris 1989:185; Osborn 1992:80; Stromberg 1966:274).

As a static hierarchy, the great chain of being was unevolutionary in its outlook especially since the Christianising thereof made 'a decisive break in the chain between God and creation' (Osborn 1992:80). In its upward ascent of life forms, the great chain could, however, lend itself to the notion of the evolution of all life forms from one common ancestor (Stromberg 1966:274). The noted evolutionist and historian of evolutionary thought Loren Eiseley (Morris 1989:185) maintains that: 'All that the Chain of being actually needed to become a full-fledged evolutionary theory was the introduction into it of the conception of time in vast quantities added to mutability of form.'

The vast amount of time was supplied by geological uniformitarianism. In contrast to catastrophism which ascribes geological and fossil formation mainly to past catastrophic events

(earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, climatic changes, floods, or impacts of extraterrestrial bodies), uniformitarianism or gradualism explains geological and fossil formation by assuming the steady, unchanging operation of natural forces over immensely long periods of time. The mechanism for the mutability of form was supplied by Charles Darwin's hypothesis of natural selection or the survival of the fittest.

Before Darwin there had been other modern biological evolutionists. Among these were Benoit de Maillet (1656-1738), Pierre de Maupertuis (1698-1759), Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), Charles Darwin's grandfather Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802), and Jean Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829). According to the historian, Benjamin Farrington (Sunderland 1988:15), Darwin did not acknowledge the previous contributions to his theory nor that natural selection had been used by the theologian William Paley (1743-1805) and by the nineteenth century scientist Edward Blyth who argued that only the fittest survived in order to preserve the created type.<sup>3</sup> Darwin, writes Farrington (Sunderland 1988:15), was familiar with Paley's book, [1802] *Natural theology or evidence of the existence and attributes of the Deity collected from the appearances of nature*, and 'found his logic as cogent as that of Euclid'.

It could, therefore, not have been weak or erroneous argumentation on Paley's part that led Darwin to reject Paley's view (that natural selection speaks of phyllic stability) and to posit natural selection as the mechanism for evolution from lower species to new, higher species. Paley and Darwin had different metaphysical beliefs. Paley was a theist and the chief burden of his book 'was that all nature speaks of the Designer behind it' (Wilder-Smith 1970:229). Darwin was an agnostic (Brown 1968:149; Stromberg 1966:279) and he 'attempted to explain the origination of the great diversity of life without the necessity of any divine power' (Sunderland 1988:16). One of his central theses 'was that *design by no means proved a designer behind it. Design might be designed as it were, but design might also just as easily arise from randomness*' (Wilder-Smith 1970:230).

To understand why Darwin's theory was readily accepted by nineteenth century scientists, one must briefly turn back to the Enlightenment in which the Newtonian worldview and Deism were in the ascendancy (see sections 3.3.2.3, 3.3.2.4).

Deism had room for a Creator of the perfect world-machine, but it had no room for the Creator's involvement with the world. The human individual was autonomous and his own reason was the sole judge of everything (see section 3.3.2.4). Because reason alone cannot explain the supranatural, the supranatural was banished by Kant (see section 3.3.2.4c) from rational thought. This opened the door to naturalism and secular materialism.

Agnosticism towards the spiritual domain is exemplified in Kant's philosophy where knowledge of the spiritual noumena is beyond reason and therefore unattainable by the human intellect. Kant pronounced the efforts of natural theology to argue from design to Designer, to be 'null and void' (Brown 1968:99). Acceptance of Kant's rejection of God and the supranatural as legitimate provinces of human reason (see section 3.3.2.4c) meant that science as a rational activity pertaining to knowledge of the natural world could henceforth proceed on purely secular, natural, and material principles. The metaphysical message carried by science after the Enlightenment was materialism.

Against this background of materialism in science, Darwin published his book, [1859] *The origin of species by means of natural selection or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*. '[P]eople were in the mood to hail it as what seemed to be the first totally acceptable explanation for the origin and development of living things' (Frair & Davis 1983:12). Popper (see section 5.2.1) pointed out that its acceptability lay in its nontheistic mechanism for phylic variation. Thus, recourse to God as the creator of the world and its living things could be dispensed with. As the atheist biologist Sir Julian Huxley (Gitt 1995:35) writes: 'Darwinism removed the idea of a Creator-God from the sphere of rational statements.' Thereby Darwin 'swept away the logic which had been the basis of a great deal of human reasoning since the dawn of history - that design proves a designer' (Wilder-Smith 1970:230).

At this stage, it is appropriate to explore the impact that Darwinism had on Western science since it underscores the critique that New Age thinkers direct against the philosophical schools that shaped Western scientific thought after Darwin.

Darwinism the evolution of life 'is based on mechanical agents which are defined by the environment (external selection) ... Darwin's theory was a mechanistic theory of life'.

Darwinian evolution reinforced and entrenched mechanism. What it did shatter was, firstly, 'the divine hypothesis to which intellectuals [since the Enlightenment (see section 3.3.2.4)] were unwilling to submit' (Wilder-Smith 1970:232). Flowing from this, it also destroyed teleology, that is, meaning and purpose in life: 'Darwin's theory ... ruined the notion of a universal teleology' (Wuketits in Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:12; cf also von Bertalanffy in Barlow (ed) 1991:107). Prior to Darwin, the mechanistic view of life included teleology. The general view was: 'An organism may be a machine; but this machine might have been created by God and built according to a divine plan; hence the machine could serve a "higher purpose"' (Wuketits in Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:14; cf also von Bertalanffy in Barlow (ed) 1991:107). In the aftermath of Darwin's theory, the scene changed; 'now the origin of purposiveness [and design] in the living world seemed explained on the basis of chance variation and selections' (Von Bertalanffy in Barlow (ed) 1991:107). The majority of biologists discarded higher, spiritual concepts of teleology and accepted that the purpose of all life was solely physical survival (Wuketits in Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:14-15).

This idea that life's purpose is exclusively physical survival is pure materialism and it was bred by Darwin's theory of evolution. Capra (1990:37ff, 93ff) identifies the Newtonian worldview (see section 3.3.2.3) and Cartesian rationalism (see section 3.3.2.1) as the root causes of the West's erroneous value system. In contrast to Capra, Wilder-Smith (1975:10) identifies the materialism that Darwin's theory bred as the root cause of the West's social problems:

Darwin and [Thomas] Huxley<sup>4</sup> were the leading protagonists of the view that there was no purpose, concept or meaning behind life. Life was not the result of the love, foresight, care, creation or compassion of a God of these concepts. It was the result of cold chance and nothing else ... In this way the views which scientific materialism began putting forward removed concepts such as love, creation or compassion from being the prime movers behind life and supplanted them with cold, feelingless, blind chance. Frankly then, can we wonder that when

these views had taken root in the general culture of the population (after about one hundred years), they bred the cold feelinglessness which characterises the revolutionary temper of today? ... We removed compassion, creativeness and love as the basis of our concept of the prime mover behind life. Why be surprised then if we reap what we have sown in our own culture?

New Agers laudably want to restore love and compassion to the world. This is the driving force behind the New Age worldview (see section 3.4.1). But it is questionable whether a problem can be successfully resolved if the actual cause (in this case, the theory of evolution) is not identified.

Capra (see above) ascribes the mechanistic, reductionist paradigm to Descartes (see section 3.3.2.1), but this is valid only in so far as it concerns the biological study of the plant and animal realms. The study of human nature encompasses, however, both biological and psychological aspects. With regard to the latter, Descartes' dualism set a limit to mechanistic reductionism. 'Man was not to be regarded as a mere machine, but as endowed with free will not submitted to the law of nature' (Von Bertalanffy in Barlow (ed) 1991:106). 'Darwinians', on the other hand, 'were "monists" (their foes said materialists) who could not accept any mind-body dualism, any separation between the physical world and the mental ... Man became a part of the biological natural order as he had not been before' (Stromberg 1966:283) - a view which is accepted by New Agers except that the natural order of which humankind is a part, is a spiritual or psychic order (see sections 2.2.1, 4.4.2). The biological interconnectedness of Darwin's theory paved the way for the New Age worldview of spiritual (psychic) interconnectedness. Darwin brought humankind down to the level of mere animal. The New Age worldview now attempts to lift humankind to the level of godhood by positing that the whole of nature is one interconnected divine entity (see sections 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 4.4.2).

Darwin's degradation of humans became the accepted view among the intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After Darwin, the early representatives of the humanities

held the view that man was no longer a person created in the image of God, but an elevated animal governed by drives and instincts. All that is essential in man

was reduced, not to his relation to the Creator, but to his presumed origins from the animal kingdom (Ouweneel in Andrews, Gitt & Ouweneel (eds) 1986:83).

Freud's theory (see section 4.2.1) exemplifies this attitude.

In the reduction of different aspects of being human to nothing but one aspect (physical drives and instincts), Cartesian dualism had been the first step. It collapsed the orthodox Christian trilogical view of human nature - spirit/soul, mind, body - into a dualism of mind and body which subsumed the spirit/soul into the mind. Darwin subsequently completed what Descartes had started. He collapsed the dualism into monism: the mind was subsumed into the physical body (matter).

For the materialistic evolutionists, mind 'is merely the highest product of matter' (Engels in Gitt 1993:48). For the spiritual evolutionists, matter is the lowest form of spirit (Wilber-Smith 1983:128-129; see section 4.4.2)

Materialistic evolution was appropriated by Western science. The other approach to evolution, namely the vitalist/spiritualist approach is held in the New Age worldview. In this form, it was appropriated by occultists such as Blavatsky (see section 2.3.3.2d) and by philosophers such as Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). Bergson's philosophy of creative evolution was one of the building blocks of the philosophy of the Christian mystic and scientist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Osborn 1992:81). Whitehead's process philosophy was the source of process theology with which Teilhard's philosophy is comparable (Brown 1968:240-241).

Since Teilhard's philosophy was of foremost influence on New Age thought (Ferguson 1989:463), his philosophy requires closer examination.

### 5.2.3 Vitalistic theories of evolution

#### 5.2.3.1 *Teilhard de Chardin's theory of cosmic evolution*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was a Jesuit priest schooled in paleontology. Teilhard's 'great aim was to reconcile Christian theology with evolutionary theory, in order to achieve a scientific view of the divine purpose and man's place in the universe' (Brown 1968:237). His philosophy was, however, criticised by the Catholic Church as minimising original sin and compromising the nature of God (Brown 1968:241). He was subsequently forbidden to publish his evolutionary theories during his lifetime.

Teilhard's starting point is evolution. For him, evolution from nonliving matter to humans is absolute: 'Evolution is a light illuminating all facts, a curve that all lines must follow' (Teilhard 1955:241). In contrast with Darwinism where evolution is without purpose and directed only by chance factors, Teilhard holds that the very thrust of cosmic evolution is the appearance of humankind (Fernando in Zonneveld & Muller (eds) 1983:29). Randomness is only apparent: 'Beneath the apparent randomness of trial and error and natural selection there is a privileged axis, along which evolution is trying to move all the time - towards increasing complexity and consciousness. Man is the end-point which gives meaning to everything that went before' (Fernando in Zonneveld & Muller (eds) 1983:28). It is on the planet Earth that humankind appeared and it is, therefore, on Earth that the drama of cosmic evolution is played out to its final completion.

In Teilhard's theory, evolution is directed by an inherent psychic urge in matter that drives it inexorably forward and upward to greater physical complexity, life, and consciousness. Teilhard 'believed that God made matter so that it was an algorithm of all life and order in the past, present and future' (Wilder-Smith 1970:223).

Teilhard's position is thus that potential life and consciousness are locked up in all matter throughout the universe. It is the 'within' of an entity. The 'without' of an entity signifies its physical, material organisation, that is, its physical complexity. All entities have both a without

and a within (Teilhard 1955:58ff). Both are in the process of evolution and in this process the degrees of development of physical complexity and consciousness correspond in a direct relationship to one another (apparently up to a point as we shall see) according to what Teilhard calls the law of complexity-consciousness (Teilhard 1955:328-330).

The evolution of both physical complexity and consciousness reached a high point in human beings. With the breakthrough into humanity, the *noosphere* (the mind-sphere - derived from the Greek word *nous* for mind) was added to the earth's biosphere (the layer of life on the surface of the earth) (Teilhard 1955:202).

In the noosphere evolution occurs differently from the way it occurs in the biosphere. Changes in physical organisation cease and humanity progresses towards one unbroken 'interthinking' whole (Russel in Bloom (ed) 1991:15; Teilhard 1955:266ff). Evolution is towards higher forms of consciousness culminating in human spirituality (Capra 1990:331).

The final point of the whole cosmic evolutionary process. Teilhard calls the *Omega Point*. He (1955:276-277) explains the evolution of consciousness to the Omega Point as follows:

We are faced with a harmonious collectivity of consciousness the equivalent to a sort of super-consciousness. The idea is that of the earth becoming enclosed in a single thinking envelope so as to form, functionally, no more than a single vast grain of thought on the sidereal scale, the plurality of individual reflections grouping themselves together, reinforcing one another in the act of a single unanimous reflection.

Individual personality, so highly valued by Westerners, is not lost:

... each particular consciousness remaining conscious of itself at the end of the operation, and even (this must absolutely be understood) each particular consciousness is becoming still more itself and thus more clearly distinct from others the closer it gets to them in Omega (Teilhard 1955:287).

*After* having worked out his evolutionary theory, Teilhard (1955:319ff) fitted Christianity into it. Teilhard (1955:322) sees Christ as the inner 'principle of vitality' as well as the Omega Point, the centre in which all centres of consciousness will converge and unite. Then, says Teilhard (1955:322), '*God shall be in all ... a superior form of "pantheism" ... [and] perfect unity*'.

Teilhard adds Christianity to evolution, but the evolutionist and ecophilosopher Skolimowski (Zonneveld & Muller (eds) 1983:60-61) maintains that evolutionary theory, including Teilhard's, cannot accommodate orthodox Christianity:

There is profound incoherence in Teilhard's view of evolution: on the one hand, it is for him a *forward* unfolding process which culminates at Omega Point, at the end of time; and on the other hand, it is a process of going *back* to the original Christian God. By attempting to subsume Omega Point under Christian theology, Teilhard undermines the *raison d'être* of evolution as an unfolding and self-actualising process ... [T]he Judeo-Christian tradition ... is based on the notion of Paradise Lost/Paradise Regained; while the Omega story of evolution maintains that we never return ... If we recognise the notion and the authority of God as conceived in the traditional religions, particularly Christianity ... [w]hat we *can* do and the only thing we *can* do is to *return* to the Paradise Lost, to reacquire virtues that have been bestowed on us by God-the-Original-Maker. If, on the other hand, we see ourselves as unfinished spiritual beings ... then we simply cannot accept the notion of the traditional God who [originally] made us perfect and whom we [can] know because once we were close to him. When we contemplate our primordial beginnings in the cosmic dust [in accordance with evolutionary theory], then we see that they were far from godly. It is only at the end that we may become godly. But only if we actualize God in ourselves. God is in the making - in us ... God is spirituality actualizing itself in us ...

But there is a way of incorporating the Christo/Genesis into evolutionary design, namely by treating Christ not as God, as a point of final destiny and ultimate striving, but as a symbol, an inspiration, a reminder that even at that stage of our

evolutionary development we *are* capable of so much grace and divinity. The Christ-consciousness becomes ... an imaginary flame that illumines our road towards greater grace and consciousness.

The final paragraph in the above quotation expresses the view that is held of Christ by New Agers. On the one hand is the historical man who was not the unique incarnation of God, but a prototype of human potentiality, and on the other hand is the cosmic Christ, the inner principle that drives humanity upwards to unity in a state of spiritual consciousness. Ferguson (1989:52) regards New Agers as fulfilling Teilhard's prophecy; 'a spearhead in the "family task" of bringing humanity into this larger awareness'.

Teilhard's vision is optimistic which makes it so attractive to New Agers (Osborn 1992:84). His writings suggest that arrival at the Omega Point is inevitable.

Another factor that makes Teilhard's theory so attractive to New Agers is its alleged closeness to the general systems theory in biology (Capra 1990:332). The position of vitalism in contemporary biology is, therefore, the subject of the next section.

### 5.2.3.2 *Vitalism, systems theory, and molecular biology*

General systems theory as an approach in biology was developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the late 1960s. Wuketits (Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:17) summarises systems theory as an approach that goes beyond mechanism. It views individual organisms holistically in terms of 'a dynamical interplay at all levels of organisation' (Wuketits in Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:17). Each level or part constitutes a whole. Von Bertalanffy's systems theory, despite its holistic approach, did not imply any form of vitalism or spiritualism (see below).

The New Age physicist Fritjof Capra (1990:330) maintains that 'the systems view of life is spiritual in its deepest essence and thus consistent with many ideas held in mystical traditions'. The alleged spiritual nature of systems theory that Capra is referring to, is a 'concept of God as the universal dynamics of self-organization' (Capra 1990:332). In other words, Capra means by

God, the endogenous, vitalising 'Christ' principle of Teilhard. But von Bertalanffy himself (Barlow (ed) 1991:109ff) and Wuketits (Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:8ff) refute the vitalist/spiritual influences that Capra draws from systems theory. Therefore, Capra is reading into systems theory an interpretation that suits his metaphysics of spiritual naturalism (see section 5.2.1).

Wuketits (Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:10) says that any form of vital, psychic, or spiritual forces acting as agents *in* matter is 'untenable in the light of modern biological research'. Wuketits' conclusion is not one of metaphysical bias. Scientists' dismissal of encapsulated vital agents is based on molecular biological research (Mohr in Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:142) and on interplanetary space research (Wilder-Smith 1970:226). Wilder-Smith (1970:226) explains the latter:

If ... matter did possess some inherent psychic property urging it up to life from within, then one would expect other planets of our solar system which consist of the same type of matter as that of which our earth is made to show some signs of this psychic urge in just the same way that matter on earth has, allegedly, shown signs.

The moon contains the same material elements as the earth, yet: 'Scientists studying the samples of lunar soil returned from the moon by Apollo 11 & 12 are united in unambiguously emphasizing that they contain *no evidence of life forms or precursors of life forms*' (*Science News* quoted in Wilder-Smith 1970:226-227).

In the field of molecular biology, scientists have also found that 'there is no psyche or rudiment of psyche detectable in a crystal or in a DNA molecule or in an elementary particle' (Mohr in Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:142). Molecular biology has revealed that

the orderly construction of a living system depends not only on the availability of the physical elements (building blocks) and of free energy (power) but also on the availability of the pertinent information (blueprint). Moreover, the construction

depends on those factors that can read the information (analogous to a fantastic master builder). At least in the foreseeable future the master builder must be obtained from pre-existing living systems (Mohr in Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:146).

In an analogy in which the construction of a new living system is compared with that of a car, Mohr (Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:147) explains that the relevant information (design) is necessarily completely extrinsic to the system which is newly constructed.

At present, as Mohr pointed out, the extrinsic information for chemicals to organise themselves into living systems is obtained from the pre-existing living systems (the parents) from which the new system emerged. Although Mohr's analogy is actually representative of the argument that a design requires an *exogenous* designer which when applied to the cosmos means that it too requires an exogenous designer, Mohr (Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:147) believes that the secrets of the design (the properties that enabled the first life to emerge from nonlife) will eventually be explainable in terms of physical and chemical laws. Mohr (Hoyningen-Huene & Wuketits (eds) 1989:147) bases this possibility on

the notion of a universal evolution - a firm credo of [materialistic] science - [which] implies that the physical and chemical properties of matter were sufficient to bring about living systems. This credo implies further that if the physical and chemical properties of matter were sufficient to *produce* 'life', then physical and chemical laws should also be sufficient to *explain* the emergence of 'life'.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of this materialistic credo, the first life and thus the first blueprint organised itself through chance. Yet information scientists and cyberneticists postulate that intelligence, not probability, chance, or randomness, is the only source of information, blueprint, or design (Gitt 1993:73; Wilder-Smith 1970:219ff, 1981:77ff).<sup>6</sup> This postulate clashes head on with the above credo of materialists. Nevertheless, the origination of the first living system is scientifically untestable, and acceptance or rejection of explanatory theories is ultimately a matter of faith. Faith, *not* scientific evidence, is reflected in the biochemist Ernest Kahane's (Gitt & Vanheiden 1994:120-121)

statement: 'Its absurd and complete nonsense, to believe, that a living cell creates itself; but I believe it, as I can't imagine it happening any other way.'

Rejection of chance and acceptance of intelligence behind the origin of the first living cell leads to either the supranaturalist or the vitalist position (Wilder-Smith 1970:224-225).

Supranaturalism rejects the absurdity of self-creation by holding that a supranatural 'Intelligence riding neither in nor on matter as we know it, but existing before any matter or any universe arose, called them into being and up to order' and life (Wilder-Smith 1970:225).

Vitalism is the New Age position which the biologist Rupert Sheldrake (1990:87) has reformulated as psychic properties (intelligence) that exist as *morphic* fields; 'invisible regions of influence with inherently holistic [that is, organising] properties', analogous to magnetic fields and, therefore, in themselves undetectable. Only their effects are detectable. The question why these fields have not on the moon given rise to conditions conducive to life is still open.

Before discussing Sheldrake's theory, attention will first be given to the *Gaia* hypothesis of James Lovelock. This theory provides apparent scientific support to the veneration of the earth as a living entity.

### 5.2.3.3 *New Age vitalist theories*

#### a) *Gaia: the living earth*

Using the Greek name *Gaia* for the earth goddess, James Lovelock, an independent British scientist, presented the idea that the earth is alive. Lovelock (1979:11) defines *Gaia* as 'a complex entity involving the Earth's biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, and soil; the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system which seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet'.

The *Gaia* hypothesis supposes, therefore, that the biosphere and the nonliving environment

evolved and are still in constant interaction in order to regulate suitable living conditions. Lovelock based the Gaia hypothesis on the fact that, contrary to other known planets, the earth has environmental conditions that allow life to flourish. The climate and the chemical compositions of the atmosphere (air), lithosphere (soil), and hydrosphere (oceans) are so finely tuned to support life that: 'For this to have happened by chance is as unlikely as to survive unscathed a drive blindfold through rush-hour traffic' (Lovelock in Barlow (ed) 1991:15).

Lovelock's argument is thus the age-old argument that a design points to a designer, but his designer is Gaia, the interactive system between the biosphere and the nonliving environment itself.

The materialistic scientific establishment criticised Gaia as a vitalistic, teleological concept; 'one that required foresight and planning by the biota [all living creatures]' (Lovelock in Barlow (ed) 1991:15). Lovelock's (Barlow (ed) 1991:15ff) response to this criticism was a computer model of Gaia - Daisyworld, a planet with the environment reduced to one variable, temperature, and the biosphere to one species, daisies in which light and dark varieties appear. Lovelock (Barlow (ed) 1991:17-18) explains:

Imagine a time in the distant past of Daisyworld. The star that warms it was less luminous, so that only in the equatorial region was the mean temperature of bare ground warm enough, 5°C, for growth. Here daisy seeds would slowly germinate and flower. Let us assume that in the first crop multicolored, light, and dark species were equally represented. Even before the first season's growth was over, the dark daisies would have been favored. Their greater absorption of sunlight in the localities where they grew would have warmed them above 5°C. The light-colored daisies would be at a disadvantage. Their white flowers would have faded and died because, reflecting the sunlight as they do, they would have cooled below the critical temperature of 5°C.

The next season would see the dark daisies off to a head start, for their seeds would be the most abundant. Soon their presence would warm not just the plants

themselves, but, as they grew and spread across the bare ground, would increase the temperature of the soil and air, at first locally and then regionally. With this rise of temperature, the rate of growth, the length of the warm season, and the spread of dark daisies would exert a positive feedback and lead to the colonization of most of the planet by dark daisies. The spread of dark daisies would eventually be limited by a rise of global temperature to levels above the optimum for growth. Any further spread of dark daisies would lead to a decline in seed production. In addition, when the global temperature is high, white daisies will grow and spread in competition with the dark ones. The growth and spread of white daisies is favored then because of their natural ability to keep cool.

As the star that shines on Daisyworld grows hotter and hotter, the proportion of dark to light daisies changes until, finally, the heat flux is so great that even the whitest daisy crop cannot keep enough of the planet below the critical 40°C upper limit for growth. At this time flower power is not enough. The planet becomes barren again, and so hot that there is no way for daisy life to start again.

From Lovelock's explanation of Daisyworld, it is clear that the interaction between the biosphere and the environment can be envisaged without invoking biological foresight, planning, or purpose. By regarding life as that which 'is characterized by a tendency to shape or form itself as it consumes [energy]' (Lovelock in Barlow (ed) 1991:8), Lovelock (Barlow (ed) 1991:18) subsequently concludes that: 'If the real world we inhabit is self-regulating in the manner of Daisyworld, ... then Gaia is the largest manifestation of life.'

Lovelock's view of life is rooted in vitalistic evolutionism, but evolution (macro and micro) is precisely what is lacking in Daisyworld. Daisyworld and its star are a created universe, conceived of in Lovelock's mind and manifested outside of his mind (on the computer screen). On Daisyworld, no evolution takes place, only repeated cycles of birth, growth, and death within three fixed laws. These are, first, that the star becomes progressively hotter; second, that daisy life is limited to temperatures between 5° C and 40° C; and third, that dark and light colours absorb and reflect heat respectively. On the planet, life did not evolve. Its potential (daisy seeds)

was present on the bare ground and no microevolutionary mutations changed the colour of the daisies. All colours 'were equally represented' in the first crop. Thereafter the dominant colour, dark or light, depended on the number of daisies of the same colour that survived the previous crop, 'for their seeds would be the most abundant'. In Lovelock's model, the self-regulating dynamics of Daisyworld do nothing more than reflect the fixed laws which Lovelock designed into the system, and the model leaves, therefore, his Gaia hypothesis unvalidated.<sup>7</sup>

Lovelock's recognition of purpose and order in the natural world deserves praise. A world without purpose is a joyless world. Darwin self, when close to dying, admitted in his writings that on the basis of his theory he had lost his joy in the arts and in nature (Alexander 1972:106; Schaeffer 1970:9).

In the next section Sheldrake's theory of morphic fields will be analysed in order to determine whether it supports his claim that holism implies a return to 'pre-mechanistic animism' (Sheldrake 1990:80).

b) *Sheldrake's theory of morphic fields*

Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist who did research work on plant physiology in India. In accordance with his belief in animism, Sheldrake proposes that morphic fields (analogous to electric and magnetic fields) surround all systems (living and nonliving). According to him, these fields govern the development of distinctive species. Sheldrake (1990:82) derived the term 'morphic' from the Greek word *morphe* meaning 'form'.

In support of his theory, Sheldrake (1990:82) appeals to biologists in the 1920s who discovered that some plants and animals can regenerate their form from a portion of the 'mother' plant or animal. For example, certain worms have been cut into 72 pieces and each piece generated a complete worm. This means that organisms have a purposive tendency to wholeness (holism) and the factor which governs the form and the necessary measures to reconstruct the relevant form is present at many points within the organism. (Heim 1953:217.) Purposive tendencies are also revealed in the instinctual behaviour of the animal world (Heim 1953:237; Sheldrake 1990:90ff).

Holistic and purposive tendencies in nature cannot be explained by a mechanistic conception of life, namely that life is driven by mechanical, purposeless forces. Holistic and purposive complexities of nature point to an intelligent plan which, although anathema to Darwinism, reinstates the argument from design to Designer. However, Sheldrake, like Lovelock (see section 5.2.3.3a), seeks both plan and planner solely in the natural world. Within his metaphysical frame of reference which implies an essentially cosmos-bound spirituality, Sheldrake attempts to explain nature's tendencies to holistic purposiveness in updated scientific terminology where morphic fields and the vibratory frequencies of morphic resonance assume the rôles that ancient animism ascribed to inner spiritual powers.

Sheldrake (1990:88) postulates that

self-organizing systems at all levels of complexity, including molecules, crystals, cells, tissues, organisms and societies of organisms are organized by fields called 'morphic fields'. Morphogenetic fields are just one type of morphic field, those concerned with the development and maintenance of bodies of organisms.

These fields are of 'an intrinsically evolutionary nature ... a kind of collective memory on which each member of the species draws, and to which it in turn contributes' (Sheldrake 1990:88). Information is transferred from past to present members of a species through morphic resonance, the influence of which, Sheldrake (1990:88-89) claims, determines the characteristic form and behaviour of the species and should, furthermore, be understood probabilistically as evolving habits and not as fixed and predetermined. In other words, Sheldrake attributes the regularity of biological form and behaviour to morphic fields which are, however, never fixed but always subject to evolutionary change and complexification.

Sheldrake (1990:89) insists that his hypothesis is testable and based on scientific evidence. In terms of his hypothesis, the cited evidence should support more than the existence of morphic fields. The evidence and test situations should be such that they indicate, firstly, that the origin of a morphic field is endogenous to the origin of the relevant species (or nonliving system) and, secondly, that macroevolutionary changes occur in and through morphic fields.

Sheldrake (1990:89ff) provides three examples of evidence which is allegedly in favour of his hypothesis, of which two relate to form and one relates to behaviour.

Sheldrake's (1990:89) first example (related to form) to substantiate his theory is as follows:

[W]hen a newly synthesised organic chemical is crystallized for the first time - say a new drug - there will be no morphic resonance from previous crystals of this type. A new morphic field has to come into existence ... The next time the substance is crystallized anywhere in the world, morphic resonance from the first crystals will make this same pattern of crystallization more probable ...

This example is, in fact, a contradiction of his metaphysical position which makes nature its own designer. It serves rather to support the supranaturalist position of a Designer outside nature: The scientist who synthesised the new chemical compound applied *his exogenous* intelligent plan to the ordering of the constituent chemicals. A morphic field may arise, but its origin lies in the 'field' of the scientist's exogenous intelligence that pervaded and ordered the chemicals in the correct way (cf Wilder-Smith 1970:25ff, 1975:55ff).

The other example that Sheldrake (1990:90) supplies with regard to form is that experiments on fruit flies have shown that certain abnormalities become more likely after such an abnormality has appeared in one member of a species. But this demonstrates only microevolution and that some abnormalities are hereditary. Biologists explain such abnormalities by genetic mutations of which the majority are harmful (Frair & Davis 1983:97ff; Parker in Morris & Parker 1982:65ff; Wilder-Smith 1981:126). Even if there were morphic fields and the morphic field of the abnormal fruit flies mutated as the genes mutated, the abnormal fruit flies, nevertheless, remained fruit flies. They did not undergo macroevolution to become a totally different species like wasps or bees.

By adding nonmaterial yet spiritually alive morphic fields to the material genes, Sheldrake (1990:90) adds a vitalistic, animistic factor that is in itself undetectable. Nevertheless, it still fails to explain macroevolution and, in fact, serves to stress phyllic stability (Smith in Lamb (ed) 1992:56-57) and, therefore, fails to substantiate Sheldrake's view of nature (living and nonliving)

as a system of changeable habits.

To support his idea of morphic fields as a collective but always changeable memory bank, Sheldrake (1990:91) says that when one group of rats learnt new behaviour, other rats showed a tendency to learn the new behaviour faster.<sup>8</sup> But the house training of puppies clearly refutes this notion. Even if it were true for some behavioural aspects of some species, one still struggles to understand why behaviour at the deepest instinctual level (such as that of a female mud wasp who *always* builds her nest in the same way) is viewed by Sheldrake (1990:90-91) as merely a habit attributable to the collective power of morphic resonance and not a given law of nature.

Light is thrown on Sheldrake's reasoning by the way in which he resolves the conflict in his system between morphic determinism and morphic freedom. Sheldrake (1990:90-91) regards the instinctual behaviour of a species as 'a fixed action pattern', predetermined by morphic resonance. But this, Sheldrake (1990:104) says, is a habit, the continual repetition of which gives it the appearance of a law. This means that future members of a species have the freedom to change inherited morphic traits in the same way that humans can change inherited character traits by an act of will. Motivated by his belief in animism, Sheldrake anthropomorphises nature to the extent that human freedom of will is projected into nature. However, anthropomorphism of nature, as Francis Schaeffer (1970:25) points out, is an evasion of the reality of nature. It endows nature with characteristics it does not possess and ignores its real characteristics.

Sheldrake (1990:109) criticises the idea of fixed laws because '[t]he designing mind of ... God [as Creator] is still there in the background'. Flying in the face of scientific evidence, Sheldrake (1990:103) maintains that: 'The idea of the laws of nature is based on a political metaphor. Just as human societies are governed by laws, so the whole of nature is supposedly ruled by the laws of nature.'

Sheldrake is, in fact, echoing Alfred North Whitehead (Jaki 1989:20) who also abolished the idea of natural laws: 'There *are no* natural laws. There are only habits of nature.' The criticism of this view by the physicist and historian of science Prof Stanley Jaki (1989:19-20) is scathing: 'Such a view had little room for exact science but plenty for unbridled fantasies ... Whitehead never

explained how science ... can be cultivated on that very "temporary" basis.'

Sheldrake (1990:102) regards the acknowledgement of natural laws as an outdated way of thinking which 'bears a strong resemblance to the Christian theology of creation by the word or *logos* of God'. The work of mathematical cosmologists to discover universal cosmological laws is, therefore, derided by Sheldrake (1990:102) as

still based on a number of assumptions carried over from old-style mechanistic physics. The most important of these is that the laws of nature are eternal; they were there 'before' the beginning and governed the universe from the outset ... If the mind of God [as Creator] is dissolved away, then we are left with free-floating mathematical laws playing the same role as laws in the mind of God.

Fixed laws and evolution are correctly recognised by Sheldrake (1990:103) as logical contradictions: 'If all nature evolves, why should the laws of nature not evolve as well? Why should we go on assuming that they are eternally fixed?'

In a book which is documented with great detail and grounded in a keen knowledge of and insight into both science (ancient and modern) and the philosophies of the world's cultures (ancient and modern), Jaki (1974:vii) shows that:

Great cultures where the scientific enterprise came to a standstill, invariably failed to formulate the notion of physical law, or the law of nature. Theirs was a theology with no belief in a personal, rational, absolutely transcendent Lawgiver, or Creator. Their cosmology reflected a pantheistic and animistic view of nature caught in the treadmill of perennial, inexorable returns. The scientific quest found fertile soil when this faith in a personal, rational Creator had truly permeated a whole culture, beginning with the centuries of the High Middle Ages. It was that faith which provided, in sufficient measure, confidence in the rationality of the universe, trust in progress, and appreciation of the quantitative method, all indispensable ingredients of the scientific quest.

Jaki (1974:356) points out that there is in our time 'a steadily growing realization that the man of science, no less than his counterpart in religion, lives ultimately by faith'. As people of faith, scientists are, according to both Jaki (1974:356ff) and Sheldrake (1990:102ff), faced with two foundational alternatives - confidence in a real and law abiding universe, a confidence in which empirical, exact science flourished, but which by its very nature implies 'creation by the word or *logos* of God' (Sheldrake 1990:102); or the acceptance of the full implications of an evolving universe where all orderliness is dissolved in a state of perpetual flux, and purpose is sought in 'pantheism and immanentism' (Jaki 1974:356).

The choice of Sheldrake and all the other New Age thinkers is the latter.

The esoteric mysticism and spiritual naturalism of New Age spirituality (see sections 2.2, 5.2.1) is allegedly supported by the discoveries and theories of the new physics. It is, therefore, the new physics that this thesis will now address.

### **5.3 THE NEW PHYSICS AND THE NEW AGE WORLDVIEW**

#### **5.3.1 Relativity theories and New Age thought**

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) formulated two theories of relativity - the special theory which deals with the laws of physics as seen by observers experiencing nonaccelerated, uniform motion; and the general theory which addresses gravitation and thus accelerated observers (Zeilik 1982:124).

##### **5.3.1.1 *The special theory of relativity***

Einstein's special theory of relativity, published in 1905, rested on two fundamental postulates: first, that the laws of physics hold true in the same form for all observers travelling at constant velocities, and second, that the constants of the equations expressing physical laws retain the same numerical value. Such a constant is the speed of light which Einstein postulated as the absolute speed and as universally invariant irrespective of the speed of the observer. (Dufner & Russel in Joranson & Butigan (eds) 1984:166; Zeilik 1982:124.)

The physicist Jaki (1978:188) says that Einstein's theories are 'mis-labeled with the word *relative*'. Einstein's scientifically creative steps, says Jaki (1978:188), were 'steeped in the invariable, absolute, geometrical beauty of nature ... a burning desire to safeguard the beauty of nature and of laws which reflected that beauty'.

Einsteinian invariance of the form and the constants of physical laws (specifically the speed of light) entailed that the space and time coordinates  $(x, t)$  of one observer transform covariantly into the values  $(x^1, t^1)$  of another observer according to what is called the Lorentz transformations (Dufner & Russel in Joranson & Butigan (eds) 1984:166-167). This required radically new definitions of space and time resulting in the unification of space and time into a four-dimensional *spacetime* manifold (Dufner & Russel in Joranson & Butigan (eds) 1984:167; Zeilik 1982:124-125).

What emerged from the special theory of relativity was both absoluteness and relativity. Dufner and Russel (Joranson & Butigan (eds) 1984:167) explain that absoluteness derives from 'the existence of spacetime quantities and forms which are invariant, and in this sense absolute'. Relativity, according to Dufner and Russel (Joranson & Butigan (eds) 1984:167), results from the apparent loss of simultaneity; 'two events which are simultaneous for the  $(x, t)$  observer will not *appear* [emphasis mine] simultaneous viewed by the  $(x^1, t^1)$  observer' which means that there are as many *descriptions* of events as there are different observers. The four-dimensional spacetime measurements are, however, the same for all observers (Stannard 1993:34) because

if another's description cannot be reached via a Lorentz transformation, it must either be a description of some entirely different physical event, or else be inherently faulty.

These Lorentz transformations therefore act as equivalency generators of mutually consistent views of the world, sorting out which views fall within the equivalent set and which are to be thrown out as unphysical or unrelated (Dufner & Russel in Joranson & Butigan (eds) 1984:167).

Dufner and Russel (Joranson & Butigan (eds) 1984:174) conclude that the special theory of relativity 'can be interpreted as a (critical) *realist* [emphasise mine] view of nature in which there exists a core of reality knowable by each observer that is the same for all observers, though the descriptions of it may differ enormously, reflecting the differences in the spacetime "perspective" of each observer'.

Thus, as Jaki (1978:183ff) says, the special theory of relativity points to philosophical realism and absolutism since it shows that, despite the many different descriptions, there is ultimately only one true description. This was the philosophical stance of Einstein and Max Planck (1858-1947), the discoverer of the quantum of electromagnetic energy. In a lecture entitled *From the relative to the absolute*, 'Planck drew special attention to what he called the "paradox" of relativity; instead of relativizing everything, it unfolded absolute, objective aspects of the physical world' (Jaki 1978:183).

New Age thinkers, on the other hand, are not philosophical realists as Planck and Einstein were. They are philosophical idealists who reject the real, objective existence of the physical world. Zukav (1979:143) accepts that the 'special theory of relativity is not a theory that everything is relative. It is a theory that *appearances* are relative'. But in the New Age worldview, the material world which we experience through the five senses is nothing more than an illusory appearance (see section 5.3.2). Its real existence, says Zukav (1979:177), is one of 'dancing energy and transient, impermanent forms'.

That matter is a form of energy derives from the special theory of relativity's famous formula  $E = mc^2$ ;  $E$  denotes energy,  $m$  denotes mass, and  $c$  denotes the speed of light. But Zukav's (1979:177) proposition that the transient and imperfect forms of matter imply that the 'world of matter is a relative world and an illusory one', is not a matter of physics which, according to Einstein's theory, points to the world's absolute realness. Zukav's proposition is grounded in his metaphysics which excluded the material world's objective existence from the outset.

Motivated by the same metaphysics as Zukav, Capra (1975:167ff, 1990:79ff) portrays Einstein's relativity theory as that which portrays the physical world as illusory, indeterminate, and

unstructured. The concepts and laws that describe it are subjective elements of the observer's language (Capra 1975:65, 173, 1990:79); 'not features of reality ... but creations of the mind' (Capra 1975:167). Capra fails to mention the Lorentz transformations which he as a nuclear physicist should know. He also fails to mention that Einstein was a philosophical realist which he as a critical historian of science should also know. Instead, Capra (1975:168) subtly places Einstein in his idealist camp by saying that: 'It took an Einstein to make scientists and philosophers realize that geometry is not inherent in nature, but is imposed upon it by the mind.'

Extrapolated into the religious and moral realms, New Age relativism (see section 3.4.2) finds a congenial niche in Existentialism (see section 3.3.4.2) and in Positivism (see section 3.3.4.3), both of which exclude the existence of objective religious and moral Truth.

New Age thinkers are actually extrapolating their metaphysical relativism into the practice of science and thereby making it appear as if their metaphysics is scientifically validated. This is, however, circular reasoning where a presupposed premise is used to prove itself.

In the following section, we shall explore the way in which Einstein's general theory of relativity is interpreted in terms of the New Age metaphysical frame of reference, from which interpretation New Agers conclude (via their circular reasoning) that their metaphysical stance has been proven.

### **5.3.1.2    *The general theory of relativity***

Einstein's general theory of relativity, published in 1915, widened the special theory to deal with accelerated observers, in particular, gravitational acceleration (Zeilik 1982:125). The question that confronted Einstein was: 'From where does mass get its moving orders?' (Zeilik 1982:145). Einstein's answer was from the local geometry of spacetime (Zeilik 1982:145) which at the ordinary level of experience appears to be flat, but at the very large planetary level reveals itself as not flat but curved (Zeilik 1982:128-129).

In itself, the 'general theory of relativity allows the cosmos to have any geometrical properties; it is not limited to only one choice' (Zeilik 1982:144). This means that the general theory of

relativity does not assume nor is it restricted to one specific geometry in the way that Newton's theory assumes and is restricted to Euclidian flat space geometry<sup>9</sup> (Zeilik 1982:144). Einstein's theory did not thereby render Newton's theory incorrect as such, but revealed that it was limited in its range of applicability.

From the fact that the general theory of relativity does not presuppose a specific geometrical form as Newton's theory does, Capra (1975:168) infers that 'geometry is not inherent in nature, but is imposed upon it by the mind'. Capra (1975:168) quotes the physicist Henry Margenau:

The central recognition of the theory of relativity is that geometry [not the universe (inset mine)] ... is a construct of the intellect. Only when this discovery is accepted can the mind feel free to tamper with the time-honoured notions of space and time, to survey the range of possibilities available for defining them, and *to select that formulation which agrees with observation* [emphasise mine].

The emphasised phrase is crucial since it refutes Capra's notion that the geometry which the intellect constructs is imposed on real space by the mind. The geometry which is selected must correspond to the observed properties of the space that it describes (Stannard 1993:66, 69; Zeilik 1982:144). Not only did Einstein demand 'that the geometry of the universe be put to an experimental test' (Zeilik 1982:144) - he did not believe that geometry should be a purely abstract pursuit with no empirically tested relationship to the universe.<sup>10</sup> Einstein (Zeilik 1982:127) writes:

Geometry is ... evidently a natural science; we may in fact regard it as the most ancient branch of physics. Its affirmations rest on induction from experience ... [W]hether the ... geometry of the universe is Euclidean or not has a clear meaning, and its answer can only be furnished by experience ... I attach special importance to this view of geometry ... for without it I should have been *unable to formulate the theory of relativity*.

Einstein did not impose curved geometry on the universe as Capra (see above) claims. Curvature is an *observed* feature of spacetime (Zeilik 1982:128), not a creation of the mind.

Capra (1975:169) is motivated by his Eastern metaphysics where the physical reality of space and time is 'relative, limited and illusory'. Capra wants to validate mysticism and the approximate, uncertain nature of scientific knowledge (Capra 1975:304), but in the process he loses the reality of the universe. Instead of emphasising the limitedness of the human mind to accurately understand the intricacies and magnificence of the physical world, he engenders uncertainty about the real, objective existence of the world.

There is an essential incoherence in Capra's position. He believes that the human mind imposes structure on the physical world which implies that the physical world is formless, flexible, and adaptable to mental influence. This means that there is no monolithic world structure which the mind can observe and describe. It, furthermore, means that each person constructs (in the full, literal meaning of the word) the world according to how he sees it and in the absence of a preexisting structure no person can judge the correctness of another person's worldview. Yet Capra (1990:37ff) judges and dismisses as false the Newtonian worldview (which he lumps together with purposeless mechanism and materialism (see section 5.2.2.2)) and ardently proselytizes his worldview as correct for all persons. However, in terms of his worldview, he is not entitled to judge the correctness or incorrectness of worldviews. Argumentation about worldviews is meaningful only if there exists a world independent of human description against which descriptions can be tested for truth or falsity. The 'very idea of error', according to Popper (Jaki 1978:248), 'is inconceivable without the idea of truth'.

For justification of the belief that the world is dependent on the perceiving subject, New Age thinkers turn to quantum physics.

### **5.3.2 Quantum physics and New Age thought**

In addition to his work on the large cosmic level, Einstein as well as physicists such as Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg, and others investigated the nature of the subatomic (quantum) realm. This world proved itself most perplexing in that it showed no correspondence to the *accurate* measurability and predictability of the macroscopic world. When the quantum physicists attempted to locate and measure the subatomic elements, they were repeatedly

confronted with what appeared to be impossible. Briefly stated the following was found:

Subatomic elements as well as light can have either wave or particle properties; properties which had been regarded as mutually exclusive. Bohr, in what is called the *principle of complementarity*, posited that these properties should be regarded as complementary rather than contradictory descriptions (Heisenberg 1958:43).

Measurement of the position of an electron (a subatomic particle) changes its momentum (velocity), and measurement of the momentum (velocity) changes the position of the electron.

This is formulated in mathematical form as Heisenberg's *Uncertainty Principle*.

The outcome of quantum events cannot be accurately predicted. Prior to observation only the probability<sup>11</sup> of a certain, *consistent* variety of outcomes can be calculated (Halverson in Hoyt (ed) 1987:83-84).

The quantum physicists were confronted with experimental situations in which the experimental apparatus influenced the behaviour of the observed phenomena. This, says Zukav (1979:54), led some physicists to wonder whether the experiment does not create the property which the scientist wants to observe. This reasoning proceeds from Bohr's interpretation of quantum theory, called the *Copenhagen interpretation* where the state of the subatomic particle prior to observation is empty of real existence (Davies 1983:102-103). The eminent philosopher Arthur Lovejoy (1955:360) shows that this is not a consequence of quantum theory but of a preassumed epistemology, the major premise of which is 'what is not observable does not exist'.

The denial of real existence to quantum particles prior to observation leads to the following type of statements made by leading New Ager:

'The electron does not *have* objective properties independent of my mind' (Capra 1990:77).

'Quantum mechanics ... leads to the possibility that our reality is what we choose to make it' (Zukav 1979:54).

'The paradigm implied by the new physics is that there is no "out there" reality ... In the paradigm of the new physics we have dreamed the world' (Talbot 1981:135).

The acceptance of such statements has far-reaching implications for the scientific and educational quest for truth and will be fully explored in chapter 6.

Apart from the above view as to the nature of the physical world, it is also claimed that 'the physicist has found that the nature of matter ultimately defies any single structure or model superimposed upon it' (Talbot 1981:152-153). But this claim contradicts the above statements. If this claim is accepted, it implies the falsity of the claim inherent in the above statements, namely that the physical world is dependent on and conformable to the individual human mind. Either reality is objectively structured and real, and therefore independent of mental models, or it is unstructured and conformable to *any and every* mental model. Reality cannot be both.

The quantum realm certainly revealed that the detection apparatus influences it as Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle posits. This principle was derived from a hypothetical experiment<sup>12</sup> in which Heisenberg reasoned that if one were to view an electron through a microscope and use light of frequency and energy<sup>13</sup> high enough to illuminate the electron's position, it would mean that the electron receives from the light enough energy to change its momentum. Yet to use light of lower frequency and energy would reduce the accuracy of the microscope and result in a blurred image of the electron's position. (Lovejoy 1955:357-358.) This experiment clearly reveals what the physicist Barbour (1966:287) says: 'It is the detection apparatus [especially the light ray], not the observer as a human being, which influences the measurement obtained.' Furthermore, as Lovejoy (1955:359-360) reasons, this experiment necessarily presupposes the prior, real existence of the electron and its properties of position and momentum. That which does not exist cannot be influenced nor changed.

Without the acknowledgement that the quantum realm and ultimately all reality exists independent of the observer, one tends to lose the distinction between reality and perception of reality. Reality is objective and independent of the human mind and its full truth (as quantum physics shows) lies beyond the limits of the human mind (Veith 1987:115, 140). Perception of reality is subjective and liable to error. According to Lovejoy (1955:362-363), it is uncertainty and indeterminacy in perception not in reality itself that observation of the quantum realm has revealed. Uncertainty and indeterminacy in measuring the quantum realm, he says,

is taken as establishing the general truth that *what* a thing is when we observe it is always modified by the operation whereby we observe it; and this is construed

as meaning that it is somehow relative to us, the observers. It is chiefly for this reason that we are often told of late that 'the principle of indeterminacy is epistemological'; and it is on this ground that the principle is said to show that 'knowing [the act of the observer] is a participant in what is finally known'.<sup>14</sup> That the percipient event is a condition necessary for the existence of the perceptual content [in the mind], and that there are numerous conditions, both physical and mental, which determine in part the character of what is finally perceived, dualistic [that is, realistic] philosophers have, of course, always held. If this is all that is meant by the proposition quoted, it did not await recent physical theory for its formulation or its vindication ... But it would seem that something more than this is intended to be conveyed by the proposition. It is not the nature of the content of perception [knowledge], but of *any object of possible knowledge* [reality] that is apparently declared to be determined by 'knowing'. This, however, clearly does not follow from the physical considerations from which it is deduced. It is not 'knowing' that, for the physicist, affects the momentum or the position of the electron, or even the precise determinability of these; it is the action of a certain physical process or instrument upon a certain physical event.

Lovejoy (1955:364-365) concludes, therefore, that quantum indeterminacy has no 'decisive and revolutionary consequences for epistemology ... It leaves the issues upon which it is supposed to bear in the same logical position as before'.

In New Age epistemology, as in dualistic, realistic epistemology, the mind constructs within itself and for itself a subjective world of appearances, but in New Age epistemology the world of appearances constitutes not false or true knowledge but reality. This imposes on reality the features of subjectivity and relativity that apply, in fact, only to knowledge. And, as Jaki (1978:212) observes: 'A world of appearances is most germane to oriental mysticism.'

New Age epistemology which admits to no distinction between reality and knowledge has its source in the absolutisation of subjective empiricism (to be discussed in section 5.4) and in the

belief that the inner and ultimate essence of reality is unstructured energy (see section 5.3.1) or mind (see section 4.4.2). In the context of the essence of reality, New Agers consider both quantum physicists (who deal with the inner aspects of matter) and mystics (who deal with the inner, intuitive aspects of the human mind) as dealing with ultimate (spiritual) reality (Halverson in Hoyt (ed) 1987:84).

One quantum physicist whose metaphysical theory is especially popular is David Bohm. To many, 'he has become something of a guru or near-cult figure' (Weber 1987:140). Bohm (1980:71ff) draws from the hypothetical experiment designed by Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen, called the EPR effect after its three designers.

Einstein, a philosophical realist, believed that quantum particles had definite properties prior to measurement which would eventually become technically accessible (Wilder 1983:142). The EPR effect was conceived of in order to illustrate the incompleteness of quantum mechanics since its mathematics require the instantaneous, correlated change of two paired but separated quantum particles. For example, if two paired electrons of opposite spin are separated then quantum theory requires that if the spin of one is changed artificially, the spin of the other changes simultaneously. This would require communication faster than the speed of light between the two electrons, a phenomenon which Einstein regarded as impossible since it contradicts the absolute speed of light posited in the special theory of relativity. (Woodhouse in Lamb (ed) 1992:27-28.) Experimental evidence in favour of the EPR effect occurring has existed since 1957 and in 1982 it was unambiguously validated with light quanta by the French physicist, Alain Aspect, for distances up to 26 metres (Frost 1992:142; Sharpe 1990:107).

Bohm (1980:passim) explains the EPR effect and other paradoxical puzzles in quantum physics by proposing the existence of an implicate order underlying the quantum realm which enfolds within it the whole explicate order of space and time in a total wholeness and unity. His theory presents the universe as a holograph. A holograph is a three-dimensional photographic image in which

each part of the photograph can yield an image of *whole object* ... [light] waves

from the whole object enter each region of the photograph, and so, ... information about the whole object is *dynamically* enfolded in each part of space, while this information is then *unfolded* in the image (Bohm in Schindler (ed) 1986:24).

Because everything in the explicate order (the visible, macroscopic world) is vibratory frequencies that supposedly unfold out of the implicate (quantum) order, the universe, according to Bohm, is a seamless undivided whole, and every part contains enfolded within it the whole order of the universe. This idea is also promoted by the neuropsychologist, Karl Pribram (Talbot 1991:1, 11ff, 54-55, *passim*).

An analogy with Lovelock's Daisyworld (see section 5.2.3.3a) is appropriate here. If the daisies in Daisyworld were sentient beings, their scientific search for a unifying principle would ultimately have arrived at the formulation of a similar implicate order theory which, in Daisyworld, arises from Lovelock's computer programme. Behind this knowledge of the 'daisy scientists' lies, however, the irrefutable fact that Daisyworld's order has its origin in the transcendent, exogenous mind of Lovelock, the creator of Daisyworld. But to arrive at this fact, the daisies need to argue that an intelligent design requires an intelligent and extrinsic designer (see sections 5.2.3.2, 5.6 note 5).

What the New Age scientists must be given credit for, however, is that, in contrast to materialists, they do not attribute the universe and all it contains to random changes. After a period of almost one hundred and fifty years of materialism, theories such as Bohm's implicate order theory reveal the deep need in people for a spiritual order that provides life with a deeper meaning than mere physical survival and material well-being. During the period of scientific materialism and positivism, the 'view was pushed that there was no other route to truth than that offered by the scientific method' (Stannard 1993:74). Despite the spiritual yearning, this view still echoes in the New Age worldview where the very source of the order that unites and holds all things together is identified as endogenous and natural albeit spiritual.

Thereby human spirituality is reduced to 'a mode of consciousness in which the individual feels connected to the cosmos as a whole' (Capra 1990:410, 458) and God is reduced to the

organisational dynamics of the cosmos (Capra 1990:317), 'the consciousness that manifests as *lila*, the play of the universe ... the organizing matrix' (Ferguson 1989:420). God is thus not the Creator and Designer of the cosmic order, but the order itself and can, therefore, be adequately addressed by both science and mysticism. Yet the physicist, Paul Davies who believes that '[s]cience offers a surer path to God than religion' (Davies 1983:viii, 229) and whose God is a 'natural God ... the supreme holistic concept' (Davies 1983:223), admits that physics and thus his god cannot 'tackle questions about, for example, purpose or morality' (Davies 1983:227).

The recurrent moral theme in New Age literature is that the perception that God, humanity, and nature constitute, in essence, one undivided whole will usher in ecological awareness and the recognition of each individual's human dignity (see section 3.4.1). As a moral principle, this New Age holistic principle implies that the difference between humans and the rest of nature is not a difference in kind, but a difference in the degree of aware consciousness or divine spirit.

In direct contrast to the New Age view, the eminent philosopher Mortimer Adler (1993:passim) argues that the moral foundation that grounds respect for human worth and human dignity lies in the affirmation of the following two principles:

There exists a universally shared human nature. This is affirmed in the New Age worldview, but qualified with the idea that all persons have not yet evolved to higher, divine consciousness. Humanity is a species that differs in kind and not merely in degree from the rest of nature. This is not affirmed in the New Age worldview.

Without the latter affirmation,

a sharp line cannot be drawn to separate the world of persons from the world of things; in fact, the distinction between person and thing becomes meaningless or at best arbitrary if there are only differences in degree, since that distinction is either a distinction in kind or no distinction at all ... [I]f men [humans] and other animals differ only in degree, the whole distinction between person and thing evaporates and we are left with no argument of this sort to justify our differential treatment of men [humans] (Adler 1993:257-258).

Without a clear distinction between persons and the rest of nature, there is nothing *in principle* wrong with treating humans no better than the animals ‘that we harness as beasts of burden, that we butcher for food and clothing, or that we destroy as disease-bearing pests or as dangerous predators’ (Adler 1993:263). In this moral dilemma, one ‘would then be forced to treat the problem as one of pure expediency, totally outside the pale of right and wrong’ (Adler 1993:267).

Adler’s reasoning reveals that there are significant moral weaknesses in the principle of undivided wholeness. This principle also carries within it significant negative implications for the practice of science.

The other end of the holistic spectrum collapses the distinction between God and the universe, and for science, this cut is crucial. Without it all of nature becomes sacred, and science as the empirical investigation of nature becomes taboo ‘lest one blaspheme something holy’ (Veith 1987:120). Moreover, when the character of the actual cosmic manifold excludes the factor of objective realness, it turns science into an epistemological boomerang. What started as a rational, empirical investigation of a real world returns as a mystical, personal, experiential investigation of an illusory world. All that is left of the pursuit for knowledge is the mystical contemplation of divine oneness, the understanding of which will supposedly release the psyche’s powers to magically manipulate the spiritual order enfolded in the holographic illusion (Talbot 1991:passim). In a similar vein, Zukav (1979:327) suggests: ‘It is possible that physics curricula of the twenty-first century include classes in meditation.’

The meditative and essentially experiential nature of New Age epistemology will be explained in the following section.

## **5.4 BEYOND REASON: THE NEW AGE VIEW OF EPISTEMOLOGY**

### **5.4.1 Mystical, subjective experientialism**

One of the most important features of the New Age phenomenon, especially in the context of the intellectual, scientific quest for truth, is its reaction against rational, Western epistemology and

the modern West's quest for reliable knowledge of a reliable and certain world.

Modern Western epistemology is characterised by the successful scientific methodology of rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism was inherited from the ancient Greek philosophers, but empiricism as scientific experimentation into the workings of nature originated within the Biblical view that the cosmos was a created structure, distinct from its Creator-God (Hooykaas 1972:passim; Jaki 1974:276ff; Veith 1987:22). Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the father of the empirical scientific method, identified the ancient Greek's pantheistic deification of the cosmos as 'the great arrest and prejudice of further discovery' (Jaki 1974:282). To the ancient Greeks, 'the gods personified cosmic powers ... The world was a living organism, the divine source of all living beings, the gods included' (Hooykaas 1972:1). According to Sir Francis Bacon (Jaki 1974:282), pantheistic Greek thought about final causes for the universe turned into 'remoras and hindrances to stay and slug the ship [empirical science] from further sailing, and have brought this to pass, that the search of the Physical Causes hath been neglected and passed in silence'.<sup>15</sup> (See sections 2.3.1, 3.2.)

In the New Age worldview one finds a return to the type of pantheistic metaphysical thought which impeded empirical science in ancient Greece. New Age thought lacks, however, the ancient Greek stress on rational thought which when combined with the Biblical secularisation of the cosmos led to empirical science. New Age thought recommends a mystical, nonrational, intuitive, and experiential approach to the quest for knowledge and truth (see section 2.2.3).

New Age epistemology is an attempt to go beyond reason, to transcend the rationalism inherited from the ancient Greeks. Prior to Descartes, the power of reason in the Christian West was subservient to the Bible (see section 3.3.1). Descartes, however, exalted reason in that he believed that through rational argumentation, the full truth (absolute knowledge) could be attained (see section 3.3.2.1). Kant subsequently placed limits on the power of reason. He excluded all knowledge of God from the power of reason and limited rational knowledge of the physical world to a world of appearances. In Kant's view, reality itself is always unknown. (See section 3.3.2.4c.)

In an attempt to go beyond the Kantian position, New Agers accept the limits that Kant placed on rational knowledge, but they believe mystical intuition can penetrate into the reality beyond the Kantian world of appearances (see section 2.2.3). This, they justify by maintaining that reality has no objective existence. They say that the structured physical world is an illusion, a holograph, and the reality that lies behind the perceived structure is an enfolded spiritual order which mystical intuition can penetrate (see section 5.3.2). Following in the tradition of the Romantics (see section 3.3.4.1), New Agers conceive of an organic, spiritually alive world in which mind and matter are basically akin.

For New Agers, mystical intuition is a legitimate mode of knowing and, moreover, superior to rational thought. Unlike rational thought, it is not limited to the 'illusory' world of appearances, but provides a direct experience of 'that order of reality *behind* the world of appearances' (Ferguson 1989:410). The Neopagan Margot Adler (1981:157) describes the hidden, occult reality as a 'kind of psychic sea, from which a minority have been able to extract certain kinds of information'.

New Agers envisage a future in which all have access to inner, occult information, an ideal which the holographic model of the universe renders possible. Marilyn Ferguson (1989:198) explains:

In a nutshell, the holographic supertheory says that *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 ...* In this framework, psychic phenomena are only byproducts of the simultaneous-everywhere matrix. Individual brains are bits of the greater hologram. They have access under certain circumstances to all the information in the total cybernetic system.

Apparent scientific validation for the nonrational and mystical faculties as valid sources of knowledge is found in the hypothesis that the two hemispheres of the brain tend to have unique functions (Capra 1990:318-319; Ferguson 1989:81ff). In general, the left hemisphere is held to be the centre of analytical, logical, and verbal skills, while the right hemisphere is held as the

centre of feelings, intuition, and holistic creativity. In New Age thought, the right hemisphere is, therefore, the seat of human spirituality.

The New Age diagnosis of Western epistemology is that it relies too heavily on the rational functions of the left hemisphere and this has caused psychological neuroses. The functions of both hemispheres are needed for psychological health. (Ferguson 1989:83). This was, in essence, also Jung's diagnosis (see section 4.2.2.4).

For New Agers, the right hemisphere is the pathway to 'that something in us [which] is wiser and better informed than our ordinary consciousness' (Ferguson 1989:85). This renders rational discernment towards intuition, feelings, and altered states of consciousness unnecessary and counterproductive. 'Whatever lowers the barrier and lets the unclaimed material emerge is transformative' (Ferguson 1989:85). In other words, whatever is directly experienced through the emotions and intuition is valid for the experiencing subject.

The New Age approach to epistemology makes experiential, intuitive feelings and not reality the criterion for truth. It is an approach with significant ramifications as will be discussed in the next section which will serve as backdrop to the arguments put forth in section 6.3.

## **5.4.2 The ramifications of subjective experientialism**

### **5.4.2.1 *Scepticism and solipsism***

According to the philosopher John Randall (1962:596), the essence of an empirical philosophy is to bring all beliefs to the test of experience. In other words, an empirical philosophy is erected by means of reasoning on empirically tested premises. This contrasts with rationalism which erects its system on allegedly self-evident truths (Brown 1968:60). Empiricists are sceptical about the idea of self-evident truth and hold that: 'Statements (apart from those of pure logic) can be known to be true or false only by testing them in experience' (Brown 1968:60-61, 1990:216). However, empiricism has the potential to be extremely subjective if it is only one's own personal experience that matters (Osborn 1992:98).

The leading seventeenth century empiricist was John Locke (1632-1704) whose *tabula rasa* theory of the mind advanced what is called the representative theory of knowledge. This theory holds that the 'mind has no direct knowledge of the outside world ... What the mind perceives is the data conveyed to it by the senses, upon which it then gets to work and interprets' (Brown 1968:62, cf also 1990:223). This is also Kant's epistemological stance (see section 3.3.2.4c).

Subjective empiricism and the representative theory of knowledge lead to scepticism where all assertions about reality are cast under a shadow of doubt (Osborn 1992:106). 'We know sense impressions, or our own "ideas", and these may well be knowable, but how can we know they correspond to what exists in the outer world?' (Stromberg 1966:105). The logical conclusion is 'solipsism, that the only knowledge possible is that about oneself and one's perceptions' (Brown 1968:66, cf also 1990:233). This places the very existence of the outer world under doubt since there is 'no way of showing that things or people have any existence independent of our own minds' (Brown 1968:66, 1990:233). The philosopher Mascall (Brown 1968:66, cf also 1990:233-234) suggests that:

At this point it would have been wiser ... if philosophers had stopped to ask themselves whether this view of knowledge was on the right track. Is it really true that what we perceive are not objects but merely sensations inside us which have made us jump to the conclusion that things really do exist outside us? Would it not be more reasonable to treat the data of our senses not as a kind of end in itself but as means through which the mind grasps an intelligible reality?

In other words, Mascall suggests that the perceptions do not constitute knowledge but only the *mediate* activity through which knowledge is acquired. This view leaves intact knowable, objectively existing features of the world outside of the self.

New Age epistemology is an heir to subjective empiricism, the representative theory of knowledge, and the scepticism and solipsism toward which they lead. Capra (1975:292), for example, states that 'the structures and phenomena we observe in nature are nothing but creations of our measuring and categorizing mind'. In a holographic, illusory world, the perceived objects

are hollow. With nothing objective and real behind the experience, the perceived features become hypothetical, subjective constructs of the mind. This, as explained above, is the road to solipsism. It is at this conclusion that Shirley MacLaine (1987:263) arrives:

[S]ince I realized I created my own reality in every way, I must therefore admit that, in essence, *I was the only person alive in my universe* ... I went on to express my feeling of total responsibility *and power* for all events in the world because the world is happening only in my reality.

But this is tantamount to philosophical legitimation of treating other persons as means towards one's own selfish ends.

Brown (1990:233) maintains that it is in the attempt to prove solipsism that its untruth is proved: 'The solipsist who tries to convince anyone of the truth of his position implicitly denies the truth of what he professes to believe.' Because the solipsist holds that others have no independent existence outside of his (the solipsist's) mind, he in turn has no existence outside of another mind. In other words, nothing and nobody exists, including the solipsist.

But since nobody would be prepared to accept their own nonexistence, it means that the riddle of one's own existence can only be solved by claiming to have created and posited oneself. This claim, says Heim (1953:116),

means that I myself am the unconditioned absolute 'I', the original power which lies beyond all spaces and reference systems and carries in its womb all possibilities of existence. I am the world's creator, and my spatially limited human existence is the product of a self-limitation which I have myself undertaken by means of a free sovereign decision. It is myself as absolute 'I' which marks off myself as relative 'I' from all relative 'not-I'.

Heim (1953:116) continues that this is a notion which humans are only capable of in the smoke of self-divinisation. And, says Heim (1953:116), self-divinisation cannot endure. When one

returns to the sober reality of one's own limited being, one realises 'that this titanic self-divinization was in fact a boundless solipsism'.

According to G K Chesterton (Jaki 1989:225), who self had a bout with solipsism, the deliverance from solipsism lies in an intellectual trust which takes for certain the objective existence of the physical universe. Chesterton is thus advocating the view of Mascall (see above), namely that to avoid collapsing physical reality into nothingness, a clear distinction should be upheld between, on the one hand, the knower and the mediate act of perception, and on the other hand, the object which is known through perception. In this way, the mediate act of perception ties the knower and the known into a mutual interrelationship, but the independent and real existence of both is left intact. Thereby subjectivity is placed on the act of perception, but not on the perceived object, and scepticism is redirected from the existence and knowability of the world to one's own imperfect and possibly incorrect perceptions and knowledge.

The objective existence of the world is untenable in the New Age worldview for it implies the existence of objective truth and contradicts the basic tenet of unlimited mind-power. The New Age solution to the despair of scepticism is to recast it into 'an optimistic mode; if nothing is certain, anything is possible' (Osborn 1992:106). This transforms scepticism where nothing is believed into credulity where anything is believed.

#### 5.4.2.2 *Credulity*

Within the credulity of New Age thought, beliefs are still to be brought to the test of personal experience, but it is to the experience of the intuitive and emotional processes of the mind. These are the activities which are ascribed to the brain's right hemisphere, the supposed seat of wisdom (Ferguson 1989:85), and they are, therefore, allegedly the proper determinants of what is real and true. This explains the trusting acceptance of occult phenomena be it channelled messages, shamanism, astrology, divination, and so forth, as well as the grandiose powers ascribed to the mind. The only criterion is whether good feelings are generated.

It is, however, interesting that astrology, for example, presents a contradiction to mind-power;

'astrology declares man to be the victim of forces beyond his control ... *Mind* cannot create its own reality and control its own circumstances while at the same time, human destiny is determined by physical planetary forces' (Hunt & McMahon 1988:75). Jaki (1974:200) points out that astrology also contradicts interconnectedness:

A chief characteristic of astrology is its thorough inconsistency. Astrology is not so much a system as an ever burgeoning set of capricious aperçus grafted on disconnected observations. Astrology is a revelling in the momentary and in the concrete with no real concern for the causal and unequivocal interconnectedness of things, events and processes.

Such contradictions fail to present themselves to the credulous mind for which the sole test for truth is subjective feelings.

Credulity is exemplified in Shirley MacLaine. She (1987:37-38) shows no concern for the fact that 'spiritual guides speaking through transmediums are not always correct ... the test for me has always been how I *felt* about their advice and projections of the future'.

When truth becomes subjective, behaviour becomes pragmatic (see section 6.2.2.2). Like the Greek Sophists, the concern for truth and ethical correctness is disregarded in favour of personal power and success (Osborn 1992:107). The impact of subjectivism on morality was discussed in section 3.4.2 and will be continued in sections 6.2.2. and 6.3.2.2. Its impact on scientific theories and the metaphysical extrapolations therefrom are explored in the following section and continued in section 6.3.

#### **5.4.2.3    *Subjectivism, science, and metaphysical extrapolations***

Subjectivism applied to science implies that subjective, personal opinions rather than critical reasoning and logical thinking form the matrix within which data is interpreted and hypotheses evaluated and extrapolated into other levels of life. In this situation, objective logical bases on which to distinguish between science and pseudoscience collapse. As Maureen O'Hara (1985:72-

73) points out: 'Anyone - crackpot, charlatan, genius, or sage - must be dealt with in the same way (believed or disbelieved) solely on the basis of personal opinion. Personal opinion then becomes equated with knowledge and can be asserted without embarrassment.'

Pseudoscientists, says O'Hara (1985:71), 'want it both ways. They want the authority of science but are unwilling to abide by the rules by which the scientific community created its authority in the first place'. O'Hara's (1985:69) criticism of New Age pseudoscience is blistering:

theorizing wildly is scientific-sounding language; sprinkling speculative discussion with isolated fragments of real data regardless of relevance; confusing analogy with homology; breaking conventional rules of evidence at will; and extrapolating from one level of reality into others wherein different principles operate.

Halverson (Hoyt (ed) 1987:84ff) believes that level confusion underlies the New Age attempt to wed science and mysticism. The distinction between the natural and the spiritual is lost. Furthermore, proven and unproven scientific hypotheses are extrapolated to the metaphysical level, the justification of which is not the evidence, but is rooted in personal experience and subjective presuppositions (Chandler 1988:247). For example, the genesis of Capra's (1975:9) 'insight' into quantum physics was not the data but a personal, mystical experience:

As I sat on that beach ... I 'saw' cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I 'saw' the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I 'heard' its sound, and at that moment I *knew* that this was the Dance of Shiva, the Lord of Dancers worshipped by the Hindus.

The intricate interconnectedness to which quantum physics points is also open to two other metaphysical interpretations - materialistic naturalism where natural frequency patterns and underlying nonlocal fields with superluminal communication explain quantum phenomena (Woodhouse in Lamb (ed) 1992:26, 44); or God's creation of a world intrinsically ordered in its variety and consistent in its inner interrelated patterns (Chandler 1988:248; Veith 1987:123).

The complementarity of all opposites including good and evil (Capra 1975:148ff) is another extrapolation based on personal metaphysics (see section 6.3.3.1).<sup>16</sup> According to Jaki (1978:205), the complementary nature of the quantum realm's duality of having both wave and particle properties, expressed in Bohr's principle of complementarity (see section 5.3.2), 'was not a matter of observation [which only reveals the duality], but an inference, and a genuinely metaphysical one'.

The bogus *hundredth monkey phenomenon* is probably the best example of how a scientific study can be distorted to suit one's preconceived ideas. According to Lyall Watson (O'Hara 1985:64-65) - who Ferguson (1989:168) and the *New Age Brain Mind Bulletin* refer to as a biologist, but who is the author of occult writings (O'Hara 1985:70) - a scientific study of the eating habits of monkeys on the Koshima Island revealed that when the monkeys were given dirty sweet potatoes, one monkey began washing the potatoes before eating. Others followed and when a critical number, say one hundred, was reached *suddenly all* the monkeys began to wash their potatoes. What actually happened was that the transmission of potatoe washing throughout the colony occurred in two distinct phases. One monkey did start the practice whereupon some copied the behaviour. However, it only became universal among the island's monkeys in the second phase when the juvenile females of the first phase began having babies and transmitted the practice to their young. (O'Hara 1985:65-66.)

The distorted version of this study is used to support the idea that

when awareness of an idea reaches the critical level, it spreads exponentially and becomes universal ... The inference is that when a myth is shared by large enough numbers of people, it becomes a reality. More likely, suggests Tim Farrington, 'it simply becomes a widely shared myth' (Chandler 1988:101-102).

New Agers use many unproven theories to provide apparent scientific support for their ideas, especially those posited by scientists to explain the difficulties with evolution. One example is the Belgian chemist, mathematician, and Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine's *theory of dissipative structures*. Prigogine's theory was an attempt to solve the problems that the Second Law of

Thermodynamics poses to evolution. This law states: The organised complexity/information of a structured/communicating system tends to become disorganised and random (Morris in Morris & Parker 1982:165). Prigogine's suggestion is that

in a system where a high degree of energy dissipation is taking place, a small sub-region [a fluctuation] may exist where a higher degree of structure is somehow generated by the dissipative field. An example might be the generation of a trail of vortices in the wake behind an object around which a fluid is flowing rapidly ... In such instances, a large amount of energy is being dissipated into unusable heat in the large flow-through of energy, but in the process, order of a sort is developed in the vortex systems so produced. Prigogine's hope was that this sub-region of higher order might then provide the 'sub-strate' for the development of a still higher degree or order by a similar dissipative field through which *it* would pass - and so on, until living systems finally are generated (Morris in Morris & Parker 1982:181).

Ferguson (1989:176) says 'Prigogine's theory resolves the fundamental riddle of how living things have been running uphill in a universe that is supposed to be running down'. Prigogine's theory was, however, strictly mathematical and nonexperimental, and he self (Morris & Parker 1982:180, 182) acknowledges that there exists no factual, scientific evidence that life originated and evolved by such means. Ferguson (1989:181) contends, however, that 'Prigogine's theory was experimentally confirmed', by which she apparently relates patterns formed in chemical solutions and oils to the design required for the origin of the first life from nonlife (Ferguson 1989:178-179). But these are meaningless, random patterns of organisation not information. There are two kinds of order or organisation. The one is the type produced naturally and randomly (for example, snowflakes and rock-formations). The other type of order implies an intelligent, extrinsic design (information) which is used to construct the desired order (Bradley & Thaxton in Moreland (ed) 1994:203ff; see section 5.2.3.2). Furthermore:

There is little similarity between the ordering associated with crystals, vortices and the like and the specified complexity required in the sequencing of amino acids to

give a functional protein [and ultimately life]. Thus it is difficult to see how these ideas can resolve the information enigma that is at the heart of the origin-of-life mystery (Bradley & Thaxton in Moreland (ed) 1994:195).

Ferguson (1989:180) uses the notion of fluctuations in a dissipative structure to support the envisaged social evolution to higher consciousness triggered by a critical number of people (see sections 5.2.3.1, 5.2.3.3b, and the hundredth monkey phenomenon discussed above). Ferguson (1989:182-183) also 'explains' how introspection and altered states of consciousness effect further evolution to higher, more exalted forms of consciousness:

Brainwaves reflect *fluctuations of energy* ... In normal consciousness, small and rapid brainwaves (beta rhythm) dominate the EEG pattern in most people ... Meditation, reverie, relaxation, and other assorted psychotechnologies [see section 2.4.1] tend to increase the slower, *larger* brainwaves [alpha and theta] ... Inward attention, in other words, generates a larger fluctuation in the brain. In *altered states of consciousness, fluctuations may reach a critical level, large enough to provoke the shift into a higher level of organization* ... Remember that *small* fluctuations in a dissipative structure are suppressed ... But larger fluctuations of *energy* [emphasis mine] cannot be contained in the old structure. They set off ripples throughout the system, creating sudden new connections. Thus, old patterns are likeliest to change when maximally perturbed or shaken - activated in states of consciousness in which there is *significant energy flow* [emphasis mine].

Ferguson's argument is self-defeating. Beta, alpha, and theta refer to the wavelength of which beta refers to the smallest wavelength. Alpha and theta, as Ferguson (see above) correctly points out, refer to larger wavelengths. What Ferguson either does not know or fails to mention is that the energy of a wave is *inversely* proportional to the wavelength. In other words, the longer the wavelength, the smaller the energy (as already taught in standard nine physics).<sup>17</sup> In terms of Ferguson's reasoning, introspective psychotechnologies and altered states of consciousness with longer wavelengths imply lower states of energy than ordinary consciousness, and they would,

therefore, contrary to her theory concerning consciousness evolution, necessarily retard the alleged evolution to higher consciousness.

Another unproven evolutionary theory used to 'validate' a sudden evolutionary leap to higher levels of consciousness is the *punctuated equilibria* theory of the materialists, Steven Gould and Niles Eldredge (Ferguson 1989:171-172). In order to explain the lack of intermediate forms in the fossil record, these two scientists propose that a new species emerges suddenly and fully formed. As the title of an article by Gould in *Natural History* for June-July 1977 says, this theory is *The return of hopeful monsters*. The hopeful monsters theory, formulated by Richard Goldschmidt in the 1930s, posited that, for example, the first bird hatched fully-formed out of a reptile egg. (Ankerberg & Weldon in Moreland (ed) 1994:281; Parker in Morris & Parker 1982:111-112.)

The unproven theories that are hitched onto by New Agers are not presented as unproven nor that the evidence on which they are based is open to other metaphysical interpretations. Instead 'New Age theorists have us believe their unproven hypotheses and non sequiturs [irrelevancies] are the underpinning for a mystical vision of deliverance' (Chandler 1988:252). It is, however, a vision which directly contradicts Einstein (Jaki 1978:186) who said that: 'The belief in an external world independent of the perceiving subject is the basis of all natural science.'

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter revealed that despite the desire to transcend scientism and materialism, the New Age worldview is rooted in philosophical naturalism as is scientism and materialism. The New Age worldview redefines the cosmos as essentially spiritual and it is in the deeper, cosmos-bound spiritual order that the illusion of a physical, spacetime world is said to inhere. Thereby the New Age worldview widens the universe to include a spiritual dimension, but in such a way that it undermines itself as a paradigm for the methodical, empirical scientific study of physical reality.

This chapter concludes the analysis of the New Age worldview in its historical relationship with the development of Western thought. Placing New Age thought into its historical context provided the necessary critical insight into the philosophical principles that underlie the premises

of New Age thought. The laying of this foundation (in this and the preceding chapters) prior to the analysis of the New Age mandate for education and intellectual inquiry was essential because education determines the principles by which life is navigated.

False principles acquired during childhood are correctly identified by New Age thinkers as the cause of 'the unease and disease of our adult lives' (Ferguson 1989:306). It is, therefore, vital that the principles that our students are given be critically analysed. As Wilder-Smith (1975:95) points out, 'to navigate on incorrect principles ... gets [one] to where one does not want to be'.

## 5.6 NOTES

1. Spontaneous generation was discredited by Louis Pasteur in 1864. His 'swan-neck jar' experiments proved that spontaneous biogenesis without the mediation of previously existing life does not take place (as a canning factor also proves) (Bradley & Thaxton in Moreland (ed) 1994:181; Goertz 1990:6; Wilder-Smith 1970:23; 1981:viii-ix).
2. A thorough exposition of this idea is dealt with in Arthur Lovejoy's book, [1936] (1942) *The great chain of being*.
3. In articles published in 1835 and 1837, Blyth presented the idea of natural selection which Darwin claimed he had thought of. Blyth's conclusion was that the survival of the strongest in a species was a conservative principle which enabled the transmission of superior qualities to offspring and thereby secured the survival of the species. (Sunderland 1988:16; Morris 1989:157-158.)
4. Thomas Huxley was the grandfather of Aldous Huxley whose views on psychedelic drugs influenced the counterculture (see sections 2.3.4, 4.3.1.1) and the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2).
5. Finding the relevant natural laws is a real possibility, but not necessarily because the first biogenesis was due to exclusively natural processes. Wilder-Smith (1981:xii-xiii) who has

three doctorates in organic chemistry and pharmacology explains (by drawing an analogy with the construction of a car):

Let us consider the following proposition: An engineer from the outer galaxies visits the earth with some of his colleagues - after all life here has been extinguished by a nuclear war. Under the rubble he finds several cars which still function, finds their owners' manuals (in English), drives them, takes them apart, teaches himself metallurgy and mechanics from them, and finally builds a similar car from scrap metal and plastic leftovers. When other colleagues from the outer galaxy visit him, they ask him about the genesis of the first car. He replies that he is now completely familiar with all the natural laws governing the cars and is convinced that nothing but matter and the natural laws are behind autogenesis. Merely matter and the laws of nature were at work in constructing the car he found in the first place. By this reasoning, the laws of nature alone built the first car from matter.

In reality of course, the cars function *within* the laws of nature and of matter, just as the biological cell - also a machine - functions within the laws of nature and matter. Yet the laws of nature alone built neither the car nor the cell. For those laws are not teleonomic and therefore *build* no teleonomic machines. Darwinism has completely overlooked this important point - that the laws of nature do in fact provide the basis for the *functioning* of a machine, without at the same time being responsible for its *genesis*.

6. Wilder-Smith (1981:77ff) gives an excellent description in layman terms explaining why information implies meaning and, therefore, necessarily requires intelligence.
7. Mathematicians have shown that the problems of abiogenesis and macroevolution cannot be solved with the help of computers. Mathematicians have calculated the number of

selections and/or mutations required and the figures are so astronomically large that when they were fed into supercomputers, the machines simply jammed (Ankerberg & Weldon in Moreland (ed) 1994:274; Sunderland 1988:134; Wilder-Smith 1970:232-233).

8. This example of Sheldrake is similar to the bogus *hundredth monkey phenomenon* popular among New Agers (see section 5.4.2.3).
9. At the time when Newton formulated his theory only Euclidean geometry was known. By Einstein's time, Nikolai Lobachevski (1793-1856) and Georg Riemann (1826-1866) had added hyperbolic and spherical geometry respectively (Zeilik 1982:128).
10. Geometry did not originate in ancient times as an abstract, intellectual pursuit that had no relationship with reality. It was developed by the ancient Greeks as a mathematical system derived from the practical surveying techniques of the Egyptians. 'So geometry ... was developed from experience.' (Zeilik 1982:127.)
11. Probability rather than certainty comes into its own *only* at the subatomic level. At the ordinary level of experience, uncertainties are negligibly small. (Stannard 1993:59.)
12. In a hypothetical or thought experiment, the experimental conditions must conform to physical laws and to the technical capabilities of the apparatus.
13. The energy of a photon of light is directly proportional to its frequency;  $E = hf$  where E stands for energy, h for Planck's constant, and f for frequency.
14. This is the type of reasoning which New Age thinkers engage in (Talbot 1981:4; Zukav 1979:134ff).
15. The books by Prof R Hooykaas, (1972) *Religion and the rise of modern science*, and Prof Stanley Jaki, (1974) *Science and creation*, are highly recommendable, especially to those persons who regard the orthodox Christian belief in creation by a transcendent yet

personal God who is the Upholder of the universe as detrimental to the practice of science. At the end of his study Prof Hooykaas (1972:162) concludes that: 'Metaphorically speaking, whereas the bodily ingredients of science may have been Greek, its vitamins and hormones were biblical.'

16. Bohm's implicate order theory (see section 5.3.2) is also grounded in his personal metaphysics. Eastern mysticism influenced him since childhood (Sharpe 1990:113) and Krishnamurti was his friend and mentor (see section 2.3.3.2d).

17.  $E = hf$  and  $c = \lambda f$ , therefore  $E = \frac{hc}{\lambda}$ .

E is the energy, h is Planck's constant, c is the speed of light and electromagnetic waves,  $\lambda$  is the wavelength, and f is the frequency.

**CHAPTER 6****NEW AGE THOUGHT, EDUCATION, AND INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY:  
REFLECTIONS ON THE FLIGHT FROM TRUTH****6.1 INTRODUCTION**

By critically examining the philosophies and theories of the antecedents of New Age thought, one realises that New Age thought is more than simply an expression of the spiritual aspirations of the West's mystical, occult fringe. The New Age worldview is, in fact, the spiritual extrapolation of three interrelated postulates which have increasingly guided Western intellectual thought since the Enlightenment. First is the postulate that the cosmos is a closed system and contains all reality that there is (see section 5.2). Second is the postulate that humans are autonomous, essentially good, and in possession of the potential to determine their own destiny (see sections 3.3.2.4, 4.3.1). Third is the postulate that reality and truth are not objective, but relative and subjective (see sections 3.3.4, 5.3.2).

Having questioned the veracity of the theories in which these postulates and their many corollaries originated, as well as the specifically New Age spiritual deductions derived therefrom, it now remains to expand on the educational implications already pointed out in the preceding chapters. The issues to be addressed in this chapter are the assessment, firstly, of the impact that the premises in the New Age worldview may have on young, immature minds, and secondly, of the viability of the New Age worldview as a philosophical framework for intellectual inquiry.

The contention is that the eventual outcome of all educational activities is not primarily determined by abstract ideals, but by the philosophical premises that undergird the worldview in which the relevant educational activities are grounded.

## 6.2 NEW AGE THOUGHT AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

### 6.2.1 Spiritual development

#### 6.2.1.1 *The turn to paganism and pantheism*

In section 5.2.2, we saw that after Darwin Western scientific thought entered the era of naturalism. With the widespread acceptance of macroevolution as a scientifically proven theory rather than a metaphysical research programme subjectively chosen by nontheists (see section 5.2.1), the whole concept of an extracosmic Creator was rendered scientifically irrelevant. Macroevolution presented a new picture of the cosmos - a self-generated, self-sufficient whole which contains all reality there is.

Acceptance of the postulate that the cosmos is all there is leaves people with two religious choices. First is the non-New Age materialist option: There is no God and no spiritual reality, but only the physical world driven by blind mechanical forces. Second is the New Age option: God and spiritual reality are dimensions within the cosmos that are imperceptible to the ordinary senses and the rational mind, but can be perceived via mystical intuition (see section 2.2).

In the New Age view, God is not a Being different and distinct from his creation. God and all things, spiritual and physical, make up a vast unity (see section 2.2.1) in which the concept of creation - often referred to in New Age texts especially in the creation-centred spirituality of Matthew Fox (see section 2.6 note 4) - is to be understood as the manifold expression and manifestation, not of God's thoughts, but of God himself. It is, therefore, an essentially pantheistic and pagan view. The cosmos becomes the deity, the divine force which works in nature and is one with nature (see section 2.2.1). This religious view becomes the only religious position that can be arrived at when religion is refurbished from within the closed, naturalistic worldview of modern science.

Already in scientific materialism, the cosmos has taken on the attributes of God as a self-sufficient entity which is the source of all existence. This, says Veith (1987:110), is clearly seen in the rapt

emotion and religious language of materialist scientists like Carl Sagan who claims: 'The Cosmos is all there is, all there was, and all there ever will be.' With these words, Sagan opened his television series, *The cosmos*, produced in 1978. If the cosmos is the only ultimate reality, if there is no extracosmic, supranatural Creator and Giver of meaning, then we are, in effect, already back to pantheism and pagan nature religions (Jaki 1989:201ff; Veith 1987:110).

In Western culture, science has for many people - including New Agers, even though the latter enclithe it with spirituality - become the final authority. Science has, therefore, become the logical coherence and overlap between the worldviews of scientific materialism (with its resultant spiritual void) and the New Age (with its 'scientific' spirituality) despite the significant differences of materialism versus spiritualism, mechanism versus vitalism or organicism (see section 5.2). The lack of spirituality in scientific materialism has influenced people who needed to add spirituality to a sterile theory dependent on blind, purposeless, mechanical forces (see section 5.2.2.2) to think in specifically New Age ways be it on whatever level. These are ways which deny the reality of God as a truly personal Being outside yet sustaining and intervening in His creation, and instead, affirm a pantheistic and rather impersonal interconnecting Spiritual Energy (or Force).

Although the extreme occult ideas of the New Age remain, at least for the moment, on the fringes of Western society, mainstream Western culture is increasingly embracing New Age ideas about the sacred sanctity of nature, altered states of consciousness as religious experiences, mysticism as the path to God, and the desirability of contact with beings in the spiritual realm.

The media has become a primary vehicle for propagating the ideas of a pantheistic, cosmic deity and an inner, cosmic spiritual dimension to which the human mind can and should open itself. The cinema and especially television are powerful instruments for influencing young and vulnerable minds. *Star wars* was only the first of many films which make statements about a mystical power source, the *Force*, and about intuitive communication with spiritual or extraterrestrial beings (Lochhaas 1988:10).

Parents who want to protect their children from such influences, which in today's world are inescapable, should cultivate spiritual discernment in their children. A scholar of comparative

religion Terry Muck (1992:71) maintains that people from nonpantheistic religions may be willing to use a cultural icon like the Force as an analogy for God because they do not fully understand its implications. Parents should therefore develop their own powers of spiritual discernment by knowing exactly what their Scriptures (for Christians, the Bible) say they should believe and what they should not believe. In addition, parents should know and teach their children why they believe as they do.<sup>1</sup>

Parents should also take full responsibility for their children's religious education, assisted, however, by their church. Parents should not shift this essentially parental task onto the school. Parents assisted by their church should provide their children with intellectually solid ammunition which will enable them to defend their beliefs against any contradictory secular or religious beliefs that they may encounter in the schools and in the media (Wilder-Smith 1975:100).

The task of the school in a plural society is not to propagate one specific view, be it secular or religious, but to 'prepare a student by instructing him in a balanced way on all aspects of all the evidence on hand on the nature of [physical] reality ... to produce truly educated students instead of mere partisans' to any dominant view (Wilder-Smith 1975:100).

The idea of spiritual discernment brings us to the problem of religious truth, a problem which New Age thinkers 'solve' by holding that the sole criterion for truth is correspondence to inner, subjective feelings.

#### *6.2.1.2 The question of religious truth*

In New Age thought it is assumed that the different religions are merely different paths to the same God (see section 2.2.1). This is the direct result of the West's abandonment of absolute religious truth standards. The relativisation of religious truth (brought about after the Enlightenment (see section 3.3.4) is, according to Muck (1992:69), one of the conditions that paves the way for religious syncretism. Arguably, therefore, these intellectual currents that relativise religious truth are spawning New Age thought as much as New Age thought is reinforcing the idea that religious statements belong to the realm of the subjective (see also section

6.3.3.1) - the realm which Adler (1990b:126) identifies as that 'of feeling and personal predilection, with respect to which, like matters of taste, there is no disputing and no adjudication by logical means'.

Within the parameters of subjective truth, individuals are free to draw on any religious tradition and to transform the beliefs to suit their own wishes and desires. Such transformation does not happen in Christianity alone. The pantheism of the New Age differs substantially from traditional Eastern pantheism.

In the East it is not the individual 'who forms from himself the "invisible and subtle essence" of reality; it is the "invisible and subtle essence" that forms him. Individuality is lost in unity' (Sire 1988:15). In contrast, New Age thought is solipsistic (see section 5.4.2.1). The individual is ultimately the only really real, and in his solipsistic grandiosity, boosted by the idea of an illusory, holographic universe (see section 5.3.2), the individual mind forms, constructs and, in effect, creates reality. Both the emphasis on the individual and the idea of creating reality have 'much more the flavor of Western thought than Eastern' (Sire 1988:15). In Eastern thought, individual 'personality is a form of illusion, not ultimately real' (Sire 1988:15). And 'in Eastern pantheism there is no creation as such; there is only emanation, the extending of the essence of reality throughout the whole of the universe' (Sire 1988:15). The pantheist

believes that God is everything, earth, sky, sea, hills, trees, you, me and everything else. So he cannot talk about God doing something or not doing something. God could never be the subject of a sentence. He has no separate existence. Therefore we could never say that God has created the earth, because the earth is God (Alexander 1972:61).

The concept of creation is rooted in the Biblical view of a personal, all-powerful, creator God (Schaeffer 1970:21). The idea of creation remained within Western culture even after Darwin. Thus, when nature becomes God as it does in the New Age worldview, for Westerners it has

the effect of making you project a sense of personality, inherent in the word

theism, into impersonal nature. But really this is cheating, because there is no real basis in the idea that the pantheist is trying to put across for believing that there is anything personal or special about nature at all (Alexander 1972:62).

Deifying nature while at the same time influenced by their Western culture's view of God, New Age thinkers appropriate to humans the divine, creative powers of the Biblical monotheist God. In doing so, the order of creation is turned upside down. In New Age thought, God did not create humankind; humankind creates God. <sup>2</sup> For example, Starhawk (1989:95) asserts that the goddess 'exists, *and* we create Her'. The rationale for this seemingly contradictory statement is that the existence of gods and goddesses is purely mental, that is, they are mental personifications of the archetypes buried in the depths of the collective unconscious (see sections 4.2.2.2, 4.2.2.3).

New Age spirituality is thus rooted in the premise that there is no God existing objectively and in complete independence of the human mind. This premise implies an eclectic, 'individualistic approach to religion [which] means that there is no single, clearly-defined tradition to pass on to one's children' (Carson in Carson (ed) 1989:3).

At first glance, religious eclecticism appears to be the epitome of an open-minded approach to the problem of religious pluralism for it involves turning away from fixed ideas and closed religious systems. It leaves untouched the decision for truth or falsity which Adler (1990b:46) and Muck (1992:60) say, all religions demand. Even the eclectic mix of religious ideas in New Age spirituality demands at least one such decision, namely whether God is a personal being separate from his creation or an impersonal cosmic life force which can be personified if and how the believer should so desire.

Too easy !! X

These two concepts of God are mutually exclusive and thus irreconcilable. In the former, God is a being who really exists; 'His existence and His nature do not depend on what anyone thinks about Him' (Little 1987:22-23). In the latter, the personification of god/dess is a freely chosen mental projection.

The latter view requires the teaching that the content of all religions is exclusively mythological

and void of any claim to objective truth.<sup>3</sup> But such an assertion is dogmatic since it is totally beyond proof. Not only is it offensive to many religious believers, 'it will certainly not convince persons of religious faith that what they believe is only myth' (Adler 1990b:62).

What the assertion does, is that it equates the fact of religious pluralism with the unproven premise of religious relativism and subjectivism. In other words, the problem that all religions have beliefs 'that involve affirmations and denials, about which the question of truth must be raised' (Adler 1990b:46), is avoided by reducing religious ideas to a matter of personal (or social) taste about which one cannot engage in meaningful debate with others of differing beliefs.

The appeal of the above assertion is easy to see. What is projected is a vision of freedom, individual autonomy, and tolerance. The young are allowed to develop spiritually in accordance with their feelings, uncoerced by others, and free to pursue any religion or combination of religions as a means to self-development and self-fulfilment. X

The position that there is no objective religious truth implicitly conveys to young people the message that there are no real answers to the big questions in life. Thus, what is actually conveyed is a fundamental scepticism which 'kills wonder and substitutes curiosity, frustrates hopeful striving for transcendence, and turns the young pupil toward the ephemeral, the emotional, the secular, the immediate and the mundane' (Schmitt in Krason (ed) 1991:11). And these, except for the emotional and the immediate, are the opposites of the professed New Age ideals.

Furthermore, reducing God to the level of a mental projection and combining it with moral relativism and subjectivism (see sections 3.4.2, 4.2.2.3, 4.2.2.4) may breed arrogance. In effect, the young person becomes the sole arbiter and keeper of his own truth. This leaves little room for the cultivation of a modest, humble spirit, but plenty for self-centred self-discovery. Nonjudgemental self-actualisation replaces the traditional educational rôles of all religions, namely to cultivate a morally good person and to effect spiritual and inner, emotional healing.

### 6.2.1.3 *Spiritual and inner, emotional healing*

Wilder-Smith (1975:110) tells of a Christian catechism which he learnt as a child. The question is: 'What is the chief purpose of man?' and the expected answer is: 'The chief purpose of man is to know God and enjoy Him for ever.' The clear implication of this catechism is that such nourishment for the mind, imbibed already in childhood, both enriches the mind and brings with it the joy of inner healing.

From a New Age perspective, the injunction contained in this catechism is to go within, to awaken the 'higher/divine' self and to find joy and subsequently inner healing therein.

The inward turn towards the self is rooted in the theories of humanistic psychologists such as Maslow (see section 4.3.1.2) and Rogers (see section 4.3.1.3). Humanistic psychology and its offshoots, the human potential movement (see section 4.3.2) and transpersonal psychology (see section 4.4), teach that the individual should be urged to be consciously concerned with the self: to build high self-esteem as the solution to life's problems and to the burden of an empty, meaningless life. The idea behind this way of thinking is that every person is basically good and responsible and, therefore, able to take control of his life if and when he realises his own inner worth and strength.

According to this way of thinking and it is a way of thinking that has permeated contemporary education, the child's most foundational need is to feel good about himself at all times.<sup>4</sup> What humanistic psychology and its offshoots do not explain, however, is why a person does not naturally feel good about himself. Why must one *learn* to feel good about oneself? If people were inherently good, surely self-affirmations to convince oneself of one's goodness would be unnecessary?

Relevant also is that humanistic psychology propagates that a negative self-image and wrong behaviour are the results of negative messages and influences received from parents, teachers, and other restrictive social institutions (see sections 4.3.1.2a, 4.3.1.3). But this is behaviouristic, an approach which humanistic psychology professedly rejects (see section 4.3.1.1). Like

behaviourism, humanistic psychology implies that:

If we deal with the negative influences in society, people will behave differently and the world be a better place to live.

This may sound very kind and comforting, but it's patently untrue ... No amount of effort spent in removing negative influences and experiences will change the selfish human heart (McClung [S a]:31).

Blaming society and seeking to correct social ills without getting to the root of evil - the selfish, self-centred human heart - explains why New Age morality is directed at social rather than personal morality (see section 3.4.1).

Humanistic psychology's assumption that personal goodness requires only to be affirmed for it actualise itself leads to the erroneous conclusion that the question 'Who am I?' should always be answered positively instead of realistically. A realistic approach to self-discovery encourages honest self-examination and accurate self-knowledge where character flaws and the necessity for correction thereof are acknowledged. (Matzat 1990:59ff.) A self-affirming approach, on the other hand, encourages the child to form what Matzat (1990:61) calls a 'manufactured self-image'.<sup>5</sup> Matzat (1990:61) explains how this is done:

We develop this new self-image by creating in our mind a positive picture of who we are. We then identify our true selves in that positive picture and thereby answer the question "Who am I?". We find ourselves in our own manufactured self-image. When you think about it, this is really a fascinating game. We make up our own rules, set the standards, associate with those who agree with us, and pat ourselves on the back for playing the game so well. It seems to me that the game is 'fixed'.

The specifically New Age techniques for playing this 'game', also with children, are meditation, which Canfield and Klimek (Brooks 1981-82:4) advise should in education rather be called

'centring'<sup>6</sup>, and guided imagery or visualisation exercises. Murdock (1987:2) describes guided imagery as 'a process of going within, focusing attention on breath and bodily relaxation and moving to deeper levels of consciousness where more images are accessible to the conscious mind'.

In the classroom guided imagery is practised by the teacher first placing the pupils in a state of relaxed passivity which, by its very nature, shuts down the mind's rational, critical faculties. Thereafter the teacher reads aloud a script, the ingredients of which include progressive advancement to higher or deeper levels of consciousness, meetings with guides, and empowered feelings of inner unity and oneness with all that is. This technique and its ingredients clearly distinguish guided imagery from ordinary imagery which is the mental activity of the *fully* conscious mind. Guided imagery bears a marked resemblance to mystical experiences (see section 2.2.2); the magical practices of the Kabbalists (see section 2.3.2.2b), the Renaissance Magicians (see section 2.3.2.3), and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (see section 2.3.2.4); shamanic visualisation (see section 2.4.1.3); pathworking (see section 2.4.1.4); and Jung's alchemystical method of active imagination used to encounter the archetypes (see sections 4.2.2.3, 4.2.2.4).

Visualisation exercises (also discussed in section 6.3.2.1) are promoted as ways of stimulating learning and creativity as well as for inner healing. Rozman (Bloom (ed) 1991:189) holds that such exercises render spiritual 'wholeness' and thereby make it less likely that children 'get caught in the traps of material identification'. Since material pleasures do tend to dull spiritual awareness and to filter out the essential ingredients of being human, Rozman's motivation is in and by itself praiseworthy. But to seek spiritual awareness and healing through methods that border on occultism is, to say the least, questionable.

Guided imagery is promoted by educators with definite educational clout. For example, Peter Majoy, who is listed in the *Who's who among America's teachers* (1993:back cover), describes it 'as an essential and basic teaching skill' (1993:64). Osborn (1992:77), on the other hand, recognises guided imagery for what it is - a powerful psychological tool with decisive psychological risks about which the promoters are far too sanguine. Osborn (1992:77) points out that:

Contrary to the assumptions of some educationists, it is relatively easy to evoke extremely profound and disturbing psychological experiences through guided fantasy. Very few teachers are trained to handle such situations. Furthermore the counselling which may be necessary can be time consuming. The pressures of most school timetables would prevent them [even if capable] giving the time necessary.

Jung himself recognised that dark and frightening forces may appear (see section 4.2.2.3). The Australian New Ager and Golden Dawn (see section 2.3.2.4) magician Nevill Drury (1985:135ff) also identifies serious adverse effects that can result from visionary activity. For example, delusions of grandeur may result. In other words, what may be produced is

the type of power-based personality that insists on spiritual sanction for its authority. The magician comes to believe that he has superior quality of inspiration and is able to justify autocratic behaviour on the basis of it. He subjects his fellows as minions. He demands unbridled respect and subservience ... [O]ne imagines oneself to have incorporated a level of spiritual attainment when one has merely skirted its periphery (Drury 1985:136).

Aleister Crowley (see section 2.3.2.4), Blavatsky (see section 2.3.3.2d), Gurdjieff (see section 2.3.3.2f), and the gurus of the counterculture (see sections 2.3.2.2f, 2.3.4) exemplify this psychological pitfall. Maureen Murdock's (1987:87) exercise, called *The ally within*, is an example of the type of recommended imagery exercises which may encourage this form of personality disorder. This exercise purportedly helps young people

to realize their own inner wisdom and recognise that they have all the answers within if they take the time to center, quiet the mind, and listen. The "Ally Within" ... encourages the participant to find a wise being within who gives guidance and support and who may have answers to personal questions (Murdock 1987:138).<sup>7</sup>

Another example is Beverly Galyean's *The Rose* (Majoy 1993:65ff), a pathworking exercise (see section 2.4.1.4) in which children are to imagine (among other things) flowers chanting, 'You have the power, you have the power' (Majoy 1993:66).

Another danger that Drury (1985:135-136) indicates, is that by 'activating the Kundalini energies [thought by Yogis to lie dormant at the base of the spine] ... [the participant] may precipitate subconscious imagery of such force and impact as to leave his psyche in shreds'. In actual fact, mental derangement has resulted from guided imagery activity (Drury 1985:136).

A tendency to psychological escapism is also found. The participant, says Drury (1985:136-137), returns from his visionary activities and 'is unable to act in the world of normality. He becomes enchanted with the visionary scenery of his subconscious, trapped by his failure to distinguish meaning from its symbolic representations' (see also section 6.2.3).

Fantasy exercises, such as the *Sanctuary* of Murdock (1987:142) and *A safe place* of Hall, Hall and Leech (1990:58-59), actually encourage psychological escapism. In a relaxed, passive state of high suggestibility, the child is told to construct a safe, imaginary place to which he is to escape for solace in times of stress.

Using guided imagery with children and adolescents is, in the light of the above psychological dangers alone, irresponsible if not inexcusable. There is also an additional risk which Osborn (1992:77) points out, namely that of indoctrination:

The most successful fantasy scripts emerge from the author's imagination and stimulate the imaginations of the participants, bypassing their critical faculties. Even if teachers resist the temptation to promote their beliefs in this way, there is no protection from their unconscious beliefs and presuppositions. This danger is heightened when the material used in the guided fantasy is drawn from religious sources ... Advocates of guided fantasy assume that it offers a safe way of gaining some insight into religious faith and practice. However, as Ignatius of Loyola discovered, such use of the imagination may actually be a very

powerful way of participating in a religious tradition.

Nor is the danger of indoctrination confined to the exercise itself. Such exercises can evoke profound experiences which demand interpretation. There is a real possibility of unintentional indoctrination whenever the teacher has to talk through such an experience with a pupil.

Apart from opening the child to occultism and visionary magic as well as intentional or unintentional spiritual indoctrination, many of the exercises recommended for classroom practice promote a concentrated focus on the self as the path to emotional stability. See, for example, Murdock's *Power shield* (1987:91), *Me as robot* (1987:93), *Mandala* (1987:95), *Mirror reflection* (1987:126), *Accepting myself* (1987:129), and *Clearing space* (1987:130-131).

In contrast to this inward, self-centred approach to inner stability, Victor Frankl teaches self-detachment. Although Frankl, as an Existentialist (see section 3.3.4.2) believes that the individual must 'create his own meaning in a meaningless world' (Lasch 1984:115), he is a humanistic psychologist who 'calls us to forget about ourselves' (Matzat 1990:73). Frankl (Matzat 1990:73) speaks of self-detachment as a 'coping mechanism built into the human psyche'.

During his time spent in Auschwitz during World War 2, Frankl realised that the people who maintained mental and emotional stability were those who detached themselves from themselves by engrossing themselves in other activities and relationships. Frankl (Matzat 1990:74) argues, therefore, that one must forget oneself to become really human: 'The more one is immersed and absorbed in something or someone other than oneself, the more he really becomes human.' According to Matzat (1990:74), Frankl is not advocating a denial or repression of problems and inner hurts and conflicts, but emphasises 'that focusing upon these things neither solves them nor changes them but merely magnifies and activates them'.

Compared with Frankl's approach and the circumstances under which it was validated, the idea of turning inward to the self crumbles into meaningless rhetoric. A fantasy world of self-sufficient power gives little if any support in times of real trouble which no amount of self-affirmation or

'creative' visualisation can change (see section 4.4.3).

Ironically, it is the followers of the New Age Movement and its predecessor, the counterculture (see section 2.3.4), who invalidate the inward search as a legitimate educational tool for providing the young with meaning and stability in life. These people tend to end up 'seeking counsel from spirits on the outside. The conclusion', says Burrows (Hoyt (ed) 1987:42), 'is inescapable: They went inside and, like the rest of us, found themselves wanting'. Faced ultimately with inner emptiness and a self that, more often than not, fails to conform to the affirmative messages, solace and empowerment are sought in idealised gurus and/or comforting messages from channelled beings (see section 2.4.2).

Contemporary Western culture and education have confused psychological and emotional health with high self-esteem. These two aspects have been identified with each other, and this is attributable to the influence that humanistic psychology has had in shaping not only New Age thought but contemporary thought in general. This identification impacts directly on the formation of character, the next point of discussion.

## **6.2.2 Character development**

### **6.2.2.1 *The cultivation of narcissism***

The value of self-affirmation in New Age thought (see section 4.3) has a striking resonance with contemporary education. However, few teachers teach or would be prepared to teach the central claim of New Age spirituality - the god within. Nevertheless, the emphasis on self-esteem in education sets the stage for the glorification of the self which is part and parcel of New Age thought.

The intentions behind the self-esteem movement in education are well-meant, namely to cultivate a healthy and confident stance towards life (Damon 1991:12). Sadly, however, it can impair the child's character growth by reinforcing the narcissism which is characteristic of young children. Damon (1991:16) indicates that: 'When we tell children that the most important thing in the

world is how highly they think of themselves, we clearly are telling them that they are at the center of the universe.' Damon (1991:17) explains further that:

The psychological danger of putting the child at the center of all things, of making a child overly conscious of herself and her own feelings about herself, is that it draws the child's attention away from the social realities to which the child must adapt for proper character development. When children learn to place themselves first, they learn to care more about their own personal experience than about the reactions of others. They come to ignore the guidance and feedback of others because they never learned to value it. They establish no firm basis for respecting others, including the important adults in their lives. In the long run, they learn to act as their own moral self-referent, which of course is not morality at all.

Without an objective moral referent beyond themselves, children cannot acquire a stable sense of right and wrong.

Kennet (Carson (ed) 1989:21), on the other hand, advocates indulgent, self-affirmative child-rearing practices as ones which allow the child's supposed inner moral wisdom to emerge naturally. Kennet's (Carson (ed) 1989:21ff) motive is grounded in Japanese, Buddhist education where *early* childhood education is, as the psychiatrist James Masterson (1985:96) also points out, extremely child-centred.

Undoubtedly the type of moral collapse of which Damon (see above) writes, is not a part of traditional Japanese, Buddhist culture. Masterson (1985:96-97) explains why. At the age of five or six years, the Japanese

mother reverses course in order to socialize the child and uses the emotion of shame to get him or her to control the external expression of infantile grandiosity and narcissism ... Shame thus became the key affect of Japanese culture, and expressing one's grandiosity and narcissism in indirect hidden

behaviors through others [interpsychic fusion or a fused self-object representation] became the keystone of Japanese behavior. In other words, grandiosity and self-centeredness cannot be directly and openly expressed, but must find expression through the other person or group.

Masterson (1985:98) gives an example of how interpsychic fusion (a fused self-object representation) functions: If a Japanese were out with a companion and felt tired and wanted to go home, he would not directly say so. Instead, 'he would say to the companion, "Are you tired, have you had enough?" He is now conveying ... that the self is tired and needs attention. He cannot do it directly. The companion is expected to perceive this and respond, "Yes, I'm tired. Let's go home"'.

New Agers, despite the emphasis on the self and individual autonomy, also seek interpsychic fusion (a fused self-object representation) which is evident in the belief that all is one Mind (see section 4.4.2). However, according to Masterson (1985:100), the result of the fused self-object representation in Japan is that:

There is no individual autonomy in Japan. One is not expected to function on one's own; one functions, intrapsychically, through the object and its symbols-family, community, company, state. Most important, there is little creativity. The Japanese are good learners through the process of imitation, a fact which they fully acknowledge. They do not innovate or create, but they learn and adapt.

The Western emphasis on individual autonomy is, however, impacting on Japanese youth, but this is occurring without a change in the early child-rearing pattern. The result, says Masterson (1985:101-102), is that the Western influenced Japanese children

are attempting to assert an autonomous self in a culture and in a psychology which has always viewed this as anathema and which frustrates their traditional psychological mechanism of working through the other person. Since social

change does not change intrapsychic structure, they are attempting to do something which they are as yet not equipped to do. *A fused self-object representation cannot operate like a separate, autonomous self* [emphasis mine]. The net result is that their defense against depression and anger (the narcissistic fused self-object representation) is going to be interrupted and they will be exposed to the underlying depression and the anger at the original frustration of their infantile needs. They will then act out their anger under the guise of being independent.

This seems to be what is happening. Parent-child psychopathology in Japan today is the opposite of that in the United States. Here [in the United States of America] we are concerned about parents abusing children. In Japanese society they are more concerned about adolescents abusing parents. The parents act in a self-sacrificing way, according to the psychology of *Amae* [psychic fusion with others], expecting their children to feel guilty and to gratify their parents' narcissistic self by complying with their wishes. The children under Westernized influence, do not accept the meaning of the parents' behavior. They do not need to follow *Amae* but need rather to assert themselves like Westerners. They become angry and assert themselves and attack the parents, and the parents do not defend themselves.

But this attack is not based intrapsychically on motives to be an independent self, i.e., healthy self-assertion, because they do not have the required intrapsychic representation of a real self. By rejecting *Amae* and not working through the group, they have frustrated their own grandiose self defense against an underlying rage and depression. So what on the surface seems like independent self-assertion is really the acting out of frustrated narcissistic rage.

From the above quotation it is clear that the New Age ideal of a self that seeks simultaneously autonomy and interpsychic fusion - two mutually exclusive psychological concepts - is in reality fraught with problems. The concept of an individual, autonomous self is derived from the

Western, Judeo-Christian idea of a real, separate self that is not only physically but also psychically separate from others. The latter has no place in Eastern psychology where '[i]t is not our [psychic] separateness that gives us reality, it is our [psychic] oneness ... From this it follows that individuals are not of special value at all. What is important is the whole, the One' (Sire 1988:12).

In Western developmental psychology, the psychological goal of growing up is to establish a personal, independent self while overcoming the narcissistic grandiosity which is characteristic of infants. This means that, on the one hand, the infantile 'grandiose self must be defused, deflated and brought into reality or down to earth, so to speak, by phase-appropriate frustration at the hands of the mother', and on the other hand, the emerging self must be acknowledged and supported (Masterson 1985:96).

The homage to self-esteem in humanistic psychology and New Age thought (see section 4.3) disturbs this balance with the result that the child never transcends his infantile narcissism nor learns to assert himself in a healthy manner. Furthermore, exaggerated concern with self-esteem has no place for the East's traditional defense against narcissistic expression, which is to repress it in the older child through the inculcation of shame.

The guru, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (see section 2.3.3.2f), is a prime example of a person who has never overcome his infantile narcissistic grandiosity. Gordon (Chandler 1988:288), an initial admirer of Rajneesh finally assessed him as follows:

In the end, Rajneesh became the kind of man, the kind of religious leader, he had always derided. If indeed his ego had once dissolved and melted like a drop into the ocean, it seemed over the years to have renewed and enlarged, and in his isolation it grew gross with his attachment to power and luxury and position

...

On his ranch, surrounded by armed guards, dressed up and doped up, imperious and imperial, he resembled Jim Jones<sup>8</sup> far more than Buddha or Krishna or

Jesus. He was unwilling to learn or change, or to admit that there was anything to be learned or to change.

Damon's (1991:17) description of a case-study of a boy who has become a full-fledged narcissist has disturbing similarities with Rajneesh. Referring to a boy caught red-handed pushing his younger sister off her bicycle, but who adamantly denies any misdeed and clearly means it, Damon (1991:17) remarks as follows:

Indeed, in this child's mind there was no misdeed. Because the boy has learned to respect only himself, he is the only one he needs to convince. Over time he gets used to convincing himself of his rightness, whatever the objective evidence to the contrary. Since he has not found reason to care what others think, the objective evidence makes no difference to him. So the boy tells himself only what he needs to hear in order to feed his self-image. The truth counts only insofar as it serves the self-image: this, after all, is a longstanding pattern for the boy. The pattern of denial, which began as a series of benign white lies intended to bolster self-esteem, has hardened into an enduring propensity toward deception. The deceptiveness is directed as much toward the self as toward the outside world. Out of such seeds grow a stubborn disregard for objective truth and external standards ...

Just as children need to acquire real skills in order to provide an objective referent for their feelings about themselves, so they need to confront consistently enforced standards in order to develop respect for persons other than themselves. Children must learn to accommodate realities that do not change as their moods and feelings change, that will not vanish when their complaints grow loud enough. Not to give children firm rules and guidelines is to breed arrogance and disrespect. This is simply another side to the inflated sense of importance fed by our over-emphasis on children's self-feelings.

The New Age worldview recognises no objectively existing moral truth (see section 3.4.2), an

omission which leaves standards of decent behaviour without an external moral referent and thus without justification. This coupled with the idea that each individual is inherently good and should, therefore, never be made to feel bad about himself nor about his behaviour has (as illustrated in the above quotation) disastrous and tragic results in real life.

In the next section further consequences of the denial of absolute moral truth as taken up in New Age thought will be scrutinised.

### 6.2.2.2 *Individual moral autonomy*

In sections 3.3.2.4 and 3.3.3 we looked behind New Age thought back to the Enlightenment's conviction that theology should not serve as a basis for moral philosophy and moral behaviour. Kant, for example, makes no appeal to a divine Lawgiver (see section 3.3.2.4c). After Darwin, the whole idea of an extracosmic God and divine Lawgiver was rejected (see section 5.2.2). Western thought entered the era of metaphysical naturalism (materialistic or spiritual) where the only course open in moral philosophy is to *posit* a magnitude from which moral values derive their authority. Positing such a magnitude within a naturalistic framework leads to an inescapable choice between three alternatives.

First, one can posit a natural but absolute moral law which simply exists, rationally discernible by all people and binding on all people. This was the position of Aristotle (see section 3.3.3). This natural law corresponds to the shared set of principles held by the world's religions, and which C S Lewis (1946:15ff) calls the *Tao*. Lewis (an orthodox Christian) does not include in the *Tao* that he speaks of the Eastern idea of the *Tao* as a cosmic unifying force (see section 4.2.2.2). For Lewis, the *Tao* represents the shared moral order which includes virtues such as respect for elders, honesty, mercy, and justice (see Appendix).

Second, one can posit culture as the source of moral authority. This is the position of cultural relativism where moral values are reduced to cultural mores, conventional taboos and prescriptions that arose in a particular culture's evolution. Within the framework of cultural relativism, those 'who belong to a given culture or system, cannot judge the right and wrong of

any other without begging the question, without taking their own point of view for granted, though it is neither better nor worse than the contrary assumptions of those whom they judge' (Adler 1988:11).

Third, one can posit the individual as his own source of moral authority. Such moral subjectivism traces back to the eighteenth century Romantics (see section 3.3.4.1), to Existentialism (see section 3.3.4.2), to positivism (see section 3.3.4.3), and to Maslow (see section 4.3.1.2) and Rogers (see section 4.3.1.3) both of whom believe that the morality which is natural to humans is just what it should be.

From cultural relativism it is but a short step to the moral subjectivism of New Age thought (see section 3.4.2). In cultural relativism, all cultural values are to be equally respected as particular customs and mores which cannot be rationally criticised (Adler 1988:11). This means that no absolute, culturally transcendent reasons can be given against racism, Nazism, cannibalism, widow-burning, and so forth. Though one may protest against such evil practices as violating human rights, such protestation is, unfortunately but unavoidably, irrational and illogical by the standard that the foundational premise of cultural relativism itself sets, namely that culture is absolute and it is, therefore, to their cultural beliefs and customs that humans should subject themselves. (See also section 3.4.2) Furthermore, if humans are just one more species in the macroevolutionary tree, the concept of human rights is deprived of its moral foundation, namely that humans differ in kind not only in degree from the rest of the animal kingdom (see section 5.3.2).

Cultural relativism as a moral stance leads to the moral subjectivism of New Age thought for the simple reason that culture is not an absolute magnitude, but a relative one. Cultures are in a state of flux. A culture comes into being, it can change, and it can cease to be. (Heim 1957:187, 227.) With no absolute referent beyond the particular culture, cultural relativism (as explained in the preceding paragraph) collapses differing values into variations of opinion for which no reason can be given why one opinion is better than another. The equality of all values, good and bad, is precisely what young people hear when they are educated within a paradigm of cultural relativism which, according to Adler (1988:4ff), has been the case in American education since the 1930s.

The inevitable result was that the counterculture in the 1960s finally rejected their culture's moral authority (see section 2.3.4). Together with humanistic psychology (see section 4.3.1), these young people, like the eighteenth century Romantics (see section 3.3.4.1), asserted the moral autonomy of the individual.

This does not mean that moral subjectivists are without moral zeal. On the contrary, in section 3.4.1 it was seen that a great deal of moral ardour is found among New Agers. In New Age thought, however, the tendency is to direct moral ardour to social issues. Social justice, human rights, global peace, and concern for the environment (see section 3.4.1) are extolled as the values of the enlightened individual which will supposedly emerge naturally in the absence of externally imposed moral restraints (see section 3.4.2).

Whilst the social involvement of New Agers is laudable, it is, however, accompanied with an attitude of tolerance that allows each individual, personal moral autonomy and, therefore, to personally do as he wants to do (which is an attitude that meshes well with contemporary culture in general). This attitude springs directly from the reigning disbelief in the objective existence of transcendent, absolute moral standards that, irrespective of cultural or personal preferences, ought to govern every person's behaviour. It is an attitude which is ascribable to Existentialism (see section 3.3.4.2) and Positivism (see section 3.3.4.3).

For moral subjectivists, personal morality is a matter of making autonomous decisions among choices which have been removed from the realm of objective truth. There are, in this frame of reference, no objective standards of right and wrong that apply to everyone (which is what cultural relativists also say).

In sexual matters, such an attitude is especially disturbing. Sol Gordon (Papalia & Wendkos Olds 1993:485), whose work focuses on helping adolescents stay healthy by avoiding drugs and sexual activity, warns that: 'Sex for teenagers is a health hazard. Teenagers are too young, too vulnerable, too available for exploitation.' Yet, in an omnipresent sexual culture that fills television and cinema screens with sleaze and that threatens to engulf society in an AIDS epidemic, New Age thought beckons young people to sexual activity as their rightful, autonomous

choice and as the Tantric path to spiritual enlightenment (see section 2.4.1.2).

According to the New Age frame of reference, children as well as adults are morally autonomous beings. In her chapter on education, Ferguson (1989:306ff) sees the major aim of transformative education as the undoing of the constraints that the demand for conformity to rules imposes on children. Ferguson presents a disdainful picture of traditional schools as extremely dull places where rigid, authoritarian, and unimaginative teachers indoctrinate the young with 'norms, obedience, and correct answers' (1989:319). Education that fosters individual autonomy is outlined by Ferguson (1989:348) as follows:

[I]f our children are to be free, they must be free even from us - from our limiting beliefs and our acquired tastes and habits. At times this means teaching for healthy, appropriate rebellion, not conformity. Maturity brings with it a morality that derives from the innermost self, not from mere obedience to the culture's mores.

This is clearly far more than the freedom to seek truth, unfettered by dogmatic prejudgements. It goes far beyond education's authentic radical rôle which is to help children become thinking people who can ask intelligent, serious questions about those aspects of life which really matter (Krason in Krason (ed) 1991:ix). According to Neil Postman (Veith 1987:139),

education should counter and thereby balance the dominant trends in a society. If a society is very conservative, closed, and static, it is the job of education to challenge that conservatism and to open up its students to change. If, however, a society is very dynamic, open, and changing (as is the case today), it is the job of education to challenge that dynamism, to affirm tradition and to be conservative. Like a thermostat turning on the heat when the room is too cold and turning on the air conditioning when the room is too hot, education must always oppose the dominant trends in order to maintain a healthy culture.

Opposing the dominant trends in contemporary Western culture, as the historical reviews in

chapters 3, 4, and 5 showed, is precisely what the New Age worldview does not do. These trends were prepared by various schools of thought and it is in the New Age worldview that they come together. The New Age worldview calls for a shift from materialistic naturalism to spiritual naturalism (see section 5.2.1), from rationalism to mystical intuitionism (see sections 2.3.1, 5.4.1). But in concert with the homage given to human autonomy and the rampant moral relativism/subjectivism, the New Age worldview holds that there is no objective truth; no objective qualities of goodness and beauty which should guide and inform each individual's life.

Hence, there is no appeal to educator and student to seek truth, goodness, and beauty through shared study, reflection, and dialogue. Moreover, where there is no openness to the idea of objective truth, there is also no appeal to educator or student to examine their own opinions in the light of questions that challenge those opinions (Sampo in Krason (ed) 1991:107). Instead, New Age education advocates that each student is to close himself within his own limited, subjective feelings and to decide therefrom what is true and what is false, what is good and what is bad.

In this way the child is free; free not only from all authoritative ties between parent and child, teacher and child, but also free from any injunction to learn, to change, and to perhaps acquire a measure of true understanding and wisdom. In effect, each child becomes an authority unto himself. Sadly, however, when the child becomes his own authority, one is, as seen in the previous section, effectively ousting concepts such as conscience, guilt, and remorse from his field of experience. There remain ultimately only two standards by which the child can determine his values; one is personal pleasure and the other is personal power (Heim 1957:226ff).

The New Age ideal of fostering individual moral autonomy without external moral guidance finds fertile soil where educational methods endorse moral subjectivism (or even cultural relativism since it also denies *absolute* moral truth (see above)). One such method is values clarification (Ferguson 1989:340; Clark 1992:333-334).

### 6.2.2.3 *Values clarification*

Pioneered in the late 1960s, values clarification offers exercises in which the child is to discover his personal values via 'an intelligent process of choosing, prizing, and behaving' (Raths, Harmin & Simon 1978:9). This seems to be in line with the fact that in genuine circumstances of moral dilemma, decisions do need to be arrived at by individual deliberation based on what one personally recognises as most honest, decent, kind, or courageous (Carr 1993:16). Nevertheless, in values clarification, the exercises collapse into a neutral, contentless process. In their very next sentence after the above quoted statement, Raths, Harmin and Simon (1978:9) continue: 'At least we assume that humans can arrive at *something* via that process, and with some support in the literature, we prefer to call that something "value".'

Thus, as Boyd and Bogdan (1984:290) point out, the

claim is *not* that ... 'values clarification' is an educational methodology to help the next generation rediscover the meaning and usefulness of important ideals of the moral order. Rather, it is that *something* will result - and that's enough for them. Let us be clear about this, even if they are not; a 'value' in the 'values clarification' approach is *whatever comes out of* a person's engaging in the ... activities enumerated ... VC [values clarification] is *not* an educational methodology to help children with the 'problem of deciding what is good and what is right and what is desirable; rather, it is a collection of strategies to ensure that children arrive at the 'something' that is produced by the VC strategies.

Attempts to purposefully instil objective qualities of moral goodness are rejected by values clarificationists such as Kirschenbaum (1977:8) as worthless, dogmatic moralising and, moreover, are placed on a par with the contradictory messages promoted by peer groups and the popular media.

In values clarification, 'it is the process of making such [value] decisions that concerns us' (Raths,

Harmin & Simon 1978:8ff; cf also Clark 1992:333). In other words, the content of values is of no matter. All that matters is having values irrespective of their true or false moral worth. And because moral guidance is considered inappropriate, the 'something' arrived at may not be the genuine moral virtues. Instead, the exercises

help the student discover and attain the self gratifications that would make him/her happy. Thus, they are exercises in refined [and motivated] selfishness ... It would seem that with its focus on the individual and his/her needs that the values clarification method, far from being a step toward the easing of [moral] crisis, is founded on the notions of self-centeredness that fuel it (Beller 1986:69).

In a nonjudgemental environment the child clarifies his values/views on subjects which vary from trivial, nonmoral issues (for example, recreational preferences) to extremely complex moral issues (for example, abortion) 'as if no significant differences existed among these issues' (Sommers 1984:383).

Aside from the superficiality of an approach which blurs the distinction between nonmoral and moral issues, another serious objection to values clarification is that it hinges on the idea that each person is entirely free to choose by purely personal fiat what should count as most worthwhile in life. This idea, says Carr (1993:17),

is patently *false*; it is just simply not true that what is rightly to be counted as of human value is so on the basis of my personal choice or say-so ... [H]owever true it may be that I am entitled to live my life without let or hindrance from others as I please - at worst this means that I am free to prefer the bad to the good if I please; not that it is up to me entirely to decide what shall count as good and bad.

One gains a good idea of the educational worth of values clarification from the following remark of a values clarification teacher (Sommers 1984:383):

My class deals with morality and right and wrong quite a bit. I don't expect them all to agree with me; each has to satisfy himself according to his own conviction, as long as he is sincere, and thinks he is pursuing what is right. I often discuss cheating this way, but I always get defeated because they will argue that cheating is all right. After you accept the idea that kids have the right to build a position with logical arguments, you have to accept what they come up with.

The error that this teacher makes is that she believes that a logical system is necessarily valid and cannot be disproved if the logic is valid. This is, however, not so. What are really important are the postulates and presuppositions from which the logic proceeded. Kurt Gödel in the 1930s proved, in what are called *Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems*, that in any logical system there are always postulates that cannot be proved (or disproved) from within that system. In other words, Gödel's theorems show that 'it is not possible to determine the truth or falsity of any logical system ... without stepping outside that system' (Chittick 1984:34). In moral instruction and guidance, it is the teacher's *duty* not to accept the student's logic, but to show from outside the student's logical system that his logic proceeded from postulates that are morally wrong.

Furthermore, if young people in the absence of purposeful moral instruction and guidance decide that immoral behaviour (for example, cheating) is all right, then it is clear that the presupposition of and the trust placed in people's innate benevolence and inner moral wisdom are incorrect and misplaced. What results from this presupposition is an ethos that denies the educator's responsibility to take a firm, unequivocal stand and to purposefully guide the child towards the good and the right.

The effect that a lack of authoritative adult guidance has on the child's construction of a personal definition of self is explored in the next section.

#### ***6.2.2.4 Adult authority and the construction of self-identity***

To New Age thinkers, permissive child-rearing practices imply liberation from 'restrictive' and

'out-of-date' social and institutional norms and requirements. The tone of values clarification and other New Age orientated educational literature implicitly implies that adult authority is that which robs children of spontaneity and self-expression. For example, Barbara Clark (1992:51) - whose book, *Growing up gifted*, is either prescribed or recommended at some South African teacher training colleges and universities (Christene vir die Waarheid [S a]:2) - holds that: 'Permissive parents have more spontaneous, original, self-initiating, and independent children. These children also seem less hostile, more outgoing and friendly.'

Contrary to Clark's view, empirical researchers such as Stanley Coopersmith (1967:passim) and Diana Baumrind (1968:passim, Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:248-258) have found through empirical studies that authoritative parental guidance is a significant contributory factor in fostering competence, creativity, and a positive sense of self-identity.

Coopersmith (1967:236) found that

definite and enforced limits are associated with high rather than low self-esteem; that families which establish and maintain clearly defined limits permit *greater* rather than less deviation from conventional behavior, and freer individual expression than do families without such limits; that families which maintain clear limits utilize *less* drastic forms of punishment; and that families of children with high self-esteem exert greater demands for academic performance and excellence. Taken together, these relationships indicate that, other things being equal, limits and rules are likely to have enhancing and facilitating effects and that parental performance within such limits is likely to be moderate, tolerant, and generally civilized. They suggest that parents who have definite values, who have a clear idea of what they regard as appropriate behavior, and who are able and willing to present and enforce their beliefs are more likely to rear children who value themselves highly. Parents who can act this way apparently have less need to treat their children harshly, and, from all indications, are viewed with greater affection and respect by their offspring.

The research of Coopersmith (1967:238) also validated that

individuals with high self-esteem who are reared under strongly structured conditions tend to be more, rather than less, independent and more creative ... than persons reared under more open and permissive conditions ... [I]t appears that children reared within definite limits are also more likely to be socially accepted as peers and leaders by their associates and also more capable of expressing opinions and accepting criticism. Thus many of the presumably negative effects of limit definition are not supported by empirically derived evidence. Once the loaded terms and value judgments are cast aside and specific behavioral indices are employed, it appears that parents who are less certain and attentive of their standards are likely to have children who are more compliant to the will of their peers and less likely to perceive alternatives - as well as lower in self-esteem.

Baumrind did not focus on self-esteem as such; her search was for the parental attitudes and behaviour that fostered competence. Baumrind (1968:255) classifies parental control into three categories - authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive - and it was the children of the first category whom she (1968:260, Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:252-253, 258) found to be the most apt to be competent. Such parents, according to Baumrind (Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:252), are loving, rational, and attentive to the child's needs; *'these parents balanced much warmth with high control, and high demands with clear communication about what was required of the child'*.

Baumrind (Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:252, 254-255) found that the least competent and most immature children were those of permissive parents. These parents are lax in discipline and make few and only weak demands for orderly behaviour and the acceptance of responsibility. Having never been trained in mature independence, the children of permissive parents behave in an immature, irresponsible, and demanding way (Baumrind in Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:253, 255). Based on her empirical research, Baumrind (Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:255) takes issue with the concept of nonjudgemental, unconditional love which is regarded by advocates of

permissive child-rearing as the essence of good parenting:

The parent who expresses love unconditionally is encouraging the child to be selfish and demanding while she herself is not. Thus she reinforces exactly the behavior which she does not approve of - greedy, demanding, inconsiderate behavior ... I believe that a parent expresses her love most fully when she demands of the child that he become his best ...

On the other hand, I do believe that ... a parent's *commitment* to the child should be unconditional ... Unconditional *commitment* means that the child's interests are perceived as among the parent's most important interests, and that (no matter what the child does) the parent does not desert the child. But the love of a parent for a child must be demanding - not demanding of the unconditional commitment it offers - but rather demanding of the reciprocal of what it offers.

With regard to the idea of competence that Baumrind focuses on, it is also noteworthy that research findings have shown that it is performance that determines self-concept and not vice versa (Moeller 1994:35). Moreover, an American research project, Project Follow-Through, evaluated over 9 000 pupils on basic cognitive and affective skills (the latter measured by the pupils' self-esteem and internalised locus of emotional control) according to three educational models - holistic models based on humanistic theories and emphasising ideas such as open classrooms, letting the child take the lead, and affirmative but abstract enhancement of self-esteem; behavioural models based on operant learning theories and emphasising direct instruction; and combination models. *On all three skills, pupils taught by behavioural models came out on top.* (Moeller 1994:36-37.)

There is, therefore, a fundamental conflict between empirical research findings and the hypothetical theorising of humanistic psychologists (see section 4.3) and those educationists, including New Age thinkers, who build a pedagogy thereon.

Based on his case studies, David Elkind (1989:passim) is another child psychologist who gives reasoned and validated advice against pressurising young people into the type of independent decision-making that they cannot yet handle. Elkind (1989:13) maintains that the educator's reluctance to take a firm stand denies adolescents (and younger children) the benefit of the educator's concern and propels them into premature adulthood. The denial of adolescence as an immature, not-yet adult stage of life, says Elkind (1989:21),

is, quite literally, a return to the homunculus theory [where the difference between adults and children is simply a matter of quantity or size] held during the Dark Ages. We hurry young people as children and then unplace them as teenagers. We cannot, dare not, persist on this dangerous course of denying young people the time, the support, and the guidance they need to arrive at an integrated definition of self.

Being nonjudgemental, says Elkind (1989:203), may at times be a necessary strategy in counselling adults, but 'it is not a good approach to rearing children'. Children expect bad behaviour to be punished. Failure to punish, according to Elkind (1989:145-146),

can lead to the conclusion that anything goes and you can get away with anything if you are clever. They learn, not the difference between right and wrong, but what you can and cannot get away with ... [T]he young person learns to look to the particular situation for guides to action rather than to fixed ... standards that can serve in many different situations.

Baumrind (1968:257ff, Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:254) also approves of punishment. Baumrind (Cohen & Comiskey (eds) 1977:254) points out that the aim of punishment, including spankings but not traumatic rejection or beatings, 'is to help the child control his own behavior, and that end requires the use of reason and the bringing to bear of moral principles to define what is right and what is wrong conduct'.

Authoritative guidance and discipline which are consistent and phase-appropriate reflect concern

for the young person's well-being and provide the stable and protective atmosphere for stress-reduced learning and growth. Relinquishment of authoritative guidance, says Sewall (1983:86), means that the young 'are deprived of dialogue with confident, steering elders - and denied satisfactory models for their own adulthood'. In addition, authoritative guidance, according to Baumrind (1968:266), provides the child with a testing ground for developing his own position. Elkind (1989:112) puts this idea as follows:

When teenagers interact with adults whose authority they respect, they can have productive, if painful, battles over ideas and actions. Such adults provide healthy opponents against whom to test their own opinions and values. But when adult authority is undermined or lost, the adult is no longer marked as one to be attended to and to learn from. The generations have become homogenized and the special status of being a teenager has been lost, and with it an important opportunity for growth by differentiation and integration.

Where Coopersmith, Baumrind, and Elkind consider the effect of permissive child-rearing practices on the individual child, Sewall (1983:93) also reflects on its implications for society. His conclusion is as follows:

Schools cannot mend families ... They cannot compete with video games or triple-X-rated films. But conscious that other social compasses now spin out of control, schools can at least try to stand for moral and intellectual fixity. In educational theory and elsewhere the values of toleration and individualism have been well advertised. But at the cost of norms: At the extremes, all is permitted and justifiable, nothing is necessary or impossible.

Educators and others who resent norms for children and themselves should consider the danger to liberty. The freedom so beloved by ... activists does not come without a cost. Civil liberties require public compromise: Democratic society cannot stand to act as a mere collection of individuals, each member defining public values as he or she sees fit, forcibly committed to nothing

beyond self ...

As social agencies in a democracy, public schools have a moral trust to act as stabilizing forces. To do this effectively they seem to be required to offer ... an ethical code that individuals must accept as children but can question as adults. Effective learning environments require, first, self-control, respect for adults, and love of work on the part of young people. Modish adults who remain hostile or neutral to such primary values do the schools and children no good.

New Age thinkers have high, worthy ideals (see section 3.4.1), but the problem is that they put their complete trust in the hope that without external controls every individual will mobilise his inner resources to allow the same freedom for others. This hope is belied by concrete evidence, especially by the social atrocities of the twentieth century (for example, Nazism) which reveal that individuals and societies require controls which are justifiable in absolute, objective terms and not socially relative or individually subjective terms.

Nevertheless, New Age educationists such as Moffett (1992:29) believe that absolute individualism can breed its contradictory position, universalism. Moffett (1992:29) claims that as people develop autonomy and 'inner strength, they draw closer to others farther away, because they rely less on those around them and seek bonds based less on blood and soil than on common humanity. And common divinity'.

Yet the Bible and Jesus say: 'Love thy neighbour' (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27). The wording makes the difference. Even though He enjoins us to love all other persons and to love them as individuals, be they blood-related or of the same or other societies and religions, as the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches (Luke 10:25-37), He did not say: 'Love the human race'. It is easy to love humanity in the abstract. (Veith 1987:82). The wording of Jesus Christ calls on us to make morality and love for others personal and concrete (Veith 1987:82) and not impersonal and abstract as Moffett's dictum does. The same difference that lies between Christ's injunction and Moffett's dictum is also relevant for the Neopagan moral dictum - 'An' ye harm none, do what ye will' (Adler 1981:99, 137-138; Storm 1991:41; Warren-Clarke

1987:135) - and that of Marilyn Ferguson (1989:104) - 'a linkage with others as if they are oneself ... [yet the self] is fiercely autonomous' (see also section 3.3.2.4c).

The moral problem of the New Age and of moral education within the New Age worldview is neatly summed up in the words of Dostoevsky (Alexander 1972:117): 'Abstract love of humanity is nearly always egoism.'

Having analysed what New Age thought implies for the child's moral development, one shall now consider just what it involves for the child's cognitive development.

### **6.2.3 Cognitive development**

To sever the infant's symbiotic union with the mother and to finally, during adolescence, come to grips with a separate, external reality that exists completely independent of thoughts, wishes, and desires is a key challenge in life (Lidz 1975:11). Failure to surmount this challenge means that the individual has never learnt to decentre cognitively, that is, to filter out that which is coincidental to oneself and to one's own thoughts.

Young children cannot decentre cognitively which explains why they 'have trouble separating reality from what goes on inside their own heads and why they show confusion about what causes what' (Papalia & Wendkos Olds 1993:303). Young children exhibit, therefore, the kind of reasoning which sees a causal relationship to the self where no such relationship exists. For example, the young child reasons: 'I had bad thoughts about my brother. My brother got sick. So I made my brother sick' (Papalia & Wendkos Olds 1993:301). In brief, the young child believes that he is the focal point of the world and that his thinking has the magical efficacy to influence the external world (Hoyt in Hoyt (ed) 1987:165).

Sadly, this immature, egocentrically overinclusive level of thinking appears to constitute the goal of cognitive development in the New Age world view. In its most extreme form, New Age thought holds that every individual is his own and the world's ground of meaning; an assumption which is nothing other than a flight into solipsism (see section 5.4.2.1). But even in the

contemporary idea, popularised by the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics, namely that the observer influences the observed (see section 5.3.2), is implicit the idea that reality is dependent on the human mind. The reason is that the words, 'the observer influences the observed' translate into 'the mind influences reality' and not into what actually takes place during observation, namely 'the mind influences *how* reality is perceived'. The latter view of observation leaves room for error in perception, that is, the way in which reality is perceived does not correspond to reality as it *is*.

From the former idea that the observer influences the observed and, therefore, that reality is dependent on the mind, it is but a short step to a belief in the magical efficacy of thought where thought shapes, forms, and, in effect, creates the structure of reality (see sections 2.4.3, 4.4.3, 6.3).

The belief in the magical efficacy of thought carries with it, however, decidedly negative connotations. Firstly, it can engender unnecessary feelings of guilt as the above quotation from Papalia and Wendkos Olds illustrates.

Secondly, this belief encourages and is encouraged by Sheldrake's theory of morphic fields (see section 5.2.3.3b) and the bogus hundredth monkey phenomenon (see section 5.4.2.3). O'Hara (1985:68) points out the negative connotation:

In promoting the idea that, although our ideas are shared by only an enlightened few (for the time being), if we really believe them, in some magical way what we hold to be true becomes true for everyone, proponents of the critical mass ideal ignore the principles of both humanism and democratic open society. The basis for openness in our kind of society is the belief that, for good or ill, each of us holds his or her own beliefs as a responsible participant in a pluralistic culture. Are we really willing to give that up?

... Far from resulting in transformation and social harmony, attempts to establish an orthodoxy of worldview have resulted in stagnation of creative activity,

vicious repression of dissidents, and - when monolithic worldviews collide - holy war.

A type of magical manipulation of the future is what Barbara Clark (1992:528) recommends when she writes that 'the view we have of the future actually sends energy into creating it. Helping the students to see a future they want, a positive, exciting future, will go a long way toward achieving such a future'. But precisely because adolescents are so highly idealistic, they have to learn that: 'Part of growing up involves realizing that "thinking does not make it so", that values have to be acted upon to bring about change' (Papalia & Wendkos Olds 1993:520). Adolescents do 'not recognize the difference between expressing an ideal and working toward it. Young people believe that by expressing a value they are working toward its realization' (Elkind 1989:41). Adolescents have to learn that one has to work (not 'centre' or meditate or think positive thoughts) to possibly achieve one's goals.

A third negative connotation of the belief in the magical power of thought is that it serves to fixate the child in

earlier phases of cognitive development in which there is reliance upon the 'omnipotence of thought', which leads ... to reemergence of magical thinking and to failures to differentiate the word from what it signifies, and even what is self and what is object, and what derives from inside and what from outside the self (Lidz 1975:54).

What is particularly disturbing is that Lidz is not referring to New Age thought, but to the nature of the schizophrenic thought disorder.

Lidz is an acknowledged authority on schizophrenia and the thesis of his book, (1975) *The origin and treatment of schizophrenic disorders*, is that schizophrenia is an egocentrically overinclusive thought disorder. Thus, what New Age thought deems to be an individual with a higher, superconsciousness is, in actual fact, an individual who has, through faulty and incomplete cognitive development, been rendered vulnerable to schizophrenia. A person who has failed to

decentre cognitively and to acquire a rational logic of cause and effect rooted in an independent, objective, external reality may, when faced with acute emotional trauma, experience results which Lidz (1975:83) says,

are far-reaching and devastating. The categories [of distinction] he had developed are now seriously impaired, allowing the intrusion of inappropriate associations which derail his thought and communication. Thinking becomes preconceptual and, in some, even syncretic, permitting the patient to connect anything that is spatially or temporally contiguous and, thus, further justify his egocentric distortions.

Most New Agers do not, however, become psychotically schizophrenic. Hoyt (Hoyt (ed) 1987:181-182) explains:

Most of them operate with a selective suspension of belief in reality. This selectiveness enables them to function in reality while maintaining their 'omnipotent' self. In order to have the experiences [of oceanic oneness, of power and control over reality and their lives] that the New Age promises, they have to suspend their belief in reality. For example, most New Agers ... look both ways before crossing the street. They don't want to be hit or killed, even if the truck is illusionary and death is not real. On the other hand, a psychotic in a florid state may not look both ways, because reality is actually illusion to him.

As justified as New Age thinkers are in criticising the rampant secular materialism and scientism in Western societies, it is, nevertheless, an error to downplay the importance of rational thought, to deny the independent objectivity of reality, and to equate a schizophrenic or an ambivalent attitude to reality with higher thought processes. Such an attitude is neither healthy nor desirable. 'Human adaptability', says Lidz (1975:10), 'contains an inherent vulnerability. The brain permits thinking but does not guarantee its rationality.' Acquiring rational logic grounded in an objective, external reality is, therefore, an essential developmental task.

As pointed out in section 5.4.2.1, the escape from solipsism and therefore also from the child's innate, egocentrically overinclusive thought processes, lies in the certainty that the world is real and independent of what the mind thinks or how it perceives reality. Sadly, however, the realism of common sense which underlies all our daily activities and which permits the mind to engage in a genuine cognitive relationship with reality is rejected not only by New Agers, but also by those academics who are influenced by Bohr's Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics (see section 5.3.2). Without the acknowledgement of a single, monolithic external reality, the structure and character of which is independent of the mind, the child's cognitive development is arrested.

Furthermore, as Adler (1990a:101) asks:

[M]ust we not also say they [philosophical idealists or constructivists who deny reality's objective independence] cannot regard scientific investigation or philosophical inquiry as efforts to attain knowledge of reality? Knowledge of the human mind and its actions and effects, perhaps; but not knowledge of a reality that is unaffected by the mind's activities.

Adler's remark raises questions such as: Is teaching the stimulation of the student's intellectual abilities to know, within the limits of his mind, the objective truth about reality? Or is teaching the stimulation of the student's formative, creative abilities to construct and prescribe the form of 'reality'? Are learning and research about a mind-independent reality, a supplier of data which the mind constructs into a theoretical conceptual map which is not reality itself, but attempts to be, within the limits of the mind, an accurate representation of reality? Or are learning and research about a mind-dependent 'reality' which supplies the mind with a formless chaos of data, vibrations of energy which are pure possibilities and on which the mind imposes order, purely subjective of course, but nevertheless reality for that person?

Educational theory and practice require answers to these questions and it is, therefore, these questions that we shall now consider.

## 6.3 NEW AGE THOUGHT AS A FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY

### 6.3.1 Constructivism - the underlying philosophical premise

In section 5.4.2.1 it was argued that the subjectivism and eventual solipsism of the New Age worldview are consequential from the representative theory of knowledge. This theory, as explained, holds that the only possible knowledge that the rational intellect can attain is sensory data, the truth of which is however doubtful since sensory data can be deceptive and is, therefore, vulnerable to inaccuracy. New Agers accept this theory's scepticism about knowledge attained through the ordinary senses. Therefore, to bypass the theory's limits on the mind's abilities, New Agers add mystical and/or intuitive experiences as legitimate sensory data, that, moreover, provide absolute albeit subjectively qualified knowledge (see sections 2.2.3, 5.4.1).

In classical Newtonian physics and the worldview constructed thereon (see section 3.3.2.3), solipsism - where reality appears to be nothing more than a hypothetical construct placed upon sensory data, for example, by Kant's a priori concepts (see section 3.3.2.4c) - was avoided. This was because the mathematical formulae of Newtonian physics constructed a model of the world that was in isomorphic relation with the sensory data adduced and validated experimentally. In other words, the theoretically constructed Newtonian worldview appeared to be an accurate and true representation of the universe. However,

when it came to be realised that the world which we perceive could not be explained in sensible [pertaining to the senses] terms - that is, roughly, with the advent of relativity and quantum theory - the world as something with real existence in itself had to go. If reality and sensibility are identical, then if sensibility goes reality goes with it (Mascall 1956:82).

New Age physicists such as Capra and Zukav (see section 5.3) believe that relinquishment of the idea of an objective reality is the only position consonant with the new physics. It is this interpretation that underlies New Age education as explained by Barbara Clark (1992:512ff).

Mascall (1956:82-83) maintains, however, that the epistemological problems posed by the new physics could have been avoided if

the paradigm of a real world is not its sensible imaginability but its intelligible apprehensibility ... If therefore the universe of modern physics is one in which all attempts to make it intelligible by models of sensory type fail and which requires for its systematisation the kind of concepts that are used by quantum physics, this does not in the least imply that it is unreal or subjective. It simply means that the formulae of quantum physics express the kind of intelligibility that it has.

The point that Mascall (1956:175) is making

is that, although the physicist knows the objective world only through the mediation of sensation, the essential character of the objective world is not sensibility but intelligibility. Its objectivity is not manifested by different observers having the same sensory experiences of it, but by their being able, through their diverse sensory experiences, to acquire a common *understanding* of it. If some such account as this is accepted, there is no need for us to feel that, with its principles of complementarity and indeterminacy and with its view of physical laws as purely statistical [and with the interconnectedness of quantum objects], the quantum theory has cut away the ground of reality from under our feet and left us falling through a bottomless abyss of subjectivism.

In the philosophical idealism of the New Age worldview, 'the bottomless abyss of subjectivism' is transformed into a triumph for the human mind. In the New Age worldview, the physical world's orderly structure, which we experience through the senses, is not the real world. The real world is not structured energy or matter, but a primal chaos of unstructured vibrations of energy upon which the mind's alleged formative, creative powers act (see sections 4.4.3, 5.3). The New Age worldview transforms its own dictums, 'nothing is objectively real' into 'everything is subjectively real'; 'nothing can be objectively known' into 'everything can be subjectively known'.

Contemporary American philosophers such as Nelson Goodman (1984:passim) and Jerome Bruner (1986:passim) and educationists such as von Glasersfeld (1995:passim) also espouse the idealism of the New Age worldview, which they call philosophical *constructivism*. Bruner (1986:95) explains that constructivism ‘contrary to common sense’ holds that ‘there is no unique “real world” that preexists and is independent of human mental activity’. What constructivists are saying is not that mental activity and paradigmatic presuppositions colour one’s view of reality (which is true), but that these actually constitute reality’s character and structure. In other words, constructivists believe that reality becomes what it is thought to be and, in effect, adapts itself to the relevant frame of reference.

Confusion and eventual identity between what reality *is* and what reality is *thought to be* arises when unguarded and incorrect statements such as: ‘This is true in one frame of reference, but it is not true in another frame of reference, and that is all there is to it’ replace guarded and correct statements such as: ‘In one frame of reference, it is *thought* to be true, but in another frame of reference it is *thought* to be false, and that is not all there is to it because the proposition which is judged differently is either true or false absolutely without any regard for the differences of opinion about it’ (Adler 1990b:12). Furthermore, both opinions could be false, but both cannot be true.

Constructivism’s denial of a preexisting, mind-independent reality implies that even contradictory views can all be simultaneously true. In the constructivist frame of reference, meaning does not inhere in reality, but solely in the mind of the theorist, be he scientist, philosopher, theologian, or artist. In other words, reality means nothing in and of itself; it is the theorist who gives it meaning through symbolic language (Bruner 1986:99ff; Goodman 1984:42). And since reality has no stable meaning of its own, it is language or thought (since they amount to the same thing) which constitutes reality’s character and structure.

Ironically, it was Descartes (see section 3.3.2.1), the philosopher that New Age thinkers love to hate, who was the first Western philosopher to cast doubt on the objective existence of reality. The scepticism of the ancient Greeks was directed at truth, at the idea of the mind attaining true knowledge of reality, and not at the actual objective existence of the world (Adler 1990a:95;

Cubitt 1990:53). Descartes, however, engaged in sceptical reasoning which required him to doubt the very existence of the world. His *Cogito ergo sum* did not, however, establish the real existence of the external world, but only the existence of his mind, the agency of his doubting and thinking (Adler 1990a:95-96). Whilst Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* set the trend for rationalism, it also epitomised a retreat away from reality and into individual consciousness as the one sure starting point for epistemological and philosophical inquiry (Cubitt 1990:46; see section 3.3.2.1). Thus, the constructivist idea that reality's existence is contingent on the human mind is, as Yarusso (1992:9) remarks, 'in many respects, a modern version of Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum*'.

Having established the existence of his thinking mind, Descartes developed a highly questionable argument - questionable because it rested only on the existence of his mind - for the existence of God and innate ideas (see section 3.3.2.1). With those convictions established, Descartes was willing to trust his senses and to affirm reality's existence (Adler 1990a:96). Descartes' innate ideas were subsequently transformed by Kant into the notion of a priori concepts which form from sensory data a semblance of reality, and it is only a semblance because the mind cannot know reality-in-itself (see section 3.3.2.4c). Thus, the 'picture of the mind - the senses and the understanding or intellect - that Kant concocted had no corresponding reality' (Adler 1990a:86).

Kant believed that he was providing Newtonian physics with its appropriate metaphysics and epistemology (Mascall 1956:171). However, when with the new physics, reality's sensibility disappeared, all that remained was the mind constructing for itself an appearance of a real world. Adler (1990a:86) believes that when the limits of Newtonian physics became evident, philosophers and epistemologists should have discarded the Kantian picture of the mind. This was not done. Instead, constructivists and New Age thinkers retain Kant's picture with regard to the rational intellect (Bruner 1986:96) as well as the representative theory of knowledge (see section 5.4.2.1) with which it is compatible. They abandon the idea of an objectively existing reality which the intellect seeks to know and understand.

The question as to what remains to teach and learn appears, to a philosophical realist, to be unanswerable. Constructivists believe, however, that education is still possible. What happens to education within the constructivist paradigm is that the approach to teaching and learning is

radically altered. No longer can education emphasise specific contents that are handed down and explained to students (Veith 1987:116). Instead each student is to formulate his own meanings and thereby construct his own personal conceptual map, a map which necessarily lies beyond evaluation. Bruner (1986:98) makes this clear: 'Once an aboriginal reality is given up, we lose the criterion of correspondence as a way of distinguishing true from false models of the world.'

Thus, with no objective reality outside of the human mind, constructivism, which extends from religion to morality to science, transforms education into a process directed towards the creation of reality or, as Goodman (1984:42) puts it, 'modes of organization [which] are built into rather than found in a [sic] world'. It is, however, a creation which can only be regarded as purely mythological world-making and the purpose can, therefore, only be psychological comfort.

With the self as the creator and thus the locus of reality, education must inevitably be directed solely towards self-discovery. This explains why New Age texts on education, though not lacking in claims as to the superiority of their aims and methods (when valid, no more than old truths in updated terminology) offer, nevertheless, mainly visualisation exercises, confluent or integrative education, and a type of 'superlearning' associated with paranormal abilities, for example, Lozanov's suggestopedy (1978:passim). It is these that we shall now explore.

### **6.3.2 Constructivism and educational practice**

#### ***6.3.2.1 Visualisation exercises - a medium of constructive creativity?***

The aim of visualisation exercises is the stimulation of creativity and learning where these are understood as the creation and construction of subjective meanings. In section 6.2.3, attention was drawn to the risk of the schizophrenic thought disorder when boundaries between the self and the external world disappear. The following remark of Lidz (1975:128) is, therefore, noteworthy: 'Although highly creative individuals sometimes become schizophrenic, being schizophrenic is rarely creative. Indeed, the productions of schizophrenic patients are usually surprisingly stereotyped and repetitive.'

Stimulation of the imagination is important in education, but the imagination requires external information of the type expressed in great works of literature, music, and art. Notwithstanding the fact that the values thereof relate directly to taste and choice, Carr (1933:14) maintains that

in terms of virtuosity, inventiveness, depth and expression there can be little doubt that some artistic achievements ... are of greater merit than others and it is only by virtue of proper initiation into such achievements that certain value judgments and choices in literature, art and music can actually come to be made; artistic preference [and creativity] is not just a matter of knowing what one *likes* but of knowing what *counts*.

In contrast to the antagonism to all restraints implicit in New Age thought, Bantock (1981:94) holds that artistic creativity 'does not arise as a result of untutored spontaneity, impulse release, but through the internalisation of past models of greatness and the disciplined approach to creativity this involves'.

In visualisation exercises the student is not accosted with creative artists whose heights he can aspire to reach and perhaps even transcend. Instead, he is isolated in his own undeniably limited experience and is, therefore, especially vulnerable to the personal taste and views of the teacher leading the exercise.

Visualisation exercises play a prominent rôle in confluent or integrative education, the subject of the next section.

#### ***6.3.2.2 Confluent/integrative education - education for wholeness?***

Confluent or integrative education is supposedly holistic education - education of the whole person - the aim of which is to include intuition, allegedly right brain activity (see section 5.4.1), and emotional and bodily feelings into learning. The architects of confluent education were Beverly Galyean (Chandler 1988:154), Barbara Clark (1986:passim, 1992:passim), and George Brown (1971:passim).

In the attempt to incorporate intuition and the emotions into learning, confluent activities rely heavily on guided imagery and on Perls' Gestalt therapy (Brown 1971:passim; see section 4.3.2) which is grounded in Gurdjieff's psychology (see section 2.3.3.2f). The final objective is 'the development of an inner life' (Hendricks & Hendricks 1983:8) which in the esoteric spirituality of New Age thought is believed to imply a spiritual life (see sections 2.2, 2.4).

The idea that the body is a vehicle of learning is rooted in the occult doctrine of correspondence: As above, so below (see sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.3.1a). Every aspect of the natural world, including human anatomy, is believed to have a spiritual counterpart. Ascribing spiritual significance to bodily parts, leads to the educational aim of spiritual perfection through bodily perfection. This calls for a form of education in which, according to Rudolf Steiner (Plunkett 1990:74), 'the whole human body, and not the brain alone, is a vehicle of consciousness' (see section 2.3.3.2e). In other words, for spiritual development, education should stimulate the alleged rhythmic links between the body and the spirit. This, New Agers believe, will open and activate the body's source of spontaneous creative energy (Hendricks & Hendricks 1983:7) - the divine energy which is believed to flow throughout and within all of nature (see sections 2.2.1, 2.4.4).

Beneath their appealing concern for education of the whole person, New Age educationists are, however, apparently oblivious to the fact that education of the whole person should, as Krason (Krason (ed) 1991:150) says, involve character education. With respect to the neglect of purposeful and objectively normative character development (an unavoidable consequence of the belief that values are constructed in the absence of external moral truth), Adler (1988:15) has a comment worth quoting:

[W]hen right feelings are not supported by right thinking, good men can be insensibly corrupted. Men of good will are not just sweet-tempered animals, but beings whose desires aim at a good they rationally apprehend as such. When the mind refuses to *see* the good and the bad of things, repudiating any moral quality in things and actions to see, the will is blind, and blindly attaches itself to this or that through natural instinct, waywardness, or caprice. Not rooted in reason, such attachments are impermanent. They can be easily

uprooted by those who are skilled in playing Pied Piper to the passions. That is why I dread the instability of a generation which, at best, will only have 'faith' in democracy - but no sure reasons for upholding it as *objectively* the best form of political community. If their 'faith' in democracy amounts to nothing more than well-disposed feelings at the moment, change of circumstances may alter the direction of their sentiments and they may find themselves with a faith in fascism or the same thing by another name.

Thus, what starts as a laudable educational aim - education of the whole person - arrives, when navigated on the incorrect assumption that untutored human nature is what it should be, at a place where New Age educators do not want students to arrive at. This place can be for the more compliant personality, passive acquiescence into the socially dominant ethos, or for the more individualistic personality, an arrogant egoism which demands self-gratification. In contemporary societies and in the New Age, self-gratification is the dominant ethos - prepared by the Enlightenment's insistence on human autonomy (see section 3.3.2.4) - and it is this ethos that contemporary education should challenge and oppose in order to fulfil its authentic radical rôle of questioning dominant social trends (see section 6.2.2.2). It is important that students be encouraged to question the contemporary stress on the self because it has enormous destructive power; 'pure [self-centred] wills do not conduct dialogue nor do they agree: they threaten and impose upon each other' (Cotta 1985:112).<sup>9</sup>

At the root of the holistic unity sought in confluent/integrative education is the dream of an individual who has actualised his 'inner divinity' and the omnipotence of the monotheist God (see section 6.2.1.2). Beverly Galyean (Chandler 1988:154; cf also Brooks 1981-82:4), one of the architects of confluent education, honestly admits this:

Once we begin to see that we are all God, that we all have the attributes of God, then I think the whole purpose of human life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence ...

As already pointed out in section 6.2.2.1, few teachers would explicitly endorse the deification of humans. It is sadly, however, exactly what is implicitly implied when the individual (or a social or cultural group) is the measure of morality. Nietzsche, in the nineteenth century, realised that when God as the absolute is dead, then what follows is the will-to-power, moral nihilism, the 'superman', and the deification of humanity (Alexander 1972:105; Cotta 1985:103).

Cotta (1985:103-104) points out that the conception of humans as God (or a part of God) is an illusion and a dangerous one:

In reality, the translation into practice of this metaphysical dream implies the dissolution of the authentic sense of law as an interpersonal mode of living ...  
The place of the law is overtaken by a will to power that denies real individuality in favor of the superman, or that burns the whole of history (of which the law expresses the duration) in the purifying pyre of revolution.

Confluent (integrative) education proclaimed under the banner of education of the whole person but without purposeful character formation is dangerous for social welfare. Furthermore, when education for character formation is put aside in favour of the child's freedom of expression (see sections 6.2.2.2, 6.2.2.3) or an abstract holistic unity which, in the final analysis, centres around the self, can it honestly be said that such education is giving the student what he needs as a *person*? If educating the whole person is merely a matter of including bodily and intuitive, emotional feelings within a learning environment characterised by a lack of moral (and intellectual) discipline, can it honestly be said that students are in a position to learn what really constitutes a responsible and truly civilised way of life? (Krason in Krason (ed) 1991:150).

It is, moreover, not only character development that is left out of confluent education's formula for wholeness. In the absence of an objectively structured world, the world becomes a subjective abstraction and an experiential artifact which means that the intellect as the mind's faculty for knowing reality is left undisturbed on the level of sense experience (Schmitt in Krason (ed) 1991:12). For transcendence of the purely sensory, the mind's intellectual abilities are replaced with paranormal abilities, supposedly superlearning.

### 6.3.2.3 *Superlearning - learning or indoctrination?*

Turning to the 'superlearning' advocated by Clark (1992:324-325), Ferguson (1989:347), and Ostrander and Schroeder (1979:passim), one finds no evidence that it is learning in the authentic meaning of the word. Like guided imagery, the technique calls for a passive mind placed into a state of hypnotic suggestibility (Lozanov 1978:passim) which results in indoctrination not learning (see section 6.2.1.3). Genuine learning embraces *active* mental involvement, a questioning attitude, a desire to discover truth, and an orientation which permits the learner to go where truth leads him. It is such mental engagement that the genuine teacher, as epitomised by Socrates and Jesus, stimulates. (Sampo in Krason (ed) 1991:107.)

The acquirement of paranormal abilities is ultimately all that remains of learning in the absence of a real world that the mind can relate to. Paranormal phenomena have, however, no place in the public schools of a democratic and plural society. The paranormal and the occult are objectionable in terms of the religious convictions of many people. Ignoring these people's convictions is arbitrary imposition of one set of beliefs and, in O'Hara's words (1985:68; see section 6.2.3), 'vicious repression' of another set of beliefs.

It is time now to determine exactly what happens to intellectual education when the world's objective givenness is denied.

### 6.3.2.4 *Constructivism - the death of intellectual knowledge and education*

In contrast to Socratic teaching, what emerges in education grounded in constructivism is a form of romanticism which sanctions anything the student comes up with as an expression of his individual creativity (Ernest in Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:464). While such romanticism has its occasional place and value, it is vital to recognise that this doctrine, if absolutised, would sound the death-knell of intellectual knowledge and education, be they scientific or artistic.

With regard to the latter, constructivists implicitly and explicitly tell students that there are no objective standards of beauty; that artistic standards are arbitrary expressions of entirely social

prejudices (Carr 1993:12). Personal taste becomes the sole criterion for art and beauty. Subsequently the possibility of stimulating real artistic appreciation fades away. As Schmitt (Krason (ed) 1991:11-12) asks:

If we tell our pupils that ‘beauty is only in the eye of the beholder’, or only a matter of feeling and emotion, why should they listen to Mozart rather than the latest pop-rock whose themes seem invariably to be violence, eroticism and sentimental self-pity? Or why should they gaze for even a moment of wonder at the gloriously setting sun, with its subtly nuanced epic, lyric and dramatic rhythms of motion and color when they can stare for five hours a day at a box that plugs into a wall socket?

Whilst I recognise that many New Age inclined people can and do have real appreciation of beauty in art and nature and would not exchange it for violence and sexual sleaze, we should bear in mind, however, that the minds of children and adolescents are unformed. In today’s world our young people’s unformed minds (that New Age thought declares morally autonomous) are bombarded with ‘entertainment’ that centres around violence and sexual sleaze. If we do not *purposefully* direct them towards beauty, goodness, and truth, they may not arrive there by themselves. It is the lack of purposeful guidance in New Age educational thought that could in the long run undermine its many worthy values and ideals (see section 3.4).

With regard to scientific knowledge and education, constructivism’s denial of a mind-independent reality effectively denies objectively validated evidence, that is, facts. It is, however, one thing to deny (and correctly so) the objectivity of theoretical and hypothetical *interpretations* of factual evidence. But it is another completely different thing to deny the objectivity of reality and factual evidence. Such denial renders scientific inquiry redundant and any dialogue about reality is ultimately incoherent.

[T]o adopt this standpoint is indeed to deny any possibility of the discovery of truth - but it ... also [denies] that explanation and understanding can have much in the way of a genuine purpose or goal at all beyond some hardly intelligible

private rationalisation of one's personal point of view. Subjectivist and relativist theories of human theoretical knowledge and belief thus not only undermine any and every coherent idea of what has epistemological value - they undermine the very project of epistemology itself (Carr 1993:12).

If there is no external, objective reality with which the mind can engage in a cognitive relationship in order to attain knowledge that corresponds to reality, 'objective knowledge can have little importance and will be of little interest to anyone' (Veith 1987:116). Consensus about what an educated person should know collapses (Veith 1987:116). The inevitable result is a smorgasbord curriculum and with no fixed curricular agenda. Students are free to take whatever they want. Such radical student freedom is applied in some American schools and the result is that fewer students sign up for difficult courses such as foreign languages, mathematics, and the hard sciences (Elkind 1989:149; Honig 1987:43-44; Papalia & Wendkos Olds 1993:421; Veith 1987:116-117).

What radical student freedom does not take into account is 'that even when young people end up completely enthralled by a facet of the mature culture [that is, not pop-culture], it isn't unusual for them to have been dragged, kicking and screaming, to the initial encounter [with master-works in art and science]' (Honig 1987:41). In Honig's (1987:44) opinion, students who are allowed to follow courses with little intellectual challenge 'are being defrauded of the education they need to make it in our society'. The required education for today's world is not merely training in marketable skills, but an education, the aim of which is 'to create independent thinkers, people who are well-informed, skilled at asking penetrating questions, and capable of separating the wheat from the chaff and making up their own minds once the facts are in' (Honig 1987:33). To meet this aim, schooling must be about truth. The existence of absolute truth, intellectual and moral, must be defended even whilst we admit that we do not and cannot know it absolutely.

Furthermore, scepticism about truth and the mind-independence of reality kills the wonder that Schmitt (Krason (ed) 1991:12-13) says,

marks all learning and childhood as it stands before what is, before real things

... Children naturally know that the realm of knowledge and truth is based on underived primary principles animated by wonder. This they do not doubt. This they take for granted even though they are unable to articulate it in their innocence. They know too that there are real answers out there to be searched out and discovered.

When they leave us to go on to higher education, the job-market or whatever, very few seem to wonder any longer. They no longer ask the big questions. They have learned not to be so naive ... They are told [by constructivists and relativists] that the claims of objective reality lead to unacceptable things like dogmatism, authoritarianism and intolerance. They are told that they must learn to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity in an evolving and progressing world. They are told that their education is a great ongoing search, a quest for personal and social significance and meaning, whatever that may mean. There is some truth in all this doxa, to be sure.

For most there is very little summoning and awakening into the intellectual life ... As for their grasp of reality and truth, well, truth is a construct of the mind itself and not a discovery of anything out there to which one must conform and be informed by ...

These young people lose their wondering innocence and intellectual humility that make all learning possible. In their place is substituted an artificial and sophisticated hubris.

Such unfortunate effects which result from the denial that reality exists independently and can be known, are due to the fact that constructivists 'have attributed to the human mind constructive, formative and creative powers that, in effect, nullify its cognitive power - its power to attain knowledge and to ascertain truths in the light of [objective] empirical evidence' (Adler 1990a:101; cf also Bruner 1986:104). The denial of an objective, external reality that the mind can know also renders redundant the use of the intellect for purposes that the senses do not serve, namely,

'distinguishing between knowledge and opinion, judging the claims that are made with respect to the truth and falsity of assertions, and assessing the certitude or degree of probability that can be attached to assertions accepted as true' (Adler 1990a: 101).

Suspension of these intellectual powers violates what Carr (1993:7) says, 'has been traditionally assumed ... [to be] one of the fundamental aims of education ... [namely] to enable pupils to distinguish rationally what is true from what is false, to believe what is true rather than what is false and to value knowledge more highly than mere conjecture, prejudice or superstition'. Constructivists have no theoretical way to go about separating knowledge from opinion, science from pseudoscience, proven theories from unproven hypotheses. All must ultimately enjoy the same status. (O'Hara in Basil (ed) 1988:157-158.) And towards all the unproven theories be they posited in the spiritual arena (see section 2.3), philosophy (see sections 3.3.2.2, 3.3.2.4c, 3.3.4.1, 3.3.4.2), psychology (see sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4), or science (see sections 5.2, 5.3.2, 5.4.2.2, 5.4.2.3), New Agers consider a gullible rather than a critical, sceptical attitude appropriate.

The sad upshot is that when the certainty of knowledge rooted in an objective reality, be it mundane or spiritual reality, is removed, the mind does not relinquish its need for certainty. Certainty is then sought in the self and eventually when real trauma proves the self to be a shaky foundation in life, certainty is sought in the truly unprovable - astrology, channelling, shamanism, and all the other forms of occultism (see sections 2.3, 2.4, 4.2.2, 4.4, 5.4.2.2, 6.2.1.3).

Implicit in the denial of reality's objective givenness is the suggestion that reality changes at the behest of human theorising. From this, it is but a short step to occultism and magic, that is, a belief in the power of the mind to change reality at will. Viewing the world as unstructured chaos restores the belief in magic and paranormal mental powers that rationalism had, by and large, countered in the West. The world as unstructured chaos does not, however, restore real meaning to human existence, but leaves our young isolated in a meaningless world to which they somehow have to ascribe their own subjective meaning. As Kirk (Krason (ed) 1991:65) emphasises: '[I]f there is no education for meaning, life will become meaningless for many. If there is no education for virtue [as a truth to be sought intellectually], many will become vicious.'

Apart from lending support to the belief in the magical omnipotence of the human mind, constructivism has another equally serious repercussion. Constructivism so fully interiorises its account of knowledge that, as Gergen (Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:28) writes,

it begins to offer the constructivist a means of escaping the charge of dualism. That is, by staking the entire epistemology on an account of the interior, the 'exterior' can be erased from concern and the theory can be viewed as monistic. Yet to escape [the] Scylla of dualism in this way confronts the theory with an equally perilous Charybdis - that of a self-defeating solipsism.

Gergen's (Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:17ff) solution to the individual solipsism inherent in New Age epistemology (see section 5.4.2.1) is social constructivism where 'the meaning of words and actions is not derived by comparing them against the subjectivity of their authors, but against the governing conventions of the communities in which we reside' ( Gergen in Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:22). As a corrective to solipsism, social constructivism is, however, questionable. Where radical, individual constructivism locks the individual into his own mind and its experiential, sensory data (see section 5.4.2.1), social constructivism locks the members of a society into that society's view of reality and knowledge. In both individual and social constructivism, knowledge is exclusively mind-dependent, on the individual mind and the social mind respectively, and therefore in both, knowledge can never be reality-dependent. Hence, in both forms of constructivism, the postulation of an independent reality, the other (starting) pole of knowledge, is simply superfluous.

One example should suffice to make clear that solipsism (individual or social) is a *cul de sac* where no student nor researcher should wish to remain. The proposition that the earth is flat is the inevitable conclusion of uninformed human experience. But if ever there were evidence that real and true knowledge is shaped by how a thing objectively is and not by the mind's perception thereof, this is it. Furthermore, the proposition, although it was *thought* to be true, was always false. It did not suddenly become false when Copernicus entertained a different view. However, in terms of the constructivist thesis, namely that reality is constituted by the mind's experiences thereof (whether on the individual or social level), the flat earth theory would still be believed in.

Therefore, in the constructivist frame of reference, progress and advancement in real knowledge is impossible.

Progress in knowledge is only possible within the limits and boundaries of an objective world against which subjective interpretation can be tested.

Where interpretation is boundless there is, as our poststructuralists are continually telling us, no 'fact of the matter', hence nothing genuine to teach and nothing genuine to learn. The moral of the story is that if there is knowledge at all - and surely there is - then learning is not and cannot be a matter, as it were, of 'interpretations all the way down' (Lynch 1993:394-395).

The only way out of the solipsism into which constructivism plunges education and the search for knowledge is to uphold a clear distinction between the realm of the objective, that which reality *is*, and the realm of the subjective, that which reality is *thought to be*.

This is further scrutinised in the following two sections.

### 6.3.3 Constructivism and intellectual inquiry

#### 6.3.3.1 *Fact-seeking research*

By its very nature, strict science, that is, fact-seeking research, cannot proceed within the constructivist paradigm. Strict science refers to observation and experimentation. Loose science, on the other hand, refers to the inferences and hypothetical theories drawn from a body of observed data. (Hoover in Thomas (ed) 1988:12-13.) All the scientific disciplines (natural and human) include strict science and loose science.

Whereas the theories posited in loose science are uncertain and require faith for their acceptance, strict science supplies certain knowledge. Knowledge that has certainty does not imply that such knowledge is absolute and perfect, but that the real existence and real knowability of the

perceived object are accepted with certitude (Jaki 1989:221-222). Both strict science and loose science (the latter is based on factual data obtained from the former) require that the scientist accept the two propositions which, according to Jaki (1978:247ff), the deeds if not the words of all great scientists have always professed. These propositions are 'the existence of a world intrinsically ordered in all its parts and consistent in all its [ordered, interconnected] interactions ... [and] the existence of a human mind capable of understanding such a world in an ever more comprehensive manner'(Jaki 1978:247).

These two propositions stand in direct opposition to the constructivist and New Age paradigm. However, contrary to the assumption of constructivists and New Age physicists such as Capra and Zukav (see section 5.3), the new physics does not prove that reality is inherently contradictory and unstructured (see the discussion in section 5.3.1) nor that reality rather than the act of perception is relative to the observer (see the discussions in section 5.3.2). Einstein's relativity theories reveal the invariant nature of four-dimensional spacetime, that is, that in spite of the differences in perception there is ultimately only one truth (see section 5.3.1). Furthermore, the very fact that measurement at the quantum level has an intrusive, disturbing effect means that quantum physics and its mathematical formulae express the state of the quantum realm *after* and *not prior* to measurement. What the state of the quantum realm is prior to observation and measurement is a question that physics cannot answer. It is a purely philosophical question which the philosopher Mortimer Adler (1990a:112-113, 1990b:98-99) answers as follows:

Imagine a pool of water in a hermetically sealed house that has endured for centuries with no human beings ever inside it [as the atom endured prior to the 20th century]. During all that time, the character of the water in the pool is completely placid. Then suddenly human beings find the house and find a way of opening it up to outside influences such as winds; and in addition, they enter the house and jump into the pool without first looking at the surface of the water. The water in the pool affected by outside influences *and especially* by the humans jumping into the pool is disturbed and no longer has the character of complete placidity. The humans describe the pool as it appeared to them

after they jumped into it and attribute to it wave motions and other properties.

Can quantum mechanics through its experimentally performed measurements be a disturbing and intrusive influence that affects the character of subatomic reality and, at the same time, can its exponents be certain that subatomic reality has the intrinsic indeterminacy that quantum theory attributes to it? Is the *unexamined* interior of the atom intrinsically indeterminate or is it like the determinate character of supra-atomic reality?

God knows the answer, as Einstein at the beginning of the controversy with Bohr declared when he said that God does not throw dice, which implied that the *unexamined* subatomic reality is a determinate reality.

Whether or not God knows the answer, experimental science *does not know it*. Nor does philosophy know it with certitude.

The truth of philosophical constructivism/idealism and reality's indeterminacy is also questioned by the great English mathematician G H Hardy (1967:130) who writes as follows:

It may be that modern physics fits best into some framework of idealistic philosophy - I do not believe it, but there are eminent physicists who say so. Pure mathematics, on the other hand, seems to me a rock on which all idealism founders: 317 is a prime, not because we think so, or because our minds are shaped in one way rather than another, but *because it is so*, because mathematical reality is built that way.

This comment of Hardy does not imply that all mathematical theorising inheres in the physical, spacetime world. But those mathematical theories that correspond to and can, therefore, be applied to physical reality do inhere in reality. Reality does not conform itself to the mathematical formulae; the formulae reflect and express in mathematical form, inherent and objective features of reality, that is, the theory corresponds to the facts.

If there were no facts and no reality that exists in complete independence of mental theories, if reality and knowledge were simply what an individual or a society says they are, the real complexity of subjects such as mathematics could be simplified. Thus, Bickhard (Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:257) asks: 'Wouldn't our world be much simpler if pi ( $\pi$ ) simply equaled the integer 3? Is that question absurd? How, within a social [or radical, individual] idealism, is it absurd?'

A description of reality in mathematical form is at the heart of physics. That such a description reflects the facts about an objectively structured reality free from core contradictions 'is assured ... by the way in which technologically contrived devices work or fail to work. Technology is not magic, as it would be in the world of the philosophical idealist' (Adler 1990b:74). Technological devices work consistently, bar mechanical failure, because the physics and the mathematical formulae underlying the devices correspond to an objective reality; not because the mind magically wills either the device to work or reality to conform to the device.

The conclusion is, therefore, that a multiplicity of 'truths' is incompatible with the logic that undergirds technology and strict fact-seeking scientific research, a logic which is ruled by the principle of noncontradiction.<sup>10</sup>

The appeal to quantum physics as being, *par excellence*, the proof of subjective constructivism and thus the disproof of the principle of noncontradiction, is shown by none other than Heisenberg (1958:43) to be without substance. This is an ironic situation since Heisenberg and his mentor, Bohr, were the architects of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics (see section 5.3.2) and it is this interpretation which contributed to the rejection of rational logic.

Describing an electron as either wave or particle, says Heisenberg (1958:43), are

two complementary [not contradictory] descriptions of the same reality ...

These descriptions can be only partially true; there must be limitations to the use of the particle concept as well as of the wave concept, else one could not avoid contradictions. If one takes into account those limitations which can be expressed by the uncertainty relations, *the contradictions disappear* [emphasis mine].

Thus, Bohr's principle of complementarity (see sections 5.3.2, 5.4.2.3) 'affirms the principle of noncontradiction as governing our thought, and it is a correct rule of thought only if noncontradiction is an ontological principle governing reality also' (Adler 1990b:93-94).

Technology clearly shows that the principle of noncontradiction is an ontological principle and, furthermore, that there exists only a single, monolithic reality with a single, objective, mind-independent truth. Thus, when research is done into facts concerning real phenomena and when inferences are drawn from the facts, the correct logic is one ruled by the principle of noncontradiction.

The appropriateness of relativism - the idea of many subjective truths unbounded by the principle of noncontradiction - is questioned by Bloom (1987:36ff) and O'Hara (Basil (ed) 1988:158) in terms of the human sciences where the different understandings and explanations of reality found in different communities form part of the research domain. Bloom (1987:39) maintains that:

History and the study of cultures do not teach or prove that values and cultures are relative. All to the contrary, that is a philosophical premise that we now bring to our study of them. This premise is unproven and dogmatically asserted for what are largely political reasons. History and culture are interpreted in the light of it, and then are said to prove the premise ... To say that it does so prove is as absurd as to say that the diversity of points of view expressed in a college bull session proves that there is no truth. On the face of it, the difference of opinion would seem to raise the question as to which is true or right rather than to banish it. The natural reaction is to try to resolve the difference, to examine the claims and reasons for each opinion.

Only the unhistorical and inhuman belief that opinions are held for no reason would prevent the undertaking of such an exciting activity.

Furthermore, Western technology and therefore also its underpinning logic and noncontradictory view of reality have become transcultural. Western technology is the one cultural product which

has crossed all cultural boundaries and has become globally recognised and applied. Thus, all cultures affirm, even if unvoiced, the underlying logic and view of reality which technology presupposes (Adler 1990b:34, 74, 123). It is, therefore, ironic that at this stage where a noncontradictory view of physical reality has become transcultural, New Age and/or constructivist epistemology places a question mark behind the principle of noncontradiction as the correct rule of thought.

Since strict science and technology support and are supported by the logic of a noncontradictory reality, constructivists are driven inexorably to the position where they have to embrace a duality of truth; one in the domain of strict science and one in the domain of philosophy and, for New Age spiritual believers, religion - the domain of strict science undeniably objective and governed by the principle of noncontradiction, and the domain of philosophy and religion regarded by them as subjective and unbounded by the principle of noncontradiction.

The following example, borrowed from Adler (1990b:75-76), illustrates what happens if the advocates of constructivism do not keep factual scientific truth about reality separate from their philosophical and/or religious views on reality: Imagine that an advocate of constructivism were offered a choice between two planes, one which is fast and comfortable but aeronautically questionable, and one which is slow and uncomfortable but aeronautically sound. In *conformance* with the constructivist teaching that reality is mind-dependent and technology is, therefore, magic, the *consistent* choice would be the former plane. Choosing the latter plane means that constructivists are unwilling to put their foundational teaching about reality to the test which, in effect, constitutes a denial thereof. At best, therefore, the doctrine that reality is ultimately unstructured with contradictions at its core is purely fictional, mythological 'truth' which is upheld and taught in order to satisfy humanity's psychological need for religion. - In other words, because humanity 'has a psychological need for a religion, then it should believe a lie to satisfy a need. This', says Alexander (1972:110), 'would seem to be the worst kind of opium of the people'.

Because the world is real, it appears that a synthesis between science and religion in the intellectual quest for truth would require three interrelated admissions: The first, relevant for science, is that there is a single, real, mind-independent physical world, thus reaffirming the natural

dualism between observer and observed; knower and known. The second, relevant for a religion synthesised with science, is that God and the spiritual domain are as objective and mind-independent as technology has proven the physical world to be. The third, again relevant for science but now synthesised with religion, is that God and other spiritual beings are separate from nature, although Deism (see section 3.3.2.4b) is not necessary. It can certainly be accepted that God is in active relationship with the universe on whom it is contingent and that He expects from us to teach our children to treat nature with respect simply because it is His creation. A cut between the spiritual realm and the natural realm needs to be upheld since without it, empirical scientific exploration and dissection of nature becomes taboo lest one anger the gods, the divine powers in nature (see sections 2.3.1, 3.2, 5.4.1).

Denial of these propositions means that the New Age worldview loses its praiseworthy vision of transcending scientism and materialism. Not only has scientific materialism already rendered religion a purely subjective issue (see section 3.3.4.3), but the objectivity of bare, uninterpreted facts with which strict science deals is undeniable. Metaphysical theories grounded in the ruling interpretative framework of scientific materialism will remain for many people the only authoritative theories about the origin, meaning, and purpose of the universe and humankind. It seems to be unavoidable that many students, especially those in the natural sciences, will not accept the supposed subjective nature of physical reality and, instead, will continue accumulating the notions that the only valid, objective knowledge of reality is obtained by the methods of natural science and that questions which cannot be answered by natural scientific methods are arbitrary, unfounded opinions and prejudices (Adler 1988:9-10; Moreland in Moreland (ed) 1994:14).

If the slighting of reality were to become widespread, with it will come 'a weakening of the search for truth about the external world. Science, however, 'cannot ... gain sustained momentum, without an articulate longing for truth which in turn presupposes a confident approach to reality' (Jaki 1974:19). The following celebrated passage of St Augustine (Jaki 1989:213) exemplifies the epistemological approach to nature which holistically integrates the scientific quest for truth into the broader, religious quest for truth:

I spoke to all the things that are about me, all that can be admitted by the door of the senses, and I said, 'Since you are not my God, tell me about him. Tell me something of my God'. Clear and loud they answered, 'God is he who made us'. I asked these questions simply by gazing at these things ... I asked the whole mass of the universe about my God, and it replied, 'I am not God, God is he who made me'.

The final requirement in this chapter is to explore further the implications that constructivism has for value-laden theorising which, in constructivist terms, is not only unbounded by factual evidence, but has no factual evidence on which to proceed.

### 6.3.3.2 *Value-laden theorising*

Loose science or value-laden theorising embraces those questions pertaining to all fields of study which cannot be answered by facts alone. That the same factual evidence can support widely differing interpretations can be taken either as invitation to investigate the different theories in order to determine the real truth or as proof that such investigation is impossible (Bloom 1987:40). Constructivists take the latter option.

Faced with the difficult problem of trying to trace the point at which objective, factual evidence is replaced with subjective interpretation, constructivists 'solve' the problem by disowning the objectivity of reality. In effect, however, it is a means to avoid testing one's own prejudices (Bloom 1987:40). Whilst the recognition of subjective bias should have the salutary effect of revealing the conditional and possibly erroneous nature of human theorising, in constructivist epistemology it has the debilitating effect of eliminating the possibility of error, not only in the theories of others, but also in one's own theories.

Constructivism shields the individual from error because it redefines and restricts reality to the individual's subjective, experiential world (Von Glasersfeld in Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:7). This restriction on reality reduces truth to viability where 'concepts, models, theories, and so on are viable if they prove adequate in the contexts in which they were created' (Von Glasersfeld in

Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:7-8). In other words, internal coherence becomes the test for 'truth' (validity).

Instead of encouraging proper intellectual scepticism which leads the student to doubt the truth of contextualism (Bloom 1987:40), constructivism places personal, contextual, paradigmatic presuppositions beyond the reach of intellectual doubt.

Not only does constructivism render it unnecessary to weigh one's own theory and its paradigmatic presuppositions in the light of all the evidence, it also makes it impossible for disagreeing scholars to engage in dialogue about their points of disagreement as constructivists argue that no fixed, objective points of departure exist. In constructivism, it is a disconcertingly easy matter to simply exclude in an entirely subjective and arbitrary manner, every view that differs from one's own. This attitude of mind is not conducive to the humility and tolerance which the Wiccan, Starhawk (1989:200-201) believes, follow from the notion of truth as relativist and subjectivist. Arguing against constructivism, Bickhard (Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:260) points out that relativism does not imply tolerance, but

simply means that we have no grounds for complaint when the torturers and the men in jackboots come kicking in our door ... [T]he idealist [constructivist] positions are conceptually malignant ... [T]he progressions from idealism to relativism, from linguistic [social] idealism to rabid communitarianism [for example, Nazism], are intrinsically powerful and unavoidable once the premises are accepted. They remain unavoidable despite the good will and pacific intentions of some of the propounders of such idealisms.

In section 6.2.2.2 we saw that cultural relativism set the stage for the individual moral subjectivism of the counterculture (see section 2.3.4) and New Age thought. In section 6.3.2.2 we saw that individual moral subjectivism can lead to anarchy. According to Bickhard (quoted above), relativism can also lead to dogmatic communitarianism where one group of individuals with the same worldview and value system sets itself up as right and everybody else is simply wrong. This leads to dogmatism, dictatorship, and totalitarianism. In the light of real evidence

regarding human nature, Chandler (1988:286) points out the possibility that New Age 'enlightened "seers" would use their new self-knowledge to decide for the rest which patterns and relationships would benefit the whole, for only those crowned with cosmic consciousness are fit to lead the planet into the New Age' (see also section 6.2.3).

On the other hand, the acknowledgement that objective truth exists and that its restrictive authority may rule out as false one's own ideas, encourages intellectual humility, discipline, and openness (Thorson in Henry (ed) 1978:223). Factual evidence, be it from the natural sciences, the human sciences, or history, cannot provide the whole truth. It does, however, provide the material which the student or scientist should consider with as little prejudice as is humanly possible. Only after having dispassionately considered *all* the facts presented, can the student or scientist draw conclusions and arrive at his own interpretation. Such an interpretation is grounded in reason and can lay claim to being knowledge, albeit conditional, imperfect, and perhaps incorrect, but nevertheless, it is more than simply contextual opinion.

Furthermore, the quest for knowledge as a quest for truth discourages absolutism. Such a quest requires true openness which is 'the desire to know, hence the awareness of ignorance' (Bloom 1987:40). What is called for in true openness is not that all views be regarded as equally valid, but that one regard all views, including one's own, as subject to revision in the light of critical evidence (Hare 1987:99).

The New Age worldview reveals that a denial of objective truth hinders and blocks critical reflection on one's own worldview and encourages instead fideism. Fideism is a commitment to the premises of one's worldview 'by faith alone and without any regard for the relation between what is affirmed by faith and what is affirmed or denied by the rest of human knowledge' (Adler 1993:285). A fideist is, therefore, a person who thinks one 'must simply choose to believe irrespective of the evidence' (Kantzer, *Foreword* in Little 1988:8).

The foundational premises of the New Age worldview are the mind-dependence of all reality; holistic, psychic interconnectedness; individual autonomy; and macroevolution. These premises either contradict one another or are denied by evidence as will be shown.

With regard to consistency with evidence, one finds, firstly, that technology clearly refutes reality's mind-dependence (see section 6.3.3.1).

Secondly, the modern Japanese experience where the young are influenced by Western ideas shows that individual autonomy and psychic fusion are irreconcilable concepts (see section 6.2.2.1).

Thirdly, in a world where 'higher' thought processes are actualised, there is no interconnectedness as actualisation of thought requires multiple worlds where each world exists in complete independence of the others. This is, furthermore, contrary to Bell's theorem and its experimental validation (Casti 1989:490), from which Bohm derived the idea of a holographic universe (see section 5.3.2). To retain holistic interconnectedness, New Age thinkers who use Bohm's theory should do as Bohm did, namely acknowledge the possibility of superluminal communication in a *single world of implicate order* (Casti 1989:474). Bohm's analogy of a holographic universe may imply an illusory universe, but it does not imply an intrinsically chaotic and mind-dependent universe. A holograph is structured; a structure which is not the product of the observer's mind, but is derived from the original object which it reflects. Furthermore, the original object stands apart from its holographic image. As an analogy of God's relationship with the world, a holographic universe implies, therefore, a universe that is separate from God, yet the whole universe reflects in some albeit imperfect way, the nature of God. This, in the light of technology, means that God is as objective and mind-independent as the universe is. An analogy is, however, always only an analogy, never a proof. Bohm's analogy does not prove that the universe is an illusion nor that every part of the universe contains the whole universe (see section 5.3.2). Bohm may possibly have arrived at the specific idea of a holograph because in addition to his scientific realism, he also had a propensity for Eastern metaphysics (see sections 2.3.3.2d, 5.6 note 16).

Turning to the issue of the New Age worldview's internal coherence one finds the following: Firstly, insofar as New Age thinkers are holistic thinkers, they should renounce the notion of the world as a chaotic, unstructured conglomeration of energy. As Jaki (1989:165) points out: 'A chaos can never be a whole, that is a coordination of parts, without ceasing to be a chaos, properly so-called.'

Secondly, to claim that it is the human mind that, on the social or individual level, creates the world's wholeness is to appropriate god-like abilities for the human mind. Moreover, human experience is often chaotic which makes it an unreliable source for imputing order on chaos. However, most important from a New Age point of view is that a mind-dependent reality fails to fit with the idea of macroevolution. If reality were contingent on the human mind, nothing could have existed in a concrete form prior to the appearance of *Homo sapiens* on earth (Adler 1990a:91-92). Thus either macroevolution or reality's mind-dependence is false, or both are false. Both cannot be true.

Thirdly, to claim that all is one Mind manifested in every individual mind as is required in pantheism (see sections 3.3.2.2, 4.2.2.2) and panentheism (see section 4.2.2.3) leaves no room for human autonomy of any kind (as explained in section 3.3.2.2). The idea of human autonomy is only consistent with the idea of a separate self (see section 6.2.2.1) which implies that there are many minds, each of separate existence and whose existence is, therefore, not subject to the formative, creative powers of another mind. This brings us back to the idea of an external reality, separate and independent from one's experiences thereof. There is also no evidence and, therefore, no logical necessity to regard the world as consisting solely of minds. There is much in the world which is clearly and without doubt nonmind.

Fourthly, the values upheld by New Age thinkers are meaningless in a mind-dependent reality. As Bickhard (Steffe & Gale (eds) 1995:241) comments: '[C]oncerns with [military] arms and pollution [see section 3.4.1] seem curiously inconsistent with holding that there is no "real world that is separate from one's experiences of it".' In a world which is a mental artifact, it is not absurd nor impossible to overcome problems by simply changing one's perception and exercising the mind's alleged creative power in order to construct reality in a more desirable form.

The above are not the only contradictions and inconsistencies in New Age thought. There are many more. But in the light of the critical discussions throughout this and the previous chapters, the above are sufficient to illustrate the point I am trying to make. This point is that when the border between objective facts and subjective theorising is whittled down and when ideas are haphazardly taken from what are sometimes mutually exclusive philosophical and/or religious

viewpoints, then critical thought, the most essential ingredient for learning and research, is the first casualty.

Thus, at the conclusion of this section, it seems that in the intellectual ferment of the late twentieth century, it is those learners who are committed to the objective existence of truth who can learn with confidence and see their own personal quest for truth in ever larger circles of meaning that bring them closer to the truth.

#### 6.4 CONCLUSION

Reviewing the educational implications of New Age thought, the conclusion is unfortunate but inescapable. By denying the existence of objective truth, New Age thought encourages moral sophistry and intellectual nihilism and consequently fails the interconnected moral and intellectual aims of education. Because our children are our future and simply because we love them, we owe them an education which, as Lickona (1993:6) succinctly puts it, helps them to 'become smart and to ... become good'.

#### 6.5 NOTES

- 1 Two good explanatory books for Christians which young people will easily understand are those by the late Paul Little who served for twenty-five years on the staff of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. These books are (1987) *Know what you believe* and (1988) *Know why you believe*. A good book for adult Christians on spiritual discernment is that by Jay Adams, (1987) *A call to discernment*.
- 2 The materialist Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) was the first modern thinker to clearly pronounce the idea that at the core of all religious representations of God are human images. According to Feuerbach (Raschke, Kirk & Taylor 1977:8), religion is merely 'the relation of man to himself, or more correctly to his own nature'.

- 3 Books that propagate the idea that all religions consist only of myths and are empty of any factually true content are, for example, those by Joseph Campbell, (1973) *Myths to live by* and (1986) *The inner reaches of outer space*.
- 4 The Christian Jay Adams (Nord 1995:197) wonders ‘how many young people will be led astray, led away from discipleship for Christ, which requires losing their “selves”, because they were told “Feel good about yourself” rather than being told that there is a criminal inside who needs to be put to death daily’. The word ‘criminal’ is harsh, but it does emphasise that humility, not nonjudgemental self-regard, should be stressed in Christian education.
- 5 The book by Don Matzat, (1990) *Christ-esteem: Where the search for self-esteem ends*, is excellent and highly recommendable to those who want to attain Biblical clarity on the issue of self-image and also for finding the support and inner peace that Jesus gives in times of trouble and trauma.
- 6 Canfield and Klimek (Brooks 1981-82:4), after writing of the need to ‘develop one’s inner and spiritual dimensions, through working with such forms as meditation’, add the following: ‘Advice: If you’re teaching in a public school, don’t call it meditation, call it “centering”. Every school wants children to be relaxed, attentive and creative, and that’s what they will get.’
- 7 Quoting the Lutheran scholar, G Ebeling, Osborn (1992:78) explains that from a Christian perspective, the absolute self-reliance and self-realisation promoted by guided imagery may actually promote a godlessness which may be described thus:

True godlessness is not the abstract denial of the existence of God, but the denial of one’s own dependence upon God, that is, the denial of one’s own existential being as God’s creature. Thus unbelief is man’s fundamental sin. And unbelief means to persevere in the principle of self-justification.

- 8 Jim Jones was the leader of the infamous *People's Temple* cult that committed mass suicide in Jonestown in 1978 (Melton 1986:126).
- 9 The book by Sergio Cotta, (1985) *Why violence?* is excellent. Among the contributory causes of the violent temper of the twentieth century that Prof Cotta analyses, is the absolute subjectivism that has marked Western philosophies since the nineteenth century. He warns that subjectivity has a nihilistic destiny. It ultimately denies the other (God, humans, and nature) 'from the participation in my own being and, therefore, from dialogue and no longer worthy of respect, is reduced either to raw material, a passive object of my calculating and dominating will, or to a non-redeemable enemy' (Cotta 1985:134).
- 10 Logic which is ruled by the principle of noncontradiction is Aristotelian logic. Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, Book IV 1989:161ff) argues that something cannot simultaneously both *be* and *not be*, that is, the meaning of something cannot include its own contradiction. It is a self-evident, not arbitrary logic because, as Grant (1978:149-150) points out: 'One cannot write a book or speak a sentence that means anything without using the law of [non]contradiction. Logic is an innate necessity, not an arbitrary convention that may be discarded at will.'
- 11 Despite the illusory nature that a holographic universe implies, Bohm supports Einstein's theory of determinate but as yet unrevealed variables in the quantum realm (see section 5.3.2). Bohm (Wilber 1983:145-146) refutes the idea of a mind-dependent reality:

Indeed this [reality's mind-dependence] is often carried to such an extreme that it appears as if nothing ever happens without the observer. However, we know of many physical processes, even at the level of quantum phenomena, that do occur without any direct intervention of the observer. Take, for example, the processes that go on in a distant star. These appear to follow the known laws of physics and the processes occur, and have occurred, without any significant intervention on our part.

**CHAPTER 7****EPILOGUE****7.1 INTRODUCTION**

New Age thought can be summed up in two words - absolute subjectivity. This, we have seen, is not at all an antimodern attitude but is part of modernity - that period of Western intellectual history which started when Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* replaced reality with the processes and contents of the human mind as the starting point of philosophical thought. In order to free ourselves and our children from the moral sophistry and intellectual nihilism that subjectivism brings about, is it necessary to turn again to a grounding premise of objectivity, that is, to the premise that reality and truth stand outside and independent of human perception and conception? On completion of this study, I think so. On the basis of this study, I have come to the conclusion that absolute subjectivity has permeated contemporary thought; that it was subjectivity that progressively emptied the world and finally human existence of real meaning; and that in the progression to absolute subjectivity, the principles of education and real learning become alien and unacceptable.

Nevertheless, to end this thesis with a list of specific 'oughts' would be presumptuousness on my part. What follows are, therefore, not presented as final solutions, but as ideas that require further study, reflection, and dialogue.

**7.2 IDEAS FOR MORAL EDUCATION**

In South Africa we are living in a unique time. The uniqueness derives not only from the many religions and ethnic groups in our country, but also from the fact that for the first time in our history, we have a state that does not protect nor endorse any one specific religion. All are to be protected, but none is to be endorsed. Such religious freedom is important because without it one's own religious freedom may be in jeopardy.

But does religious freedom imply moral freedom? The absolute relativity and subjectivity of New Age thought answers this question with a decisive 'Yes'. It is in this affirmative answer that the uniqueness of New Age spirituality lies. It is the one religion which in its multifarious forms does not endorse what all responsible religions and secular philosophies endorse - the *objective* authority of the underlying moral Law (see Appendix) and that subjection thereto does not come naturally.

From the outset, the relativist and subjectivist view of morality excludes the possibility that humans should *theoretically* be able to resolve whatever moral disagreements exist among them. In other words, moral relativism and subjectivism exclude any possibility of attaining a common good in South Africa through interreligious moral dialogue. Such a common good to which all individuals *ought* to subject their selfish desires is what I believe all responsible people, in spite of the cultural and religious differences, want and need in South Africa. I do not believe that responsible people want a disordered democracy where undisciplined individuals strive only to fulfil their selfish desires.

There are, of course, moral issues on which the different religions and secular philosophies do not agree. But such disagreement tends to surround highly complex and very difficult moral problems; abortion, euthanasia, sexual preference, the death sentence, and so forth. A school is, however, not the place for debating such issues. If adults struggle to resolve such issues, how can we expect inexperienced children and adolescents to resolve them? Furthermore, disagreement on difficult moral issues does not deny the objective and binding truth of the virtues that children need to be introduced to before they, as responsible adults, can participate in complex moral debates.

Our plural schools should not concentrate on our moral differences but on our moral agreements. The common moral Law should be articulated in our schools so that it can act as our social glue. And its objective truth should be stressed. The virtues that the moral Law reflects - honesty, kindness, responsibility, respect, mercy, justice, and so forth - are objective and beyond criticism and denial, if for no other reason, because there is nothing better to replace them.

We cannot clamour for moral, selfless individuals if we remove the seat of moral behaviour. This is the tragedy of New Age thought and the moral subjectivism it endorses. Its ideals call for the very same selfless qualities that its subjectivism renders impossible. Furthermore, the stress on social rather than personal morality pushes morality to the periphery of one's existence. Thereby each person can erect a barrier around his life within which he can assume that his own selfish life does not contribute to society's moral crises.

The scepticism in New Age thought about objective moral truth is in fact superficial. Scepticism is not applied to their own values, but only to conventional moral valuations, especially in the spheres of sex and hierarchical authority structures. New Age thinkers are not nearly sceptical enough about an undisciplined individual's capacity to subject himself to the values of environmental responsibility and the honesty and respect in one's dealing with others that social harmony demands.

Self-discipline is *learned* behaviour. It does not come naturally. Today's young people do not, however, accept dogmatic authoritarianism and, I believe, correctly so. But I also believe that there is a clear distinction between dogmatic authoritarianism and authoritative guidance. To treat children and adolescents as children and adolescents, that is, as immature people who need adult guidance, is *not* patronising. On the contrary, it reflects the adult's real love for the young and his real understanding of their innocence, even when their innocence is covered with an artificial gloss of maturity. Such a gloss usually reveals itself as criticism of moral rules. However, criticism becomes meaningful only after a high level of initiation into the true meaning and practical implications of moral rules.

Real love for the young wants what is best for them and that is *purposeful* moral education into the principles of moral truth. Purposeful moral education need not imply dogmatism. I believe that in our plural schools, morality can be grounded without referring to distinctive and unique religious beliefs. Without appealing to any one religion and yet actually appealing to all religions, schools can ground morality in the universal sameness of the human race and of basic human nature. This should not be overly difficult. After all, truth about human nature as it *is* and not as we would like it to be is the one thing of which we all have first-hand experience.

As an orthodox Christian, I believe that grounding morality in our universal sameness is theologically correct (Romans 2:14-15). Moreover, I believe that this grounding cannot be objectionable to believers of other religions or to religious nonbelievers.

My suggestion is, therefore, that our schools purposefully teach children two things: firstly, that humanity differs in kind from other animals, and secondly, that, in spite of the differences in language, customs, and religious beliefs, the essence of human nature is the same. The first is supportive of special treatment of humans while the second is supportive of equal, respectful treatment of all persons irrespective of cultural differences and differences in physical and/or mental abilities.

When a belief in our universal sameness *and* our uniqueness from the rest of nature is acknowledged, then our young will hopefully be able to see beyond the differences and come to see other people as worthy of the same respectful treatment that we all desire for ourselves. We should strive towards this moral ideal even as we know that knowledge of what is objectively good does not always lead to good behaviour. Nevertheless, I believe that the chance for ethical behaviour is greater when objectivity is attributed to moral virtues than it is in the moral stupor that relativism and subjectivism bring about.

Our children are growing up in an amoral time when crime is rampant, when violence and brutality have become recreational viewing, and when freedom of expression seems to be more protective of pornography and filth than it is of truth. If, in these times, our schools are to pass on our moral patrimony then they should step up to their responsibility as the bearers of objective moral standards. This can be done by the following:

by teachers (and parents) who are living examples of moral truth;

by punishment which is appropriate to age and to misdemeanour;

by course content - history and literature are rich sources of the principles of moral truth; and

by upholding truth as lodestar in the human and natural sciences. Drawn on by truth, science teaches the practice of disciplining and restricting the human will to truth even whilst it affirms the principle of humility in that it teaches that what the mind believes to be true could in fact be erroneous.

As far as the future of intellectual, scientific education is concerned, the outlook thereof within the subjectivist and constructivist paradigm appears to be dismal. Here too the leitmotiv is the denial of objective truth; the denial that it exists; the denial that it can be known; the denial that it has an authority which rules out as false some interpretations; and the denial that the mind should discipline itself to seek correspondence with what really *is*.

In the following section I shall express my ideas as to the meaning, the worth, and the protection of intellectual, scientific education.

### 7.3 IDEAS FOR INTELLECTUAL, SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

The unabashed resurgence of superstition, occultism, and magic among New Age thinkers is not simply a revival of the West's alternative, mystical, and gnostic spiritual tradition. I have come to the conclusion that it is also an outgrowth of the Cartesian programme. At the heart of Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* is mental autonomy - that absolute and indubitable knowledge starts in the human mind and is, therefore, achievable through perception and/or rational reasoning. In effect, the Cartesian programme collapsed the distinction between truth as an external, objective reality and knowledge as an internal, subjective construct of the mind. This culminated in positivism and scientism where objectivity is assigned to both factual knowledge and to the rational but nevertheless hypothetical deductions derived therefrom. New Age thinkers come to the correct conclusion, namely that all deductive knowledge, including that achieved through rational, scientific methodology, is not objective but subjective because it depends ultimately on presuppositions that are unprovable within the logical system itself. This is proved in Gödel's theorems.

However, after this correct conclusion, New Age thought takes an irrational turn. To save the declaration of mental autonomy, the objectivity of reality and truth is abandoned. The materialist naturalism of positivism and scientism is transformed into spiritual naturalism and the search for absolute knowledge is set forth as a search for mystical and occult gnosis which is divorced from reason.

In the move back to occultism and gnosticism, the proponents of philosophical constructivism and absolute subjectivity do not appear as irrational eccentrics nor as sorcerers and black magicians. They (for instance, Capra 1990:passim and Roszak 1973:passim) present themselves as logical thinkers who have analysed the Cartesian and positivist programme as one rooted in the belief in objective reality and truth and have subsequently found this belief to be the source of all our social and environmental problems. Their recommendation that, to avoid the evils of a world ruled by scientism and technology, we should suppress the ideal of objective truth and return to the pagan view of a capricious, spiritually infused nature is, however, naive.

Firstly, the mistake of positivism and scientism lies not in the logic, that is, the principle of noncontradiction, but that scientists confused their rational deductions based on purely naturalistic premises with truth itself. This and its widespread acceptance arose because the phrase that should precede all theorising, namely, 'A certain scientist theorises that ...' was replaced with the phrase, 'Science shows that ...'. This mistake fostered scientism and its dogmatism and pride.

Secondly, in the face of the objective, noncontradictory physical world that technology and its undergirding scientific facts reveal, New Age spirituality fails to establish a continuum between science, philosophy, and religion. Because their philosophical, metaphysical declarations do not square with reality, the laudable ideal of a holistic integration of the diverse fields of human epistemological endeavours cannot be achieved.

Thirdly, with the death of the belief in an objective reality which the intellect can know within limits will come the death of what science should be - a humble, disciplined search for the level of truth which is directly accessible to the intellect. Technology will, however, not disappear. As the one globally accepted objective truth, technology will become the framework within which everything else finds meaning and purpose. And this is a dangerous situation. Technology carries with it enormous manipulative power. When objective truth as the guiding principle of science is replaced with pragmatic viability, science will be practised and taught in a moral vacuum. Its technological products can then be used without any moral qualms to exploit nature and to control society and individuals.

Coupling technological power with the New Age worldview that promotes absolute moral subjectivity and reduces technology to magic will, in all probability, compound the risk of power abuse. Despite the pacifist intentions of New Age thinkers, their obsession with the self reveals that beneath the belief in occultism and magic is a desire for power - the manipulation of reality to serve personal ends.

All of the proponents of relativism, subjectivism, and constructivism do not explicitly promote occultism and magic. All the same, the idea that reality has only relative and subjective meaning implies that reality is essentially formless and, therefore, changeable and subject to magical manipulation. This means that even if occultism and magic are rejected for what can only be purely subjective reasons, students are nevertheless subtly influenced to discard the idea of an objective, external reality. Thereby they come to a tacit acceptance of a magical view of reality where reality is believed to actually change as human perception thereof changes. This, as we have seen, can have tragic consequences for moral, emotional, and cognitive development and for the future of science.

Faith in the existence of a consistently ordered reality that the mind can know within limits but can never magically influence is the backbone of science. Without this faith, science collapses and with it its real moral worth. The academic, scientific enterprise should be committed to the idea that the world has a definite structure with a complexity in detail and cohesive interrelationship that demands intellectual discipline and responsibility if it is to be known. The academic, scientific enterprise demands more than mere curiosity. It demands that the mind, in its desire to learn and to know, discipline itself to seek correspondence with what *is*. What is the point of learning and research if it is not to seek knowledge that corresponds to reality?

In the final analysis, I believe that no one can become part of the academic, scientific enterprise without a personal commitment to the objective existence of truth. The value of the intellectual life is neither received by nor understandable to the mind that has been taught to concentrate only on its own experience of reality. When students understand only their subjective experiences of subject matter, opinion is constructed, not knowledge.

Subjective experience and what something objectively is, do not necessarily coincide. For example, according to the subjective experience of some of the extreme critics of the New Age movement (for instance Cumbey 1983:passim and Marrs 1987:passim), it is a movement that should be identified with Nazism and/or Satanism. Their experience is, however, off the mark. Yet in terms of the New Age, constructivist premise that the meaning of something is subjectively constructed in the absence of real, objective meaning, the conclusions drawn by these critics cannot be refuted. These critics are merely doing what constructivism recommends, namely, constructing and creating their own reality and truth.

In redefining truth as subjective, the sole criterion of which is viability with paradigmatic presuppositions, constructivists allow researchers and students to retain their opinions and preconceived ideas and assumptions rather than make a painful reassessment thereof which honesty and humility of mind demand. The result is a loss of pure intellectual motivation - the discovery of truth for its own sake and for the enrichment of mind that truth brings about. Ultimately the principles of science as a quest for truth will become alien and in conflict with the mentality cultivated in the New Age and constructivist paradigm.

I believe, therefore, that the idea of objective truth should be defended and upheld in our schools and universities. Without it, dialogue between scholars of differing views breaks down. Furthermore, the young mind of a student is delicate and needs to be fed on truth if it is to grow and prosper.

The task of a teacher is not to indoctrinate students into what he, the teacher, thinks to be true. But neither is it the task of a teacher to facilitate subjective meaning construction which may quite conceivably be wrong when measured against reality. Furthermore, the word *facilitation* carries with it, the implicit message that learning should be an easy process. But easy is precisely what learning very often is *not*. If our young are to become lifelong learners then they must as children already learn to accept that in all real learning the medicine often tastes bad.

Real learning is not only difficult because the subject matter is difficult to understand. Its real difficulty lies in the fact that it often demands the unpleasant task of acknowledging our own

errors. Real learning cuts two ways. It demands an honest, humble mind that can acknowledge its own errors. Yet it also demands scepticism that suspends judgement till the whole picture has been attained. And it is especially when emotion and preconceived ideas demand agreement or disagreement that judgement should be hesitant.

Judgement on the ontological and cosmological level is especially difficult. It is at this level where interpretations of scientific evidence differ widely. It would be wrong to forbid the teaching of any reasonable interpretative explanation. Yet we should not make the opposite mistake of teaching our students that there is no objective truth, that reality changes as perception and presuppositions change. Instead, we should teach our students to probe, to sift, to recognise contradictions, and to judge in the light of informed reason with the quest for truth as the guiding lodestar. This implies that students be taught to critically subject all paradigmatic presuppositions, including their own, to the authority of the truth that reality reveals.

The teacher's task is, therefore, to help students develop their own reasoning powers; reasoning which proceeds not from subjective feelings, intuition, and preconceived ideas, but from what *is*. Proceeding in this manner, the teacher, on the one hand, introduces his students to the commitment, discipline, and responsibility that real learning and the academic, scientific enterprise demand. On the other hand, the teacher is also cultivating an independent thinker who is not swayed by popular opinion, but who also does not arbitrarily and subjectively reject ideas that differ from his own. He has learnt to search deeper and to weigh ideas, including his own, in the light of evidence.

An education which upholds truth as the lodestar and the guiding principle is ennobling. It is neither reactionary or revolutionary, but conservative and radical. It trains the students to think independently; to search, to sift, to weigh, and to form informed judgements and conclusions disciplined by consistency with what *is*. It offers our students true freedom, that is, the freedom of making choices that, enlightened by true knowledge, have the capacity to shape their personal future and the future of society in positive ways.

## 7.4 CONCLUSION

My final conclusion in this study is that even in our plural culture education can never be simply a matter of subjective meaning construction. Real learning can only proceed from premises that correspond to reality. Real learning requires a humble and critical attitude that springs from the desire to *know* (not construct) truth.

Irrespective of our religious and cultural differences, the concern of all educators should be to lead our young into the moral life that meets objective standards of human decency. And the additional task of our schools and universities should be to incorporate our young into the intellectual life. From this perspective on education, the New Age worldview fails. Nothing in its absolute subjectivism requires young people to adapt their personal desires to a hierarchy of moral obligations. Nor does it offer young people the opportunity of acquiring the discipline and responsibility that the academic, scientific enterprise demands.

In the long run, I am inclined to think that the absolute subjectivism of New Age thought will extinguish all *real* learning - religious, moral, and scientific. This is a pessimistic view, but I believe that it is better to warn of a potential catastrophe and have time prove me wrong than remain silent.

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## APPENDIX

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE MORAL LAW

(Compiled by C S Lewis 1946:56ff)

## I. THE LAW OF GENERAL BENEFICENCE

(a) *Negative*

'I have not slain men.' (Ancient Egyptian. From the Confession of the Righteous Soul, 'Book of the Dead'. v. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* [= *ERE*], vol. v, p. 478.)

'Do not murder.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus xx. 13.)

'Terrify not men or God will terrify thee.' (Ancient Egyptian. Precepts of Ptahhetep. H. R. Hall, *Ancient History of Near East*, p. 133 n.)

'In Nástrond (= Hell) I saw ... murderers.' (Old Norse. *Volospá* 38, 39.)

'I have not brought misery upon my fellows. I have not made the beginning of every day laborious in the sight of him who worked for me.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478.)

'I have not been grasping.' (Ancient Egyptian. *Ibid.*)

'Who meditates oppression, his dwelling is overturned.' (Babylonian. *Hymn to Samaš*. *ERE* v. 445.)

'He who is cruel and calumnious has the character of a cat.' (Hindu. Laws of Manu. Janet, *Histoire de la Science Politique*, vol. i, p. 6.)

'Slander not.' (Babylonian. *Hymn to Sama*. *ERE* v. 445.)

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus xx. 16.)

'Utter not a word by which anyone could be wounded.' (Hindu. Janet, p. 7.)

'Has he ... driven an honest man from his family? broken up a well cemented clan?' (Babylonian. List of Sins from incantation tablets. *ERE* v. 446.)

'I have not caused hunger, I have not caused weeping.' (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 478.)

'Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects of Confucius*, trans. A. Waley, xv. 23; cf. xii. 2.)

'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.' (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus xix. 17.)

'He whose heart is in the smallest degree set upon goodness will dislike no one.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, iv. 4.)

(b) *Positive*

'Nature urges that a man should wish human society to exist and should wish to enter it.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Officiis*, I. iv.)

'By the fundamental Law of Nature Man [is] to be preserved as much as possible.' (Locke, *Treatises of Civil Govt.* ii. 3.)

'When the people have multiplied, what next should be done for them? The Master said, Enrich them. Jan Ch'iu said, When one has enriched them, what next should be done for them? The Master said, Instruct them.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, xiii. 9.)

'Speak kindness ... show good will.' (Babylonian. *Hymn to Samaš. ERE.* v. 445.)

'Men were brought into existence for the sake of men that they might do one another good.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii.)

'Man is man's delight.' (Old Norse. *Hávamál* 47.)

'He who is asked for alms should always give.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 7.)

'What good man regards any misfortune as no concern of his?' (Roman. Juvenal xv. 140.)

'I am a man: nothing human is alien to me.' (Roman. Terence, *Heaut. Tim.*)

'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus xix. 18.)

'Love the stranger as thyself.' (Ancient Jewish. *Ibid.* 33, 34.)

'Do to men what you wish men to do to you.' (Christian. Matt. vii. 12.)

## II. THE LAW OF SPECIAL BENEFICENCE

'It is upon the trunk that a gentleman works. When that is firmly set up, the Way grows. And surely proper behaviour to parents and elder brothers is the trunk of goodness.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, i. 2.)

'Brothers shall fight and be each others' bane.' (Old Norse. Account of the Evil Age before the World's end, *Volospá* 45.)

'Has he insulted his elder sister?' (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446.)

'You will see them take care of their kindred [and] the children of their friends ... never reproaching them in the least.' (Redskin. Le Jeune, quoted *ERE* v. 437.)

'Love thy wife studiously. Gladden her heart all thy life long.' (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 481.)

'Nothing can ever change the claims of kinship for a right thinking man.' (Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*, 2600.)

'Did not Socrates love his own children, though he did so as a free man and as one not forgetting that the gods have the first claim on our friendship?' (Greek. Epictetus, iii. 24.)

'Natural affection is a thing right and according to Nature.' (Greek. *Ibid.* I. xi.)

'I ought not to be unfeeling like a statue but should fulfil both my natural and artificial relations, as a worshipper, a son, a brother, a father, and a citizen.' (Greek, *Ibid.* III. ii.)

'This first I rede thee: be blameless to thy kindred. Take no vengeance even though they do thee wrong.' (Old Norse. *Sigrdrifumál*, 22.)

'Is it only the sons of Atreus who love their wives? For every good man, who is right-minded, loves and cherishes his own.' (Greek. Homer, *Iliad*, ix. 340.)

'The union and fellowship of men will be best preserved if each receives from us the more kindness in proportion as he is more closely connected with us.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. xvi.)

'Part of us is claimed by our country, part by our parents, part by our friends.' (Roman. *Ibid.* I. vii.)

'If a ruler ... compassed the salvation of the whole state, surely you would call him Good? The Master said, It would no longer be a matter of "Good". He would without doubt be a Divine Sage.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, vi. 28.)

'Has it escaped you that, in the eyes of gods and good men, your native land deserves from you more honour, worship, and reverence than your mother and father and all your ancestors? That you should give a softer answer to its anger than to a father's anger? That if you cannot persuade it to alter its mind you must obey it in all quietness, whether it binds you or beats you or sends you to a war where you may get wounds or death?' (Greek. Plato, *Crito*, 51 A, B.)

'If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith.' (Christian. I Tim. v. 8.)

'Put them in mind to obey magistrates.' ... 'I exhort that prayers be made for kings and all that are in authority.' (Christian. Tit. iii. 1 and I Tim. ii. 1, 2.)

### III. DUTIES TO PARENTS, ELDERS, ANCESTORS

'Your father is an image of the Lord of Creation, your mother an image of the Earth. For him who fails to honour them, every work of piety is in vain. This is the first duty.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 9.)

'Has he despised Father and Mother?' (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446.)

'I was a staff by my Father's side ... I went in and out at his command.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 481.)

'Honour thy Father and thy Mother.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus xx. 12.)

'To care for parents.' (Greek. List of duties in Epictetus, III. vii.)

'Children, old men, the poor, and the sick, should be considered as the lords of the atmosphere.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 8.)

'Rise up before the hoary head and honour the old man.' (Ancient Jewish. Lev. xix. 32.)

'I tended the old man, I gave him my staff.' (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 481.)

'You will see them take care ... of old men.' (Redskin. Le Jeune, quoted *ERE* v. 437.)

'I have not taken away the oblations of the blessed dead.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of the Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478.)

'When proper respect towards the dead is shown at the end and continued after they are far away, the moral force (*tê*) of a people has reached its highest point.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, i. 9.)

### IV. DUTIES TO CHILDREN AND POSTERITY

'Children, the old, the poor, etc. should be considered as lords of the atmosphere.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 8.)

'To marry and to beget children.' (Greek. List of duties. Epictetus, III. vii.)

'Can you conceive an Epicurean commonwealth? ... What will happen? Whence is the population to be kept up? Who will educate them? Who will be Director of Adolescents? Who will be Director of Physical Training? What will be taught?' (Greek. *Ibid.*)

'Nature produces a special love of offspring' and 'To live according to Nature is the supreme good.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. iv, and *De Legibus*, I. xxi.)

'The second of these achievements is no less glorious than the first; for while the first did good on one occasion, the second will continue to benefit the state forever.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. xxii.)

'Great reverence is owed to a child.' (Roman. Juvenal, xiv. 47.)

'The Master said, Respect the young.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, ix. 22.)

'The killing of the women and more especially the young boys and girls who are to go to make up the future strength of the people, is the saddest part ... and we feel it very sorely.' (Redskin. Account of the Battle of Wounded Knee. *ERE* v. 432.)

## V. THE LAW OF JUSTICE

### (a) *Sexual Justice*

'Has he approached his neighbour's wife?' (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446.)

'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus xx. 14.)

'I saw in Nástrond (= Hell) ... beguilers of others' wives.' (Old Norse. *Volospá* 38, 39.)

### (b) *Honesty*

'Has he drawn false boundaries?' (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446.)

'To wrong, to rob, to cause to be robbed.' (Babylonian. *Ibid.*)

'I have not stolen.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478.)

'Thou shalt not steal.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus xx. 15.)

'Choose loss rather than shameful gains.' (Greek. Chilon Fr. 10. Diels.)

'Justice is the settled and permanent intention of rendering to each man his rights.' (Roman. Justinian, *Institutions*, I. i.)

'If the native made a "find" of any kind (e.g. a honey tree) and marked it, it was thereafter safe for him, as far as his own tribesmen were concerned, no matter how long he left it.' (Australian Aborigines. *ERE* v. 441.)

'The first point of justice is that none should do any mischief to another unless he has first been attacked by the other's wrongdoing. The second is that a man should treat common property as common property, and private property as his own. There is no such thing as private property by nature, but things have become private either through prior occupation (as when men of old came into empty territory) or by conquest, or law, or agreement, or stipulation, or casting lots.'

(Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii.)

(c) *Justice in Court, & c.*

'Whoso takes no bribe ... well pleasing is this to Samaš.' (Babylonian. *ERE* v. 445.)

'I have not traduced the slave to him who is set over him.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478.)

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.' (Ancient Jewish. Exodus xx. 16.)

'Regard him whom thou knowest like him whom thou knowest not.' (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 482.)

'Do no unrighteousness in judgement. You must not consider the fact that one party is poor nor the fact that the other is a great man.' (Ancient Jewish. Leviticus xix. 15.)

## VI. THE LAW OF GOOD FAITH AND VERACITY

'A sacrifice is obliterated by a lie and the merit of alms by an act of fraud.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 6.)

'Whose mouth full of lying, avails not before thee: thou burnest their utterance.' (Babylonian. Hymn to Samaš. *ERE* v. 445.)

'With his mouth was he full of *Yea*, in his heart full of *Nay*?' (Babylonian. *ERE* v. 446.)

'I have not spoken falsehood.' (Ancient Egyptian. Confession of Righteous Soul. *ERE* v. 478.)

'I sought no trickery, nor swore false oaths.' (Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*, 2738.)

'The Master said, Be of unwavering good faith.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, viii. 13.)

'In Nástrond (= Hell) I saw the perjurers.' (Old Norse. *Volospá* 39.)

'Hateful to me as are the gates of Hades is that man who says one thing, and hides another in his heart.' (Greek. Homer. *Iliad*, ix. 312.)

'The foundation of justice is good faith.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii.)

'[The gentleman] must learn to be faithful to his superiors and to keep promises.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, I. 8.)

'Anything is better than treachery.' (Old Norse. *Hávamál* 124.)

## VII. THE LAW OF MERCY

'The poor and the sick should be regarded as lords of the atmosphere.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 8.)

'Whoso makes intercession for the weak, well pleasing is this to Samaš.' (Babylonian. *ERE* v. 445.)

'Has he failed to set a prisoner free?' (Babylonian. List of Sins. *ERE* v. 446.)

'I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a ferry boat to the boatless.' (Ancient Egyptian. *ERE* v. 478.)

'One should never strike a woman; not even with a flower.' (Hindu. Janet, i. 8.)

'There, Thor, you got disgrace, when you beat women.' (Old Norse. *Hárbarthsljóth* 38.)

'In the Dalebura tribe a woman, a cripple from birth, was carried about by the tribes-people in turn until her death at the age of sixty-six.' ... 'They never desert the sick.' (Australian Aborigines, *ERE* v. 443.)

'You will see them take care of ... widows, orphans, and old men, never reproaching them.' (Redskin. *ERE* v. 439.)

'Nature confesses that she has given to the human race the tenderest hearts, by giving us the power to weep. This is the best part of us.' (Roman. Juvenal, xv. 131.)

'They said that he had been the mildest and gentlest of the kings of the world.' (Anglo-Saxon. Praise of the hero in *Beowulf*, 3180.)

'When thou cuttest down thine harvest ... and hast forgot a sheaf ... thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.' (Ancient Jewish. Deut. xxiv. 19.)

## VIII. THE LAW OF MAGNANIMITY

### A.

'There are two kinds of injustice: the first is found in those who do an injury, the second in those who fail to protect another from injury when they can.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. vii.)

'Men always knew that when force and injury was offered they might be defenders of themselves; they knew that howsoever men may seek their own commodity, yet if this were done with injury unto others it was not to be suffered, but by all men and by all good means to be withstood.' (English. Hooker, *Laws of Eccl. Polity*, I. ix. 4.)

'To take no notice of a violent attack is to strengthen the heart of the enemy. Vigour is valiant, but cowardice is vile.' (Ancient Egyptian. The Pharaoh Senusert III. cit. H. R. Hall, *Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 161.)

'They came to the fields of joy, the fresh turf of the Fortunate Woods and the dwellings of the Blessed. ... here was the company of those who had suffered wounds fighting for their fatherland.' (Roman. Virgil, *Aen.* vi. 638-9, 660.)

'Courage has got to be harder, heart the stouter, spirit the sterner, as our strength weakens. Here lies our lord, cut to pieces, our best man in the dust. If anyone thinks of leaving this battle, he can howl forever.' (Anglo-Saxon. *Maldon*, 312.)

'Praise and imitate that man to whom, while life is pleasing, death is not grievous.' (Stoic. Seneca. *Ep.* liv.)

'The Master said, Love learning and if attacked be ready to die for the Good Way.' (Ancient Chinese. *Analects*, viii. 13.)

## B.

'Death is to be chosen before slavery and base deeds.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. xxiii.)

'Death is better for every man than life with shame.' (Anglo-Saxon. *Beowulf*, 2890.)

'Nature and Reason command that nothing uncomely, nothing effeminate, nothing lascivious be done or thought.' (Roman. Cicero, *De Off.* I. iv.)

'We must not listen to those who advise us "being men to think human thoughts and being mortal to think mortal thoughts," but must put on immortality as much as is possible and strain every nerve to live according to that best part of us, which, being small in bulk, yet much more in its power and honour surpasses all else.' (Ancient Greek. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1177 B.)

'The soul then ought to conduct the body, and the spirit of our minds the soul. This is therefore the first Law, whereby the highest power of the mind requireth obedience at the hands of all the rest.' (Hooker, op. cit. I. viii. 6.)

'Let him not desire to die, let him not desire to live, let him wait for his time ... let him patiently bear hard words, entirely abstaining from bodily pleasures.' (Ancient Indian. *Laws of Manu.* *ERE* ii. 98.)

'He who is unmoved, who has restrained his senses ... is said to be devoted. As a flame in a windless place that flickers not, so is the devoted.' (Ancient Indian. *Bhagavad gita.* *ERE* ii. 90.)

## C.

'Is not the love of Wisdom a practice of death?' (Ancient Greek. Plato, *Phaedo*, 81 A.)

'I know that I hung on the gallows for nine nights, wounded with the spear as a sacrifice to Odin, myself offered to Myself.' (Old Norse. *Hávamál*, l. 10 in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*; stanza 139 in Hildebrand's *Lieder der Alteren Edda*. 1922.)

'Verily, verily I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it.' (Christian. John xii. 24, 25.)