

A REVIEW OF NEW AGE RELIGION MOVEMENT

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Abstract: *As the 20th century came to a close, Western industrialized countries saw a “proliferation, diversity, and popularization of New Age spiritual discourses and practices. Spiritual philosophers in the New Age movement draw inspiration for their own speech and practices from Eastern and Western traditional religious beliefs, Western science, and psychoanalysis. This essay explores the ways in which the discourses and practices presented in canonical works by four New Age spiritual leaders function as an ever-evolving social product in contemporary consumer culture. By turning scientific, social scientific, and conventional religious speech and rituals into social products,’ the research demonstrates, New Age spiritual philosophers link themselves with consumptive behavior. New Age spiritual philosophers are involved in what may be called a consumption of the self, according to the data study. Constant redefinition, restructuring, and repackaging of New Age technologies of the self are considered as consequences of consumption” of the self.*

Keywords: New Age spirituality, social products, consumption behaviour, technologies of the self.

Introduction

Since the middle of the twentieth century, “New Age spirituality has been a developing social phenomenon in Western industrialized countries. To define the wide range of ideas and activities that fall under the umbrella of New Age, the term self-spirituality was developed. An interest in self-improvement is attributed to the Romantic cultural era at the time of the Italian Renaissance, but most fully elaborated by the early German Romantics, Goethe and Rousseau, and the increasing secularization of Western culture after World War II.

Even Marx had an ethical perspective of people as creatures with a broad variety of creative potentialities, for whom their 'own self-realisation exists as an intrinsic imperative,' as stated by the author of the aforementioned article. the 'free subject' who is actively encouraged to exercise their autonomy in selecting whatever has diffused through culture, from sometimes disparate codes or frameworks of meaning, to satisfy their own requirements for self-development or self-actualization; this is a key characteristic of post-modern religion. Most of the social-scientific literature uses the phrase New Age (or spirituality, since that appears to be the favoured word) to refer to a seemingly disjointed collection of spiritual concepts and activities. It's been stated that most people involved in the spiritual scene make use of elements from a variety of sources at once, creating wholly unique syntheses”. Do-it-yourself-religion, "pick-and-mix religion," "religious consumption à la carte," and "spiritual supermarket" are all terms used to describe the New Age. While Sutcliffe and Bowman claim that "New Age turns out to be only a

specific code phrase in a greater field of contemporary religious experimentation," according to Pessimal, we are dealing with a "eclectic – if not kleptomaniac – process with no obvious relation to an external or 'deeper' reality." This standard narrative rehashes Thomas Luck Ann's seminal critique of New Age, first published in *The Invisible Religion* some forty years ago. Luckman contends that the Christian monopoly has been eroded and a "market of ultimate consequence" has emerged as a result of structural difference in contemporary society. To cater to their own interests, shoppers on this market for religious goods and services create unique meaning bundles. In fact, Luckman writes in a recent book that New Age is exemplary of this trend of private "bricolage": "It collects abundant psychological, therapeutic, magic, marginally scientific, and older esoteric material, repackages them, and offers them for individual consumption and further private syncretism." This debate concerns the hypothesis that New Age ideology spreads in response to secularization and modernisation as a substitute for established religion. Our goal in this piece is to see whether any of the claims in can be supported by data from a different cross-cultural situation, among a more homogeneous younger group of college freshmen, and using more sophisticated measures of New Age and traditionalist beliefs. While not necessarily representative of the population at large, recent research has demonstrated that such homogeneous groups are useful for making accurate cross-cultural comparisons.

Despite the extensive research on New Age perspectives on the natural world, little has been written on New Age behaviours, particularly where

they intersect with questions of commercialization and environmental policy. "I will argue that photography and the production of such "power places" as visual commodities has contributed to their "spiritual magnetism" for followers of New Age nature religion, drawing on ethnographic data from these two communities and on theoretical approaches to visibility, commodification, and the phenomenology of landscape perception". The images of Courtney Milne, which will be examined further on, portray a planet where ceremonial energies are focused at certain spots and leave their imprint. However, a deeper multi-sensory involvement in the "acting" of holy space is required for the genuine sacralization of such "power spaces." When looking more closely at New Age practices and writings, it becomes clear that listening or "atonement" takes precedence over the visual method of interaction, which points to a concept of the "self" that is significantly different from the current Cartesian subject. This is complemented by a set of stereotypical New Age conceptions of nature, such as Gaia, anthropomorphized "spirits of place," "earth energies," and sacred geometry.

The New Age concept and the discourse of spirituality: different voices

One of the most outspoken opponents of the New Age "is Steven Sutcliffe, who, in his 2003 book, argues that the definition of a New Age movement merely essentializes a collection of heterogeneous and divergent social processes and that the New Age is a created, etic term. Sutcliffe proposes reappraising New Age as a precursor to a change in modern religious practice toward small groups and a language of spirituality, and therefore removing it from the subject of movement studies. According to Sutcliffe, New Age should be categorized as a subset of popular religion due to its wide variety of alternative spiritual practices. Sutcliffe claims that the interests of religion in its popular form include grassroots action, techniques for daily life, goals of spiritual liberty and equality, and an ideology of direct, unmediated access to experiences. Sutcliffe claims that New Ageism is being supplanted by a more mainstream, practical, daily spirituality that has its roots in New Age thought. In contrast to religion, which is often connected with systems and dogma, spirituality has, according to Sutcliffe, arisen as a hybrid discourse, formed from alternative and popular sources, and associated with lived experience and inner dialogue. The emerging spiritual discourse, according to Sutcliffe, is dissident

because it seeks something other, more, and better than institutionalized religion; lay because it takes place in a domestic setting that blurs public and private spheres; populist because it acknowledges the supremacy of the will of the people; and functional because it places an emphasis on short-term goals and the active creation of meaning in everyday life. Several different theorists of modern popular religion have written on the rise of spiritual discourse. Paul Heelas, for example, says that religion is giving way to spirituality, resulting in a spiritual revolution. Heelas describes religion as obedience to a transcendent God and a tradition that mediates his authority, while spirituality is the feeling of the divine as immanent in existence. Whereas the former is dwindling, the latter is flourishing, both beyond the bounds of organized religion and inside the realm of conventional faith", as Heelas argues. Heelas sees New Age ideas as representative of a larger spiritual shift in popular society. According to Heelas, the New Age is only the exposed part of an enormous iceberg.

Review of literature

(Hackett 2020) studied "New Age Trends in" discovered this and in the early 1980s, I surveyed religious institutions in south eastern Nigeria and discovered a surprising number of movements whose primary goal was the cultivation of spiritual power and esoteric knowledge and whose associations or origins were as far flung as India, Indonesia, Britain, and California. 1 Although precursors of what I have labeled "spiritual science movements" have existed in Nigeria at least as far back as the 1930s, their widespread emergence after the conclusion of the Civil War in 1970 marked a watershed moment. These movements, to the best of my knowledge, had gotten almost little scholarly attention since they did not fit into recurrent patterns like neotraditional or autonomous Christian movements. Generally speaking, this is still the case.

(Flere and Kirbiš 2009) studied "New Age, Religiosity, and Traditionalism: A found that and New Age is a phenomenon that requires study for understanding both spirituality and the nature of contemporary society. Efforts to study New Age phenomenon are accompanied by some lack of clarity about its limits; some theorists even regard attempts to define New Age as essentially futile. Most influential authors focus on subjective self-awareness and the individual experiential dimensions of New Age. They also stress that New Age strongly favours a holistic—

interconnected, essentially the same, basically unified—outlook. In addition, emphasis is given to the coming of a new era, which brings about the positive values man has been seeking for millennia, as well as to the social criticism and counterculture” aspects of New Age.

(Houtman and Mascini 2002) studied “Why Do Churches Become Empty, While New Age Grows? Secularization and Religious Change” discovered this and According to Dutch studies conducted during the 1960s, the rapid fall of Christian churches has not been offset by the growth in popularity of New Age. However, from a theoretical standpoint, it is more crucial to investigate the reasons for these strikingly different patterns of growth. This article achieves its goal by comparing young and old in the Netherlands using survey data from that country as a whole in the year 1998. The first and most important conclusion is that rationality cannot be blamed for the demise of the Christian tradition. Two, rising moral individualism is to blame for the demise of Christianity and the rise of atheism and New Age spirituality (individualization). Considerations for future sociological research on cultural and religious shifts are offered.

Conclusion

Several pieces of evidence suggest that researchers of religion should pay more attention to subtle but significant shifts taking place in modern religiosity. The argument presented here posits that this shift in religious affiliation may be traced back to the effects of globalization. Globalization's most important contributions stem from the process of relativization that ensues when all aspects of life are considered equal in a globalized society. However, responses to globalization may also appear in very different forms, and it is possible that concerns about socioeconomic changes, power, and prospective identities are at the root of these kinds of reactions in Western societies. There is less and less justification for reducing "religion" and "various forms of religion," such as New Age and Christianity, to essentialized categories in today's interconnected world. The only thing limiting the free movement of ideas and materials across borders is the will of the person. Elements of alternative religion's historical canon are increasingly blending with those of mainstream religion, becoming an integral component of the latter. Liquidity-based reflection on religion is timely, as mentioned in the introduction chapter. To that end, we share Linda Woodhead's desire to stress that the shifts at the heart

of this study are shifts within religion, not departures from it. This work therefore serves as a contribution to the ongoing discussion on secularization. However, researchers of religion now face a new challenge: how to identify which manifestations are religious and which are secular given that a major component of modern religious transformation is a sacralization of the profane. This topic is addressed right from the bat in the book's prologue.

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