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The New Thought movement and The Law of Attraction

This article is a critical examination of the New Thought movement and the Law of Attraction.

I will begin the article with a description of the roots of New Thought, and hereafter investigate how the movement is based on a problematic redefinition of concepts such as karma, suffering, and negativity. This will show how New Thought is the creator of the modern term: positive psychology.

Hereafter I will examine a New Thought product of today: the movie/book called *The Secret*.

After this, I will show how The Law of Attraction is a kind of black magic, and the following ethical problems involved.

Finally, I will investigate the widespread use of testimonials within the movement, and show the many paradoxes involved.

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1) New Thought

The Law of Attraction is a metaphysical New Thought belief that “like attracts like,” that positive and negative thinking bring about positive and negative physical results, respectively. According to the Law of Attraction, the phrase “I need more money” allows the subject to continue to “need more money.” If the subject wants to change this they would focus their thoughts on the goal (having more money) rather than the problem (needing more money). This might take the form of phrases such as “I have as much money as I need” or “I have a job that pays very well.”

The question is, of course, whether all this is positive, and that question is the foundation for this article.

The New Thought movement, or New Thought, is a spiritual movement which developed in the United States during the late 19th century and emphasizes metaphysical beliefs. It consists of a loosely allied group of religious denominations, secular membership organizations, authors, philosophers, and individuals who share a set of metaphysical beliefs concerning the effects of positive thinking, the Law of Attraction, healing, life force, creative visualization, and personal power.

It promotes the ideas that “Infinite Intelligence” or “God” is ubiquitous, spirit is the totality of real things, true human selfhood is divine, divine thought is a force for good, all sickness originates in the mind, and “right thinking” has a healing effect.

Although New Thought is neither monolithic nor doctrinaire, in general, modern day adherents of New Thought believe that their interpretation of “God” or “Infinite Intelligence” is “supreme, universal, and everlasting,” that divinity dwells within each person and all people are spiritual beings, that “the highest spiritual principle is loving one another unconditionally...and teaching and healing one another,” and that “our mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become our experience in daily living.”

The three major religious denominations within the New Thought movement are Religious Science, Unity Church, and the Church of Divine Science. There are many smaller sects under the New Thought umbrella as well.

Thomas Troward, who was a strong influence in the New Thought movement, claimed that thought precedes physical form and that “the action of Mind plants that nucleus which, if allowed to grow undisturbed, will eventually attract to itself all the conditions necessary for its manifestation in outward visible form.”

In 1906, William Walker Atkinson (1862-1932) used the phrase in his New Thought Movement book *Thought Vibration or the Law of Attraction in the Thought World*, stating that “like attracts like.” The following year, Elizabeth Towne, the editor of *The Nautilus Magazine, a Journal of New Thought*, published Bruce Maclelland’s book *Prosperity Through Thought Force*, in which he summarized the principle, stating: “You are what you think, not what you think you are.”

The book *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace D. Wattles espouses similar principles – that truly believing in the object of your desire and focusing on it will lead to that object or goal being realized on the material plane (Wattles indicates in the Preface and later chapters of this book that his premise stems from the monistic Hindu view that God pervades everything and can deliver that which we focus on). In addition, the book also indicates that negative thinking will manifest negative results.

In 1937, author Napoleon Hill published his book *Think and Grow Rich* which went on to become one of the best-selling books of all time, selling over 60 million copies. In this book, he discusses the importance of controlling your own thoughts in order to achieve success, as well as the energy that thoughts have and their ability to attract other thoughts. In the beginning of the book, Napoleon Hill mentions a “secret” to success and promises to indirectly describe it at least once in every chapter of the book. It is never named directly, for he says that discovering it on one’s own is far more beneficial. Many people have argued over what the secret actually is, with some arguing that it was the Law of Attraction. Hill states the “secret,” to which he refers, is mentioned no fewer than a hundred times, yet reference to “attract” is used less than 30 times in the text. Most students of the book claim the secret is hidden in its title: THINK (i.e., thoughts).

By the mid-1900s, various authors addressed the topic and related ideas under a range of religious and secular terms, such as “positive thinking,” “mental science,” “Pragmatic Christianity,” “New Thought,” “Practical Metaphysics,” “Science of Mind,” “Religious Science,” and “Divine Science.”

Author Louise Hay in 1976 released a pamphlet in which she links various diseases and disorders to certain thoughts and states of mind. This list was included in her 1984 best-seller book *You Can Heal Your Life*, in which she promotes positive thinking as a healing method.

In 2006 a film entitled *The Secret*, based on the “Law of Attraction,” was released and then developed into a book of the same title in 2007. The film and book gained widespread attention in the media from *Saturday Night Live* to *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in the United States. The same year Esther and Jerry Hicks (who provided

much of the original source material for *The Secret*) released *The Law of Attraction*, which was on the New York Times bestseller list.

The Law of Attraction's modern interpretation, as presented in *The Secret*, is that physical reality is a reflection of inner (subjective) reality, summarized in the quote from *The Secret*, "your thoughts and your feelings create your life." Author and businessman Kevin Trudeau produced an audio compact disk called *Your Wish Is Your Command* which deals with the same subject of thoughts manifesting reality.

The success of the film and various books led to increased media coverage, both positive and negative. Oprah Winfrey devoted two episodes of her show to discuss the film and the Law of Attraction. Talk show host Larry King also discussed it on his show with Bob Solis but criticized it for several reasons. I will return to *The Secret*.

The dominating idea of all forms of New Thought is that thoughts or beliefs have an effect on things and people around us independently of our doing anything. Thinking creates reality. Happiness and health are the direct results of our beliefs and thoughts. We have the power to change our beliefs and thus our state in life, at will. If we are sick, it is because we are not thinking correctly. If misfortune befalls us, it is because we are not thinking correctly. Health is due to correct thought; the truth will set you free and the truth is that you need only faith to be healthy, rich, saved, whatever.

New Thought is, in the words of the American physician, psychologist, philosopher, and investigator of the paranormal William James, "a deliberately optimistic scheme of life." James was one of the first to try to characterize the sources of the New Thought movement, also known as Mind Cure or Mind Science movement:

"One of the doctrinal sources of Mind-cure is the four Gospels; another is Emersonianism or New England transcendentalism; another is Berkeleyan idealism; another is spiritism, with its messages of 'law' and 'progress' and 'development'; another the optimistic popular science evolutionism of which I have recently spoken; and, finally, Hinduism has contributed a strain. But the most characteristic feature of the mind-cure movement is an inspiration much more direct. The leaders in this faith have had an intuitive belief in the all-saving power of healthy-minded attitudes as such, in the conquering efficacy of courage, hope, and trust, and a correlative contempt for doubt, fear, worry, and all nervously precautionary states of mind.... Mind-cure might be briefly called a reaction against all that religion of chronic anxiety which marked the earlier part of the 19th century in the evangelical circles of England and America."

In the [Skeptics Dictionary](#), Robert Carroll writes:

The number of New Age promoters of the delusion of mind cures is staggeringly high. Television, radio talk shows, and the Internet have opened the floodgates for promoters of these alleged panaceas. Many of these New Age mind cures have incorporated references to quantum physics and Eastern mystical notions, such as chi and chakras, into their repertoires.

Carroll names just a few: Barbara Brennan, Rosalyn L. Bruyere, David L. Cunningham, Cyndi Dale, Donna Eden, David Feinstein, Guy Finley, Richard Gerber, Burt Goldman (*Quantum Jumping*), Soleira Green, Stanislav Grof [?], Steven Halpern, Louise Hay, Vernon Howard, Dorothea Hover-Kramer, W. Brugh Joy, Byron Katie, Rachel Kohler, Dolores Krieger, Bruce Lipton, Grant McFetridge (Peak States and Whole-Hearted Healing), Mary Morrissey, Carolyn Myss, Peter Occhiogrosso, Judith Orloff, Simon Rose (Reference Point Therapy), Linda Salvin, Eckhart Tolle [sic] and Marianne Williamson.

He writes:

In addition to promoting delusions about the ability of people to cure others and themselves of horrible diseases by the power of thought, the New Thought Movement encourages delusions in other areas of life. Outside of the healing arena, New Thought beliefs contribute to what might be called the empowerment delusion: the false belief that feeling empowered or believing you are empowered is the same as being empowered. The empowerment delusion leads people to believe they can create health or wealth, or anything material by willing it or asking God to will it. A corollary is the delusion that poverty or sickness is one's own fault: one's bad thoughts, stinkin' thinkin', negative ideas, lack of faith, etc., cause all misery.

2) The Redefinition of Karma and Suffering

Carroll continues:

*The empowerment delusion is fed by appeals to distorted (redefined) interpretations of karma, like the Law of Attraction, to nonsensical appeals to quantum physics (Deepak Chopra, Rhonda Byrne, and a host of others), or to faith in faith (like all faith healers and prosperity preachers, like Reverend Ike or Joel Osteen). The billion-dollar self-help industry is largely driven by the empowerment delusion [see my articles [Management Theory and the Self-help Industry](#) and [Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity](#)]. The popularity of Helen Schuman's (1909-1981) *A Course in Miracles* gives testament to the attractiveness of New Thought's revisionist biography of Jesus as wanting more love and forgiveness, and less suffering and*

sacrifice. Heaven awaits us all and there is no hell [A *Course in Miracles* is an example of pseudohistory created by a postulate of being a channeler – see my articles [A Course in Miracles](#) and [Paranormal Phenomena seen in Connection with Channeling](#)].

And here we have the central spiritual and ethical delusion in New Thought: New Thought tends to dismiss the existence of evil, failure, and suffering. Some New Thought promoters claim that New Thought is a new, more “optimistic and positive” interpretation of karma, which has to replace the old “pessimistic and negative” interpretation. But this is an example of the belief in magical thinking (subjectivism and relativism). Do they really think that the traditional law of karma disappears because they have decided to interpret it in a new way? – But the idea that thoughts/language create reality like magic, and that, for example, new definitions of words, removal of certain words from our vocabulary, etc., etc., will create a new reality, is actually supported by the postmodern intellectualism in Universities (see my article [Constructivism: the Postmodern Intellectualism Behind New Age and the Self-help Industry](#)).

As an example of how Law of Attraction devotees are trying to redefine karma, read the article [Definition Karma](#) by Kalyn B Raphael. She is an author, spiritual Life Coach, a Channel, and a Coach of Coaches (wonderful title). Note that in the beginning she already claims that the customary definitions of karma don’t make sense to her. Instead, she wants to give a “deeper” definition that she thinks will resonate as true with others as well (as if the definition will decide what karma is). Also, note that when she is talking about love she is saying that love is about loving yourself, or self-love (I will return to this curious belief later in this article). Finally, read the comment by Jay Steven Levin, where he gives a critique of her article. Kalyn’s answer to this critique is an example of the weird conversations you can involve yourself in when talking to Law of Attraction devotees. Either she simply doesn’t understand that his comment is a critique, but instead a confirmation, or else she is turning the whole thing upside down, which would be an example of the thought distortion *Conversion to the opposite*.

Anyway, if you are in a true, intensive spiritual practice – that is, in a process of awakening – then it is absolutely necessary that you have some guidelines which know the dangers and pitfalls, and which will lead you in the correct direction. Part of this is the original teaching of karma, as formulated both in original texts and by the great enlightened masters. If you understood the traditional philosophy of karma you would, for example, never say that peoples’ suffering is their own fault because they are thinking negative thoughts (or, as other ignorant religious people may claim, have done bad things in their past lives; are lacking faith, etc.). There are two main reasons:

1) Karma philosophy is about understanding the meaning of suffering (which New Thought is ignoring in the same way it is ignoring everything else it finds negative). But understanding the meaning of suffering is closely connected with the awakening of compassion. Compassion would never allow you to say that a person's suffering is his/her own fault.

2) Furthermore: nobody can actually *tell* about the reasons for other peoples' karma (suffering), because one's karma can only be realized by oneself. Just an example: Jesus was without original sin (negative karma), yet he died suffering. That was due to his taking on other peoples' original sin. We see all enlightened masters do the same – and all compassionate people. This has nothing to do with bad things in their past or negative thinking. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man to transcend the negative karma of the original sin. But in order for a human being to become able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), an eminently precise and profound preparation is required. And the true spiritual practice within the religions serves as part of this preparation.

So, when you do your part of the work in this way, then you will discover that the enlightened consciousness (God, Christ, Buddha) has already cleansed the negative karma and taken on, and forgiven, the original sin. All enlightened teachers of this Earth (Rumi, Krishna, Francis of Assisi, Rabia, Meera, Yeshe Tsogyel, Teresa of Avila) are doing the same: they take on the original sin and are purifying it for us.

You can read more about this deep philosophy in my articles [What is Karma?](#) and [The Value of Having a Religion in a Spiritual Practice](#).

The Law of Attraction seems particularly suited to the modern temperament, though, given that with karma you might have to wait a thousand lifetimes to get the good things you deserve (unless you begin a spiritual practice), whereas with the Law of Attraction *everything* is possible in *this* lifetime. No waiting! Better service! The Law of Attraction might be said to be the lazy person's karma, since karma is based on doing (the spiritual practice), whereas the Law of Attraction is based on *thinking* and *feeling* (you don't have to *do* anything, you just have to think it or feel it, then it will magically happen!).

This is also handy for the modern person who is quite busy enough as it is. In addition, karma is concerned exclusively with morality (specifically good and evil deeds), but the Law of Attraction is concerned only with positive feeling vibrations which needn't necessarily be connected to pesky morality at all since moral is reduced to subjectivism and relativism: moral values are what you *feel* is good. There is no objective standard for good and evil.

Another New Age technique is the so-called Nonviolent Communication (giraffe language). Here concepts such as good and evil are directly looked at with contempt (see my article [Nonviolent Communication \(NVC\) is an Instrument of Psychic Terror](#)).

Control makes us feel powerful (empowered), which is a good feeling. And feeling that there is a right order in the universe, the Law of Attraction, which you can control via the power of thought, is, of course, comforting to many people.

Is there any harm in this? What's the harm in obliterating truth and reality in favor of what you want to be true? A great deal of harm can come from deluding yourself that you can control your health, spiritual development, your wealth, etc., via your thoughts.

In my article [The Emotional Painbody and Why Psychotherapy Can't Heal It](#), I explain how the painbody, through the inner evaluating ego, is connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history; you might call it original sin or negative karma. This you can't control via your thoughts, and therefore neither via your feelings, will or choices.

As mentioned: in my article [The Value of Having a Religion in a Spiritual Practice](#) I describe that only an intervention from the source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man to transcend the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to be able to receive this help, you must do your part of the work: the spiritual practice. Many years. And this means that you need to restructure the ego's ownership of things, food, personal power, sexuality, and emotions. Spiritual practice is simply about separating and dismantling the automatic identification of the consciousness with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. Thus the mystical process can begin. And here begins the so-called progressive karma, which is also good karma. So, good karma is *only* happening after years of spiritual practice.

The magnet of attraction which the ego is controlled by – the ego's identity with the material world: instincts, sexuality, emotions, desire, collective ideals, ownership, personal power – will in a true spiritual practice lose its attraction. Investments in the material world's ups and downs, its demands, temptations, and dramas become undramatized, uninteresting, even meaningless in relation to the consciousness' opening direction in towards its spiritual essence (the soul): the now, the Wholeness, life itself, and, finally, the eternal Otherness, from where the good, the true, and the beautiful are streaming as grace and forgiveness.

In this movement in towards the source you begin to ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way: Who am I? Where do the thoughts come from? What is consciousness and where does it come from? Is there a meaning to life? How does man preserve a peace of mind and balance in all the relationships of life? How do we learn to appreciate the true goods and flout all transient and vain goals? Is the destiny of Man part of a larger plan? In this way, the grip, which the material world has on your mind, is automatically reduced (I have explained this in my book [Meditation as an Art of Life – a Basic Reader](#)).

Very few people will be willing to do this work. On the contrary, the New Thought movement today has done an illusory work of trying to redefine this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction is becoming the direct object of worship.

Another aspect of the true spiritual practice is that you break the automatic process of what is called compensatory karma. Compensatory karma is also known as negative karma or original sin. Compensatory karma is closely related to the material world, the laws of nature, the cycles of life – yes, actually, the pure causal regularity of mechanical kind. It would be an illusion to connect such things with a superior intentional divine order (see the thought distortion *Intentionality bias* in my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#)).

In accordance with the authentic spiritual traditions, the movement of time is a power, an expression of energy, which follows some laws. These laws are also called compensatory karma, or Samsara, the wheel of life and death. They work in all cycles of life. On the plane of the outer forms, there are birth and death, creation and destruction, growth and dissolution of apparently separated outer forms. This is reflected everywhere: the life-cycle of a star, a planet, a physical body, a tree, or a flower; in the rise and fall of nations, political systems, and civilizations; and in the inevitable cycles of gain and loss in the individual person's life.

A cycle can last from some hours to some years. There are big cycles and small cycles within the big ones. The cyclic nature of the Universe is closely connected with the impermanence of all things and all situations. Buddha made this into a central part of his teaching. It is also a central part of the teachings of the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, about which you can read in my article [A Critique of Ken Wilber and his Integral Method](#).

There are cycles abundant with success, where things come to you and you flourish, and cycles abundant with defeat, where things wither away or wear down, and you become obliged to let go of them in order to make space, so that new things can arise, or so that there can happen a transformation. If you cling to them and make resistance

at that time, it means that you deny accompanying the stream of life and then you will suffer.

The problem with the positive psychology of the New Thought movement, and therefore the ideology of success coaching, is that it is focusing one-sidedly on the up-cycles as being positive, while the down-cycles are negative. In this way, it induces in people the thought distortion called a False dichotomy. A false dichotomy is a misleading conception of possible alternatives. A dichotomy is a division in two alternatives. Often seen in the expressions Either/or – If/then, for example, “Either you are with us, or you are against us” – “If I’m not always a success, then I’m a fiasco.” Similarly, someone who says you must either believe that God exists or else that God doesn’t exist is setting up a false dichotomy since there is the well-known third option of the agnostic.

A false dichotomy appears when somebody sets up a dichotomy in such a way that it looks like there are only two possible conclusions when the facts actually are that there are many other alternatives which are not being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on a false dichotomy. A false dichotomy is thinking in extremes and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life.

In connection with inappropriate basic assumptions, such as "If I am not always a success, then I am a fiasco", the false dichotomy is closely related to the development of guilt, shame, and depression.

Note that you can’t think in extremes, such as I am a success, I am perfect, I am beautiful, without the opposite extreme. That is, if you, for example, follow the teaching of positive psychology, which excludes all negativity, then you induce in yourself a false dichotomy because an exclusion of the opposite extreme is not possible. On the contrary, the opposite extreme is getting stronger; that is, if you fail, the fall will be experienced much stronger.

This is also related to the thought distortion called *Conversion to the opposite*. You can, for example, convert your insecurity and anxiety for not being good enough to exaggerated self-confidence. Such a conversion is, of course, a kind of **compensation**, escape, self-deceit, and will lead to a false and imbalanced way of life.

Sadly enough, it seems like the movement of positive psychology directly is using Conversion to the opposite as a central part of its training. Positive psychology is marked by its attempts, through thinking, to eliminate all negativity by converting it into something positive or simply by ignoring it, or saying it doesn’t exist. But a thought is always defined by its negation; that is, what the thought is *not*. This means that a thought always contains a pair of opposites. So, you can’t, by the force of

thinking (and therefore not by force of will or choice), convert negativity to positivity. If you nonetheless try to do this, you will end up focusing on the one extreme of a pair of opposites, which is an unbalance. The energy laws within the wholeness will, therefore, seek to bring the thoughts back to the balance of the middle. They do this through a counterbalancing movement, that is, a swing over in the opposite extreme. This is what is meant by compensatory karma. Existentially seen, Conversion to the opposite causes a conflict between what you are and what you want to become or between being and becoming (I have investigated this conflict in my article [Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity](#)).

Conversion to the opposite and the above-mentioned problems also seem to characterize Byron Katie's method The Work, in her so-called Turnaround technique, where you always have to look at your thoughts as false (see my article [A Critique of Byron Katie and Her Therapeutic Method The Work](#)).

In a true spiritual practice the transformation happens partly through the art of life, where you are dancing between the opposites (as in the teaching of Yin and Yang), and through a deep meditative-existential inquiry.

As long as your awareness is identified with thinking, you will have lost the contact with your deeper being and will only exist in the movement of time. You'll have your identity in your life situation and will be ignorant about the Source of Life. Therefore you will also suffer by being the subject of the energy-laws and life-cycles in the movement of time. But suffering is closely connected with the fact that you create resistance against impermanence. Therefore the compensatory karma is *negative* karma, even when you are in an up-cycle.

If you, however, know the energy-laws, you will know that it is not true that the up-cycles are positive and the down-cycles are negative, except in the mind's judgment.

Furthermore, you have your free will to either continue to be identified with the area of compensatory karma or break with it and move in towards the source, which is the area of progressive karma (where the mystical process begins).

In Taoism and Zen, they talk about the concept of Wu Wei, which means non-activity, passive listening presence, non-control, non-interfering, which leads to Tzu-Jen – spontaneity and naturalness. In Zen, for example, it is said that when practicing Wu Wei you are letting the grass grow by itself. Also, the Stoic concept of Apátheia (the Stoic calmness) is about this – which you, by the way, find in all wisdom traditions. So, it is puzzling that in the New Thought movement they often quote these wisdom traditions, as if the New Thought ideology is in perfect harmony with

them. The fact is that New Thought is an extreme example of the illusion of control when believing that via the "power of thought" you can attract (control) anything you can dream of.

So, if you actually followed Kalyn Raphael's teaching, you would really get in trouble when your spiritual essence begins to wake up, because then, completely unprepared, you would be faced with your negative karma which you have previously done a lot of work to ignore.

This happens because when you practice intensively, in a short time you have to run through a lot of existential stuff, which has to do with your painbody and later with your past lives. Therefore, the true spiritual practice contains three important concepts:

- 1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others – see my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#))
- 2) Investigating the shadow (your ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the Ego – see my articles [The Emotional Painbody and Why Psychotherapy Can't Heal It](#) and [Suffering as an Entrance to the Source](#))
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images – see my article [Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Connection with Spiritual Practice](#)).

Spiritual practice is a process of awakening and, even though you wake up to a greater presence and intensity of life, you also wake up to your own and others', realized or unrealized, suffering. Actually, it is necessary to pass through this process of realization in order not to develop a spiritual crisis. This also means that it isn't the contents of the suffering you have to run through. The wisdom traditions consider this stuff rooted in time, and therefore not only in your personal history but also in the collective history. To open up for this is the same as opening up for an endless depth of suffering, and this is what happens in a spiritual crisis (see my article [Spiritual Crises as the Cause of Paranormal Phenomena](#)).

Time and its images consist of energy and energy fields, as well as their lawfulness within the wholeness which forms the so-called karmic structures.

Experiences of the collective aspects of these areas are experiences which lie outside the Ego's area or outside the dimension of the ordinary consciousness. Such experiences are kundalini, clairvoyance, astral travels, mythological visions, miracles,

channeling, UFOs, memories from past lives, Near-Death Experiences, possession states.

In spiritual respect, the task is to inquire into the nature of these dimensions of consciousness. Wherein do the structures of these experiences consist? Does a map of these areas, which can lead you on the right path, exist?

Experiences of these areas belong namely to the journey from the sleep of the wholeness over the dreams of the wholeness to the awake moments of the wholeness. And these phenomena are out of the scope of the ordinary Ego-consciousness.

When your consciousness is identified with your personal time, then this essence will be hidden by thoughts and images, and then the awareness is sleeping; the innermost of you is sleeping. And with it, the wholeness is sleeping. When the contents of the consciousness fall silent, the consciousness itself begins to light up and awake.

In the spiritual development there exist some existential conditions – as well as some growing conditions and growth levels, common to all mankind – which indicate a map of the inner journey towards awakening, which is known in all wisdom traditions.

In Zen, for example, it is said about this process of awakening – “In the beginning, mountains are mountains and woods are woods. Then, mountains are no longer mountains and woods are no longer woods. Finally, mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods.”

This refers to the three forms of the state the Wholeness can be in – sleep, dream, awake. When the wholeness is sleeping, mountains are mountains and woods are woods. This is the reality of the ordinary consciousness (the Ego-consciousness). The ordinary consciousness can sleep in three ways: 1) the dark sleep, which is the Ego’s deep nightly sleep; 2) the grey sleep, which is the Ego’s nightly dreams and other dreams; 3) the light sleep, where the Ego is awake.

The three forms of state of the Wholeness can also be described as the personal time, the collective time, and the universal time. When we talk about going through them in a spiritual development process, these three states can be said to reflect the structure of the education novel (Bildungsroman). The education novel is specifically known from Romanticism. With concepts collected from Goldschmidt’s *The Homeless* (1853-57), the development process of the education novel can be characterized in this way: *at home – the homeless – home*. Although great parts of the course of the education novel are about *the homeless* phase, we know that the person

very probably shall arrive “*home*” again. A more or less pronounced model for all the education novels of Romanticism is Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* (1795-1829), which, in a very symbol-satiated form describes a spiritual development process. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* is another example of a description of the spiritual development process.

When the Wholeness begins to dream – and this happens only if you set yourself existentially into the process of awakening – then the Ego, or the inner thinker, experiences himself as a flower which begins to open itself towards the collective time; the thoughts will be lit through, whereby their collective components – sound, symbol, color, structure – will be visible and will make themselves current in the image of reality. The clarity from your dissolved and evaporated thoughts and content will expand the consciousness out towards the borders, behind which the collective common human structures exist.

In other words, the thoughts become less personal, more common, more collective, deeper, and more philosophical. And these common deep thoughts of mankind your consciousness can *see* by the force of its increased clarity as visions (primordial images, religious images, symbols, teachers, higher worlds, other dimensions, etc.). Your consciousness then observes a world aspect of vibrant, sound-filled energy fields, which shimmer in symbols and colors. It observes a world of auric colors, archetypal symbols, and yantric or other energetic structures. It begins to sense karmic phenomena.

Reality expands itself, all things seem different than before, people shine as transparent onions, plants and animals vibrate, the cosmos is alive; mountains are no longer mountains, woods are no longer woods. This is the opening of the collective time which lies on the so-called astral plane.

But in a spiritual practice, it is all about the form of the dream-consciousness, not its content, as New Thought promotes.

On the plane of the universal images, and therefore on the Now’s plane, the form of the consciousness is central – the actual consciousness, its clarity, and its openness. Not the content of the consciousness. In spiritual practice, the spiritual and spiritually active is the consciousness’ course towards its source (the Now, the Otherness). What the consciousness, the mind, and the senses are filled by, is of less crucial importance.

But the collective time is a very dangerous intermediate area. Here, the temptation to either become afraid or to experiment with various possibilities (astral travels,

clairvoyance, telepathy, etc., etc.) is great. It is a very forceful state. Goethe and Dante write about the collective time in *Faust* and *The Divine Comedy*, Tolkien – in *The Lord of the Rings*, Ursula Le Guin – in *A Wizard of EarthSea*. The shamans had to dare to journey to the underground kingdoms filled with shadow-inhabitants, demons, and dead; they had to handle the journey to the heavenly regions, where gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, were accommodated. The mystics had to experience the descent to hell with its belonging devils, fire and sulfur, and torment and suffering. And they had to confess their sins to heavenly hosts of angels and light-creatures if the temptation of the sexual impact of the devil was too difficult to resist.

The creative and reality-creating ability is set free in a fascinating degree in the collective time. However, in this astral state, you are still on the plane of the collective images of time, which work in sequences in the past and future, and you are in danger of ending up in a spiritual crisis. A spiritual crisis is an expression of your having gone out in the collective time with your Ego, not having done the philosophical preliminary work, that is to say, the realization-work and the ethical training. The Ego will then make you lose your way in the collective time.

A spiritual crisis can be expressed in two ways:

1) as suffering, often called The Dark Night of the Soul,

2) as Ego-inflation (*inflammatio*).

1) If the borders to the collective time are broken down or exceeded out of hand, for example, through LSD or through one-sided development techniques, or when in shock, then the consciousness and the personality will slide crucially out of balance and therefore will suffer. The Ego will go sideways on its personal identity and life situation, suddenly experiencing an intrusion of tremendous astral energies, clairvoyant abilities, visions of mythological beings, good and evil forces, various demons and angels, death and themes of rebirth, unusual light phenomena, messages from supernatural beings, and memories from past lives. Since the Ego's nature has not been realized, these experiences will be characterized by unreality and division, fear of going mad and fear of death, or the experience of a totally meaningless and dark extinct world.

2) The personality can receive information through the break-in of astral and collective energies, images, and symbols: information about what approaches the human beings from the outside (from other people, chance, destiny, life, etc.). However, the information received through collective images is contradictory and

split. Many have been seduced by these colorful experiences and have remained there, with the ability to see the aura and to create images in reality.

When the collective time is used spiritually, in the true sense, then the Ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside. However, the same forces can be used for other purposes: creative, Ego-affirmative, political, demonical, and so on. The forces which in spirituality are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission, and spiritual information exchange – the same forces can be turned inwardly through the Ego-structures and can open creative channels, create super-Egos, political leaders, and popular seducers.

The problem, or the danger, does not consist in the use of creativity or auric abilities. It is actually a good idea to formulate the experiences creatively; the danger is whether the Ego grows and becomes swollen on the world's positive responses. And if the Ego gains strength, takes the honor, or blows itself up, this stops the transformation process of consciousness and halts the growth forward towards the goal: illumination and later enlightenment.

The most appropriate spiritual practice is, in other words, to use the dreaming state of the wholeness and to begin practicing the supporting exercises (which I have described in my book [Meditation as an Art of Life – a Basic Reader](#)).

If you, as a practitioner, remember to use such a spiritually correct opening in the wholeness, you will gain a considerable lift forward toward full development.

In other words, it is very important that you do not move your focus from the awake everyday life (for example, a good earth-bound job, ordinary people, and family) to dreams and sleep; do not use drugs or one-sided development techniques which promise you great experiences and abilities.

You have to have patience. Even for people with a consistent and methodical practice (2-3 hours every day), there can pass weeks, months, or years between the reflections into the awake state of the wholeness. However, if the practice is appropriate, the spiritual consciousness will, with time, automatically penetrate the dreaming wholeness.

And if moments of actual awakeness are coming, then everything is simple, intense, present, in the right place: mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods, but without longings, without wishes and desires, without the past, without the future. The mountains are. The woods are. The consciousness is. The Now is. You are at home again, at home in the true sense.

So, what you have to confront is the *nature* of suffering. And the *nature* of suffering is, in short, the ignorance about the Source of Life; therefore, we have to apply both self-inquiry and inquiry into society and nature: critical thinking.

Contrary to all this, New Thought is about loving yourself. Loving yourself is based on positive psychology, which means that loving yourself, loving your karma, loving your desires, loving everything negative in you – is the same as seeing everything in yourself as positive, and therefore as something good. You can't be wrong. The same surrealistic approach is seen in NLP, which claims that there isn't such a thing as failure, only feedback (see my article [Neuro-linguistic Programming \(NLP\) and Large Group Awareness Training \(LGAT\)](#)).

Read more about the stages of awakening in my article [Paranormal Phenomena Seen in connection with Spiritual Practice](#).

See Martin Gardner's *The Healing Revelations of Mary Baker Eddy: The Rise and Fall of Christian Science* (1993), for an account of how the New Thought Movement stripped Christianity of such things as sin, hell, demons, and other nasty things, and replaced them with a hodge-podge of beliefs from Eastern mysticism and Western paranormalism and spiritualism. Gardner focuses on a minor poet and writer who was a major player in expressing the beliefs of New Thought, Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919). She penned some memorable lines, e.g., "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone."

New Thought gives the illusion of control over things that can't be controlled, but which are inexorably linked to our well-being and happiness. New Thought absolves the allegedly benign creator of all responsibility for bringing evils to good people and it does so without resorting to the claim that the ways of God are not our ways, or that evil is really good, or the most absurd of all: evil isn't real. New Thought just ignores evil and tries to get us to look the other way.

3) The Secret

New Thought probably won't have much influence in most corners of the world. More than one-third of the people on our planet don't even have access to a flush toilet. As the critical thinker, Robert T. Carroll says, "Will Oprah Winfrey, one of the great promoters of New Thought in our time, advise 2.5 billion people to just believe in hygiene and it will come? Can anyone believe that if you happen to have the misfortune of being born, say, in a squalid Indian village, governed by a caste system, that all you have to do is believe your way out? An ignorant person might blame karma or God's will, but nobody in his right mind should believe that anyone (for

example, children), born in those conditions, lives and dies in those conditions because of her thoughts or beliefs, which could be changed by an act of the will.”

Why do you think that 1% of the population earns around 96% of all money that's being earned? Do you think that's an accident? It's no accident. It's designed that way. They understand something. They understand *The Secret*: the Law of Attraction. Ah, there it is, then. It is the *wise* people who have the money and the BMWs. Are we to conclude that the poor Indian man, the poor Chinese woman, the poor African woman, etc., are fools? The deeply offensive racial overtones are hard to ignore.

New Thought has grown into thousands of little movements in the past 150 years. *The Secret* and *What the Bleep Do We Know?* are just two recent manifestations of what Robert Carroll calls a Hydra-headed monster, guarding the gates of wishful thinking, suggestion, and self-hypnosis. There have been many others. Some might have heard of Jerry and Esther Hicks (they claim they were the discoverers of the Law of Attraction!). Some might remember Émile Coué's optimistic mantra therapy, Maxwell Maltz's Psycho-Cybernetics, or the prosperity preacher Norman Vincent Peale, whose bestseller *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) was a New Thought offshoot (see my article [Hypnosis, Hypnotherapy and the Art of Self-deception](#)).

There are many anecdotes about people who quit behaving as if they were ill/poor and in need of healing/money, started acting as if they were healthy/rich, and were healed (got success) after they began thinking more positively and developed some self-confidence. Such anecdotes are often used as “proof” that New Thought is true. But we also know that we can't cure cancer, heart disease, measles, diabetes, high blood pressure, and a host of other illnesses by prescribing belief as a placebo.

Likewise, we know that teaching people to feel powerful and go for their dreams is not enough to guarantee success. You have to have more than belief in yourself. You need talent and you need some good fortune. For every success story like Oprah or Obama, there are thousands of failures, who never get to tell their stories. Our evidence is incomplete. As Carroll says, then we never hear from the countless bartenders and waitresses who thought their desires would be enough to make them movie stars. In fact, we rarely hear from the ones who found out the hard way that hard work alone doesn't guarantee success. We never hear from the folks who tried the mind-cure but died. They aren't around to give their testimony. So far, Carroll says, we have only the words of alleged psychics that the dead are appearing on Oprah or Larry King. When the dead do show up to give their testimony, however, they may cast some doubt on the power of belief.

As mentioned, *The Secret* is a best-selling 2006 self-help book written by Rhonda Byrne and based upon William Walker Atkinson's prior works and school of thought.

A film, based on *The Secret*, was released before the book in DVD format. After being featured in two episodes of Oprah, the book reached the top of the New York Times bestseller list.

Rhonda Byrne has written a follow-up to *The Secret*, called *The Power*, after answering several thousand letters from readers of *The Secret*.

Before the film and the book were released, Rhonda Byrne (born 26 August 1945) was an Australian television writer and producer. According to the dramatic narrative of *The Secret*, Byrne was shattered by the sudden death of her father and the news that Prime Time was effectively bankrupt. Byrne says her teenage daughter handed her a copy of the get-rich-quick classic *The Science of Getting Rich* (1910) by Wallace D. Wattles, a book that led her to a deep immersion into the self-help literature and the epiphany that most of these books sell the same message – that positive thoughts yield positive outcomes. Or, as the management theorists say, “It is not facts, but the best story, that wins!”

As I have mentioned before, New Age will, in the future, on a large scale, be based on the ability to tell a good new story. This will often be mixed with the ability to use modern technology within computer science and movie production. Make a great website and tell a story like in a Hollywood film, and you have success. The latest within New Age is, for example, the so-called WingMakers Project. The difference between a Hollywood film and a New Age guru, however, is that the New Age guru is claiming that his story is true, though very well knowing that the whole thing is a fiction. It is interesting that the creator of the WingMakers Project, Mark Hempel, already is defending his story as being true, against critics, who say that the story is a hoax. Hempel has the precise background of having worked in the computer and IT industry (see my article [Time Travel and the Fascism of The WingMakers Project](#)).

Or, take the Human Design System, created by Alan Robert Krakower, who claims to have received it in a vision, whereafter he calls himself Ra Uru Hu. He was a well-educated and successful businessman who worked as a contractor and magazine publisher with his own advertising agency (see my article [A Critique of the Human Design System](#)).

These kinds of story-telling will be the future of New Age and it will be amusing to follow what the next “true” story will be. There is no doubt that what I call [The Matrix Conspiracy](#) (a strong advocate for the use of hypnosis and hypnotherapy) will be turned into propaganda through mass media phenomena such as Transmedia Storytelling, Alternate Reality Games (for example, *The Blair Witch Project*), Viral Marketing/Internet Hoaxes, and Collaborative Fiction.

Anyway, *The Secret* was released around the same time as the film version of *The Da Vinci Code*, and it was cleverly packaged as a historical mystery. There are lingering shots of a faded cursive script on parchment paper, often accompanied by pounding drums or wordless choirs, and Byrne talks about “tracing the Secret back through history,” revealing all the great thinkers who have harnessed its power. (According to one title card, “*The Secret* was suppressed,” though we never learn how or by whom). This is also an example of pseudo-history within the New Age movement.

Intercut with this is a succession of American self-help gurus, explaining that by really focusing on what you want your “positive” energy flows out into the universe and is rewarded (notice how it is an implied assumption that it is “positive” to focus on your own wishes/greed). And intercut with this mantra are dramatised scenes of this “Law of Attraction” in action: a little boy visualizes a brand new bicycle and gets one from his dad; a woman focuses on some jewelry in a shop and gets it; a man is visualizing a parking space and – *voilà!* – there it is! At one point, the “miracles coach” Joe Vitale likens the universe to a giant shopping catalog. He says, “You flip through it and say, ‘I’d like to have this experience and I’d like to have that product, and I’d like to have a person like that. It is you placing your order with the Universe. It’s really that easy.’”

On the official website (www.thesecret.tv), you can download a “Universal Bank (un)limited” check, which you can fill in with your name and the \$ amount you want. The drawer is The Universe account (unlimited abundance). You can also buy The Secret Lamp (“your real-life Aladdin’s Lamp”); The Secret Scroll Document Holder; The Wealth Beyond Reason Starter Pack; The Wealth beyond Reason Power Pack, etc. You can also join the free forum (though, of course, the fee-based “Abundant” membership is highly encouraged), and so much more. For money.

Since appearing in bookstores, the book has sold 1,3 million copies and 2 million DVDs, outselling even the new Harry Potter novel. After translation, the book sold more than 19 million copies worldwide. It is currently on track to becoming the fastest-selling self-help book on record.

Oprah loves it. Hollywood stars Nicole Kidman, Meg Ryan and Scarlett Johansson swear by it. So, you are really getting in trouble if you are criticizing it. But I will take the chance.

The film is launched – by the way, like a number of other similar New Age products – showing how Rhonda Byrne, one day at the end of 2004, discovered the secret laws and principles behind the whole of the universe and thus became able to see through

the secret behind everything, which has made the world's biggest geniuses so brilliant and successful – including the greatest thinkers, scientists, artists, and philosophers. She was surprised why nobody else had discovered this, and will, therefore, share the secret with us.

The Secret is both something new and something old. It is something new in the sense that it is based on management theory and positive psychology (see my articles [Management Theory and the Self-help Industry](#) and [Humanistic Psychology, Self-help, and the Danger of Reducing Religion to Psychology](#)). It is something old because it, at first glance, talks about ancient spiritual/universal laws. However, these laws become distorted to fit together with the management theories.

It is, in short, a giant manipulation-project, whose purpose is to scrape together as much money as possible. The circulation of the idea happens via multi-level-marketing structures – that is, sales networks, which are built-up in a pyramid structure – the same ideas that lie behind the illegal pyramid games.

The central concept in *The Secret* is, as we have seen, “The Law of Attraction;” that is, if you think in compliance with this law, then you can attract a successful life fit for you. This is because, as the book says, your thoughts directly create the world, including the physical world. Everything that happens to you, whether negative or positive, is, in other words, due to your own negative or positive thoughts. You, therefore, have to exchange these negative thoughts with more positive thoughts.

Here, the book, apparently in compliance with the wisdom traditions, mentions a concept such as love. But it is important to understand what precisely it is the book understands by love (I have already mentioned this weird belief). It namely urges readers to rid themselves of illness through “harmonious thoughts,” to attract love by loving themselves. Love is about loving yourself. Positive thinking is about adding love to your own needs, feelings, wishes, yes, even to your dark sides; that is, see everything in yourself not as something negative but as something positive. It has nothing to do with the spiritual concept of love, where you feel compassion for other people and through this compassion receive the good. The spiritual concept of love is turned upside down in the book: you receive the “good” by loving yourself, by seeing everything in yourself as something positive and therefore good.

4) The Law of Attraction is the Law of Black Magic

I have referred to this demonical turn as the 666-aspect of the Matrix Conspiracy. The idea behind the Law of Attraction is the most obvious example of the use of black magic/Satanism within the Matrix Conspiracy. The demonical influence in the New Thought movement is best seen in the New Thought testament *A Course in Miracles*

(see my article [A Course in Miracles](#), where I explain this. I have also investigated it in my blog post [The Conspiracy of the Third Eye](#). Also see my article [The Four Philosophical Hindrances and Openings](#)).

I will briefly explain it here. In a spiritual practice, it is important to know the difference between the selfish use of energy and unselfish use of energy. You can also term this demonical use of energy and spiritual use of energy or black and white magic.

The ego-religion and ego-exercises are the ego's incessant confirmation or denial of itself: "I am useless!" or "Wonderful me!" Both the denial and the confirmation of the ego maintain the ego-process, ego-identity, and ego-centralization. The ego's religion and exercises are the ego's needs, longings, and will: "I want, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, I hope, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish," or, in its most common core: "I, I, I...Me, Me, Me..."

It should now be easy to see that the positive psychology of the New Thought movement and the Law of Attraction are based on the ego-religion and the ego-exercises, which are about moving the focus away from the denial of the ego (the negative, evil) and encouraging the confirmation of the ego, which is considered to be positive and in compliance with the divine universal laws.

In the Danish New Age magazine *Nyt Aspekt* (New Aspect, January-March 2012), there is an article called "Super Thoughts" by the Health Coach Anni Simonsen. After having stated that "New research has shown..." that "everything is subjective" and "Fantasy = reality," she claims that you can think yourself healthy by standing in front of a mirror and repeating: "You are so beautiful!", "I love you!" She states that it is about giving yourself positive confirmations to acknowledge, praise, and love yourself as unconditionally as possible. Thereafter, she states that critical thinking belongs to the denial side of the ego, wherefore you, of course, should avoid such kind of negative thinking.

The Law of Attraction cannot admit doubt or skepticism. If one begins to doubt the power or even to harbor critical (= negative) thoughts about it, one is assuredly on the road to ruin. Simonsen concludes that giving yourself positive confirmations is synonymous with healthy thoughts and that such thoughts are good thoughts, light thoughts, super thoughts.

I don't know which research shows this. Maybe the movie *The Secret*? *The Secret* says that "It has been proven scientifically now that an affirmative thought is hundreds of times more powerful than a negative thought." But again: Proven by which scientists? And written up where? Because I couldn't find it. These are

extraordinary claims that surely require extraordinary evidence, which The Secreteers do by using the word “science” over and over as if merely saying the word is the same as *doing* it – as if feeling good about science will attract more science into your life.

Anyway, if you find it difficult, Anni Simonsen continues, you must borrow (here we see that Anni Simonsen is also an NLP coach and that New Thought is the source of inspiration for both the Law of Attraction and NLP – see my article [Neuro-linguistic Programming \(NLP\), and Large Group Awareness Training \(LGAT\)](#)). She continues the exercise: Let yourself be inspired by a person, whom you would want to be like, and use this model to create your own self-image. When this self-image is ready, it is time to add sound. Listen to your own voice. Find the sound that tells you that you speak to the world with confidence and trust. It is a voice people will listen to! Listen to how the whole world will answer with acknowledgement, respect, and love.

I am afraid I don't agree that the whole world will love Anni Simonsen because she stands in front of a mirror, repeating to herself: “You are so beautiful!”, “I love you!” I think it sounds like the evil queen from the fairy tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. I would, at any time, prefer Snow White who loves others in a state of complete self-forgetfulness.

Simonsen ends the article with a preconceived response to critique. If you think that the image is not true but is only a fantasy, then remember that everything is subjective.

And now to my claim that such thoughts are an expression of black magic, a way of turning spirituality upside down.

First of all: Subjectivism means that truth is *only* something you create yourself – there is no absolute or objective truth. This, of course, raises the Socratic question: from where does Anni Simonsen (and other New Thought thinkers) know that everything is subjective? She can't *know* this if reality is only a fantasy you create yourself. Subjectivism is self-refuting. The self-refuting aspect is that subjectivism makes an exception of its own position. The very assertion of subjectivism is itself non-subjectivist (see the thought distortion *Self-refuting arguments* in my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#)).

Besides this self-contradiction, the assertion of subjectivism is in opposition to spirituality, which, in its worship of a divine reality, of course, believes that truth is absolute and objective. The opposition is due to religion, and therefore spirituality, being reduced to psychology, which leads to reduction and distortion of the human being (see my articles [Humanistic Psychology, Self-help, and the Danger of](#)

[Reducing Religion to Psychology](#), and [The Pseudoscience of Reductionism and the Problem of Mind](#)).

Secondly: We have seen that the ordinary ego-consciousness functions by being identified with the physical world, with the instincts, sexuality, emotions, and collective ideals. The true spiritual practice works through these aspects by means of, for example, the core which exists in the basic monastic vows: poverty, chastity, and obedience. These promises work by restructuring the ego's ownership to things, food, and power; and they restructure one's sexuality and emotions. Then the mystical process can begin and one's so-called progressive karma (good karma) starts working. Again, now it should be easy to see how positive psychology and New Thought are doing the exact opposite.

The ego is a demonical structure and it attracts demonical powers and energies which have also been created by the ego phenomenon. The same energy-process and function which realized spiritual teachers use can, therefore, be used for other purposes than spiritual. When the energy-processes of the astral plane's collective history are used spiritually, the ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside and the energy is funneled into the now, and, therefore, towards the source and the spiritual dimension. The people around a spiritual teacher constitute an energy-mandala and are, in this way, made transparent to a higher common human spirituality.

A less-realized person could be able to contact and manipulate such collective forms of astral energy, using them for other than spiritual purposes – creative, ego-affirming, political, demonical, and so on.

The same powers which can be put by realized spiritual teachers at other's disposal for healing, energy transmission, and spiritual information exchange, can be internalized by the ego-structures, and thus directed into the past and future, resulting in fragmentation (conflict). In this way, there can be opened creative channels or created super egos (super thoughts), political leaders and popular seducers (in my article [The Philosophy of Karen Blixen](#) I have investigated these phenomena in detail).

These phenomena are well known from the history and literature. In the story of the temptation in the desert, we can see these possible ways of using the energy, presented in an anticipated form. Here, you see the possibility of using the freedom and power in order to elevate the ego and the ensuing power and material glory. But Jesus abstains from this deification of the ego. This phenomenon is also known from the Faust myth, as described by Goethe and Thomas Mann, for example.

When you use the powers from the collective history of the astral plane in a selfish way, and with which demonical astral beings will help you (because the ego phenomenon is their magnet of attraction), you can create personal power and material glory. This is the essence of Black Magic and the background for the creation of the concept of the Law of Attraction (although the worshippers probably don't realize this – I think they have perfectly good intentions – see the thought distortion *Good Intentions Bias* in my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#)).

A lot of the many New Thought channelers are frauds or just disillusioned because they are completely controlled by subjective feelings, emotions, and intuitions. But some of them are caught up in the ego-inflation side of a spiritual crisis and are actually channeling entities from the collective time. The problem is that they don't know who it is they are channeling. Demons can be very charming and manipulative. They will tell you what you want to hear; they will give you experiences and help you to gain prosperity and success. But you will eventually meet the compensatory karma, or Nemesis (see my article [Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Connection with Channeling](#)).

In short, you cannot use these energies as you want to, that is, through thinking and, therefore, not through will, choices or feelings.

The eternal circling around your own dreams, desires, success, etc., will, in other words, be counter-balanced through the opposite categories.

I will repeat what we already have examined: as soon as your thoughts spread to an extreme, the energy-system compensates by seeking to bring itself back to the balance of the middle. The system does this by seeking the opposite extreme (for instance, from perfectionism to failure), that is, through counterbalancing, compensating. The energy works as a pendulum. The more energy is invested in an extreme of a pair of opposites, the larger the swing in the opposite direction will become.

5) Ethical problems connected with The Law of Attraction

Here is one of Rhonda Byrne's own examples on positive thinking: If you, as a female, have a problem with being too fat, then this is due to you thinking 'fat thoughts'. Feeling a bit overweight these days? According to Rhonda Byrne, it is not an excess of food that's making you fat – it is your thoughts that are adding those extra pounds.

“To put it in the most basic terms, if someone is overweight, it came from thinking ‘fat thoughts’ whether that person was aware of it or not,” writes Byrne. “A person cannot think ‘thin thoughts’ and be fat. It completely defies the Law of Attraction.”

So, if you simply think ‘thin thoughts’, refrain from observing fat people, and follow Byrne’s three-step process of “Ask-Believe-Receive,” then you are guaranteed to lose weight without actually doing anything about it.

The “positive” in Rhonda Byrne’s example of positive thinking is, in other words, an Egoistic ideal of beauty without any kind of ethics: avoid observing fat people!

The film is coming with a number of similar examples how its own concepts of positive thinking are equivalent with pure egoistic thinking. In addition to this, the film also has some messages to sick, weak, and poor people, which are as ethically problematic. Sick, weak, and poor people are told that their disease, weakness or poverty is their own fault because they think sick, weak, and poor thoughts. The examples on how they shall think, instead, are as absurd as Byrne’s own example: for example, people with cancer are told that they can heal miraculously in three weeks their disease by watching funny films or by having a few Gratitude-stones sent from LA.

For those of us unfortunate enough to fall ill, it really is all our fault. “You cannot ‘catch’ anything unless you think you can, and thinking you can is inviting it into your thought,” says *The Secret*.

The flipside of the “Law of Attraction” that *The Secret* so keenly promotes is that as sure as positive thoughts bring wealth, health, and happiness, negative thoughts are also responsible for any illness, poverty, or bad luck that happens your way. The problem is the propensity for self-blame when it doesn’t work. Besides that, it is an invalid ad hoc clause (rationalization) to say that if the Law of Attraction doesn’t work, then it is because you are not doing it correctly—such statements, as mentioned, are inducing a false dichotomy in people, which makes them easy targets for guilt, shame, and depression.

Another weird aspect of this is something I have experienced when talking to Law of Attraction devotees. For example, I talked with a woman, who for years had tried to “attract/manifest” a man into her life. But the men she “attracted/manifested” weren’t good enough. She said: “Well, you get what you are asking for!” She simply thought that the “wrong” men were due to mistakes in her thoughts, in her way of attracting/manifesting these men. She didn’t talk about the men as human beings but

as objects for her own wishes. She was exposing a “me-me-me-and-then-perhaps-you-if-it-fits-me”-logic. The last thing she was considering was that a person using such a logic would be a nuisance to other people.

Here is the main reason why today’s self-help industry has lost the true spirituality out of sight: the Ego-worship which shuts itself from this wholeness. Today, the wholeness, or the Otherness, has been eliminated and only the development of the self, or the Ego, is left. And the Self/the Ego is your personality, therefore, it is a personal development (also called self-improvement). The problem with this personal development is that it has developed into a never-ending development, an egoistic philosophy.

In natural science, nature is reduced to atomic particles, empty space, fields, electromagnetic waves, particles, etc., etc. Nature is explained and described in a way which is a world away from our immediate sense experiences.

The support of a natural scientific view of nature has almost always led those supporting it towards combining it with an instrumental (technological) view of nature. This conception of nature means seeing it as pure material or only as a means for the unfolding of Man.

The instrumental view of nature rests on a sharp division between Man and everything else, that is, between inner and outer nature. Man is, by force of his inner nature, radically different from, and standing over, the outer nature. This is, among other things, due to his being in the position to master nature with the help of reason and science.

By the way, this thought characterizes almost all traditional Western philosophy, where philosophizing is due to thinking alone, even though the theories within this tradition are highly contradictory in other crucial points. You find it in Christianity, in Descartes’ view of Man as a self-reliant being, in the Enlightenment philosophers, in Romanticism’s view of Man as a historical being; in Kierkegaard, Karl Marx and Auguste Comte, who respectively founded existentialism, Marxism, and positivism.

In opposition to this and under the pretense of a discussion about the damage we have caused nature, in recent years were worked out conceptions, declaring that nature has value in itself. It is not only a means but ought to be respected for its beauty and richness. This point of view is well known since older times. For lack of a better term, we could call it a communicative view of nature, since it is implying that we, in some sense, live in community with nature.

And as the above shows, these two views of nature are inseparably connected with the view of what a human being is. The discussions about Man, which I have outlined in my book [A Portrait of a Lifeartist](#), have been about the status of reason in relation to desires and passions, as well as the relationship between naturalism and self-production.

The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has sought to create a synthesis of the many viewpoints. He claims that the development of reason, as well as the division and alienation in the modern world, and the many overspecializations of areas of knowledge have led to today's society being ruled by a radical opposition between two kinds of reason: the instrumental and the communicative.

The instrumental, or technical reason, is about how to find given means to given goals. It is, for instance, a necessary goal for Man to get his necessities of life satisfied by cultivating nature. The means is the technology which today builds on the extensive knowledge of natural science. To cut a long story short, thanks to the instrumental reason we get control over nature. In the area of technical competence, we have gone far. This whole part of our lives has been developed into extensive systems, such as the economy, the bureaucracy, the market, and the market forces.

The communicative reason and competence is the reason we use in all relationships where it is important to come to an understanding with each other. It presupposes that we know our life-world. Among other things, Habermas understands the life-world as the scope of linguistic ability, cultural knowledge, and individual skills, which is the condition for understanding both the family jargon, as well as the tone between children throughout the many communities. By the way, Habermas argues that the difference between instrumental and communicative reason is given with the fundamental structures of language and different types of speech acts.

The core of Habermas' critique of culture is that the instrumental reason has conquered some terrain from the communicative reason. The systems (the market and the bureaucracy) have colonized the life-world. This means, among other things, that political and philosophical questions are being made into technical questions, as when an election campaign is about the details of the economic planning; and this leads to us treating each other as means or as items which are on a wrong course (the treatment society).

The instrumental reason is controlling and it gets control. According to Habermas, there is nothing wrong with this in technical respect. The problem arises when this attitude starts characterizing ordinary relationships between humans, as well as areas where values should be crucial, in philosophical respect. It is also due to this attitude,

that in reference to human problems we always have to hear what the specialists think, for instance, the economists, sociologists, historians, psychologists, biologists, etc., etc.

The philosopher, as a philosophical counselor, has, in short, vanished, and thus also the art of life, which could have created unity and coherence in life. Many will perhaps object that the New Age movement advocates a new kind of holistic thinking. But there are a number of misunderstandings in this. Philosophy is by definition holistic thinking. You can, therefore, say that the New Age movement is an abortive attempt to re-create philosophy as an art of life. The attempt is going wrong already because of a lack of ability to understand itself precisely as a philosophy. Personally, I think this is due to the many uneducated people we see within this environment, who have received all their knowledge by reading self-help or other New Age books.

This main failure is due to the New Age movement being characterized in an extreme way by the instrumental reason and the treatment society, despite that it should be a showdown. That which should have been an art of life becomes reduced to a treatment, especially psychotherapy, and the New Age magazines are abundantly characterized by alternative treatment offers, rather than offers of counseling in the art of life.

Another failure, where the holistic thinking is lost, is due to the psychologizing of philosophy, where it, in contradiction to its own claims, shuts itself away from the wholeness, or the Otherness, and locks itself inside the individual psyche.

That was Habermas. Another communicative thinker is the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. Central in Buber's thinking is the thought about two fundamental relationships: I-THOU and I-IT. He investigates this in his wonderful poetic book *I and Thou*.

The *I-Thou* relationship is characterized by freedom, cooperation, and a deep feeling of personal involvement. The *I* confronts its *Thou* not as something that can be studied, measured, or manipulated, but as a unique presence which is answering the *I* in its individuality. This corresponds to the communicative view of Man and nature.

The *I-It* relationship is characterized by a tendency to treat something as an impersonal object controlled by causal, social, or economic powers. This corresponds to the instrumental view of Man and nature.

Buber refuses the idea that humans are isolated, autonomous beings who act from abstract rules. Instead, the reality exists between humans, as they discover and change each other. In short, the reality is dialogical in its nature. Buber describes God as the eternal THOU, the *Thou* who can never be an IT. In that way, you can reach God not with a derivation or a conclusion (some images of life), but with a readiness to answer the concrete reality of the divine presence.

In accordance with Buber, Man can relate to life in two radically different ways: either as a subject who experiences something, namely an object, an *It*, to which he is external; or as a person who is in a relationship with another person, a *Thou*. It is the last which is fundamental.

The *I* first becomes an *I* in this relationship with a *Thou*. There exists no *I* in and of itself. The basic purpose of the human existence is the actual relationship. The spirit, the human reality, is not in the *I* (as New Age and the self-help industry claim), but between the *I* and the *Thou*. First in this *between* is Man's way of being constituted. The relationship with the *Thou* is the mirror in which the *I* can discover itself. The relationship is one of philosophical sparring partners.

According to Buber, the whole of the human existence happens in the tension between challenge and reaction, which can be seen dialogically as questions and answers. Man becomes spoken to by the eternal THOU, God, through challenges and what happens to him. But through his reactions and actions, he is conversely able to answer this question of the challenge, that is to say, to take the responsibility for himself, to answer individually.

So, in any challenge you can – if you open yourself for it and listen to the call of the *Thou* in complete silence – hear the eternal *Thou* ask, “Where are you in thy life?” And, by observing your reaction – that is to say, by looking at your way of being and discovering yourself – you can answer, “Here I am in my life, this is what I am!”

Buber has herewith shown an important philosophical exercise, namely, to see the relationship with the surrounding world as a relationship with a philosophical sparring partner. Precisely like this functioned also Socrates' method of philosophical dialogue, the so-called Socratic Pedagogy, where Socrates, through his questions, became a mirror in which his dialogue partners could discover themselves through their answers.

Above the entrance of the temple in Delphi was written, “Know thyself.” And the intention behind Socrates' dialogs in the town square in Athens was that they should function as a medium of self-exposure. Socrates was a philosophical sparring partner,

a mirror in which his dialog partners were able to learn to know themselves. Krishnamurti often said something similar (see my article [The Philosophy of Krishnamurti](#)).

In the exercise *Philosophical Sparring Partners*, self-knowledge arises by seeing the relationship with the surrounding world as a mirror. And in this mirror is formed the true portrait of yourself: a portrait of a life artist (see my book [A Portrait of a Life](#)).

Paradoxically enough, we have our most intense identity experiences in the experience of life-feeling, spontaneity, and self-forgetfulness. This means that a human being who knows himself, who is himself present, at the same time often is self-forgetful, open toward and engaged in life itself. In these experiences you have your identity in a presence, in the feeling of being in the middle of the stream of life.

What is, after all, life? Is it not something new all the time? It is something which is constantly changed and which is creating a new feeling. Today is never the same as yesterday, and that is the beauty of life. This “new” is the unique in life, a unique presence: The Eternal Thou. Buber said, “I become through my relation to the *Thou*; and as I become the *I*, I say *Thou*. All real living is meeting.”

Man is a communicative being.

So, the relationship is in the connection with identity, the mirror-image of which you can discover yourself. Without the relationship you are nothing. To be is to be in a relationship, which is the actual life. You only live in a relationship, otherwise, you don't live – then life is without meaning. So, it is not because you construct (think) your identity, that you live. You live and have your identity in the ability to be self-forgetfully engaged in the relationship, and it is the lack of ability to understand this, which causes the conflict.

The reason why there is no understanding of the relationship is that you use relationships to achieve something, to become something, to be remolded, to be something else than what you are. You use, as Habermas expresses it, the instrumental reason on human relations, where it only should be used on technical relations. Precisely this we see unfold in the Law of Attraction movement.

Another Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, worked, inspired by Buber, also with such a communicative thinking (very close to Krishnamurti's philosophy).

Levinas namely calls the unique presence in life *The Otherness* (God; Krishnamurti also called God *The Otherness*). The Otherness manifests itself as The Other, or as

the *Thou*. Man can't be understood isolated but always in relation with, or in a meeting with "The Other." In the other's face, in thy neighbor's appearance, you meet an unfounded (metaphysical understood) demand for responsibility which you can't ignore but, of course, very well try to drive out.

In Levinas' philosophy, it is impossible to remain a spectator of the world. Man, and also language, is constituted by the indispensable connection with the Otherness – (as we remember, Niels Bohr also said that it is not us who are putting reality in order, it is reality which is putting us in order – see my article [Quantum Mechanics and the Philosophy of Niels Bohr](#)). – The Otherness manifests itself in the other's face. The face calls to you. Your reaction to the face is an answer and it shows who you are. So, it requires the responsibility that you listen to this call.

Levinas criticizes the traditional effort of philosophy in building up philosophical systems, as well as all kinds of idealism and subjectivism because precisely the Otherness (the new) opposes the system, it opposes all idealism and subjectivism. That, which is really something else, or different, is, according to Levinas, *The Other*, with whom you are standing face-to-face – the other person. This relationship is the foundation of ethics and not a system or thought constructions created by idealists or subjectivists as The Law of Attraction devotees. So, just like in Buber, in Levinas, there is also a disposition to a philosophical life-practice very similar to the philosophy of Krishnamurti.

The Law of Attraction's lack of understanding of such an ethics can be seen in an interview with Newsweek, where Rhonda Byrne is asked if the victims of the genocides in Rwanda in 1994 had attracted this destiny themselves. She answers with confirmation.

"If we are in fear, if we are feeling in our lives that we are victims and feeling powerless, then we are on a frequency of attracting those things to us," says Byrne in reference to Rwanda.

So, a spiritual concept of compassion with people who are suffering, as for example the victims in Rwanda, will in the Law of Attraction involve a risk of attracting the weak and powerless thoughts of these people (their stinkin' thinkin'). So, instead, you should turn your back on them.

Note, that it is not only Byrne who answers in this way; it is a typical answer from Secreteers who, of course, are always asked these kinds of questions; for example, in relation to children who are getting raped and murdered. And non-secreteers are, of course, shocked over this attitude.

The thought falls for a Reductio ad Absurdum argument. Any psychopath, multiple murderer or tyrannical dictator would namely love the thought. Just try to use the idea on the German mass extermination camps under the Second World War. The idea would actually be very useful in order to justify crimes in this style. It is, as mentioned, a way of thinking that is completely devoid of ethics – that is, a psychopathic way of thinking. And that actually applies to the whole of the self-help industry. I have examined the psychopathic trait of self-help thinking in my article [Humanistic Psychology, Self-help and the Danger of Reducing Religion to Psychology](#). In my article [A Critique of Byron Katie and Her Therapeutic Method The Work](#), and in the follow-up [Byron Katie](#), I have shown how precisely Nazi's mass murdering Jewish women's babies by burning them to death alive while the mothers watch, is the loving work of God, and that Hitler was our Guru (if you don't believe it, then read the articles). As a matter of fact, Byron Katie says that baby killers are "higher" than the illusion of mommy.

The Secret uses a long line of the greatest geniuses of history to confirm its theories (from Emerson to Shakespeare, from Plato to Lincoln, from Victor Hugo to Newton and Beethoven); all wisdom traditions are also used to confirm them. But these people become – just like the wisdom traditions – systematically abused by taking their statements out of their right connection and twisting them, in order to mix them with the film's theories.

The thought distortions in the film, which the authentic spiritual traditions try to explore, change, and restructure, are directly used with the purpose to manipulate. Meanwhile, I don't think the creators of the film do this fully consciously. I actually think that they believe in the idea. They are just extremely uneducated and naive, and without any philosophical or scientific training. – in this they remind about a lot of other New Age worshippers.

Like many other New Age directions (for example, illustrated in the New Age film *What the bleep do we (k)now?*) *The Secret* wallows in the philosophical viewpoints of relativism/subjectivism – that is, philosophical viewpoints which can justify the theoretical idea (not facts) about management – the best story, which wins (your thoughts directly create the world, including the physical!). Here, the film uses – again, like many other New Age directions – Einstein's theories of relativity, as well as quantum mechanics, to “prove” its theories. But, again, like many other New Age directions, these scientific theories are badly distorted (see my article [Quantum Mysticism and Its Web of Lies](#)).

The Secret's performers/followers manipulatively sign themselves with all kinds of titles. Here are some examples from the book (which, by the way, is also quite revealing): "philosopher, lecturer, author and creator of true wealth, prosperity, and human potential programs," (James Arthur Ray); "moneymaking and business-building expert" (John Assaraf); "philosopher, chiropractor, healer, and personal transformation specialist" (John DeMartini); "metaphysician and one of the top marketing specialists in the world" (Joe Vitale); "a nonaligned, trans-religious progressive" (Michael Beckwith).

(Joe Vitale is also signing himself Dr. Joe Vitale, MSC.D. I wonder what these initials mean? I have never heard about them).

The Secret, according to the film/book is, as mentioned, "The Law of Attraction." And, defined clearly and simply, this "law" (as certain as the law of gravity) is that our thoughts always attract what they are about and bring it to reality. This is presented as a literal truth – a law just like the laws of gravitation. And it is stated like this, "Always works every time, with every person!" Note: **always**. And **every time**, **with every person!** No exceptions. It's a law, you see. Think about wealth and you will become wealthy. Think about that new car you've always wanted and it will come to you. Think about getting a good parking spot on the lot and one will open up for you. Think about your ideal weight (really, dwell on that number, write it on your scale) and you will attract that reality to yourself. (All of these are real examples in the book.) Rhonda Byrne is glad to report that since deciding her "perfect weight" is 116 pounds she has moved to that mark and nothing moves her from it, no matter what she does or eats, because she thinks "thin thoughts" (can thoughts also prevent her from getting older?).

Now, here is how "the Law of Attraction" actually works, according to *The Secret*: "Thoughts are magnetic; and thoughts have a frequency. As you think, those thoughts are sent out into the universe and they magnetically attract all like things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent out returns to the Source. And that source is you."

As Mel Lawrenz says in an article (*The Secret Exposed*): "Now here's the bad news: whatever happens in your life is the result of what your thoughts have attracted – the good and the bad. Appendicitis? An auto accident? Poverty? You have brought it on yourself."

And Bible verses are quoted in the book, as if the book was about something holy. Lisa Nichols, motivational speaker and one of the contributors, notes that: "in Proverbs it talks about "so a man thinketh, he is." In Matthew, it says "if you ask and you believe in your prayers, then you will receive it."

And then there is James Arthur Ray, author of *The Science of Success: How to Attract Prosperity and Create Harmonic Wealth Through Proven Principles*, who says, “Here’s the question I want you to consider – do you treat yourself the way that you want other people to treat you?”

Mel Lawrenz continues: “Does that sound familiar? It is a twist, a pretty severe twist, of one of the most universal principles of life called the Golden Rule, which Jesus described as “do to others as you would have them do to you.” So this tried and true selfless principle of life (“do to others...”) becomes the ultimate form of self-centeredness (“treat yourself...”). Oh, and by the way, you can attend James Arthur Ray’s seminar, his “harmonic wealth weekend,” for a seminar fee of a mere \$997. Somebody has figured out how to attract wealth to himself.”

(As mentioned, then, for example, love is twisted in the same way: you will attract love by loving yourself, not by loving others. In the true spiritual traditions, you attract love by loving others – precisely what Jesus talks about).

The Secret would lead you to believe that you are entitled to whatever you want and you have the power within yourself to gain it. The book says, “Begin right now to shout to the universe: “life is so easy. Life is so good. All good things come to me.” And “You deserve all good things life has to offer.” “You are the creator of you and the Law of Attraction is your magnificent tool to create whatever you want in your life. Welcome to the magic of life and the magnificence of you.”

Very different from the message of Jesus: the first will be last and the last will be first; lose your life and you will find it.

And in this, we find the confusion of *The Secret*. It is all about the Ego, for the Ego, obsessed with the Ego. Even *Newsweek* magazine offers this ethical critique: "On an ethical level, *The Secret* appears deplorable. It concerns itself almost entirely with a narrow range of middle-class concerns – houses, cars, vacations, followed by health and relationships, with the rest of humanity a very distant sixth."

The Secret appeals especially to professional, middle-class American women (spreading to women all over the world) who are turned off by traditional religion yet feeling a yearning for a personal, non-denominational spirituality. They often refer to themselves as the new feminists. Sentiments such as, “You are the creator of you, and the Law of Attraction is your magnificent tool to create whatever you want in your life,” resonate with them. They are not concerned with critics who wondered about the flipside: how people, even children, who suffer illness, violence, untimely death or other misfortune might have “attracted” that. The self-help industry, as such, is

especially promoted through women's magazines (see my article [The New Feminism and the Philosophy of Women's Magazines](#)).

So, the Law of Attraction is the idea that your positive or negative thoughts magnetically, magically, can attract the negative or positive into your life, so that it becomes reality. And what the idea considers as being positive or negative is only circling around one special thing: how I can get my own wishes, feelings, and needs satisfied. The believers claim that the Law of Attraction is a spiritual law which will help you in this quest. In other words: focus your thoughts on getting your own wishes, feelings, and needs satisfied, and then you are living in compliance with the spiritual laws and can make reality give you what you want.

This is an extremely manipulative thought because according to the true spiritual laws there is a duality in the Universe which you have to realize in order to reach into non-dualism: for instance, yin and yang, positive and negative, light and darkness, I and Thou.

This understanding of dualism goes on that the opposites are defining each other; they are inseparable. If one of the poles is overemphasized it creates unbalance.

These laws exist everywhere: in nature, in society, in Man himself.

I will repeat the three important concepts in a true spiritual practice:

- 1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others)
- 2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the Ego)
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images)

And now, if we take the self-deception of the Law of Attraction in relation to the above-mentioned:

- 1) The believers close themselves inside the "positive," that is, what they *think* is positive: namely, their own wishes, feelings, and needs. In this way, they leave out the negative which results in a lack of ability to realize the laws of dualism. Their so-called exercises, with which they think the idea of the Law of Attraction helps them, are about how to drive out, force out, repress, even ignore the negative.

2) When ignoring the negative, they fail to understand the shadow, both their own dark sides, the Ego, as well as ignorance and suffering as such. And understanding your own suffering is a necessity in order to cultivate compassion for other people (see my article [Suffering as an Entrance to the Source](#)).

This causes their empathy and compassion for other people to be hard to discover, illustrated by Rhonda Byrne's words: If you as a woman feel you are too fat, then turn your back to fat people, so that their fat thoughts don't influence you; and by the words that peoples' suffering is their own fault and you should turn your back on them, so that their negative thoughts don't influence you.

The failure to realize their own dark sides can be seen in another episode with Rhonda Byrne. She typically meets people with a loving facade. At one time, she wanted to remind the world about the crucial importance of gratitude: "Remember," Byrne was preaching, "if you are criticizing, you are not being grateful. If you are blaming, you are not being grateful. If you are complaining, you are not being grateful."

It was an odd time for Byrne to be preaching these words because at the same time her lawyers had just sued two of the very people who were instrumental in launching her book and film *The Secret* to phenomenal success. Drew Heriot, the Australian director of the film, and Dan Hollings, an Arizona internet consultant whose "viral marketing" helped propel Byrne to global fame via Oprah Winfrey, had both been demanding that Byrne pay them a share of the estimated \$300 million revenue they claimed she'd promised them. In the weeks up to Thanksgiving, Byrne's lawyers had counter-attacked by launching legal actions against both men in jurisdictions far from their homes, a tactic one judge has since described as vexatious and harassing.

For a woman whose central message is the power of positivity, Byrne has a surprisingly long history of such bust-ups, stretching back to her days as a television producer in Melbourne – but as we have found out by now, it is yourself you should not criticize, it is yourself you should not blame, it is yourself you should not complain over, it is yourself you should be grateful for, it is yourself you should love – and as a consequence, the ignorance about your own failures, about your own dark side.

3) They close themselves in their own idea about the Law of Attraction, which causes them not to have any spiritual practice (no training of realization and compassion). We have already examined this. The Law of Attraction is not about doing anything. You don't have to do anything, you only need to think about something and then it will magically happen.

All and all, it causes a total end of any spiritual development and any ability to learn – especially because they don't have to listen to other people. They lull themselves into a huge illusion and self-deception, which will cause an enormous unbalance.

6) The use of Testimonials

The idea of the Law of Attraction goes wrong from the start because it is based on a misinterpretation of quantum mechanics, which you can see repeated again and again in numerous New Age books. A misinterpretation, which the believers could see corrected if they were seeking other sources (instead of their easy-solution-to-everything-quest) to their ideas than New Age books, for instance, Niels Bohr himself (see my article [Quantum Mechanics and the Philosophy of Niels Bohr](#)).

The manipulative in the idea is partly that it says it is proven by science, but also that all great thinkers, artists, and spiritual traditions, support it. As mentioned, this happens by taking short or longer quotes out of the correct context and placing them so that it seems like they support the idea. Some of the coaches and speakers in the environment are masters in this manipulative art. Manipulating is also the swollen titles they use about themselves, such as, for instance, "Super Coach," "The World's greatest Money Coach," and so on in the same style.

The word "proven" is also used manipulatively in connection with the experiences the believers say they have had after they have begun to use the Law of Attraction; that their experiences, therefore, "prove" that the idea is true.

Law of Attraction meetings are often going off as testimonials about these "proofs" – and when Law of Attraction devotees comment on blogs and forums, they almost always begin with testimonials. Scientifically seen, this is pure nonsense (note that when I mention science, it is only in relation to how the New Thought and Law of Attraction devotees themselves use this concept and therefore they bear the burden of evidence – I would not demand scientific proof if a theory was not claiming to be scientific).

Of course, you can create success by creating a manipulative stunt like *The Secret* but this doesn't prove that the idea presented in the film, therefore, is true. Testimonials are usually permeated with thought distortions such as *Subjective validation*, *Selective thinking*, *Confirmation bias*, *Motivated reasoning*, *Classical conditioning and placebo effects*, *Proof by ignorance*, etc., etc. – again: see my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#).

Jeannine, for example, followed the advice of self-proclaimed expert “manifesters” Fred Fengler and Todd Varnum, authors of *Manifesting Your Heart’s Desire* because she had a broken garage door:

I remembered reading your book and decided to manifest a fix. I started talking to the door and asking it to work. I... used to talk to plants and they tended to grow better so I talked to the door. After a few minutes of communicating with the door, I pushed and the door worked perfectly.

Fengler and Varnum give other examples of successful “manifesters.” For example, an anonymous writer told them how he or she **sold a business**:

I decided to manifest using my willpower. As I went to sleep, I said out loud, “OK universe, this is what I want. I want an offer. I want a good offer. In fact, I want TWO offers. In fact, I want them TOMORROW!”

The next day was perfectly normal. I ‘reminded’ the universe it was 4 PM and the office would close at 5:30. I felt confident that the universe would take care of me no matter what happened. Within ten minutes, I had a call from one prospect who said he had an offer and would be right over. Ten minutes after he left the offer off, I got a call from my business consultant. He told me that a second offer was being written and it would be on my desk in 24 hours, which it was.

I accepted the first offer, and we flawlessly closed the deal in less than two weeks.

That’s all there is to it. You let the universe know what you want and you’ll get it! As Robert Carroll says, then this should be good news to those superstitious folks who try to sell real estate by burying a statue of St. Joseph on the property. There is an easier way: manifesting!

If they can create what they want in an instant, then they must not want very much, except maybe the many followers who might buy their books, tapes, crystals, etc. If the power of thought is so powerful, why don’t they end the ethnic hatred in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, etc? They are telling us that they, via the power of thought, can make this world a better place but for some reason, they choose not to. As Carroll says, I think we all know the reason: they are powerless. And I will add: It is not others they are concerned about, it is themselves.

And why don’t they take the James Randi’s One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge? – Here there is money they can attract and manifest very easily. James Randi is an American stage magician and scientific skeptic. His challenge is offering a prize of US \$1,000,000 to eligible applicants who can demonstrate evidence of any

paranormal, supernatural, or occult power or event under test conditions agreed to by both parties.

Let us take two other testimonials and assume they are right.

1)

The testimonial of the editor of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books, Jack Canfield, provides an excellent example of selective thinking when he is talking about ask-believe-receive and ignoring idea-action-results. He tells us that he visualized earning \$100,000 (even writing the desired amount on a bill worth far less and tacking it to the ceiling above his bed) and focused his mental energy only on the goal of attaining the money. He tells us that he had absolutely no idea *how* he was going to get the money – he simply focused on believing that he *would* get the money, somehow. But how? For four weeks he had no breakthrough ideas but then, one day in the shower, he remembered that he had written a book and if it was published (particularly if he sold 400,000 copies and he made a quarter on each) he just might achieve his financial goals. Of course, the book was published and the results were only a few thousand dollars shy of 100,000 dollars.

Mr. Canfield attributes his success to knowing and applying the principles of *The Secret* – he literally *attracted* 100,000 dollars through good feelings, positive energy, and the power of visualization. Is it possible, however, that this is a misattribution and the actual reason for his success is that he suddenly remembered that he had written a book, got it published, and subsequently earned money from it? You know, all the other authors do it. Is he making an Arbitrary inference? The *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this therefore because of this) fallacy would appear to be working overtime in the minds of the enthusiastic Secreteers. “It happened because I wished for it,” the Secreteer would say, instead of the more obvious explanation, “It happened because I worked for it.”

2)

In another instance, an advocate for the Law of Attraction tells us that he posted a picture of his dream home on what he calls his “vision board,” forgot about it, found the vision board five years later and was astounded to discover that the home he was currently living in matched the one he had visualized.

This does sound amazing, except that he also tells us that he *spent an entire year renovating the house* that is currently his dream home. The question, therefore, is this: is he living in his dream home because he wished it, or because he renovated it?

And, concerning the idea, then believers of all kinds of other beliefs (totally different from the Law of Attraction) also always have had experiences, and a lot of believers don't experience anything. It can also be pure fantasy, coincidence, etc., etc. Besides, black magic works. So, therefore, note that I am not a cynical skeptic concerning this. I would actually, to a certain extent, accept that it works – as black magic. We have already examined the consequences of this.

And psychopaths also seem to have a strange ability to attract what they desire and want.

And look at the great Law of Attraction guru himself, James Arthur Ray. He must be able to give a lot of testimonials of his success. But his career ended in complete failure and tragedy. He has been sentenced to two years in prison because of indifference to people in trouble during a sweat-lodge ceremony. Three people died because of this (see my article on the tragedy: [James Arthur Ray and the Sweat Lodge Tragedy](#)).

So, testimonials don't *prove* anything.

Another question: how can the Law of Attraction support the wishes of all people? What if these wishes are contradictory? What about two parts in a war? What if another person wishes me dead, and I wish to live?

Remember: the Law of Attraction **always** works, **every** time, with **every** person. Examples are given in the movie. A man is shown, worrying about being late, and so he gets stuck in a traffic jam. Another man is shown, locking up his bicycle, presumably because he is worried about it being stolen; he returns later to find it *has* been stolen.

The absurdity of these examples should be obvious, and the absurdity arises because of the movie's extreme individualistic and egoistic thinking, where the existence of other people is not even considered. Are we supposed to believe the traffic jam wouldn't have happened if it were not for this one guy worrying about being late? What about the other people in the traffic jam? Were they all thinking negative thoughts about being on time? And if they were, doesn't that debunk the "always works every time, with every person" mantra? And what about the guy getting his bike stolen? Are we to assume that if another *positive* thinking guy had left an identical *unlocked* bike at the same location, the bike thief would still have stolen the locked bike of the person *worried* about theft? Has anybody done a controlled study on this?

A third example: what happens when two drivers approach traffic lights on different roads, and both of them “attract” green lights at the same time?

And now, finally, the most frightening thought: what if the psychopaths, mass murderers, dictators, terrorists, child abusers, etc., etc., got hold of the fact that there has arisen a new philosophy – the Law of Attraction (which famous people and millions of other people worship as the true divine power) – that actually would justify their ideas of what they find positive (their wishes, feelings, and needs)?

There is nothing at all in the Law of Attraction concept that can say that this would not be positive. Focusing on your wishes is per definition positive. The concept doesn't have any other ethical foundation than these two rules:

- 1) There doesn't exist any objective standard for good and evil!
- 2) Moral values are what you subjectively *feel* is good!

This article has been edited by Sufi Beloved (2018).

All articles and books referred to are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com

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