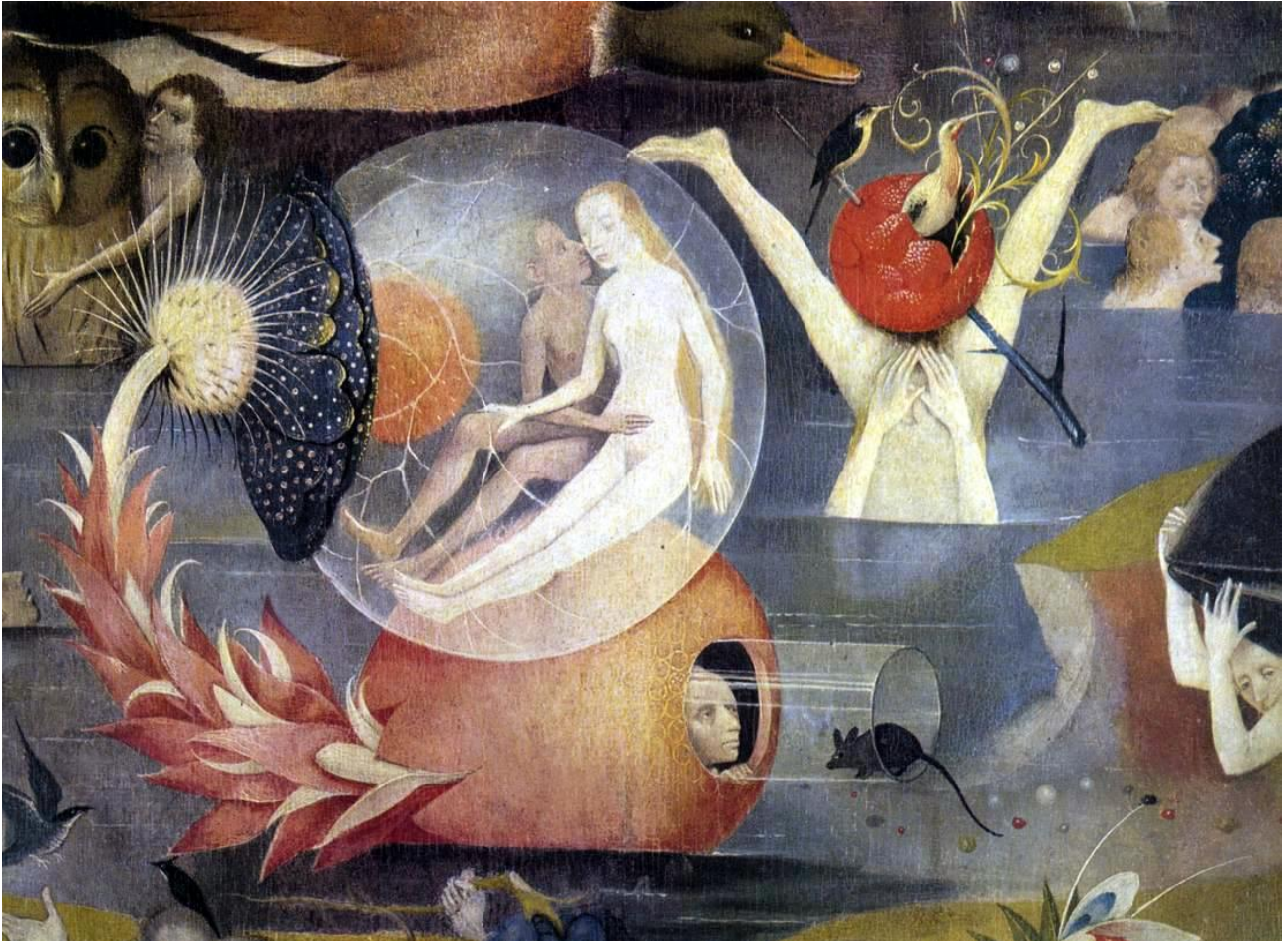


Morten Tolboll



The Matrix Conspiracy Part 1

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Dedication:

Soli Deo Gloria

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Introduction

I have practised yoga and meditation since 1985, and during this period I have developed the concept of **Meditation as an Art of Life**. In 2008, 2009, and 2010 I have published this teaching in three books: *Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader* (2008), *Dream Yoga* (2009), and *A Portrait of a Lifeartist* (2010).

The development of this teaching is connected with my experience of a spiritual crisis (see my articles **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena** and **The awakening of kundalini**). Therefore the teaching also has some critical things to say about certain areas of spiritual environments and theories, simply because they – due to my experiences - are misleading and dangerous, many times directly wrong. This applies especially to New Age and the self-help industry.

When I in 2005 began to promote my teaching on the internet I, to my astonishment, experienced that their ruled some kind of spiritual censorship created by self helpers and New Agers – not organized – but created by individuals who share the same ideas.

The presence of these people on the internet is enormous. And everytime someone is promoting spiritual issues (and also often scientific issues) you will have them on your comments area and on your email.

My “problem” was that I introduced the concept of *Philosophical counseling*. Philosophy is in the eyes of these people, in some weird way, banned in spirituality – it is somehow a terrible thing (probably due to the use of critical thinking).

And they didn't want to go into discussions about it, they didn't want to argue for their disagreement (argumentation is negative in their point of view). Instead they tried to silence me through mumbo-jumbo and condescension. So where philosophy tries to investigate, restructure and change thought distortions, these people are directly using thought distortions in order to get on in the world (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

In the start I closed down a couple of websites, blogs and forums, simply because I was unprepared for the enormous degree of attacks.

But also in the real world I began to meet these people everywhere. I discovered that their theories are introduced in schools, continuing education and on workplaces; yes that they even are on the top of EUs project on lifelong learning and education. I

also discovered the connection with postmodern intellectualism and different kinds of reductionisms practised on the Universities. Furthermore I discovered the connection with consumer capitalism, advertising industry and the entertainment industry.

Though many of the theories disagree in between there is a red thread going through them all: subjectivism and relativism - the indifference to truth, and the following distortion of spirituality, philosophy and science.

I realized that what I have met is a new kind of Sophists. The relationship between the Sophists (teachers of rhetoric) and Socrates (the philosopher) is the central issue in the whole of Plato's work (see the introduction to my book **A dictionary of Thought distortions**).

In lack of a better term I have decided to call the whole of this circus the Matrix Conspiracy. And I call the agents of this conspiracy The Matrix Sophists. The Matrix Sophists are a common term for the tens of thousands of consultants, coaches, practitioners, identity-experts, therapists, sexologists, educators, teachers, social workers, spin doctors, psychotherapists and psychologists, who all share the ideas of The Matrix Conspiracy; that is: some kind of mix between postmodern intellectualism, management theory, self-help and New Age.

In my first book **Meditation as an art of life – a basic reader** I presented what I call the four philosophical hindrances and openings in towards the Source (see my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**). I presented them in order to show what I think characterizes the spiritual practice as it exists in all the traditional wisdomtraditions. Ever since I have become increasingly puzzled over, how The Matrix Conspiracy - which claims to work in accordance with spirituality - is turning this upside down.

The paradox is that while The Matrix Sophists are claiming to create the authentic, autonomous, resource-filled and competent human being, at the same time is doing the exact opposite: it is making people dependent of therapist, coaches, others ideas and ideals; making them modeling and imitating so-called successful people, etc., etc.

The Matrix Conspiracy, and its belonging therapeutic techniques, thereby exposes the paradox, that the more resource-filled a human being is conceived to be, the more it has to be supported therapeutically. The more self-actualizing a human being becomes, the more it is in need of help to actualize itself. And the more responsibility a human being is said to have for its own life, the more this same human being, basically, is considered as a victim, as non-authentic, and therefore as powerless.

That means that if you don't share their ideas, and even are critical, you are considered as a non-authentic, powerless victim. That is one of the reasons why they think they don't have to argue with you but instead are trying to silence you through mumbo-jumbo and condescension. I have especially met this attitude in relation with 1) my kundalini-experiences, 2) my education, 3) when I tried to take an education as a health care assistant, 4) in my time as unemployed, and 5) from friends and family.

In my article **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing**, I am telling the whole story of this in depth.

In the first three books of my teaching you can see my starting critique of all this. But since the main issue of the books is my spiritual teaching, the critique is rather sporadic and unsystematic. As you can see in the descriptions of the books, I had actually also decided that this critique should be the final critique. But after 2010 I experienced how The Matrix Conspiracy increasingly was creeping into all aspects of my life. Especially because I also began to meet it in friends and family, I decided to write two books on The Matrix Conspiracy, which is dedicated the revelation of what I seriously see as the most dangerous ideology on Earth. But it is also connected with the re-introduction of philosophical counseling and my teaching.

My book **A Dictionary of Thought Distortions** is a follow-up book to the first three books on my teaching. It is also a reference book to the two books on the Matrix Conspiracy. In this way it is a kind of bridge between my teaching and the two Matrix Conspiracy books.

So, the present book is part 1 of two books on The Matrix Conspiracy. The two books consist of articles already published, but which, in the books, are collected and arranged under certain superior themes. There will therefore come some repetitions of the same themes. I have decided – except for a few changes - to leave that unchanged, since it can serve as a tool for understanding difficult problems.

The two books on The Matrix Conspiracy can, like **A Dictionary of Thought Distortions**, also be seen as textbooks. As textbooks I have provided them with a great deal of references to articles and books.

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

Both the three basic books on my teaching, the follow-up book *A Dictionary of Thought Distortions*, and the two books on The Matrix Conspiracy, can in this way

be seen as a kind of free internet library for people, who want to go into a deeper study of my teaching.

And, since this book is the first of two on The Matrix Conspiracy, I will begin with some articles that, in a new form, explain the philosophy behind my teaching. This philosophy is namely the central foundation for my critique of The Matrix Conspiracy. Hereafter I will go into The Matrix Conspiracy itself and its five programming technologies. Finally I will describe the karmic consequences of The Matrix Conspiracy: ego-inflation and the problem of the painbody.

I end the book with a description of the self-help guru James Arthur Ray and his involvement in a sweatlodge tragedy, where ego-inflation and the denial of the painbody were central causes.

Part 1: The experiential and intellectual background for my teaching

The Fascism of Theosophy

Theosophical society is a religious movement founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Harry Steel Olcott and William Q. Judge.

The movement was among the first, which introduced Indian philosophy and religion to the West. Its teaching unites Indian key concepts, as for instance reincarnation and karma, the idea of spiritual masters (called avatars), who pass on insight and realization to humans, and finally Neoplatonic inspired ideas about, that the divine principle emanates in the world and in humans, and that Man can be a part of the divine through realization and insight.

Theosophy is without comparison the religion, which has inspired most new religions and movements, as many hundred movements, in some shade, draw on fundamental ideas of Theosophy.

The teaching of Theosophy is introduced in a number of books and magazines; the most important books are written by, or are ascribed Madame Blavatsky (for instance "The Secret Doctrine", "Key to Theosophy", "The Voice of Silence") and Annie

Besant, Blavatsky's successor as president ("Ancient Wisdom"). Another central person is Alice Bailey, whose thoughts about a new divine world order is one of the pillars in New Age.

The teaching puts Man in the centre of its description of cosmos, because the final salvation, which shall bring unity with the divine, and which has consequences for both Man and cosmos, begins in Man and his growing spiritual realization and liberation.

To achieve realization through a line of various stages of realization is the goal in Theosophy. Man is divided in three parts or levels: the body is at the bottom in the hierarchy, and the spirit is at the top. Between these two is the soul as a mediating factor. The spirit shall learn to control the body. Man (and cosmos) consists of 7 planes, of which the first three belong to the material world, while the rest belong to the spiritual world. The movement goes from the pure physical to pure spirit.

Man is in his current condition caught in the matter and is tied to reincarnation, but can through development (evolution) work himself out of the current conditions and into a form of existence, which is characterized by pure spiritual being, unity with the divine principles.

In this quest Man receives help from the spiritual masters in The Great White Brotherhood, a spiritual hierarchy of masters, whose insights, on various levels, are beneficial for Man in the evolutionary development.

A critique of Theosophy

Spiritual seen, human beings have two complementary aspects: an energy aspect and a consciousness aspect. Seen from the energy aspect lawfulness rules: your body is subject to the physical laws of nature, your psychic system is subject to the lawfulness of the energy fields and of the energy transformations. The energy aspect is the area of compensatory karma; it is the area of experiences, the area of the personal and collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and therefore in absence of awareness, or absence of consciousness. And that also means that it in itself is without realization.

Seen from the consciousness aspect, then a human being seems to be akin to the wholeness, to be transcendent in relation to these lawfulnesses. The consciousness is the area of progressive karma, spiritual development; it is the area of realization, the area of the universal images of time, which work in synchronism with the Now. The Now seems to be a quality of awareness, and therefore also of consciousness and wholeness. Realization has to do with the three states the wholeness can be in: sleep,

dream, awake. So it is only here you can talk about the spiritual insights of the great mystics. It is only here you can talk about genuine mystical experiences; that is: experiences, which are followed by realization (see my article **What is karma?**).

In Theosophy everything is reduced to the energy aspect, though. And this reductionism is going again in other Theosophy-influenced directions (as for example New Age, Ufology, Ken Wilber, The Human Design System, The WingMakers Project - see my articles **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**, **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method**, **A critique of the Human Design System**, and **Time travel and the fascism of The WingMakers Project**).

This reductionism is due to the attempt of synthesizing spirituality and science. Theosophy is especially inspired by Darwinism, and its theories about human evolution (read more about reductionism in my article **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**). And the idea continues today in New Age and Ufology, where spirituality, apart from Darwinism, furthermore is sought synthesized with new developments within psychology, psychotherapy and natural science, especially biology and quantum mechanics.

The problem of Theosophy is its attempt of synthesizing spirituality, consciousness, evolution and race. According to Theosophy all evolution is basically the evolution of consciousness. So, consciousness is reduced to evolution, or, the energy aspect of Man.

According to Blavatsky's writings, there will be seven root races assembled for our Earth; each root race is divided into seven sub-races. Only five root races have appeared so far. According to prominent occultist and Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater, a colony will be established in Baja California by the Theosophical Society under the guidance of The Great White Brotherhood in the 28th century for the intensive selective eugenic breeding of the sixth root race.

A few million years in the future, the seventh root race will arise from the seventh sub-race of the sixth root race on the future continent that the sixth root race will be living on, and which will arise from the Pacific Ocean.

It is believed by some Theosophists that after the present round of human spiritual evolution, by reincarnation of souls in root races, is completed dozen million years from now, the human race will migrate to the planet Mercury to continue its spiritual and physical evolution.

Where does Theosophy get these ideas from? Leading members claim they have channeled it from the Great White Brotherhood. The phenomenon of channeling

plays a great role within Theosophy, where unenlightened persons claim to channel messages from the enlightened consciousness. But there are especially three problems with channeling:

1) The one problem is the thought distortion called Truth by Authority. Truth by Authority is about taking statements to be true simply because an alleged authority (experts, teachers, states of enlightenment, divine sources, paranormal abilities, etc.) on the matter has said/justified that they are true. A level of critical thinking is always appropriate, because the statement may be based on magical thinking, false premises, faulty reasoning, wishful thinking or vested interests.

People, who in their arguments/teachings, again and again, have to defer to some authority (experts, teachers, states of enlightenment, divine sources, paranormal abilities) in order to justify their arguments/teachings, are hundred percent on the wrong track, even if they should have some paranormal abilities. It is interesting to see, that true enlightened masters, as well as sober spiritual teachers, never do this. And interesting, that probably most of the many people, who have made a business of being clairvoyant/mediums/channelers etc., will fall for Truth by Authority (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

2) Another problem is, that spiritual seen, then nobody can tell you about your karmacially structures, or your spiritual evolution. All people, models or techniques - clairvoyants, channelers, regression therapists, shamans, Theosophy, Astrologers, prophets etc. etc. - who are claiming they can help you karmacial – that is: with your spiritual growth - are cognitional and ethical delusional and deceptive (read more about karma in my article **What is karma?**).

As mentioned, then the genuine karmacially structures do not lie in the collective time, but in the universal time, which work in synchronism with the Now. If the karma idea is used spiritual seen correctly, then the focus, instead of being projected out in something afar (past lives, a guru, birth, the future, Theosophy), will be present in something very near, namely only in the most intensive experiences of this actual life, and after that: in this actual Now with its possibility of realizing your innermost.

So the universal images are lying as a kind of dream-tracks and song-lines in your actual life here and now. Only here and now they can be discovered. Only Man himself can find the progressive karma. The consciousness has the key in its life. It helps nothing, what people through a system may be able to think about the collective time, or fantasize about karmacially experiences and spiritual evolution. Many of these experiences (for example about past lives) – and which have a certain reality for either the clairvoyant or the channeler – are collective fantasies.

3) The third problem is the problem of pseudohistory. Pseudohistory is purported history such as Afrocentrism, creationism, holocaust revisionism and the catastrophism of Immanuel Velikovsky. Pseudohistory should be distinguished from the ancient texts it is based on. The sagas, legends, myths and histories, which have been passed on orally or in written documents by ancient peoples are sometimes called pseudohistory. Some of it is pseudohistory, some of it is flawed history and some of it isn't history at all.

Pseudohistory should also be distinguished from historical fiction and fantasy. Anyone who cites a work of historical fiction as if it were a historical text is a practicing pseudohistorian. There are also writers of historical fiction who intentionally falsify and invent ancient history. A technique to do this is to claim to find an ancient document and publishing it in order to express one's own ideas. An example is *The Celestine Prophecy*, and *The WingMakers* story. A variation on this theme is to claim that one is channeling a book from some ancient being, e.g, *The Urantia Book* and *Bringers of the Dawn* (read more about channeling in my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**).

Before we go further it is important to mention, that evolutionism – also in its most modern Neodarwinistic version – is a natural historical report, and not a natural scientific theory. Neodarwinism can – as all other historical science – only retrospectively explain the development up to now in a rational way. This appears clearly from the fact, that it can't give any scientifically well-founded prediction of the future development. It is not possible with any reasonable precision to predict the future biological development on the background of the theoretical foundation of evolutionism.

Until today Man has not been able to do anything in order to change his genes. This has been changed with the modern genetic engineering, which already in principle has made it possible to change the genes of our gametes. In the future the problem about consciously changing peoples' genes in order to improve certain characteristics is not any technical difficulty. It is in turn a serious ethical and political problem about setting limits and about, where these limits have to be set.

As mentioned, then the reductionism of Theosophy is due to the attempt of synthesizing spirituality and science. Theosophy is especially inspired by Darwinism, and its theories about human evolution. And the idea continues today in New Age and Ufology, where spirituality, apart from Darwinism, furthermore is sought synthesized with new developments within psychology, psychotherapy, natural science, especially biology and quantum mechanics. The whole thing is presented as an ideology with a lot of attempts to predict the future evolution of Man, often connected with eugenics: the applied "science" or the bio-social movement (Social

Darwinism) which advocates the use of practises aimed at improving the genetic composition of people, usually referring to human populations.

So, the evolution of consciousness is in Theosophy reduced to seven root races, epochs, or stages, in the evolution of Man. And such a philosophy of consciousness ends in serious metaphysical problems of the mind, such as the free will problem, and the problem of personal identity, which are quite central, when you talk about spirituality (about the problem of personal identity and free will: see my article **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**).

In Theosophy, the seven rays are said to be seven major types of Light-substance (spirit/matter) (waves/particles) that compose the created universes. These are also believed to convey “Divine Qualities”.

We have already seen how Blavatsky uses the number seven in her classification of the seven root races as the seven stages of the evolution of consciousness; a classification, which is based on the theory of the seven rays.

According to Alice Bailey, each person has a soul ray that remains the same through all their incarnations, and a personality ray that is different for each incarnation. Each ray is also correspondent with certain masters within the Great White Brotherhood, and with particular planets, cycles, nations, etc. The seven rays are the basis for what Alice Bailey called New Age Psychology – she divides everyone in the human race into these seven psychological types (read more about personality typing in my article **Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice**).

Theosophy’s classification-system is harmful because it involves all the problems of what I call The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (see my article **The Hermeneutics of suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing**). There is no evidence for such systems at all. How do we test these kinds of claims? We cant.

In that way it ends in being a refined way of justifying prejudice. Using Theosophy’s classification-systems are simply a way of creating a system of prejudice. And that is anti-spiritual.

One of many examples of Theosophy-prejudices, is for example the racial theories. Blavatsky used the compounded word Root-race as a technical term to describe each of the seven successive stages of human evolution that take place over large time periods in her cosmology. Although the whole humanity belongs to the same Root-race, her evolutionary view naturally admits a difference in development between various ethnic groups; for example she declared, that at this point of their

evolutionary cycle the Semites, especially the Arabs, are “degenerate in spirituality and perfected in materiality.”

In Blavatsky’s view, she was giving cold “scientific” facts (taught by what she called the “Occult Science”); a clear symptom of pseudoscience (about pseudoscience: see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**).

In Alice Bailey the prejudices are getting even worse. Her vision of a unified society includes a global “spirit of religion” different from traditional religious forms and including the concept of the Age of Aquarius.

A lot of controversy has arisen around some of Bailey’s statements on nationalism, American isolationism, Soviet totalitarianism, Fascism, Zionism, Nazism, race relations, Africans, Jews, and the religions of Judaism and Christianity. Yonassan Gershom and others have claimed that her writings contain racist material.

Alice Bailey for example wrote about what she described as “the Negro Problem”, and “the Jewish Problem.”

Before World War II, she for example wrote: “The major racial problem has, for many centuries, been the Jewish, which has been brought to a critical point by Germany...”

Bailey wrote extremely critical about the Jewish people, referring to them collectively as a race, with group karma, characteristics, and behaviours. Specifically, she was of the opinion that Jews embody the characteristics of “materialism, cruelty and a spiritual conservatism” and the “separative, selfish, lower concrete mind.”

Bailey described Jews as “the most reactionary and conservative race in the world”, etc., etc., etc.

Later she stated that the Jews were themselves responsible for the bad treatment they received; that is: statements similar to the Law of Attraction devotees.

So, there are clear fascistic elements in Theosophy.

Although Fascism is considered to have first emerged in France in the 1880s, its influences have been considered to go back as far as Julius Caesar. Thomas Hobbes, Niccoló Machiavelli, and Hegel have also been considered as influential, as well as contemporary ideas such as the syndicalism of Georges Sorel, the futurism of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the nationalist and authoritarian philosophy of Oswald Spengler and the conservatism and Social Darwinism of Enrico Corradini.

The synthesizing of authority, hierarchy, race, eugenics, purity, unity, spirit, within these influences, is shared by Theosophy, where reductionisms such as biologism, psychologism, sociologism and historism go hand in hand. And the tendency continues in New Age and Ufology.

Fascism is often mischaracterized as “extreme right”, although writers have found placing Fascism on a conventional left-right political spectrum difficult. There is a scholarly consensus that Fascism was influenced by both left and right. Some fascists have themselves promoted their ideology as a “third way” between Capitalism and Communism.

In that way we see, that Theosophy, and all its branches, is a central part of my concept of the Matrix Conspiracy (see my article **The Matrix Conspiracy**).

Part two of this article:

When he was 13 years old the philosopher Krishnamurti (who was raised in Theosophical Society in India) became chosen to be channel for Maitreya, who, in the ideas of the Great White Brotherhood, is identified as Jesus, a spiritual master. Annie Besant founded a theosophic wing on this purpose called “The Order of the Star in the East”, which Krishnamurti later dissolved. He did it on the paradoxical background, that he apparently himself entered into a process of enlightenment; that is: that he himself became a spiritual master, not a channel.

The aim of part two of this article is in this way an investigation of the difference between a spiritual teaching, which is coming directly from an enlightened master, and the teaching which non-enlightened people are claiming to channel from enlightened masters. The aim is also to show his relevance for my own teaching, and for the new movement of philosophical counseling.

The philosophy of Krishnamurti

Introduction

This article is part two of my article **The fascism of Theosophy**.

The philosopher Krishnamurti became raised in the Theosophical society in India under the tutelage of Charles Webster Leadbeater and Annie Besant, leaders of the Theosophical Society at the time. When he was 13 years old Krishnamurti became

chosen to be "channel" for Maitreya, who, in the ideas of The Great White Brotherhood, is identified as Jesus, a spiritual master. Annie Besant founded a Theosophic wing on this purpose, called "The order of the Star in the East", which Krishnamurti later dissolved. He did it on the background of the paradoxical circumstance, that he apparently himself entered into a process of enlightenment; that is: that he himself became a spiritual master, not a channel.

The aim with this article is in this way an investigation of the difference between a spiritual teaching, which is coming directly from an enlightened master, and the teaching, which non-enlightened people are claiming to channel from enlightened masters (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**). The aim is also to show his relevance for my own teaching, and for the new movement of philosophical counseling (see my article **Philosophical counseling as an alternative for psychotherapy**).

The philosophy of Krishnamurti

Born 12 May 1895 into a Telugu family in what was then colonial India, Krishnamurti lived next to the Theosophical Society headquarters at Adyar in Madras in his early adolescence. At Adyar, he encountered prominent occultist and Theosophist Charles Webster Leadbeater. He was subsequently raised under the tutelage of Leadbeater and Annie Besant, leaders of the Theosophical Society at the time.

Leadbeater and Besant believed Krishnamurti to be the likely vehicle for a messianic unity, the so-called *World Teacher*. As a young man, he disavowed this idea and dissolved the worldwide organization (the Order of the Star) established to support it.

The background for his decision was as follows: During a stay at Ojai valley in California, in August-September 1922, Krishnamurti went through an intense, "life-changing" experience. It has been simultaneously and invariably characterized as a spiritual awakening, a psychological transformation, and a physical conditioning. The initial events happened in two distinct phases: first a three-day spiritual experience which was followed, two weeks later, by a long-lasting condition that Krishnamurti and those around him would refer to as the *process*; this condition would recur, at frequent intervals and with varying intensity, until his death.

According to witnesses it all started on 17 August 1922, with Krishnamurti complaining of extraordinary pain at the nape of his neck and a hard, ball-like swelling. Over the next couple of days the symptoms worsened, with increasing pain, extreme physical discomfort and sensitivity, total loss of appetite and occasional

delirious ramblings. Then, he seemed to lapse into unconsciousness; instead he recounted that he was very much aware of his surroundings, and that while in that state he had an experience of mystical union. The following day the symptoms and the experience intensified, climaxing with a sense of “immense peace”.

Following – and apparently related to – these events, in early September, a strange condition, which came to be known as the *process*, started as an almost nightly, regular, occurrence. These new incidents continued with short intermissions until October; later, the *process* would resume intermittently. As in the separate three-day experience of August, the process involved varying degrees of pain, physical discomfort and sensitivity, occasionally a lapse into a childlike state, and sometimes an apparent fading out of consciousness explained – by Krishnamurti or those attending him – as either his body giving in to pain, or as him “going off”.

These experiences were accompanied, or followed, by what was interchangeable described as *presence*, *benediction*, *immensity* and *sacredness*, a state distinct from the *process*. This state – said to be felt by others present – would later, and increasingly, often reoccur independently of the *process*. Krishnamurti regularly substituted *the other* or *the otherness* as shorthand description for this particular experience; also a way of conveying the sense of impenetrability regarding this *otherness*, the strange sensibility it affected, and the unusual state of consciousness it precipitated, as described in his diaries and elsewhere.

The above events, and subsequent occurrences of the *process*, were not revealed publicly until 1975, while Krishnamurti’s descriptions of both the *process* and of the *other* were first published a year later, in 1976.

Since the initial occurrences of 1922, several explanations have been proposed for these events and for the process in general. Leadbeater and other Theosophists, who believe they are authorities on such matters, expected the “vehicle” to have certain paranormal experiences, but were nevertheless mystified by these developments, and unable to explain the whole thing.

In the meantime the rumors concerning the messianic status of Krishnamurti had reached fever pitch as the 1925 Theosophical Society Convention was planned, on the 50th anniversary of its founding, with high expectations – among Theosophists and OSE members – of significant happenings. Paralleling the increasing adulation was Krishnamurti’s growing discomfort with it. In related developments, prominent Theosophists and their fractions within the society were trying to favorably position themselves relative to the *Coming*, widely rumoured to be approaching; “extraordinary” pronouncements of spiritual advancement were made by various

parties, disputed by others, and the internal Theosophical politics further alienated Krishnamurti.

On 13 November 1925, at age 27, Krishnamurti's brother Nitya died in Ojai from complications of influenza and tuberculosis. Despite Nitya's poor health, his death was completely unexpected by Krishnamurti, and fundamentally shook his belief in Theosophy and his faith in the leaders of the Theosophical Society. He had received their assurances regarding Nitya's health, and had come to believe that "Nitya was essential for his life-mission and therefore he would not be allowed to die", a belief shared by Annie Besant and Krishnamurti's circle.

Pupul Jayakar, one of Krishnamurti's friends, wrote that "his belief in the Masters and the hierarchy had undergone a total revolution." Moreover, Nitya had been the "last surviving link to his family and childhood....The only person to whom he could talk openly, his best friend and companion".

According to eyewitness accounts the news "broke him completely". He struggled for days to overcome his sorrow: "Day after day we watched him heart-broken, disillusioned. Day after day he seemed to change, gripping himself together to face life...He was going through an inner revolution, finding new strength."

Jayakar stated that in later years "Krishnamurti accepted that perhaps the intensity of sorrow had triggered a vast, wordless perception" while biographer Roland Vernon suggests that in the end, "Krishnamurti discovered, at the root of sorrow, an emptiness that could be not touched by hurt". – also see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**.

Twelve days after Nitya's death he was "immensely quiet, radiant and free of all sentiment and emotion"; "there was not a shadow..to show what he had went through." The experience of his brother's death seems to have shattered any remaining illusions, and a "new vision" was now "coming into being".

Over the next years Krishnamurti's new vision and consciousness continued to develop. New concepts appeared in his talks, discussions, and correspondence, together with an evolving vocabulary that was progressively free of Theosophical terminology.

Krishnamurti dissolved the Order during the annual *Star Camp* at Ommen, the Netherland, on 3 August 1929 in front of Annie Besant, three thousand members, and a radio audience. In the so-called Dissolution Speech, he stated that he had made his

decision after “careful consideration” during the previous two years, and said among other things:

“I maintain that truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people along a particular path...This is no magnificent deed, because I do not want followers, and I mean this. The moment you follow someone you cease to follow truth. I am not concerned whether you pay attention to what I say or not. I want to do a certain thing in the world and I am going to do it with unwavering concentration. I am concerning myself with only one essential thing: to set man free. I desire to free him from all cages. From all fears, and not to found religions, new sects, nor to establish new theories and new philosophies.”

Following the dissolution prominent Theosophists turned against Krishnamurti - now a fully enlightened master - including Leadbeater who reputedly stated, “the Coming had gone wrong”. A human being, who - within Theosophy, where the absolute authority is non-enlightened “channelers” – is reaching enlightenment, must be considered as a person whose path has gone wrong.

Krishnamurti spend the rest of his life holding dialogues and giving public talks around the world on the nature of belief, truth, sorrow, freedom, death, and the quest for a spiritually fulfilled life. He became an independent writer and speaker on philosophical and spiritual issues including psychological revolution, the nature of the mind, meditation, human relationships, and bringing about positive social change. Maintaining that society is ultimately the product of the interactions of individuals, he held that fundamental change in society, can emerge only through freely undertaken radical change in the individual. Krishnamurti stressed that the need for a revolution in the psyche of every human being and posited that such revolution cannot be brought about by any external entity, be it religious, political, or social.

Krishnamurti denounced the concept of saviors, spiritual leaders, or any other intermediaries to reality, and urged people to directly discover the underlying causes of the problems facing individuals and society. Such discovery he considered the natural outcome of unconditional, absolute psychological freedom, which he proclaimed to be within reach of everyone, irrespective of background, ability, or disposition. He vowed to work towards this goal of universal psychological freedom, and stated that understanding the actual relationships individuals have with themselves, society and nature is of vital importance in attaining this objective.

He declared allegiance to no nationality, caste, religion, or philosophy, and spent the rest of his life traveling the world as an independent speaker. He authored several books, among them *The First and Last Freedom* (1954), *The Only Revolution* (1969), and *Krishnamurti's Notebook* (1976). A large collection of his talks and discussions have also been published.

Krishnamurti's last talk was in Madras, India, in January 1986, a month before his death in his home in Ojai, California (aged 90).

Krishnamurti's relevance for the new movement of philosophical practice

In connection with Krishnamurti the concept of philosophical counseling is important. Philosophical Practice is a new alternative form of counseling to people, who don't feel, that priests, doctors, coaches or psychotherapists, can offer them enough help concerning their spiritual/existential questions and problems. It is a possibility for asking a *philosopher* for advice.

It is a rebirth of something very old, perhaps close to the authentic origin of philosophy, for example Socrates' philosophical dialogues at the town square in Athens, or the philosophers in ancient India and China, who ordinary people could come and consult regarding their daily problems.

The idea about Philosophical Practice, in its current form, originally came from the German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach. The first of May 1981 he opened, as the first, a Philosophical Counseling-practice. In 1982 he founded the German Society of Philosophical Practice, and ever since the phenomenon has spread all over the world.

In 2002 the Danish Society of Philosophical Practice was founded and established by a circle of philosophers, psychologists, idea-historians and people of education, with the purpose to create a professional forum in Denmark for development, research and information about the Philosophical Practice. This happens through lectures, courses, network, and others activities, which can promote the understanding and interest in Philosophical Practice, as well as the society has plans about continuing education and certification of philosophical practitioners in Denmark.

However there doesn't exist an *actual* education to philosophical practitioner. But in order to ensure the professional competence, and not to become mixed with the fount of educations, which is found in the alternative therapy market, most philosophical practitioners agree, that a minimum requirement to a philosophical practitioner is a MA in philosophy or history of ideas.

In addition to this it is possible to take an education as *Master in counseling*, where Philosophical Counseling is included as one of the modules. This education is offered by Denmark's Pedagogical University. One of the pioneers of this education is associate professor at DPU, Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, who also is the first in Denmark who has involved Philosophical Counseling in an academical treatise: *Det filosofiske Liv – et dannelsesideal for eksistenspædagogikken* (Gyldendal 2002)

The relationship between science and alternative health care/consultation is a subject, which is very popular for the time being. In this connection Philosophical Practice is an extremely interesting phenomenon, partially because it features many of the elements which the educations in the alternative therapy market also seek to implicate, partially because there at the universities (especially at DPU) are being worked with developing Philosophical Practice as a serious and scientifically well-founded way of counseling. However this still happens in a rather academical way, and in Denmark there are still very few practising philosophical practitioners.

All this has inspired me in my own work, where the central issues is the paranormal area, but where I precisely use the philosophical practice as method.

Philosophical Practice is a unifying term of two different basic methods: Philosophical Counseling and The Philosophical Café. Where Philosophical Counseling mainly is connected to dialogues face to face, then The Philosophical Café of course is used in groups. Both methods are however common in that way, that they, through dialogue, involve the participants in a self-inquiring practice, where it is about asking philosophical questions.

In the following I will concentrate about Philosophical Counseling, and show differences and similarities in relation to psychotherapy and religious counseling.

In Philosophical Counseling philosophy is understood as a way of life, where you strive after wisdom and happiness; that is to say: where you practise a certain realized and clarified way of life. In this it differs from the academical philosophy, where the work with philosophy is a purely theoretical activity, included the so-called practical philosophy.

Traditions where the concept of philosophy slides in one with a certain existential form of training and therapy, is found, both in the East and in the West. From the East can be mentioned Indian and Buddhist philosophy, Taoism and Zen Buddhism. From the West can be mentioned Greek and Roman philosophy, and the whole tradition of mysticism within Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

A good introduction to this is Aldous Huxley's book *The Perennial Philosophy*. A more academical introduction to the understanding of philosophy as a way of life, is found in Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life - Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*.

Even though the modern concept of Philosophical Counseling primarily goes back to the Stoics and Socrates, then the great philosophers within all the different wisdomtraditions always have sought to pass on an art of life of a more or less philosophical kind. They namely asked philosophical questions - that is: *not* in an intellectual way as in the academical philosophy, and *not* as that to repeat a mantra - no, they asked philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way, as the wordless silence within a strong, existential wonder. As Aristotle said, then philosophy begins with wonder. We all know the wonder we can feel when we look at the stars, or when we are confronted with all the suffering in the world. This wonder fills us with a silence, in which all thoughts, explanations and interpretations withers away. It is in this silence we ask ourselves the great, philosophical questions, open inwards and outwards, without words, without evaluations.

The wordless silence within the existential wonder is the same as asking philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way. And it is this philosophical questioning which can be the beginning of a deep examination of Man and reality – a lifelong, philosophical voyage of discovery towards the Source of life: the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

However most people loose this silence, and get satisfied with explanations and interpretations. That is the difference between the great philosophers and ordinary people. The great philosophers had a strong longing after something inexpressible, after something which couldn't be satisfied by explanations and interpretations – perhaps a longing after awakening – or after realization. With the whole of the body, with life and blood, with soul and spirit, with brain and with heart, they asked into, and were investigating themselves and life. They asked questions to everything, and were investigating it in a meditative way, as if it was something completely new. Simply because this philosophical questioning and inquiry itself constitutes an absolute central meditation-technique, which opens the consciousness in towards the Source. In other words they used philosophical questions as universal koans. All other spiritual exercises were in fact only used to support this.

It is the philosophical questioning and inquiry that in the end will open the consciousness in towards the Source. In all wisdomtraditions you can find

descriptions that show that the moment of enlightenment happens in this way, either alone, or in a dialogue with a master.

The clearest modern example on how this happens in practice, is in my opinion Krishnamurti.

The essence of Krishnamurti's teaching is contained in the declaration he was putting forward in 1929, where he said: "Truth is a pathless land!" By doing so he comes to be a spiritual alternative to the false spirituality of our time, which central declaration says: "Truth is a land with many paths!" - see my article **The Matrix Conspiracy**.

The unusual and radical about Krishnamurti is precisely, that he uses philosophical questions as his central meditation-technique, and that all other spiritual exercises only shall be used to support this. By doing so Krishnamurti also has become the central source of inspiration to my development of the concept of **Meditation as an Art of Life**.

Krishnamurti uses philosophical questions as a type of universal koans with the intent of opening the consciousness in towards the Source: The Good, the True and The Beautiful – what Krishnamurti himself uses many various names for: the Otherness, Being, the Blessing, Love.

Krishnamurti was putting many various types of philosophical questions. The way he was investigating them in was by letting each and every question become followed by the question *Who am I?* - which means that each and every time someone was putting forward a question/problem, he went into an investigation of the one who was asking the question – like *Who asks? Who is it who is trying to find out the truth?*, etc.

Krishnamurti is as mentioned a so-called enlightened master, which means that his consciousness is at one with the Source. In his book *Krishnamurti's Notebook* he describes experiences connected with the condition of enlightenment.

Time after time Krishnamurti makes people aware, that supporting exercises cannot lead to the Source. The purpose with the supporting exercises is only to give the practitioner the calmness, which is a necessity in order to acquire the philosophical question's ideas and concepts in an every-day, self-inquiring practice. For example he recommended yoga to keep the body flexible, and to sit quiet in passive awareness (like Zazen in Zen Buddhism), and finally meditative writing.

Krishnamurti said many times, that he didn't want any followers. His teaching is about spiritual practice as becoming a light for oneself - about developing spiritual by developing your own teaching.

He said, that you should use his talks and writings as a mirror; which means: for meditative listening or reading.

This means, that you shall not listen to him, or read his words, in order to get new information, but in order to go into another state of consciousness when you listen – that is, that you, as a listener to his talks, or reader of his words, rather than evaluating, are trying to relate neutral to his teaching. You take, so to speak, a mentally step backwards, and observe yourself and what is happening. You use Krishnamurti's teaching as a mirror, in which you discover yourself. In this way Krishnamurti transforms his own oneness-consciousness to the individual. You move from the outside teacher to the inner teacher. The Source in yourself is becoming activated. You become your own teacher.

By doing so Krishnamurti's teaching fits into our postmodernistic time, but rather than becoming a postmodernistic pilgrim, who jumps from one path (theory) to another – and therefore remains on the pure *theoretical plane* - you become a real pilgrim who, through Krishnamurti's teaching, develops your own teaching, and hereby follows a continuous and ongoing *practice* in the postmodernistic labyrinth of paths.

In the former time's spiritual pedagogics the teacher took the central place in the teacher-student mandalas, whereby the hierarchical structure was able to be unfold (Christ and Buddha in the centre). In the newer time's spiritual pedagogics (maybe because of the Egoextreme of our time, and the many people who end up in Ego-inflation) the development aims towards holding free the center of the circles, whereby an ideally equal spirituality can begin to unfold. This development is especially represented by Krishnamurti, who in this way seeks to make the Source common. In such a mandala-structure is that, which before symbolical was gathered in the centre, now unfolded and made common in the periphery. The aim is completely to avoid the guru-centric. Anybody, who has worked with Krishnamurti's teaching, can recognize this.

Philosophical counseling is in the same way not guru-centric and can't succeed without the guest's own active participation. The insights are the guest's own, as well as the relief from false conceptions and restrictive assumptions.

Philosophical Counseling is in other words a rebirth of that kind of dialogue, which is not based on religious/political doctrines, ideologies, myths or conceptions (or as today: **management theory and the self-help industry**), but on realization and inner transformation, and which has been used by great masters such as Socrates, Epicurus, Confucius, Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti, Dalai Lama and Eckhart Tolle.

Even though these masters give answers to questions, then these answers therefore are not conclusions to anything, as you for example see it in politics or religion. The answers are only tools for the questioner's own self-inquiry. That will say, that they are a help discovering the questions'/problems' implicit *philosophical* questions, and investigating them in a meditative-existential way. And this is the central about Philosophical Counseling. This also means, that Philosophical Counseling is not a philosophy-class (teaching history of philosophy). And if there are involved answers, which other philosophers or theories have given, then it is only with the purpose of the self-inquiring practice.

You may say, that Philosophical Counseling follows the teaching that *Truth is a pathless land*. In that way Philosophical Counseling helps the guest to develop spiritual by developing his own teaching - to become a light for himself, to become his own teacher where he happens to stand – and at the same time has the philosophical aspects of the spiritual practice with him, as it is the core in all wisdom traditions.

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 away 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 personal development. The problem with this personal development is that it has developed into a never-ending development, an egoistic philosophy (see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

What is, after all, life? Is it not all the time something new? It is something, which constantly is changed and 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, which the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber called The Eternal Thou.

Another Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, worked, with inspiration from Buber, also with such a communicative thinking (very close to Krishnamurti - feel the irony and remember the leading Theosopher Alice Bailey's words about Jews – see part one of this article **The fascism of theosophy**).

Levinas namely calls the unique presence in life *The Otherness* (God). The Otherness manifests itself as The Other, or as The Thou. Man can't be understood isolated, but always in a relation with, or in a meeting with "The Other". In the other's face, in thy neighbour's appearance, you meet an unfounded (metaphysical understood) demand about 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 to the world. Man, and also language, is constituted by the indispensable connection with the Otherness - (as we remember, then also Niels Bohr 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 for 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, because precisely the Otherness (the new) opposes the system (the old). That, which is really something else, or different, is in accordance with Levinas *The Other*, whom you are standing face-to-face with, the other person. This relationship is the foundation of ethics, and not a system (besides Theosophy itself, see my article **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method** as an example of an attempt of building an all-embracing philosophical system). So just like in Buber there also in Levinas is a disposition to a philosophical life-practice very similar to the philosophy of Krishnamurti.

Krishnamurti often told about how important it is to be alone. But to be alone is according to Krishnamurti not about isolating yourself in your relationships, on the contrary. But to be alone is to reject the moral of society, of ideologies of all kinds, not to adapt yourself to such (see my article **The difference between philosophical education and ideological education**). It is - in your opinion formation, and in your identity formation - to reject striving towards being something else than what you are, to reject imitating others, and being a slave of their ideas, where your actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt (authenticity is also a central concept in the self-help industry, but they are ending in the direct opposite – see my article **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing** – about this peculiar paradox).

Only in this rejection, in this alonebeing, you can be in a true relationship. It is the alonebeing in the I-Thou relationship; the I-Thou relationship between you and the Otherness, which is something carrying, something granted, something, which is greater than yourself; something, which you can characterize as an absolute Otherness in relation to the created world. It is this instance, which leads you out to

the things in an opening, self-forgetful and involving way, like in a painting by the Jewish painter Marc Chagall. This power exists in the Now's relationship with everything. It is life itself.

So the self-forgetful alonebeing is spiritual because the life fulfilment, which life itself contains, is so absolute, so complete, that there herein is something eternal and endless.

So if you are present in the Now, actively and involved from the awareness, the innermost in yourself, and from the heartfulness - that is to say: totally, with the whole of yourself, and therefore in self-forgetful freedom and world absorption - then you will experience eternity and infinity. You will experience the true essence of nature, which is the Otherness.

Only in this relationship you can be yourself in your opinion formation and identity formation, live in compliance with your own essence, and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action.

The philosophy of Karen Blixen

In this article I will try to explain the philosophy of one of the greatest storytellers in the 20th century. Many have tried that before, but I will try to do it with a special touch. This special touch is an explanation of the philosophy of a woman whose immense sorrow over unhappy love, opened her to ancient secret knowledge and powers, that very few understand.

My article is – besides my own experiences with extraordinary powers - inspired by what the Danish philosopher and spiritual teacher Jes Bertelsen, has investigated in his strange little book *Inner Tantra* (1989).

The philosophy of Karen Blixen is not easy to understand, since she never put it out directly in words, only through her stories. In order to explain I will try to characterize a particular area of the polar relationship of some collective energy-processes, where informations from the Source (the divine energy-source, the otherness – God, whatever you might call it), through individual persons, are transformed via the mandala-structures of the universal images, down through the polarized structures of the collective images, to the personal images.

(Read more about this image-structure under your thoughts – which meditation opens up for – in my articles **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice**, and **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with mystical experiences**).

In other words: the phenomenon, which often is called energy- and consciousness-transmission - (in my article **A critique of the Indian Oneness Movement and its use of Western success coaching** I have shown the false use of this ability; that is: the use of what they in Indian philosophy call Deeksha, Shaktipat, etc.).

The images in the universal time include their polar partners, they are a kind of visionary mandala-structures, which work in synchronism with the Now. They therefore function synthesizing and healing. The images in the collective and personal time eliminate these polar partners, and therefore they work separating in polar tensions. Furthermore they work in sequences in past and future.

Images in the collective time are therefore a dangerous intermediate area between the universal and personal time. The collective time lies on a so-called astral plane, and its degree of fascination is known from fairy-tales, myths, archetypes, primordial images, dreams.

When individual people have an opening to the collective time, their creativity, and their reality-creating ability, are set free in fascinating degree. Experiences from here are experiences such as kundalini, clairvoyance, astral travels, mythological visions, miracles, channeling, UFOs, memories from past lives, Near-death experiences, possession states.

However you are, in this astral state, still on the plane of the collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and you are in danger ending up in a spiritual crisis. A spiritual crisis is an expression of, that you have gone out in the collective time with your Ego, without having done the philosophical preliminary work; that is to say: the realization-work and the ethical training. The Ego will then make you loose your way in the collective time. This can happen in two ways: either as suffering (often called The Dark Night of The Soul), or as Ego-inflation (further reading about this: **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena** and **The ego-inflation in the New Age and the self-help environment**).

In the following I will (in order to explain the philosophy of Karen Blixen) look at three ways of realization, in which individual persons can have an access to the collective time's area of energy, and how this energy can work both constructive and destructive:

1. The realized transmission of energy and consciousness
2. The lesser realized transmission of energy and consciousness
3. The unrealized transmission of energy and consciousness

1. The realized transmission of energy and consciousness

Around ethical highly placed spiritual teachers, there seem to be formed existential mandala-structures, which, as great energy-whirls, canalize highly growth-advancing energy and consciousness-waves from the Source (the Now, life itself). These mandala-structures necessarily have to arrange themselves after the collective images' polarization-patterns in past and future, whereby the lines are formed, which the energy and the transmissions can follow into the personal images, which after all also only work in past and future.

These energy-mandalas are in religious art archetypal portrayed in for example the classic configurations around Christ (the four evangelists and their symbolical power) and Buddha (the Dyani-Buddhas with their esoterical figures).

Such mandala-fields are constelled concretely among the students, who relate to such a teacher. And in these fields, constituted by human beings, the Source manifests itself concretely-existential.

In the former time's spiritual pedagogics the teacher took the central place in these mandalas, whereby the hierarchical structure was able to be unfold (Christ and Buddha in the centre). In the newer time's spiritual pedagogics (maybe because of the Ego-extreme in our time, and the many people who, because of ego-inflated psycho-religious movements as the New Thought movement, and the self-help industry as such, end up in Ego-inflation – see my articles **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction** and **Management theory and the self-help industry**) the development aims towards holding free the center of the circles, whereby an ideal equal spirituality can begin to unfold.

This development is especially represented by Krishnamurti, who in this way seeks to make the Source common. In such a mandala-structure is that, which before symbolical was gathered in the centre, now unfolded and made common in the periphery. The aim is completely to avoid the guru-centric. Anybody, who has worked with Krishnamurti's teaching, can recognize this (see my article **The philosophy of Krishnamurti**).

When an individual person has a realized access to the collective time's area of energy, we have to do with a spiritual teacher of one or the other kind. The realized transmission of energy and consciousness will always be characterised by a spiritual teacher, who not only has realized the collective time's astral worlds, but in addition to this also the universal time, and therefore truth and reality (which means that he or she is an enlightened master). This teacher is therefore able to discriminate between the image and the reality, and therefore able to relate relatively to the relative and absolutely to the absolute (what critical thinking is all about – see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**). The collective forms of energy are here used for spiritual purposes (where the energy is turned towards the Now, and therefore the Source and the essence).

Such teachers function as energy-distributers and energy-spreaders to individual persons, who are students and disciples of this teacher, a kind of transformation-phenomenon, where the individual persons are lifted into the spiritual dimension with its universal images, insights and experiences of love.

To teach spiritual consists after all in, among other things, in passing on energy (love, information, healing, direct transmission of spiritual consciousness). Only an enlightened master can do this. The enormous amount of New Age teachers calling themselves spiritual teachers are therefore an extremely dangerous inflation of knowledge about spirituality (see my article **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**).

The passed on energy from the spiritual dimension is, from the medium of an enlightened master, spreading itself like waves out towards those, who are open, and those, who can learn and receive. This wavevibration-process goes through the mandala-structures of the universal images, which work in synchronism with the Now (the spiritual dimension) to the polar tension-tracks in the collective images, which work in past and future, in order to be able to reproduce itself in the personal images, which after all also only work in past and future. The waves have to be able to travel. The energy has to be able to spread itself from higher levels, via the teacher, and out to those, who can grow in this field.

Around such a teacher there in other words arises an universal image, a kind of mandala-structure, created by the teacher and the students around him.

Most known is as mentioned Jesus and his disciples, or Buddha and his disciples. But it can also happen in a monastery, for example around Francis of Assisi, Hildegard von Bingen, or around Socrates and his students.

In such a group-energetical mandala-structure in the Now, the polar relationship in the collective time is organized in such a way, that energy can be send and received, arise and travel like rings in water.

The greatest source of energy we, via our common Ego-consciousness (the personal images), have at our disposal, lies in our sexuality. All spiritual practice is about transforming sexual energy into spirituality.

In the work of spiritual teachers you can talk about a conscious making use of group-energetical mandala-structures. All such existential manifested mandalas have that in common, that the sexual energy here uses other lines than the usual.

Whether the sexuality is transformed through exercises, prayer, and meditation, or it happens through conscious taken over unhappy fate (illness or the death of the beloved, which I below shall investigate with reference to Karen Blixen), then the conscious turned inwards sexuality opens for knowledge about, and experiences of the collective images of time. Hereby is released an extensive and common human energy, which can express itself in the existential environment around the concerned energy-sources.

There exist traces of this many places; and there is often offence connected to it. The conditions are not realized for what, they really are. People choose to understand from their own conditions, understandable enough. In addition to this shall be added, that these energetical structures are subtle, they are extremely powerful, and they are in themselves neither good or evil. To a high degree it depends of the participants and their philosophical integration, and their realization work and ethical practice, what use there is made of these powers and functions.

One can therefore not blame observers, partially that the phenomena are misjudged, partially that they easily awake suspicions. For surely is it namely, that such energy-phenomena often enough have become used in lesser beneficial situations.

2. The lesser realized transmission of energy and consciousness

The same energy, which can be used unselfish, can namely also be used turned stimulative into the Ego-structures, whereby the Ego can loose balance and expand to a super-Ego, or in another way be demonized. It is this, that happens in the spiritual crisis. You have gone out in the collective time with your Ego.

The lesser realized transmission of energy and consciousness is therefore characterised by people, who admittedly have an opening to the collective time, but

not to the universal time (although Karen Blixen, as we shall see, seems to be an aesthetical borderfigure). Such people are often not able to discriminate between the image and the reality, and therefore they relate absolutely to the relative. They are caught in magical thinking.

In *Out of Africa* Karen Blixen somewhere describes the magic of the words. The natives named for instance an European after an animal, and a human being, who through many years, by all his surroundings, has been named with one animal-name, finally happens to feel himself related with the animal, he is named after; he recognizes himself in this animal.

In the natives' ability to create myths they don't discriminate between the word and the thing, the name and the named. The white men are really, in the eyes of the natives, both humans and animals. In the same way with their linkage of spirits and machines.

Karen Blixen tells about how the natives, because of this mythical "gift", can put experiences on humans, which they can't defend themselves against, and not get out of. They can make humans into symbols. She is telling, that it is a kind of magic, which is used on you, and that you later never completely can disentangle from it. It can be a painful, heavy fate to be exposed as one or the other symbol.

But also in the Western civilizations we become exposed for such a magic. It is not something, which we have come over. Now it is happening through one or the other kind of religious or political propaganda - and in particular through the media storm, which transforms humans into consumers. "You are what you eat!"

It is also this magic George Orwell describes in his novel 1984, with the language called Newspeak; a language created by the rulers in order to control thinking. We all know it more or less. If you, by your surroundings, constantly are being induced some kind of image, you will in the end begin to believe in it, even if it is not true. Especially in family relations we see how family members are being induced roles, which are incredible difficult to disentangle from, because family relations also have with love to do.

All this is magical thinking, and there are a lot of thought distortions built into it, for example the thought distortion *arbitrary inference*, which means, that you make a causal linking of factors, which is accidental or misleading (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**). The main reason for the rise of magical thinking is that you don't discriminate between image and reality, the map and the landscape.

True spirituality is about discriminating between language and reality. Discrimination is a central virtue in critical thinking. The Dominican mystics call this step *Discriminatio*, the ability to discriminate between how the energy is used temporal or religious. And despite that magical thinking actually can create something magical, then in true spirituality it is still something temporal, or relatively (black magic/occultism), which will create negative karma if practised (in my article on New Thought I have explained how this movement is a direct teaching of black magic – see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**).

The Orientals call the ability of discrimination viveka, discrimination, the ability to use your will on that part of the energy, you can steer yourself, and steer it towards exercises, prayer, mantras, meditation, instead of towards career, worldliness, self-unfolding, as the New Thought movement teaches it (for example read the Indian philosopher Shankara's book *The Crown-jewel of discrimination*).

The same energy-process and function, which realized spiritual teachers use, can therefore be used for other purposes than spiritual. When the collective time's energy-processes are used spiritual, then the Ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside, and the energy is turned into the Now, and therefore in towards the Source and the spiritual dimension. The people, who around a spiritual teacher, constitute the energy-mandala, are in this way made transparent for a higher common human spirituality.

In the Ego-inflation the contact with, and the ability to manipulate with such collective forms of energy, will be used for other purposes than spiritual. It can be creative, Ego affirmative, political, demonical and so on.

The powers that, by realized spiritual teachers, are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same powers can themselves be turned in through the Ego-structures, and therewith into past and future. In this way there can be opened creative channels, created super Egos, created political leaders and popular seducers.

This is a demonical element.

Many gurus seem to have fallen into this temptation. In the story about the temptation in the desert, we can see these possible ways of using the energy pictured in anticipated form. Here you see the possibility of using the freedom and the power, to elevation of the Ego and the consequent power and material glory. But Jesus abstains from this deification of the Ego.

However, many false gurus have fallen for the temptation. And in the present time, where spirituality is blended with coaching and management theory - the belief in, that worship of money, success and winner-mentality, is the same as being in compliance with the universal laws - we will undoubtedly see an explosion of such super Egos – and experiences show, that the world will follow them.

In *Doctor Faustus* Thomas Mann describes, how the main character Adrian Leverkühn discovers and releases such collective powers and is using them to intensify his musical creativity to genius heights. He goes deliberately into a demonizing-process by making love with the whore Esmeralda, whereby he consciously catches syphilis, for then to use the inner pole-tension of this disease to heighten his creative capacity.

Afterwards the universal energy-mandala unfolds itself out through lines of genius musical works, where both those, who perform them, and those, who listen, are being caught by the magical circle.

Thomas Mann partially builds his figure on Nietzsche, and the whole of the novel is on a collective plane about, what the Germans did under The Second World War, where demonical polarized energy spread from Hitler and the secret SS-rituals.

In Adrian Leverkühn's dialogues with the Devil are clearly seen haughtiness and superman-feeling as the motives, which control the use of the collective creative energy.

This doesn't mean, though, that all great art is coming through because a creative person turns the collective energies in through the Ego-structures: Thomas Mann's musical image, which intuitively and poetical seeks to understand Hitler-Germany, is for example a contra-image to Bach's music, which toned God to honour and mankind to uplifting. To all the great works Bach added "Soli Deo Gloria".

If you get in contact with collective energies it is in fact a good idea to seek to express your abilities artistically, but in a way, that directs them towards the spiritual dimension.

In another, more aesthetic-demonic scenario, you can also see some of these group-energetical polarization-phenomena around Karen Blixen.

As mentioned Karen Blixen seems, in line with the greatest artists, to be an aesthetical borderfigure between the realized and the lesser realized transmission of

energy and consciousness. This is especially coming to expression in the oddity, that what she in her letters refers to as the Devil, she in her stories refers to as God.

Now, let us go into an investigation of this.

Karen Blixen's novel *Out of Africa*, is in short about finding the universal images behind everything, the original, as she calls it, the ancient, where you live in accordance with yourself, with God's plan with you.

The God in Karen Blixen's stories, is the wild God from the Book of Job. The God, which she in her letters calls the Devil, is therefore not the God of the common, mediocre life, which in Blixen's childhood had clipped her wings, and made her live as a slave of others ideas; that is: the ideas of the common, mediocre life (in connection with my own life and fate, I have described this in my article **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing**).

Out of Africa is about Blixen's rebellion against this mediocrity of the common life, and how she seeks the original images, which she refers to as the ancient; the ancient, both in the wild nature, with its animals and natives, but also in the aristocracy of for example her beloved Denys Finch Hatton - not in the content of aristocracy, but in its form, as an image of originality, nobility, possibilities, freedom and adventure.

Karen Blixen's concept of aristocracy is therefore linked with her concept of the original images, the ancient, and is both directed towards certain people, who she refers to as great travellers, adventurers and dreamers, as well as the wild nature and its native people.

When Karen Blixen in 1913 travelled to Africa she was 28 years old. She was at that time lonely and proud as a descendant of great rulers or great dreamers. It was her youthful longings and dreams she travelled into. The strange, wild and dark world, which she met, she recognized. In the woods of North Zealand in Denmark, which are high and light and are penetrated by hundreds of roads and paths, like parks or great gardens, she had seen the ancient wood for her inner eye, a flowing world of great passions, which still was untouched by consciousness. In *The Plough*, a small story, which was printed in 1907, she had depicted the ancient wood:

"In the wood there is not safe in the night, the ancient woods are haunting. Though fallen and died for so many thousand years ago, and forgotten in the day-time, they wake up at night again, rise, just like the fallen from their graves on the battle field, and transform the world. Impassable and terrible, with a gnarled and unlimited

power, the ancient wood rises. And there are heard booms in the wood from the heavy steps of the great ancient elephants, and in the whoosh of the great tops is another sound, it is the night song of the wood, it is the ghost of the ancient songs, which were sung, when Earth was new. Oh, it is the voices of the ancient woods and their song about the great free Earth. It is the song of the great rivers and lakes and the great plains and the great changes, the song of the great battles, of loneliness, of freedom, of darkness, the great songs about ancient times, about the youth of the Earth, when it was wild and free - and the woods, the marshes, the great lakes and plains were its thoughts. Mankind was not born and nothing had name..."

Eight years later Karen Blixen was laying sick in a hospital in Copenhagen.

She had lost the dream of Africa, she had lost her coffee farm, had got infected with syphilis from her husband Bror Blixen, and this illness had destroyed her sexuality, her possibilities for being together with men erotical, and for having children. And she had lost her beloved Denys Finch Hatton, who got killed in an airplane crash.

But now she began to realize, that this maybe also was God's plan with her.

In *Out of Africa* Karen Blixen somewhere retells a small story, she was told as a child. She calls it *The Roads of Life* and gets it placed in such a way, that it tips one of her completely central ideas up in the light.

The story, which actually should be drawn at the same time as it is being told, is about a man, who lives in a small round house with a small round window, and with a small triangular garden. Nearby there is a lake with a lot of fish in. One night the man wakes up because of a frightful noise, he gets up and goes out after the sound. It becomes a terrible trip. Twice successive it happens, that he first falls over a stone and after that in three ditches successive. At last it shows, that there has happened a break in the dam of the lake; he then repairs the hole and walks tired home.

At the same time as the story is being told the storyteller draws the lines in the man's route, and if you now follow these lines from the house to the lake and back again, then there is coming a quite nice image of a stork out of it.

Karen Blixen's following comment to the story was:

"I am glad that I have been told this story, and shall remember it in the hour of need. The man in the story was cruelly deceived, and had obstacles put in his way. He must have thought: "What ups and downs! What a run of bad luck!" He must have wondered what was the idea of all his trials, he could not know it was a stork. But

through them all he kept his purpose in view, nothing made him turn round and go home, he finished his course, he kept his faith. That man had his reward. In the morning he saw the stork. He must have been laughed out loud then.

The tight place, the dark pit in which I am now lying, of what bird is it the talon? When the design of my life is complete, shall I, shall other people, see a stork?

Infandum, Regina, jubes renovare dolarem. Troy in flames, seven years of exile, thirteen good ships lost. What is to come out of it? “Unsurpassed elegance, majestic stateliness, and sweet tenderness.”

So when Karen Blixen was lying in her sickbed, and after having realized, that this maybe was God’s plan with her - she made a pact with the Devil, that she from now on could change everything into stories. And in her stories, and in her following life as a storyteller, she realized the dreams she had had as a young woman.

All her following stories, for example Seven Gothic Tales, are reflections of her own experiences with destiny. They are all about how to find the dream-tracks and songlines in the artwork of your life - God’s plan with you - and about people who live in accordance with these power lines, and about people who don’t live in accordance with them (see my article **What is karma?**).

These themes continue in Karen Blixen’s storytelling ever after.

And Karen Blixen herself became, in her pact with the Devil, an embodiment of the same demonical element, which fascinated Milton, Romanticism, Baudelaire, etc. The Devil haunted in her, and around her, just like he haunted in figure of Prospero in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, as Mefistoteles in Goethe’s *Faust*, or as Conchis in John Fowles’ *The Magus*.

He haunts in the change of Karen Blixen’s looks, the change of the beautiful, brightly dressed woman, into the blackdressed witch-like woman. Karen Blixen even liked to speak about herself as a witch, since she considered a witch as someone, who has contact with the deep, ancient secrets and powers. And this is not only something symbolical. Karen Blixen’s access to the collective time's astral worlds, her transformation into a witch, her paranormal abilities, are something completely real, which several times have been depicted by people, who stood her close.

In the realized transmission of energy and consciousness the sexuality is transformed through exercises, prayer and meditation. In Karen Blixen’s case it is happening through conscious taken over unhappy fate, partially her illness, partially the death of

the beloved (a theme which by the way is well known and very used in art and literature, for example in Goethe's *Faust*). This conscious turned inwards sexuality, opened her to knowledge about, and experiences of, the collective time and its images – and maybe also about the universal time and its images. Hereby was released an extensive and common human energy, which expressed itself in the existential environment around herself, as the Source of energy.

She created an energy-mandala around herself, a magical circle. You can directly feel the magic just by reading her books. It waves out of her stories, just like it also can be felt in books, which are written about her.

The magical circle of poets and men of letters (among whom Thorkild Bjørnvig, Aage Henriksen, Jørgen Gustava Brandt and Jørgen Kalchar), who moved around Karen Blixen on Rungstedlund, were after own statements, in works and scriptures, grabbed by a strange indefinable magic. They were lovers, but however clearly not lovers in ordinary sense. They were in apprenticeship, but not in apprenticeship in ordinary sense; they were in pact with, and weaved together with Karen Blixen, and at the same time they came deeper in towards their own creative potentials. They were drawn into the collective time. Both in their being together with Karen Blixen, and in their works, they melted together with a world of archetypes, primordial images, myths and dreams. All of it was changed into stories.

What she referred to as God's plan with you, she also referred to, as that to find your role in the story, and since she herself was the storyteller, she didn't mind forcing the circle around her to find their roles in her story. To adhere to God's plan with you, just like the man in the story about the stork, she could also refer to, as that to keep the author's idea clear. And the author was herself. The roles in this play she referred to as marionettes. The good marionettes are rewarded, not with well being or special happiness, but with a fate, an image that was remembered, for example a stork. They would get to see the dream-tracks and the songlines in the artwork of their lives – God's, or the author's plan with them.

She could in other words refer to herself as God himself, or the Devil himself. The witch. She could do this, because she apparently was conscious about herself manifesting an universal image. She referred to herself as being 3000 years old and of the same age as the prophet Esajas, whom she had an intensive, conflict-accented relationship with. And all of it, her own fate, the relationship with her students, can be found reflected in her stories in a fount of variations. Reality and stories are melting together.

The initiation ritual into this magical circle was the same for each of them. She told the individual person the story of her disease, and that she in her sickroom had a visit from the Devil, which she entered into the pact with, that she from that moment of would be able to transform everything that happened to her into stories. Furthermore that if they mixed blood with a witch, they would get access to the same ancient, deep secrets and powers, which she herself possessed. They would get an image, they would get to see the dream-tracks and the songlines in the artwork of their lives – God’s, or the author's plan with them.

That Karen Blixen herself, through her fate and her distinctive attitude to this fate, opened her mind to the collective time's polar relationships, is without any doubt. That she radiated an enormous witch-like eros and at the same time a dramatic tragic fate, is also without any doubt.

This, not only personal creative power, therefore constellated - in its quality of collective - a circle of highly intelligent and sensitive men, who together with Karen Blixen, constituted this fascinating energy-mandala-phenomenon.

That Karen Blixen wanted to transmit her special knowledge about how to intensify creative energy to her closest relatives in the circle, appears from Aage Henriksen’s energy-experience with her in 1958.

The following description of Henriksen’s energy-experience is very close to my own experiences of the kundalini-power (see my article **The awakening of kundalini**). I have first late in my life found out what happened in the life of Aage Henriksen and Karen Blixen, and is of course even more mystified over that I somehow always have had an intuitive sense of this connection.

Aage Henriksen describes his experience with the awakening of kundalini – and how Karen Blixen was connected with this awakening - in *The Irrepressible* on page 146:

”During the Christmas Holidays I had circled mystified around these stories and special around ‘The Cloak.’ In this story there happens a transferring of power and soul, from one human being to another, and it happens in that moment, where the old master takes the cloak of his own shoulders and puts it around Angelo’s. I now began to talk about the story and weaved Angelo’s night in the prison - where he sits as hostage for his teacher, and become torned up from the ground - together with bygone years’ events between her and me.

””Yes, I don't really understand, what it is, you are saying,’ she answered.

“Then the conversation silenced, and there went some time, before I sensed, that the room between us somehow had become alive, as in the time with my yogateacher, but now different. There came a radiation from her, which grew in power, until it was as a hard, dare wind, which somehow came innermost from the bones and which caused, that my eyes were watering.

“When I lifted my head and was looking at her, she was almost hidden in a cloud of scarlet aura, in which the white, whirling phosphorus-light floated as a disc. God must know, how I myself was looking like – as at a deathbed, or as a thief?

“In this way it lasted for a long time, I don’t know how long, maybe ten minutes. She herself interrupted the mute, intense being together, by dry and short saying: ”Now come!” as if we had entered into an agreement. The situation developed itself and changed itself momentarily. Once again a being together with Karen Blixen had slowly changed itself into an optical instrument, in which the impurity of one’s own heart comes to sight.

“I knew, that if I went with her now, I would arrive somewhere, which I nothing knew about, but even if the Earth had begun to shake, I would never have got the idea, that I still would be able to break off and say no. I then sat down on the edge of the bed and bent over her, as she wanted to, and at the same time I sent my thoughts miles around for help and protection for both of us. Then she took both her hands up around my throat, and drilled a finger hard and long into the back of my neck, for finally to stroke me over both shoulders. When I was straightening up, she broked the silence with the unexpected request:

””Now say a verse.’

“The first, which felt into my thoughts, was the beginning lines to Sarastro’s aria in The Magic Flute, which also, as it probably was the meaning, contained my understanding of, what this hour was all about, or what I wished, it should be about:

“In diesen heil’gen Hallen
Kennt man die Rache nicht,
Und ist ein Mensch gefallen,

Führt Liebe ihn zur Pflicht.

“I felt dizzy, when I got up from the uncomfortable position. It was as if the whole of my abdomen pulled itself together in cramp and sent strong streams up in the head. I wanted to say something, but she stopped me:

””You shall go now.””

We get the impression, that Karen Blixen knew – at least intuitively – what she did. According to Aage Henriksen (p. 148) the blockade obstructed the kundalini-stream at the back of the neck, so that the head started to shake. The intensifying of the creative energy necessarily has to do with the throat-chakra, since this centre is focus-spot for creative energy-transformations (see my article **What are chakras?**).

Aage Henriksen, who is acquainted with the spiritual practice, and has an active kundalini, was aware, that she in this way led his consciousness away from the spiritual dimension, and into the area of the collective images. This is the demonical element, which finally forced him to break away from her. He writes, that she would stick at nothing in order to prevent her young friends and acquaintances in exceeding the borders of the earthmoon-kingdom, in which she was queen. A part of the same demonical element caused Thorkild Bjørnvig to break his pact with her.

Did Karen Blixen maybe in the pact with Thorkild Bjørnvig, and in the energy-manipulation with Aage Henriksen, try to transmit the secret of the creative intensifying? Did she, like others, who are initiates in the collective power's nature and ways, try to transmit this existential knowledge? It seems so.

All of Aage Henriksen's books are about how he sees these processes reflected in various fictional works of art. His starting point is the transformation of inhibited sexuality into art, which Freud called sublimation. According to Aage Henriksen, a line of great Danish-Norwegian poets have personally experienced and pondered over this transformation, as for example Grundtvig, Henrik Ibsen and Sophus Claussen. As Aage Henriksen says, then it shows, that their problems for a long time had been known within Europe's so-called esoterical traditions. In their highly extended and strange populated space of consciousness, it is seen, that two streams, which each are surrounded by a respective experience-circle, cross each other in the love of human beings and are the Source of many complications: the direction towards the one and the direction towards the many. It is, according to Henriksen, this knowledge, which Goethe, with his connection to the Masonic Order, has pictured in *The Fairytale* and in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, and which Rudolf Steiner, who had the theosophical movement as one of his conditions, reproduced in his *Mystery Dramas*.

Furthermore Aage Henriksen tells about Karen Blixen, who in her works, according to him, sovereign managed the strong, ancient secrets. It was, among other things, she who opened the great background world for him.

How demonical was it? It is an open question, because as already mentioned, what she in her letters refers to as the Devil, she in her stories refers to as God. She keeps on being an aesthetic borderfigure between the realized and lesser realized transmission of energy and consciousness. As Kierkegaard says, then God's nature always unites the opposite.

3. The unrealized transmission of energy and consciousness

The energy will tend to dance in a polar mandala around people, who have broken through to the polarity of the collective images. Whether this energy comes into sight as music, as art, as religious love or as wisdom, then the energy will seek to stream out and spread out in polarized circles around the Source. The more knowledge, that exists about this, the larger the pedagogical effect after all can be. But with knowledge follows choices. When these structures become conscious, then people partly themselves can decide, which forms and which motives, should be the definitive.

As observations of the great spiritual teachers show, then the possibility for unselfish use constantly seems to be neighbour to the possibility of Ego-reinforcing use. The same energy, which freely can be given to others as growth, the giver himself can take to intensification of his own isolating particularity. The choice seems to be dependent of the level of realization work and ethical practice.

The third type of polarized collective energy-phenomena, is the mainly unrealized transmission of energy and consciousness.

The unrealized transmission of energy and consciousness is, just like the lesser realized, characterised by people, who admittedly have an opening to the collective time, but not to the universal. Such people are often not able to discriminate between the image and the reality, and therefore they relate absolutely to the relative.

The collective time manifests itself in a widely and indefinite area, for example could a broad spectrum of common human activities and organizations be called manifestations of the collective time: parties, state formations, wars, work communities, concerts, clans, tribes and sects, mass psychological phenomena, religious parishioners, fashion streams, group souls.

Such incalculable common human undertakings are manifestations of collective energy– or life-processes, in which there are great powers in play in the form of collective images, which work in opposites; energy, which originates from sexuality.

In individual persons, who pass on an unrealized transmission of energy and consciousness, the opening to the collective time today often lies around that to be well-known or famous.

We live in a postmodern society, where the distinction between reality and appearance/superficies is about to disappear. Reality is often the images, we receive through the stream of information. And it becomes more and more difficult to see, which objective reality that lies behind. It seems more and more to be *the images*, which are real, and not some *behind lying* reality. In that sense all images are equal true, but they are not equal good, for some images are more fascinating than others, some images affect us more than others. Therefore the expression of the image has come in focus. The expression of the image – its *aesthetics* – decides, whether it fascinates us or bores us. What apply for today, is the *intensity* and *seduction* of the expressions. The new truth/value criterion is, whether something is interesting or boring. Eternal values such as goodness, truth and beauty fall more and more away.

Around the so-called "celebrities" - rockstars, movie stars, models, royals, - there are therefore today formed energy-mandalas, which transmit the forces from the collective time; powers which release, and manifest, collective images, and therefore behaviour. Just try to notice, in what degree "the celebrities" make people behave, dress, act and believe.

But the energy-mandala can also form itself around ordinary people, who of one or the other reason, through transformed sexuality, have accomplished an opening to the collective time, and who, by turning the energy in through the Ego-structures, develop themselves into super Egos, political leaders and popular seducers such as Hitler and Stalin.

In the wars and collective orgies, which such people bring about, there also are triggered, and manifested, different collective images, which always are polarized in opposites such as for example hate and love, good and evil.

And the energy, which brings about this, builds on transformed sexuality. Ordinary sexuality is saved against, and closed, in relation to the collective time. But not entirely though. Underneath the common sexuality smoulder the depths. Underneath lie the fantasies and the images, all the tabooed and suspected desires.

These backgrounds have, in our time, clearly become visible in pornography, in brothel-activity, in the sex advertisements of the daily newspapers. But the whole of this underlying sexual astrality is precisely characterized by being split from the respectable accepted prescribed sexuality. There are many reasons for this: anxiety, condemnation, sin-conceptions, society repression.

The Western civilization has from Christianity inherited and taken over a very characteristic religious worldimage. Sex is sin. Sex is in the highest a necessary evil, you in the safe, god-guaranteed and eternal-made institution of marriage have to give way to. And God is good. God is creative.

Therefore the destructive, the subversive, has become overlooked. It doesn't belong to the productive nature of God. But because it is such evident a fact, you have to do something about it. We have then suitable handed the destructive over to the Devil, who is a fallen angel, an outcast and unhappy, without possibility for salvation and redemption. Unfortunately we have in this religious worldimage got the Devil, the evil, the destructive, *and* the sexual weaved together. And this enormous complex can we basically not do anything about. Of course. Since it after all constitutes half of the world and reality. God maintains the creation every moment. But what or who is then the great power, which every moment breaks down? Is that not created by God? And unless it is created by God, then God is after all not almighty. The whole of this world-image seems insufficient.

Since the destructive (aggression, breakdown, violence) not belongs to God, then it is of evil. But life on our planet is however build up in that way, that all higher forms of life live by destroying, eating and breaking down and digesting other life! So if life itself, in its nature, is of evil, then there is no meaning of life.

In order to rescue this scheme of things you either end up in Manichaeism or heresy. Either there are two worlds and two gods: the one god is good and creative and loving. Opposite this god there then exists a dark, destructive and evil devil. The children of the light, who eternally are fighting and leading wars against the children of darkness. A war-crazy religiousness.

Or you end up, Christian seen, in heresy by being led to believe the following:

1: God is also destructive and is responsible for breakdown, death and dissolution and entropy.

2: The Devil is therefore a repressed, outcast unhappy redemption-needing structure.

Sexuality, as the most direct urge of life, is not sin, on the contrary sexuality is a holy and creative activity. This, Christian seen, heretically outlook on life can however rescue the meaning and connection in cosmos and in the inner and outer reality of Man.

Because when the destructive and the sexual also belong under the divine, then Man has the possibility for, in religious spiritual openness, to take the responsibility for his part of the sexual, and his part of the destructive.

The danger is, that when sexuality and destruction are excluded from the divine – and herewith from the spiritual dimension – then people are tempted, in powerlessness, to run away from their responsibility. And that is precisely what mankind do. Wars, torture, anger, atomic bombs, chemical war, plague-weapons. No one have the responsibility. All of it makes it difficult to assign responsibility. And the result is, that no responsible is taking care of destructivity. It rambles restless around, unreleased, demonized. Everybody is afraid of this destructive evil, but no one takes the responsibility for his own anger.

Therefore it becomes so, that the opposites in the collective time (right/wrong, good/evil, light/dark) constantly slide over in each other. They can't be separated. What you believe is good, shows suddenly to have evil consequences. This we learn again and again – see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions** for examples.

And it all originates from transformed sexuality. Practically all people have contact with some kind of sexual fantasy based on a primordial image. It can shine through in daydreams, masturbation-images, pornographic fascination or similar. It is concealed. Often unspoken. Frequently people play an inner video at the same time as their intercourse. And as a rule these hidden and blacked out fantasies and stimulations are not open, nothing the partners dare to tell each other about. Sometimes these astral images are shining through in the nightly dreams. But the usual is, that these hints are not explored, nor integrated in the partners' normal life together. If they are realized, they live a fantasy-life. These desires and wantings are maybe fulfilled through novel-magazines, through pornography or lived through afar from the daily life in the sexworlds of the large cities, with their specialities and offers.

Hereby the shadowy and wild growing underground of sexuality, are split from the more accepted love-life. The so-called perverted or romantic-fantastic images and desires, are excluded from the space of love. And when these dark fantasies and desires are excluded, they become darker, more distorted, more repressed, more perverted. In the collective image of the good, the right, there is build up energy, and

finally the energy will swing over in its opposition, the evil, the wrong, in order to balance an imbalance (again: see my article **What is karma?** – also see my articles **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it** and **The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help industry**).

The astral sexuality contains the backside of the Ego and of the desire. This collective shadow is repressed to the sexual subconscious.

Daphne Patai is a feminist scholar and author. She is a leading critic of the politicization of education, in particular of the decline of free speech on college campuses as programs conform to pressures from feminists and other identity groups.

After spending ten years with a joint appointment in women's studies and in Portuguese, Patai became highly critical of what she saw as the imposition of a political agenda on educational program (what I call **The Matrix Conspiracy**). Together with the philosophy of science professor Noretta Koertge she wrote the book *Professing Feminism* (1994). The book analyzes practices within women's studies that the authors felt were incompatible with serious education and scholarship – above all, the explicit subservience of education to political aims (the background for this is the so-called postmodern intellectualism – read my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**).

Patai's thesis is that a failure to defend the integrity of education, and a habit of dismissing knowledge and research on political grounds, not only seriously hurts our students but also leaves feminists helpless in trying to defend education against other ideological incursions.

Prominent among Patai's concerns are what she sees as draconian sexual harassment regulations as implemented in the academical world. She argues that contemporary feminism is poisoned by a strong element of "heterophobia": a pronounced hostility to sexual interaction between men and women and an effort to suppress it through micromanagement of everyday relations. This thesis is developed at length in her 1998 book *Heterophobia: Sexual Harassment and the future of feminism*.

Daphne Patai is the inspiration to my thesis about the development of a new Puritanism, where traditional religious confession-techniques have been transformed into psychotherapy (see my article **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**). This new Puritanism has from Christianity inherited and taken over the above-mentioned characteristic religious worldimage, that sex is sin. Sex is in the highest a necessary evil. Therefore the destructive, the subversive, again is becoming overlooked. But because it is such evident a fact, the radical feminists have

to do something about it. Like in Christianity they have therefore suitably handed the destructive over to the Devil. And in this worldimage they have got the Devil, the evil, the destructive, and the sexual weaved together.

There are namely a painful irony in the fact, that our days feminists so uncritical have affiliated the methods, which psychotherapists and hypnotists pretend can uncover repressed memories from childhood about sexual abuse and more bizarre things such as satanic rituals, cannibalistic orgies, alien abduction, past lives etc. In this way they paradoxically come to remind about earlier times' Christian inquisitions, a kind of psycho-religious inquisitions (see my articles **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**, and **Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception**).

There is another aspect of this, which might seem like an opposition to the New Puritanism of radical feminism, but which is a part of the same Matrix Conspiracy: because those of the New Age worshippers who today call themselves witches or sorcerers are often anti-Christian, pagan, and woman-centered, or satanic. New Age often exalt whatever the Church condemned (such as egoism and healthy sexuality in adults whether homosexual or not) and condemn whatever the Church exalted (such as self-denial and the subservient role of women).

The problem is, that the reductionist aspect of The Matrix Conspiracy does, that no one will take the responsibility for their part of the sexuality, and therefore for their part of the destructive (see my article **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**).

The Ego wants. The backside of this Egocentredness is radical Ego-sovereignty. So the Ego, the desire, the violence and the power, are combined in the dark collective primordial images and fantasies: incest, sado-masochism, homosexuality, group sex, cannibalism, sacrifice, death-images – all these archetypes lie underneath the common sexuality, and constitute the dark astral underground in the collective time. Often illustrated in the Gothic tale, first by Edgar Allan Poe in his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1839), later by for example Henry James in his *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), which dealt with the corset tight Victorianism. And of course Karen Blixen. Today we perhaps see the works of Tim Burton as a respond to our time's Puritanism.

When you in that way bind yourself in the one pole of an opposition, yes, then you create a resistance, and therefore a force to, and a dependence of the opposite pole, which causes, that the mind, the sexuality, is becoming anchored in, and determined by these basic mechanisms.

The magical mean, which can raise the mind's hypnotic fascination of the primordial images of desire, of power game and of Egoism - is religion and supporting exercises, including the monastic vows about poverty, chastity and obedience (see my article **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice**). Religion and supporting exercises consist in realizing the collective time, not opening up for it, not living through it, as psychotherapy wants it, but in realizing the nature of the demonic primordial images of desire, violence and Egoism.

Why the vows about poverty, chastity and obedience?

Because falling in love (and having a sexual relationship) with another human being depends on images, partially collected from the more collective depths of time, partially from your personal images, and therefore from your growing up conditions. However the original images of falling in love (sexuality) are coming from the deepest and most universal images of time. These images are, like mandalas, composite by opposites, therefore a kind of syntheses. As Aristophanes claims in Plato's Symposium (which is about love itself), then Man in his original mythological state was a double being. However when the Ego is coming in contact with such an image, then the Ego divides it in pieces in order to analyze it, understand it. And by doing so you get all the comparisons with earlier and the hopes/fears of something else, and the separated opposites such as subject and object, love and hate, male and female.

In this way a female gets an inner male image. A man gets an inner female image. Concerning homosexuality, then the circumstances, which constitute the lifesituation of the individual, have created another situation, but the inner image will under any circumstances reflect a longing after unification with an opposite pole, therefore a longing after wholeness. Falling in love (sexual turn on) arises when these images become projected on another human being.

That way falling in love, and sexual turn on, implies a fount of contradictions. Falling in love is for example dependency. The other side of dependency is anger and fear and powerlessness over being so dependent. Furthermore the inner images can themselves be split. This can imply, that you cannot turn on sexually upon types you fall in love with, and vice versa. The man's inner female image can for example be divided up in the madonna/whore type. The woman's inner male image in the hard/soft type.

And since falling in love, and sexual turn on, depends on images, then reality will gradually uncover these illusions, and then the alienation and apartness appear, and therefore the mistrust. Concerning sexual turn on, you therefore have to create new, more and more extreme, images, in order to have an ongoing turn on.

All this lies in the collective time as a kind of original sin, and it is therefore almost impossible for the individual person, for the personal time, to dissolve this, at the same time as you are in a sexual relationship. Especially in the Egoextreme of our time (see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**).

Within the New Age-ideology the concept of Tantra is admittedly very popular; that is: where you speak about transforming sexual energy into spiritual energy through relations with one or several sexual partners. There is no doubt about, that Tantra in its original form in monasteries in India, has produced enlightened masters, but the Tantra, which I see widely-spread in modern Western forms - often mixed with psychotherapy, and a bit of "wisdom" from the New Age-movie *The Secret* - is, in most cases, thoroughly stupid. Here it is of course the Ego, which invents one of its usual tricks in order to get its primordial image (sexual wishes/fantasies) satisfied: "It is God himself, who justifies my sexual wishes/fantasies, and that I therefore have to live them through!"

I have in my philosophical counseling-practice talked with many people, both men and women, who have practised tantra. All the men I have talked with, directly admit that they exclusively did it for, either to have sex with one, or preferably several, beautiful women. When it comes to the women I talked to, then the admission is not so directly. But it is evident, that especially women, in Tantra, gets a justification of being able to get some sexual fantasy's primordial image satisfied; that is to say: to practise sophisticated sex, both with one partner, but also with many different men.

Many of these tantra-movements, and their rituals, therefore in a remarkable way remind about the rituals in swinger clubs and sequences from porno movies, where they also seek to get sexual fantasies' primordial images satisfied.

But in Tantra the shadowy and wild growing underground of sexuality doesn't become split from the more accepted love-life. The so-called perverted or romantic-fantastic images and desires are not excluded from the space of love. And therefore these dark fantasies and desires don't become darker, more distorted, more repressed, more perverted.

This is because that it becomes justified through the combination with some spiritual concepts, such as meditation. That is of course fine enough, but there is a lot of spiritual self-deceit involved in it, because it is the Ego, which controls the process. Also because of the postmodern intellectualism in New Age, where very few people actually have an ongoing and continuous spiritual practice, but go shopping from master to master, teaching to teaching.

The ordinary Ego-consciousness functions by being identified with the physical world, with instincts, sexuality, emotions and collective ideals. Religion and supporting exercises work through these aspects by means of for example the essence, which exists in the basic monastic vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. These promises work with a restructuring of the Ego's ownership to things, food and power, and they re-structure sexuality and emotions. First thereafter the mystical process can begin. No form of modern Tantra can, as far as I can see, bring about this. On the contrary the Ego uses it as a trick of self-assertion.

But it also has to be mentioned, that religion and supporting exercises necessarily must develop into an art of life, where you actually are working with realization and ethical practice – or else you end up as a hypocrite. And that we also have seen many examples on.

In our time, where the Ego-structures are in a maximum, the astral caricatures of Egoism therefore also are in their maximum. In our time, which is characterized by a consumerism, where all deeper values have been split off, and where everything is measured after if it is boring or interesting, sexuality has got an exaggerated big importance, because it maybe is the only experience we have of something deeper. But sexuality works, just like all energy, in wave movements and pendulum movements. In order to be able to get a sexual ignition and experience, it requires that you build sexual energy up in a wave. This wave then breaks in the sexual experience. Hereafter follows a trough of the waves. But in our growth-fanatical consumer culture, we don't accept the valley. We want the peak experiences, the rises, but we complain over the valleys, the falls. Therefore we all the time try to maintain the rise by providing it with new sexual images, fantasies etc. If the energy laws were really understood, we would accept the trough of the waves as well as the wavecrests.

And these, the Ego's images of desire and of sexual pleasure, will, because of, that energy also functions as pendulum movements, gradually begin to switch over in their demonic primordial images, which we have repressed to the collective time - they begin to become more and more extreme and therefore perverted.

And because we have got the Devil, the evil, the destructive *and* the sexual, weaved together, this also begins to appear in a rise of aggression, violence and pollution. The outer pollution corresponds in that way to an equivalent dark collective inner pollution. The outer war-crazy armament, corresponds to an inner astral tension in power, aggression and anxiety. That which caused, that the wise old of the East termed our time Kali Yuga, the dark age.

Most obvious these dark primordial images manifest themselves in acts of war. Beside the actual acts of war, which never can be said to be true, but always distorted and perverted, the sexual energies - which you have got tied together with destructivity - are triggered in the soldiers, who rape and plunder the conquered women and towns.

In acts of war exists the most clear demonical element. There is not so much to misunderstand. No, the misunderstandings take place in the actions, which lie ahead of the war, in which a lot of seduction-art, and therefore thought distortions, are active. And the archetypical popular seducer is, as already suggested, of course Lucifer.

Everywhere we see a tendency to that the images of the Ego-extreme (which is about becoming something, to get success, to conquer a place on the top, to become a winner) have begun to switch over in their demonical primordial images. The dark images in the collective time have begun to manifest themselves. We see it in the medias, in movies and in books.

Behind the whole of this midnighttrambler-complex in the individual, a collective image shows itself. The complex exposes itself as an emanation of evil, of the Devil.

In one of Rolling Stones' masterpieces *Sympathy For The Devil* the text goes:

Please allow me to introduce myself
 I'm a man of wealth and taste
 I've been around for many a long, long year
 I've stolen many a man's soul and faith
 I was around when Jesus Christ had his moments of doubt and pain
 I made damn sure that Pilate washed his hands and
 Sealed his fate.

I stuck around St. Petersburg
 When I saw it was time for a change
 I killed the Tzar and his ministers
 Anastasia screamed in vain
 I rode a tank, held a gen'ral's rank
 When the blitzkrieg raged and the bodies stank
 I watched with glee while your kings and queens
 Fought for ten decades for the Gods they made
 I shouted out, "Who killed the Kennedy's?"
 When after all it was you and me.

Just as every cop is criminal
 And all the sinners, Saints
 As heads is tails, just call me Lucifer
 "Cause I'm in need of some restraint."

So if you meet me, have some courtesy
 Have some sympathy and some taste
 Use all your well-learned politesse
 Or I'll lay your soul to waste.

In "Sympathy for the Devil" Mick Jagger seems to have sensed these connections. At some of the concerts, where this tune was played and sung, there was triggered off rape, ordinary sexuality, murder and births. The song is the hell preacher's hint of the only way out. The Ego has to descend down into the deep of evil, has to take it seriously, see it in the eyes, realize and feel, that evil is in there. The Ego has to learn to get on with its complex, instead of avoiding/ignoring it as the New Thought movement is advising people to do (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**).

The complex is there, it requires a name, it wants voice, time, awareness. If not, it destroys the consciousness and drowns the world in pollution and violence.

The awakening of kundalini

Kundalini is a concept in Indian philosophy. According to Tantrism it is a latent spiritual power, which is situated in the bottom of the spinal column, behind the sexual organs. Symbolic it is seen as a slumbering, rolled serpent. The serpent can be awakened; that is: the spiritual energy can be released, normally through a special yoga technique.

In spiralform it then moves from the foot of the spiral column up in the head, while it opens a line of psychological centers, called chakras (see my article **What are chakras?**).

By awakening the Kundalini the yogi is said to gain supernatural abilities and spiritual insight, and he can attain the final liberation.

So the awakening of Kundalini is said to be a necessary part of the spiritual practice; that is: the process of awakening. But in the West Kundalini is best known as a part of a spiritual crisis. Spiritual crises often appear as unintended consequences of yoga, one-sided meditation techniques, body-oriented- and experiential psychotherapy, healing, energy transmission (for example Deeksha/Shaktipat), different types of rituals. Among other factors of release can be mentioned: births, unhappy love, celibacy, deep sorrow, high fever and intake of drugs. But a spiritual crisis can also come suddenly without traceable cause. You can suddenly be thrown out in such a crisis.

When it is a matter of a spiritual crisis, then your consciousness and personality have slipped fundamentally out of balance, though in most cases not so much that you can be diagnosed as having a mental disease. But your process of awakening, your spiritual development, has left the rail, and ended up blind, either in suffering – *The Dark Night of the Soul* – or in ego-inflation (see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

The manifestations of this form of crisis resemble the descriptions of the awakening of the serpent power, or Kundalini, found in historical Indian literature. As mentioned, then, according to the yogis, Kundalini is a creative cosmic energy that resides in latent form at the base of the human spine. It can become activated through meditation, specific exercises, the intervention of an “accomplished” spiritual teacher, or sometimes for reasons that are unknown.

The activated Kundalini rises through the channels in the “subtle body”, which is described in the yogic literature as a field of non-physical energy surrounding and infusing the physical body. As it ascends, it clears old traumatic imprints and opens the centers of psychic energy, called chakras. This process, although highly valued and considered beneficial in the yogic traditions, is not without dangers and requires expert guidance by a guru, whose Kundalini is fully awakened and stabilized (an enlightened master).

The most dramatic signs of Kundalini awakening are the physical and psychological manifestations called kriyas. One can experience intense sensations of energy and heat streaming up in the spine, associated with violent shaking, spasms, and twisting movements. Powerful waves of seemingly unmotivated emotions, such as anxiety, anger, sadness, or joy and ecstatic rapture, can surface and temporarily dominate the psyche. Visions of brilliant light or various archetypical beings and a variety of internally perceived sounds, as well as experiences of what seem to be memories from past lives, are very common. Involuntary and often uncontrollable behaviors complete the picture: talking in tongues, chanting unknown songs, assuming yogic postures and gestures, and making a variety of animal sounds and movements.

Recently, unmistakable signs of this process have been observed in thousands of westerners. California psychiatrist and eye doctor Lee Sannella, who first brought the Kundalini syndrome to the attention of Western audiences, single-handedly collected nearly one thousand such cases.

So, the core-phenomenon in the Kundalini-process is some form of rising through the chakra-system, where the sexual, subsidiary the emotional, energy is built up and concentrated in the bottom of the body, for then to flow upwards towards the higher chakras in the transformation-event. Either can then the energy, which before was in the sexual or emotional expression-form, after the transformation, be retrieved as extended love, where focus is in the Anahata-chakra, or as creative energy, where the center is the Vishuddha-chakra, or as intuitive energy, where the key-spot is Ajna-chakra.

Several dimensions can occur at the same time. Finally the transformation can lift the energy, and therewith also the consciousness, if this is meditative well-trained, all the way up to the crown-center and out through the central channel, upwards in the more universal duality-transcendent aspects of experiences of the enlightened consciousness (Sahasrara-chakra).

Generally you can talk about three forms of rising:

1. The cross-rising. The rising is experienced and can be seen as a movement from the sexual glands up towards the heart, where the tracks cross each other, past the nipples up in the two brain hemispheres, where then the flowering-phenomenon unfolds.
2. The fountain-rising. The transformation is described as an up-flow of energy in the central channel (physical the spine, ethereal Sushumna) all the way up and out of the body in the crown-center. Here the energy stream turns – very much like the fountain – and flows down outside the body in the aura on all sides, for then again to unite at the basis of the spine.
3. The melting-rising. Again the energy rises, streaming in a central movement. But when the consciousness – the experience – reaches the brain, or the energy-fields above the top of the head, a quite special occurrence takes place. Something, which is described as a static or frozen connection between the right and left hemisphere of the brain, or as a static pattern of masculine and feminine energy in the fields over the crown center - this static, crystalline or frozen double field is being brought to melting, apparently by force of the up-streaming energy. The energy, which hereby is

melted or is melting, flows down through the body and fills it up from below with a feeling of bliss.

These three types of rising should describe the enlightenment-process. And I am not in doubt about, that this also could be the case. The problem is, that you can experience them, exactly as described, without that there happens any transformation, transcendence or enlightenment. You can purely and simply just experience it like energy movements – it can be very pleasant, but also unpleasant. Finally it can result in a spiritual crisis.

As far as I can see, it depends of, whether the energy is turned inwards towards the essence of the mind (of the chakras), or outwards towards the content of the mind (of the chakras) - again: see my article **What are chakras?**. In order to, that it can happen correct, there precisely is needed much meditative training, and with meditation is here meant Meditation as an Art of Life; that to ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way. And this aspect of meditation is, as far as I can see, often neglected in the forms of meditation I have met, which not directly is based on the traditional spiritual practices, but have become mixed with psychology and psychotherapy – the New Age-ideology (see my article **Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy**).

It is directly wrong, and very deceptive, to claim, that the unpleasant consequences of a rising-process are due to, that old traumas dissolve, that you are in a transformation-process, and that you just shall go ahead and go the process through. This is a dangerous form of psychologizing (which origins from the experiential psychotherapy and its cathartic theories), that you will meet at practically all the meditation teachers you meet within this environment. They are all characterized by the power psychology and psychotherapy have got in our society (see my articles **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**, and **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

The problem is, that you can't go the process through if you turn yourself towards the contents. The contents is unfathomable, there isn't any end of it. And if you nevertheless do it, the process will grow worse and worse and worse, till you end up in a psychiatric hospital.

The problem is, that unless you are very cognitional and ethical trained, you will still be identified with the painbody and the Ego (see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**). This means, that certain challenges will be able to activate the painbody exactly as before the awakening of Kundalini - you will in other words give it your energy. And after an awakening of Kundalini this means a drastic increase of the volumes of energy an awakening of Kundalini implies.

The ridiculous is, that many of those, who advise people in their Kundalini-experiences, absolutely no own experience have of it. They have read the whole thing in some self-help books, which are written by people, who neither have any experience. And if you are making them aware of it, they are being furious. They are often intellectual inflated, and would begin to advice Dalai Lama himself, if they could (see my article **The ego-inflation within the New Age and self-help environment**).

What is it that can go wrong in the rising-process? The past and the future is the thinking's time-dimension, which physical reflection-spot therefore is in Agna-chakra - the eyebrow-area. This area is in other words quite central when you start with meditation. When the thoughts therefore are building energy up, this energy runs up in the head. Different said there is being created a spiral-like, creative up-tension of the whole of your being.

When this tension is rising to a certain critical point in the different chakras, it breaks like a wavecrest, and there happens an experience of one or the other kind. The experience is the breakers of the wavecrest. The built-up energy breaks in the content and visions, feelings and symbols of the experience. And if the built-up volume of energy is big enough, you can create an opening wherethrough the contents of time and its images can begin to flow in.

Time is not just the personal history, but also the collective and the universal history, and therefore the contents of time and its images are unfathomable. A completely fascinating perspective, and dangerous, especially in connection with the meeting with the collective time, where the wholeness begins to dream.

In its positive aspect the contents of time and its collective images is sublime and divine, and therefore a source to fascination. Many so-called upward meditationtraditions make an effort to build energy up in a wave in order to get an experience of this sublime and divine content. Among other things they do this through concentration – it can be concentration on a chakra, a mantra, an object or something else. But you must all the time remember, that concentration alone is a pure mental thing, and therefore a thought-activity.

The type of rising is completely dependent on the exercises you practise. For example you can practise exercises, which visually imitate one of the three types of rising. There is in other words not anything common necessary in, that spiritual development shall happen through a certain way of rising. To claim this will be to mislead people. All techniques are moreover content, contrary to being in the Now, which direct you

towards the form, or the essence. Awakening of Kundalini is therefore completely dependent on what technique you are using.

The danger lies in the identification with your thoughts and your painbody – and therewith in the identification with the collective imageworld of time, which is a part of the structure under the thinking. The identification itself is the same as the Ego, and the energy which is built up in the positive aspect of the collective imageworld of time, will be able to blow the Ego up in inflation. And then you have a spiritual crisis, which absolutely not has any healing and transformational potential.

The "positive" aspect of a spiritual crisis is the most self-deceptive, because it usually ends up in Ego-inflation and total lack of self-realization. When the Ego has embezzled itself energy, which rightly belong to the collective time, there arises inflation. The Ego blows itself up using energy, which not rightly belong to the Ego (again: see my article **The ego-inflation within the New Age and self-help environment**).

When there in connection with Kundalini-awakening is talk about a spiritual crisis, then this is characterized by, that the "positive", like the negative, contains elements of unrealized unreality, division, stagnation, anxiety or meaninglessness. The consequence is, that your spiritual development stops.

The collective images of time will, as images, always be defined by their negations. And in its negative aspect the contents of time and its collective images therefore are frighteningly and demonical. The opposites in this structure can't be separated, but define each other. So the more you identify yourself with the one pole in such a pair of opposites, and expel the other pole (as it is the case in the Ego-inflation), the more the abandoned pole will work stronger and stronger on its polar partner. This is because, that energy works as streams within a wholeness. The energy you have build up in the divine pole (which you shall remember only is a collective image) will finally switch over in its opposite demonical pole. Simply in order to balance an imbalance in the wholeness. The problem (the self-deception) is lying in, that a contrabalancing don't have to happen in this life, but first in the next. In Indian philosophy you must therefore necessarily see yourself in such large perspective (see my article **What is karma?**).

However, many in a spiritual crisis have experienced such a contra-balancing development. This is the aspect of suffering, but on the other hand a much better possibility of self-realization.

When you identify yourself with your thoughts and your painbody you loose your being and is being identical with the swings of the energylaws, which within the

wholeness work as a universal balancing-system (as for example also in the teaching of Yin and Yang, where too much Yin brings about a swing over in Yang and reverse). In this identification you will in other words become exposed by troughs of the waves, of contrabalances, as well as karmacially back-swings. And these will be very heavy taken in consideration, what volumes of energy you in a spiritual crisis have to do with.

A spiritual crisis in its negative aspect is known under the term *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

All people in an intensive, spiritual training (no matter what tradition it belongs to) runs in a short time through a considerable amount of existential stuff, which is the cause of suffering. This existential stuff lies in time and its images. Certainly you awake to a greater presence and a greater life-intensity. But this is also an awakening to your own and others, realized or unrealized, suffering.

However there is big difference between, whether the spiritual training develops into a spiritual crisis or not. The spiritual crisis is intimately tied up with the Ego, and therefore the identification with the thoughts, the painbody and the images of time. In this identification the mind is - when there is talk about a spiritual crisis - so to speak being flooded with experiences of the contents of time and its images, and you don't understand what is going on. And therewith you either have the Ego-inflation or the deep suffering.

However this doesn't happen, when the spiritual training goes off correct. And it is my experience, that the so-called downward meditationtraditions are a much better securing towards spiritual crises than the upward meditationtraditions.

The spiritual practice, which I have developed – Meditation as an Art of Life - must necessarily come within a downward meditationtradition, where all creative up-tensions, through being in the Now, are relaxed away from the images of time. Being in the Now starts in Agna-chakra, with awareness-training (training of neutral observation). But the training of awareness must necessarily begin with focusing or concentration. And at this point there is a lot of pitfalls in meditation, because what shall you focus the consciousness on (a point between the eyes, a inner image, a chakra, an outer object, a mantra or a prayer)?

Through focus and concentration the energy-level is rising, and how do you secure, that this increased energy runs into the Now, and not into the thoughts and up in the head, with the risk of ending in a spiritual crisis? The head is in time, while the body is in the Now. Neutral observation must therefore be connected with the body. My own experiences with an awakening of kundalini say me, that Hara-focusing is the

best guarantee for, that the energy runs in the right course. And if the energy already circulates wrong (for example if you are in a spiritual crisis), then the training of Hara will correct this (see the supporting exercises in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**)

The energy flows in this practice back from the content-side of the chakras, towards their essence-side. In Agna-chakra the energy flows back from past and future, back from sorrows and bindings, plans and worries, into the Now and therefore down through the head, down into the body, from chakra to chakra, whilst the energy, which is tied in their content-side, is being released, moving inwards towards the essence: therefore from language to silence, from opposites to oneness, from emotions to being, from movement to the unmoved, from the manifested to the unmanifested. The body is being surrounded by the new energy's presence and joy of life. The whole thing happens through a melting, a letting go, a devotion (here the training of love and compassion will help, for example as in bhakti-yoga). And such has the progress for example also been described by the enlightened Indian master Sri Aurobindo (and also by the enlightened Danish master Martinus). The chakra-process here goes off the other way round – from above and down.

It reminds about the third type of rising, the melting-rising, only the energy is not rising. But what is described as a static or frozen connection between the right and the left hemisphere of the brain, or as a static pattern of masculine and feminine energy in the fields above the crown center, this static, crystalline or frozen double field is being brought to melting, not by force of up-streaming energy, but by force of Relaxationmeditation, Hara meditation and Tonglenmeditation jointly. The energy, which hereby is melting, flows down through the body and fills this up from below with a kind of feeling of bliss. The melting of the freezing in the head opens at the same time upwards, so that energy from the spiritual dimension can flow downwards.

In my article **A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork** you can read more about my own experiences with the awakening of kundalini.

Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena

The Czech-american psychiatrist Stanislav Grof has made a pioneering work mapping different types of spiritual crises, which I below, on the background of my own experiences, present in a slightly reworded version:

The awakening of Kundalini. Described as a snake-like energy, which in spiral form moves itself from the foot of the spiral column up in the head, while it opens a line of psychological centers, called chakras (see my articles **The awakening of kundalini**, and **What are chakras?**). The phenomenon is especially known in connection with the Indian Tantrism.

Para-psychic opening. Visual, auditory or emotive knowledge about a past and a future, which lies outside your own personality. Is especially known in connection with different types of clairvoyance. Also known in connection with astral travel or astral projection (out-of-body experiences).

Spiritual crises as a hero's journey. The experience of yourself as a hero who travels through a mythological and fantastic empire, filled with good and evil forces, as well as a fount of other sharply marked opposites. The crisis takes you farther and farther back into the past – through your own history and the history of humanity, all the way to the creation of the world and the original ideal state of paradise. In this process, you seem to strive for perfection, are trying to correct things that went wrong in the past. It often culminates in the meeting with death and the following rebirth. Such death-rebirth themes are known from ancient schools of mystery, as well as in the transition rites of scriptless peoples' religions.

The shamanic crisis. At the beginning of his career the shaman often goes through heavy ordeals, the so-called initiation crisis. The initiation often includes a journey to the underworld, where the shaman aspirant goes through terrible ordeals with diverse demons and other mythological creatures. As in the hero's journey the initiation often culminates in the experience of death, dismemberment and extinction. Typical the extinction then is followed by resurrection, rebirth and ascension into heavenly regions.

Channeling. The ability to make contact with divine creatures and levels of consciousness, which is thought to possess informations of spiritual value for people, and through the body mediate communication from these levels.

Close encounters with UFOs. Experiences of unusual light phenomena, communication with aliens, or experiences of being abducted by aliens, or of travelling with them to other worlds.

Breakthrough of memories from past lives. Sequences of experiences, which take place in other historical periods and/or other countries/planets – or in connection with karmacial experiences.

Near-death experiences. Experiences, which are connected with death or the death process. This can be experiences of anxiety or existential guilt, but also experiences of a peaceful, harmonic condition after death.

Possession states. An experience of, that your mind and body (it can also be things or places) have become invaded and are controlled by a being, or an alien energy, which can be of divine or, most known, demonic kind. Often with inexplicable bodily manifestations.

Oneness-consciousness. Experiences of oneness between inner and outer, strong positive feelings, transcendence of time and space, feeling of holiness and paradoxical nature. It sounds like a genuine mystical experience, but it is not. It is rather a so-called peak experience - about the problem of peak experiences read my article **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching**).

Alcohol and drug abuse. The strong longing after alcohol or drugs corresponds on a low level to our own being's spiritual longing after wholeness: the unification with God. The important role of the Ego-death under the above-mentioned types of spiritual crises is a direct parallel to the abuser's experience of "hitting the bottom." Can for example be seen reflected in the "Beat Generation", and the works of the Beat writers. Another aspect of alcohol and drug abuse as spiritual crisis, is that alcohol, and some kind of drugs, can relieve the intense stress from other kind of spiritual crises.

Spiritual crises are not due to mental disease, but are manifestations of time and its more collective images; that is: the collective history of the astral plane. These manifestations are often accompanied by some deep and powerful energies (or forms of energy), which penetrate the whole of your being. And this can, in the meeting with the painbody (the thought's negative energyfield in the body), be heavy filled with suffering. Therefore such crises often in the psychiatric system are misdiagnosed as mental disease, due to a lack of knowledge about, or rejection of, such forms of energy. This often makes the crisis even worse.

Experiences of the above mentioned phenomena are not a reliable criterion for, that you are in a crisis, though. You can experience them without being in a crisis (though you still can be a victim of thought distortions). When it is a matter of a crisis, the phenomena should be followed by the following symptoms:

- 1) Burning hot or ice-cold streams, which move up through the back.
- 2) Excitation in the abdomen, along the spine, and up in the head.

- 3) Vibrations, restlessness or cramps in legs and other places in the body.
- 4) Pains, tensions or stiffness in the back of the neck, as well as headpains.
- 5) Fast pulse and increased metabolism.
- 6) Sensitivity to sounds, people's presence and other influences.
- 7) Sense of orgasms different places in the body, or total, cosmic orgasms.
- 8) Mystical/religious experiences, revelations and/or cosmic glimpses.
- 9) Para-psychic abilities, light phenomena.
- 10) Problematic balance between sexual impulses and spiritual urge.
- 11) Problematic balance (contradiction) between living a temporal life and a spiritual life.
- 12) Anxiety because of uncertainty about the process.
- 13) Weakened concentrationpower and lapses of memory.
- 14) Sleeplessness, manic exaltation alternate with depression and lack of energy.
- 15) Total isolation because the inner experiences can't be communicated out.

In my article **The devastating New Age turn within Psychotherapy** I describe some physiological persuasion techniques used by psychotherapy cults. It is techniques producing predictable physiological responses; that is: physiological methods of producing various mental and physical feelings taught to members as group activities. Members' responses to these activities are reinterpreted in desirable ways by group leaders or trainers, so as to convince both neophytes and devotees that the processes are good for them. The process of positive reinterpretation, sometimes called *proof through reframing*, is a persuasion technique commonly used by cults. One of the physiological persuasion techniques is called *Relaxation-Induced Anxiety*, and refers to the use of one-sided meditation-techniques. In the article I give a few examples of symptoms which illustrate former cult members' range of impairments after having done such one-sided meditation-techniques, some of which remain after many years out of the cultic group. The symptoms seem to be symptoms of spiritual crises, though the persons described don't mention this.

The presence of the above-mentioned symptoms is however still not a reliable criterion for, that it is a matter of a spiritual crisis. The criterion is also, among other things, that the physical symptoms can't be explained through medical science, as well as that you, in psychological sense, are able to discriminate between your own inner experiences and the outer surroundings.

The crucial criterion is however, that the experiences are accompanied by one, or more, of the following existential conditions: unreality, division, stagnation, anxiety or meaninglessness.

This means, that your consciousness and personality, when it is a matter of a spiritual crisis, has slipped fundamentally out of balance, but in most cases not so much that you can be diagnosed as having a mental disease.

Spiritual crises often appear as unintended consequences of yoga, one-sided meditation techniques, body-oriented- and experiential psychotherapy, healing, energy transmission (for example Deeksha/Shaktipat - about the false, or demonical, use of Deeksha, see my articles **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching** and **The philosophy of Karen Blixen**), different types of rituals. The problem is - besides using one-sided techniques - that many experiential psychotherapists, meditation teachers, or other spiritual teachers, are completely ignorant about the nature of spiritual crises. There are far too many people today, who teach spiritual techniques without having the necessary experience and philosophical knowledge.

A special problem is in this connection, that many meditation teachers are psychologists or psychotherapists, who, with the best intentions, want to use meditation as a therapy based on a scientific approach; that is: without religious/spiritual/philosophical undertones. In other words, they cut the philosophical aspects of meditation off, and that's of course a problem, because meditation traditionally is meant to open up into the dimensions of the human mind, which actually are of a philosophical nature (see my articles **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**, and **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

Among other factors of release can be mentioned: births, unhappy love, celibacy, deep sorrow, high fever and intake of drugs. But a spiritual crisis can also come suddenly without traceable cause. You can suddenly be thrown out in such a crisis.

The wisdom traditions have always claimed, that the above-mentioned phenomena come from the collective imageworld of the astral plane, which consists of highly abstract form-formations of energy. This imageworld has had many names: it is

Plato's world of forms, the Bardoworlds of the Books of the Dead, the Anabasis of the mystery cults, the image galleries of the Alchemists, the collective subconscious, the dreamtime of the aboriginals etc. etc.

This imageworld has a relative validity, because it is lying outside the area of the personality, and seems to have a paranormal, or supernatural, character. The deceitful (relative) about it is, that it works in sequences in past and future, and in fragmentation. If you therefore identify yourself with it (the above-mentioned phenomena), then you relate absolute to the relative, and remove your consciousness from the Now, which is the actual reality and being. The Now is left empty and meaningless, the absolute has vanished. Furthermore you become a helpless victim of the swings of the energy-laws, and then you have the spiritual crisis. As mentioned this can result in deep suffering (often called *The Dark Night of the Soul*), but it can also result in Ego-inflation.

Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice

The Good, the True and the Beautiful, is the Source, which rays in all religions, though often faint, through countless thought distortions. But through history there have always existed rare individuals, who experienced an inner transformation, and therewith realized that in themselves, which all religions aim towards. The various descriptions of this, basically same, indescribable ground-realization, could, in a spiritual practice, be:

- a) Oneness with the divine
- b) The ultimate fulfilment
- c) The essence of consciousness
- d) The naked consciousness
- e) The enlightened consciousness
- f) The Source of love

But in order to describe this non-conceptual truth in a more broad sense, they thereafter used their own religions as frame of reference.

Through some of these men and women there has in all great religions arisen a spiritual practice, which represented, not only a rediscovery, but in some cases an intensification of the light of an original teaching, universal and common to all mankind. Thus Gnosticism and Mysticism arised in the early and medieval Christianity, Sufism in Islam, Hasidism and Kabbalah in Judaism, Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism, Zen and Dzogchen in Buddhism. But even older are shamanism and paganism; religious practices which I under one call the old religion and the old art.

Unlike the established religions then the spiritual practice presupposes no religious doctrine, ideology, myth or conception, though religion and supporting exercises often are used as a frame of reference. The spiritual practice puts its emphasis on realization and inner transformation. And it is this, which constitute the philosophical element in the spiritual practice.

The 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 (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 heal it**, and **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**)
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images)

To begin a spiritual practice is to begin a proces of awakening. In Zen it is for example said about the process of awakening: "In the beginning mountains are mountains, and woods are woods. Then mountains no longer are mountains and woods are no longer woods. Finally mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods."

This refers to the three forms of states 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 states the wholeness can be in, can also be described as the personal time, the collective time and the universal time. Furthermore it can be described as the personal history, the collective history and the universal history. Time and history constitute the structure under your thinking.

This structure is also called the astral plane, or the astral world. It is a plane of existence postulated both by classical (particular neo-Platonic), medieval, oriental and esoteric philosophies and mystery religions. It is the world of the planetary spheres, crossed by the soul in its astral body, either through the dream state, or on the way to being born and after death, and generally said to be populated by angels, demons, spirits or other immaterial beings.

The astral plane is connected with the so-called Akashic records. The Akashic records are a compendium of mystical knowledge encoded in a non-physical plane of existence: the astral plane. These records are described as containing all knowledge of human experience and the history of the cosmos. They are holding a record of all events, actions, thoughts and feelings that have ever occurred or will ever occur.

The Akasha is an “astral light” containing occult records, which spiritual beings can perceive by their “astral senses” and “astral bodies”. Clairvoyance, spiritual insight, prophecy and many other metaphysical and religious notions are made possible by tapping into the Akashic records. They are metaphorically described as a library. They can be accessed through astral projection, meditation, near-death experience, lucid dreaming, or other means.

The Akashic records are the wholeness, and as mentioned: the wholeness can be in three states of spiritual awakening - sleep, dream, awake – which again can be described as the personal, collective and universal time (or history).

The collective time is a very dangerous intermediate area, if you not are very trained in realization and compassion. The collective time is the area where different kinds of paranormal (philosophical/religious) phenomena are beginning to occur in your daily life. It is especially the lack of understanding this area, that is due to my critique of the many incompetent spiritual teachers you see today in the New Age movement (see my articles **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**, and **The Matrix Conspiracy**). If you don't understand what to do, when these phenomena arise, it can end in a spiritual crisis (see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**). Though you might have paranormal abilities, then you, spiritual seen, not necessarily are sufficiently awake on these areas, and therefore competent enough to guide other people spiritual.

I have in my book **Dream Yoga** - in the article *A Map of the Spiritual Journey* - more deeply investigated the three states the wholeness can be in.

I have in my book **A Portrait of a Lifestylist** set up six steps, or phases in this process of awakening, which are recurring in all the various wisdomtraditions. These steps

indicate a common core, which in remarkable equal form occurs in all the directions. That is: some existential conditions, and some, common to all mankind, growing conditions, and growth levels, in the spiritual practitioner's voyage of discovery into himself, and thereby into life itself. The steps are:

- 1) The separation of the observer and the observed
- 2) Religion and supporting exercises
- 3) Passive listening presence (wordless prayer)
- 4) Discrimination
- 5) Creative emptiness
- 6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

A central method when teaching people spiritual practice in a way which is not distorted, is philosophical counseling (see my article **Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy**).

Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with mystical experiences

To begin a spiritual practice is to begin a process of awakening (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice**). In Zen it is for example said about the process of awakening: "In the beginning mountains are mountains, and woods are woods. Then mountains no longer are mountains and woods are no longer woods. Finally mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods."

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The Akashic records are the wholeness, and as mentioned: the wholeness can be in three states of spiritual awakening - sleep, dream, awake – which again can be described as the personal, collective and universal time (or history).

The collective history of the astral plane, is, as a matter of fact, creating a subject-field and an object-field, but this is not reality, it is based on a self-image and a world-image, therefore an illusion, a poetic work of mankind, as they both in Buddhist and Indian philosophy point out. They work fragmented in sequences in past and future.

The universal history of the astral plane, is, contrary to the collective history, an expression of reality itself, though. It is the Akashic records when not influenced by human thought distortions (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**). It is not human made. In Yogacara Buddhism they use the term Alaya-Vijnana, the common universal storeroom of consciousness, which doesn't consist of anything else than forms, the carrier of all latent possibilities and the store place for all accumulated tendencies. It is the foundation for the activity of the mind, and because it always both is changeable, dynamic, and at the same time a continuum, which is an oneness and homogeneous, it can't be understood by the thinking.

Nonetheless the universal history is of linguistic kind, language, which however no longer is verbal, but superior, visionary syntheses and wholes, that work more in synchronism with the Now than in sequences in past and future. The thoughts of God.

Both the personal, collective, and universal history, are images in time.

We can now talk about two types of symbols and symbolizing. There exist two types of symbols, dependent on whether it is the collective images, or the universal images, which are lying as foundation for the symbol.

A mystical experience is happening when astral energies and content arrive to the consciousness, either from the collective images, or from the universal images.

When energy and content arrive to the consciousness from the collective images, then this energy, and this content, will symbolize itself. This is due to, that the collective images are in a condition of vague, diffuse, astral oneness. What is coming from the collective images therefore contains a much greater width and depth than the liminary, relatively narrow and clear concepts and classes of the ordinary consciousness. The vague, wide contents and energies from the collective images are therefore growing narrower in the meeting with the consciousness. The symbol is this quintessence, this shortened, condensed form of expression of the vague, wide collective material.

The other types of symbols are coming from the universal images, and therewith from reality and truth itself. All reality, which shall mirror itself in the superficial mind, will automatically symbolize itself. Again the symbol is a telescoping, a representing quintessence of the informationquantities, and the greater clarity, which are connected with reality.

Symbols from the collective images reproduce a more vague, more imprecisely, but richer organic astral oneness. Symbols from the universal images reproduce a clearer, more precise and superior astral oneness. The more vague astral oneness, or the more precise astral oneness, shows itself in symbolic form in the dividing, separating structure of consciousness.

Symbols from the collective images are known from the archetypes and primordial images of the dreams, from fantasies, fairy-tales, myths etc.

Symbols from the universal images are formed in the transition from the wholeness of the observer and the observed, to the separation of the observer and the observed (in my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist** the relation between the observer and the observed is a central issue).

What reality in itself contains, is real in this dimension, not symbolic, not linguistical. But when reality becomes unreality in the separation of the observer and the observed, it narrows, loses clarity and light, is being muted to the split consciousness, and that – which in reality was truth – will transmute itself to symbols. That which is truth in reality and presence, is symbolic in unreality and absence. It is therefore very difficult for the universal images to communicate themselves to an ordinary absent consciousness. It requires, that you yourself do your part of the spiritual work.

So, there exist symbols both from the collective and universal images of time. Symbols are manifestations of these images. They are all a telescoping, a representing quintessence of the astral information quantities the images contain.

Symbols from the collective images are, as already mentioned, shortened, condensed modes of expression from a subordinate, vague, diffuse and imprecise astral time unit, which moves fragmented in sequences in past and future; or said differently: in cycles (see my article **What is karma?**). Symbols from here are known from the archetypes and primordial images of the dreams, from fantasies, fairy-tales, myths etc., but also in relation to the experience of ghosts, spirits, UFOs etc. To experience symbols from here is however not the same as directly (without the intermediate state of the symbols) experiencing the collective time's astral images and worlds. Here the consciousness has to be in an astral state.

Symbols (and energies) from the collective images are for example the cause of spiritual crises such as kundalini, para-psychic opening, spiritual crises as a hero's journey, the shamanic crisis, channeling, close encounters with UFOs, breakthrough of memories from past lives, near-death experiences, possession states, oneness-consciousness/peak experiences, and many phenomena in relation to alcohol and drug abuse (see my articles **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**, **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with clairvoyance**, and **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**).

Symbols from the universal images are of a completely different character. They reproduce a much clearer, more precise and superior astral wholeness. It is from these symbols you can receive direct teachings about your spiritual development process.

When you have trained meditation and dream yoga in many years, a so-called divine being can visit you through a symbol from the universal images: Christ, Buddha, masters, teachers, angels. Note that these of course also can come from the collective images – the difference is explained below:

Such a symbol is, as mentioned, a telescoping, a representing quintessence of the information quantities, which the wholeness in a universal image contains. The divine being will in that way canalize information to you from the universal image, which, together with the whole of the universal vision, constitutes the dream-tracks and the songlines in the artwork of your life. The divine being (or other symbols from the universal images) will in that way help you to compose, to synthesize and interlock, what your inner thinker in the waking state has divided. But it is very important to understand that this nothing has to do with the channeling phenomenon, which belongs to the collective images. In order to receive help from a divine being you must be very close to enlightenment yourself.

Our suffering, our painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego (see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**).

That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can't heal Man from the ground. In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the astral plane's collective history. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma. The concepts indicate, that the inertia projects beyond the personal history (growing up conditions, traumatic bindings, painful experiences etc.) and far down into the collective inherit-backgrounds of history (genes, environment, society-ideals, the archetypes and the primordial images of the dreams, fantasies, fairy-tales, myths, and finally: instincts inherited from the animals). It is a factor, which lies in the evolution itself, in the genes, in the collective subconscious, in the collective history.

When therefore therapy requires a change, then the instinctive survival-preparedness in us reacts and protests. Man has survived on willfulness and a consciousness-structure, which mental and psychic sign is Ego-centredness. The bigger Ego, the bigger survival chance.

Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategy (the Ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma. You can't, by therapeutic strategies, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through therapy. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And

as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions (see my article **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice**).

So, when you in this way do your part of the work, then you will discover that the enlightened consciousness (God, Christ, Buddha), already have 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.

Suffering as an entrance to the Source

The Danish philosopher Niels Thomassen examines suffering under the following five categories: unreality, division, stagnation, anxiety and meaninglessness. These are in my teaching inextricably linked with the painbody (see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**).

Unreality consists in, that the Ego constantly compares the Now with earlier and hopes, desires or fears something else. This way the Ego makes the Now (the existential facts), into a problem. Hereby there is created resistance. The Ego places itself outside life itself. Unreality is in this way the experience of, that what happens around you, and with you, do not concern you, that you are not in it, not involved. You are not here, nor other places, but outside, in the meaning absent. A condition filled with negativity.

Division consists in, that the Ego, through evaluations of the images of time, split the world up in opposites (good and evil, power and powerlessness, perfect and fiasco, love and hate). Thereby is created a line of one-sided and extreme basic assumptions (for example "I always have to be perfect!") and rules of living (for example "unless I always am perfect, then I am a fiasco"). But the energylaws of life will seek to balance these imbalances, for example through contrabalances (perfect becomes fiasco). Hereby there arise negative automatic thoughts, which again activate the painbody.

Stagnation has to do with being identified with the thinking's past and future. This identification forms an image of itself in the body, a negative energyfield: the emotional painbody. The painbody contains all the pain you have accumulated in the past, and when it, through negative automatic thoughts, is activated, there arise negative feelings, and your actions will be a never-ending repetition of the same. Negative feelings are for example anxiety (lack of lifecourage, obsessions, phobia),

depression (ennui, guilt, shame, boredom), destructivity (hate, powerlessness, self-destructivity, anger, aggression).

Anxiety has to do with that you are too much in the future, in your plans and projects. You constantly formshape energy, whereby the energy runs up in your head. It forms a creative, spiral-like up-tension of the whole of your being, so that you loose contact with reality. You become paralysed, the world becomes a threat to you, the space narrows, and there arises dizziness. You become constrained, captured and characterized by lack of lifecourage.

Meaninglessness is created by, that your mind (your thoughts) removes itself from the Now and invests the Now's energy in the past and the future. The mind is getting absent-minded and forms a negative and self-circling absence, characterized by ennui. Regardless how much meaning you in this way seek to find in the past or the future, then it will not be real meaning, because the loss of the Now always will lie behind in the form of emptiness.

These five categories constitute together the suffering, which in this way is a part of your lifesituation. Like this suffering has a past and a future. The past and the future form an unbroken continuum, unless the Now's releasing power is activated through your aware presence, which is the goal with spiritual practice. Behind all the different circumstances which constitute your lifesituation, and which exist in time, there in other words exists something deeper, more essential: life itself, your being in the timeless Now itself.

If you activate this deeper dimension you will get the opposite categories: reality, cooperation, movement, safety and meaning.

Reality is middle, is fullness, is lying in light. The middle is the quality, which is lying in, that you are not decentralized, not apart from yourself, not absent from the actual. On the contrary you are in the middle of the actual.

Cooperation means that you think flexible, that you are capable always to look at the challenges from different viewpoints, for hereby to find a balance.

Movement has to do with, that you don't make resistance, that you transform the painbody's negative energyfield, so that the energy can flow unhindered through you. At the same time you open yourself to the life-source, which is the unmoved mover behind everything. And then you find yourself in the middle of the stream of life.

Safety means that you have found ground connection. The creative up-tension has become relaxed down into the earth through a melting, a letting go, a devotion. The

world has become a place where you feel at home. You are free and filled with lifecourage.

Meaning arises when the energy flows backwards from the past and the future, and fills the Now with presence, and therefore with joy of life. You are present in the Now with *the whole of yourself*, in the self-forgetful openness and devotion to the world. The Now is awareness. Life itself is openness and therefore love. The Now and life itself is the same. In this way you discover, that the meaning of life is to express the awareness and the love which both are the essence in yourself and the essence behind everything else – the Source.

Both in Tibetan Buddhism, and in Christianity, suffering are seen as a possible way of entering into the Source.

In Tibetan Buddhism they see suffering as a so-called “bardo” state in the same way as dreams, lucid dreams, astral states, spiritual crises, and the deathprocess.

The word Bardo is specially known in connection with the Tibetan book of the Dead, which in Tibetan is called Bardo Thödol. Bardo is the Tibetan word for an intermediate state between two crucial states, for example life and death, birth and death, death and rebirth, unreality and reality, sleep and awake, good and evil, love and hate, perfectionism and fiasco. What characterizes the Bardo state is deep uncertainty and doubtfulness. Thödol means liberations through listening (spiritual practice in the intermediate state).

So Bardo can mean the after-death state, the death-nearness state, or a borderline state as such; that is: all kinds of suffering, sorrow, alcoholism, economical bankruptcy, all kinds of illness, physical as psychologically.

So if you actually begin to practice spiritual in a Bardo state, then the state can have a healing and transformational value, which can give your spiritual development a considerable lift upwards. This is because that you in this state are more open for change than usually; that is: the Ego is weak.

This gives some stuff for reflection. In the so-called “normal” (healthy) state, we are usually closed to life itself (hopeless Egoistic self-circling), while we in borderline states are more open.

In Christianity they talk about The Way of the Cross. Christian mystics have always known, that suffering can work advancing on a spiritual transformation-practice. This is because that suffering can be so unbearable, that you finally do not feel up to make resistance against it anymore. But this surrender exactly leads you into the Now.

Paradoxically enough it is your resistance against the suffering, which upholds the suffering, while the surrendering of resistance neutralizes the suffering.

All inner resistance is experienced as negativity in some kind. All negativity is resistance. Negativity goes from irritation or impatience to violent anger, from bad mood or sulky reluctance to suicidal despair. Sometimes the resistance activates the painbody, and in such cases even a small situation can create negativity, for example anger, depression or deep sorrow.

As we saw, then resistance is created by the inner thinker (the Ego), which through evaluations compares the Now with earlier, and hopes, desires or fears something else, whereby the Now (the suffering) is being made into a problem. And through negativity the inner thinker then tries to manipulate reality and get what it wants. But the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, is connected with the more dangerous depths of the collective images in time, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego. That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can't heal Man from the ground.

In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the collective time. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma (see my article **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice**).

Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategy (the Ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma. You can't, by therapeutic strategies, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through therapy. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the spiritual practice.

Returning negative feelings can therefore very well contain a message from the Source, in the same way as an illness does: a message about, that there is something you have to change. But every outside change is superficial and temporary, unless it is coming from a change in your consciousness. And what that concerns, it can only mean one thing, namely to start a spiritual practice.

When you have achieved a certain degree of spiritual training, you no longer need the negativity to tell you what you need in your lifesituation. But as long as there is

negativity, or illness, then use it as a signal, which reminds you to begin a spiritual practice, or, if you already are practising, to deepen it.

If you have a serious illness, then use it to become enlightened. All "bad" which happens in your life – use it to become enlightened. Surrender to the existential facts, surrender to the Now (see the supporting exercise *The Change of Suffering into Enlightenment* in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**, and the article *Suffering as an Entrance to the Source* in my book **Dream Yoga**).

Finally both Tibetan Buddhism and Christian mysticism are common in training yourself in using your personal suffering to increase your love and compassion – which means: where you mentally receive and give. You use your own suffering in a way, where you receive *others'* suffering in your heart. Here you let it dissolve in the light of compassion, whereon you give the compassion on to these others. This practice works healing, both on yourself and on others (see the supporting exercise *The Heartmeditation* in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**).

So, when you in this way do your part of the work, then you will discover that the enlightened consciousness (God, Christ, Buddha), already have 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. And that is precisely what the above-mentioned heartmeditation is all about. The two processes mutually fertilize each other.

The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice

Our suffering, our painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego (see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**).

That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can't heal Man from the ground. In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the astral plane's collective history. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma. The concepts indicate, that the inertia projects beyond the personal history (growing up

conditions, traumatic bindings, painful experiences etc.) and far down into the collective inherit-backgrounds of history (genes, environment, society-ideals, the archetypes and the primordial images of the dreams, fantasies, fairy-tales, myths, and finally: instincts inherited from the animals). It is a factor, which lies in the evolution itself, in the genes, in the collective subconscious, in the collective history.

When therefore therapy requires a change, then the instinctive survival-preparedness in us reacts and protests. Man has survived on willfulness and a consciousness-structure, which mental and psychic sign is Ego-centredness. The bigger Ego, the bigger survival chance.

Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategy (the Ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma. You can't, by therapeutic strategies, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through therapy. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions.

So, when you in this way do your part of the work, then you will discover that the enlightened consciousness (God, Christ, Buddha), already have 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.

I have in my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist** set up six steps in such a spiritual practice:

- 1) The separation of the observer and the observed
- 2) Religion and supporting exercises
- 3) Passive listening presence
- 4) Discrimination
- 5) Creative emptiness
- 6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

The first step, the separation of the observer and the observed, is the step where you are completely ignorant about your painbody; that is: where you are suffering. The next step is religion and supporting exercises. Religion and supporting exercises are a

valuable early stage in a spiritual practice. In my book **Meditation as an art of life – a basic reader** I have described five supporting exercises. They are as follows:

- 1) The Relaxation meditation
- 2) The Hara meditation
- 3) The Heart meditation
- 4) The Change of suffering into Enlightenment
- 5) The philosophical Diary.

In his *Yogasutras* Patanjali mentions religion and supporting exercises as the first six limbs of the eight limbs of Raja-yoga:

- 1) *Yama*: outer and inner cleanness. Outer cleanness is first of all based on a meticulous body-hygiene. Inner cleanness is based on the moral standards, you find in all systems of religion.
- 2) *Niyama*: self-denying life and devotion to God. This does not necessarily imply a life as a monk or nun, but it requires that you simplify your life, so that there is room for tranquillity and reflection.
- 3) *Pranayama*: mastery of breathing and through that: mastery of the vital energies and intellectual powers.
- 4) *Asana*: the, from Hatha-yoga, known positions and relaxation exercises.
- 5) *Pratyahara*: mastery of senses and sense impression. The ability not to be distracted.
- 6) *Dharana*: the ability to lead all thought-energy towards a single point and keep it fixed there. Correspond to concentration exercises and awareness-training.
- 7) *Dhyana*: the ability to letting the thought flow into an object, or a conception, and getting to the bottom of it. Corresponding to asking philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way, or purely and simply silence.
- 8) *Samadhi*: oneness-consciousness. The complete unification of the consciousness (the self, Atman) with it's source (The Good, the True and the Beautiful – or God, Brahman).

In Christian Mysticism the supporting exercises is called *Recollectio* and is described by Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila. Moreover supporting

exercises is seen in Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual exercises*, which perhaps is the practice within Christian Mysticism that reminds the most about the Greek (Socrates, Epicureans, the Stoics) understanding of philosophy as an art of life.

Concentration consists in the action, the exercise, in which the soul constantly is aimed at, and is remembering, God. When you walk and stand, speak and work, eat and rest: constantly remembering God. The Christian heart prayer (Jesus prayer), which consists in, to each heartbeat, to say a prayer – Kyrie Eleison ("Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.") – is also a technique of concentrative kind, which purpose is to create unity and direction in the mind.

Something similar you will also find in Jewish and Islamic mysticism, and in the philosophies of the East.

Also the Stoics used supporting exercises, either awareness exercises, meditation exercises, intellectual exercises and practical exercises. For instance the Stoics used the so-called Philosophical Diary.

In *Pierre Hadot: Philosophy as a way of Life. Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault. 1995 Blackwell* - you can read about Socrates', the Epicureans', the Stoics', the Christian philosophy's, and other Western philosophers' supporting exercises.

Religion and supporting exercises cleanses and prepares transformation on a collective, unconscious-instinctive, level.

The two main reasons why religion and supporting exercises is a necessity is partly, that the ongoing self-confirmation of the ego and its negative automatic thoughts, is replaced by a spiritual remembrance, partly that the collective inertia is purified and prepared, so that the Ego is made transparent along with that original sin and negative karma are transformed and transfigured in the contact with the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness, the saints etc.) And these two processes mutually fertilize each other (negative automatic thoughts are based on thought distortions – see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

Religion has to do with the pious attitude and way of thinking, which stands for the observance of religious virtues, duties and rituals. In this way you can bring a unity and direction into the mind, an order and tranquillity in the thinking, a consistency between thought and conduct of life, an awareness of your relationship with persons, things and ideas, which no therapy is able to. In a spiritual practice it serves as a frame of reference.

The supporting exercises are the beginning of the spiritual practice, where you begin to activate the higher functions of the mind. In order to discover and break the identification with the samsarical producer of the mind, the subject must discover the hidden source in the awareness or in the innermost of consciousness. It happens by neutralizing the Ego's, or the thinking's, functions. This happens through meditation.

The Ego's functions constitute what you could call the ordinary consciousness. You can talk about four such, lower, functions of the ordinary mind:

1. Evaluation (accept/denial, yes/no)
2. Focus
3. Activity
4. Language (words, images)

The source of awareness, the naked consciousness, is hidden because it has melted together with these four functions. They have become a kind of veils, or layers.

Meditation is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with these functions. Then you can talk about four higher functions of the consciousness, which are becoming activated through meditation:

1. Neutral observation
2. Passive listening presence (or wordless prayer) (defocus)
3. Non-activity (non-action)
4. Non-language (wordless)

The whole proces is like a flower opening itself.

The steps in a spiritual practice can of course be described in many different ways. Another way to describe it is by saying that it 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 (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**)

If you include these three concepts in step 2, religion and supporting exercises, then you can say, that the critical articles in my book **Dream Yoga** also can be seen as

frames of reference and supporting exercises. As you continue up the steps, then these references also must fall away, until you are completely naked in a state of alonebeing.

Spiritual practice is a philosophical art of life, and that religion and supporting exercises lead towards such a philosophical life, means that they affect the human existence as a whole; that is to say: both your thoughts and your conduct of life.

In order to lead towards a philosophical life, it is, as far as I can see, a great help, if you find a religion, which suits you, and practise the supporting exercises in connection with asking philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way (see my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**).

It is however likewise valuable to remember, that the spiritual practice - asking philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way - gradually will lead beyond the relative and limited concepts of the religion. It is necessary that you, just like the masters within the spiritual practices of the religions, only use the religion and the supporting exercises as a frame of reference, partly to describe the non-conceptual truth of the Source, partly to direct the thoughts towards this Source. You shall in other words not identify yourself with any religion. Avoid making it into an ideology, avoid making yourself dependent of it. The best way to avoid this, is probably to avoid being a member of a religion, and just keep it as something private and personal.

In my articles **A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork**, and **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**, I show the dangerous consequences it can have, when you in a spiritual practice reduce religion to psychology and psychotherapy.

In my book **Dream Yoga** (in the article *The value of religion and supporting exercises*) you can read more about the value of having a religion in a spiritual practice.

What is Dream Yoga?

Dreams are a continuation in the sleep of the thinking in the awoken state. The awoken state thinking is primarily characterized by words, while the thinking in the dream state primarily is characterized by images. When you fall asleep the thinking in other words dissolves in images. In the Danish poet Ole Sarvig's poem

Daystreams it is described in this way:

The day's murmurous slim river
widens out by evening
and becomes night's deep,
for miles, obscure lake,
reflecting the stars.

And deep by the bottom of the lake
the day's wild stream has
its way in dreams.

The structure of thinking is lying in the astral plane and the Akashic records; or said in another way: The structure of thinking is lying in time and its images. The thinking, and therefore the dreams, reflects in that way the double movement of time. On some deep level the dreams reflect the outgoing movement of time, which in the dawn of time took its beginning on the background of a great vision of the Universe, the future. The dreams reflect this outgoing movement's negation of the starting point, the Now's unmanifested being, the Source itself: the Good, the True and the Beautiful. And they reflect the negationpower, which shattered the great vision in a multitude of images, which in this way came to work as kind of memories of the vision, now the past. Finally they reflect the backmovement, the longing after the great vision.

So the images in the movement of time are shattered reflections of the great vision of the Universe. They are shadows, dreams, masks, fables, fairy tales, fictions, and they flow in the movement of nature itself – they are, as the Tibetan Buddhism says, relatively valid dreams.

In the scriptless peoples' religions, or in the world of the child, the dreams are episodes under the awoken state. To the poets and to the mystics it is not impossible, that the whole of the awoken state is a dream. As Shakespeare says it in his play *the Tempest*: "We are of the same substance as our dreams; our short life is encircled by a sleep." This is not totally wrong, when you consider, that the images of time flow in the actual movement of the matter (also see my article **The Dream hypothesis and the Brain-in-jar hypothesis**).

The awoken state (which perhaps also just is a dream) is characterized by reality-experience, clarity, precision and stability. The Ego is active, knows its biographical, historical and cultural identity. Abilities and education are stable and cumulative. The world is reasonable stable: things, nature and human beings are recognizable and only change themselves after reasonably predictable patterns. The awoken state, and the

responding larger sense of reality, is therefore so much more intense, the space around is so much larger, the clarity so much deeper - than the dream state.

In relation to the awoken state there are therefore, in dreams, great lacks and limitations. Dreams are thinking in images, but the sense of reality lacks. In dreams you often don't know where you are, whom and what you are. You can be all roles, carry all masks, have all ages and be both gender in every imaginable occupation. This creative richness and multiplicity of the dream state meanwhile costs identical clarity and stability.

The Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges quotes the author Paul Groussac - who in the section *Among Dreams* (in *the Intellectual Journey*) - says, that it is astounding, that we each morning wake up sensible and reasonable, after having passed through this territory of shadows, through these dreamlabyrinths.

Borges furthermore claims, that dreams are fictions, fictional productions, which means: productions of the thought. He quotes Addison, who notices, that we in the dream both are the theatre, the spectators, the actors, the topic and the words we hear.

And after all this is correct, when you consider, that dreams are a continuation of the thinking, which structure is lying in time and its images, which are of a linguistic character.

In the awoken state the Ego is active, and therefore the Ego's evaluations also are active. But the double movement of time is reflected in the Ego, because the Ego is created in the consciousness' identification with the thinking, and therefore with the images of time. Therefore you can say, that the awoken state also is a kind of dream. The actual sense of reality, or the awoken state itself, comes from the Now.

Because of the negationpower of time, the images of time only exist in relation to their negations. The most universal images in the movement of time include their polar partners, they are a kind of visionary mandala-structures or yantrafields. The more collective and personal images expel their polar partners. Yet this is in accordance with the images' logic not possible, and the result is contradiction and split.

This split is also reflected in the Ego, which makes resistance against the Now, and therefore in fact against reality, or the awokenness. The resistance consists of problematizing the Now by comparing with earlier, and hoping, desiring or fearing something else. And in this evaluation-process the Ego identifies itself with the one pole in a pair of opposites, wherefore the polar partner is expelled. The Ego says yes and no, justifies and condemns, accepts and denies, chooses and expels, either by

using the past or the future, or by using opposites: by using time the Ego problematizes the Now by comparing with earlier, and hoping, desiring or fearing something else; by using opposites the Ego polarizes the Now by thinking black and white. Altogether caused by the various split images/assumptions of time, which constitute the Ego's selfunderstanding and outlook on life. Furthermore the Ego develops strategies with the purpose of maintaining this selfunderstanding, or to avoid being confronted with it – the so-called thought distortions (see my book **A Dictionary of Thought distortions**). And all these assumptions and strategies are together constituted by words and sentences, which work in sequences in past and future, and in extremes, or analyses.

In the dream state there meanwhile happens a reduction of the Ego, which therefore no longer can maintain its selfunderstanding. This means that the universal images of time can come more into expression. And it is through these images, which the Source can express itself – they are reflections of the Source so to speak. These images are of a more visionary character, but they are still linguistic interpretations. Unlike the words meanwhile, then each universal image always includes, like a mandala, its opposition. The universal images are in other words a kind of syntheses, which work more in synchronism with the Now than in fragmented sequences in past and future.

In the concrete dreamcontent, which can be personally or collectively, the universal images work in form of symbols. The symbol is a telescoping, a representing quintessence of the informationquantities, which the wholeness in the universal image contains. In this way the symbol-function of the dreams has a development function, which works with the person's development level (the level of realization-work and ethical practice). This means, that dreams seek to put together, to synthesize and join, what the Ego in the awoken state has divided. This development function try to show you the map of your spiritual history, the dreamtracks and songlines in the artwork of your spiritual life – your progressive karma. But therefore it is also impossible for the Ego in the awoken state to understand the dreams. It can well be, that the Ego finds that the dreams cost identical clarity, but the Ego can logical seen not understand their function. Much dreaminterpretation is therefore completely deceptive.

Furthermore the dream state is connected with the body. When you fall asleep the energy flows away from the head and down into the body – you can feel it when you become sleepy, and the feet becomes warm. And therefore dreams are more characterized by feelings than by thoughts. Feelings are the body's reaction on the thoughts. Feelings arise where the thoughts and the body meet. They are a reflection of the thoughts in the body. The thoughts create a build-up of energy in the body. It is this energy, which is the feeling, and it is in this energy the images of the dreams

show themselves. In order to understand a dream you therefore have to try to feel it rather than to think it. And if there is conflict between the thought and the feeling, then the thought is lie and the feeling truth.

The Ego-weakening, and the dreams' connection with the body, furthermore do that the energy-laws of life work much better in the dream state. In other words: dreams balance the energetical swings of the thoughts. And dreams seek to finish unfinished situations. If you follow your dreams you will see, that wherever and whenever the Ego's awakened life - on the background of evaluations using opposites - has slipped out in one extreme, then the dreamprocess seeks to balance this imbalance by insisting on the opposite extreme. If you awake were too gentle, the dreams depict the more stubborn and unfriendly sides in your personality. If you were too negative, the dreams seek to bring the positive aspect into light. And each and every time the Ego in the awaken life reacts to the challenges of the various situations, by using the past, an unfinished situation is left behind. The dreams seek to finish this as good as possible. As you know you can have the same type of dreams again and again – until you begin to examine yourself, and change and restructure your thoughtpatterns, so that you can let go of the situations. This is your compensatory karma.

So firstly the dreams has a development function through their symbolfunction (progressive karma). Secondly the dreams function with reference to bodily and energetical balancing and regulation of the swings of the thoughts (compensatory karma). This, the self-regulating system of the dreamprocess, is a Sisyphean task though, as long as you in the awaken life don't help.

These two functions correspond to the function of the chakras.

In order to make changes in your dreams, or nightmares, it is necessary, that you in your awaken life support the work of the energy-laws in the dreams. This is a part of what is called Dream yoga.

If you therefore begin to practise being in the Now, and flexible (critical) thinking, you can exempt the dreams from having to contra-balance imbalances and finish unfinished situations, what will give an ever increasing feeling of freedom.

But first after many years of spiritual practice, will the continuous supporting exercises, by themselves, begin to penetrate, first the dream life, and later the deep, dreamless sleep.

The important in spiritual practice is the dreamconsciousness' form, not its content.

On the plane of the universal images, and therefore on the Now's plane, the central is the consciousness' form, the consciousness itself and its clarity and openness. Not the consciousness' content. In spiritual practice the spiritual and spiritual active, is the consciousness' direction towards its source (the Now, the Otherness). What the consciousness and the mind and the senses are filled of, is of lesser crucial importance.

The development concerning the Now and the universal images shows itself in the dreams' consciousness in three ways:

1) In the dreams you begin to practise the continuous supporting exercises the same way as in the awoken daily life (about the supporting exercises, see my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**).

2) Dreams, which become lucid and the, to this responding, most suitable practice.

3) The dreams' consciousness becomes astral and the, in relation to this, most suitable practice.

1): That your spiritual practice at all reflects itself in the dream life, is a beneficial sign in your total effort. In the moment of falling asleep you simply begin to train relaxation and Hara practice. Moreover you remember to write the dreams down when you wake up. Later you can experience, that you in a dream suddenly begin to practise.

2): Lucid dreams are dreams, in which you know, that you are dreaming. There are many different causes to, that there can arise lucidity in dreams, for example stress conditions or illogical circumstances, or that you watch yourself in a mirror, or so-called flying dreams. You discover that you can alter in the dream as you like. To use lucidity to different experiments is therefore an understandable temptation, but basically without spiritual content.

When you know that you are dreaming, while you are dreaming, the dream is called lucid. The word lucid means luminous, and the name is referring to the unusual clarity, which is in such dreams.

The lucid dream is a little more awake, a degree more awake, than an ordinary dream. Such dreams can therefore be said to be a state between dream and awake, however still more akin to dream.

Normally the Dream Self is not distanced from the dream scenario. To know that you are dreaming is due to, that a part of the Dream Consciousness separates you from the immediate identity with the scenario and content of the dream. The phenomenon is

analogous with meditation, or neutral observation. In neutral observation there are two functions. The one is the observer, who separates himself from the stream of thoughts. The second is the neutrality that neither says yes or no, considers or comments.

When dreams become lucid, then it is analogous with the activating of the first function: the segregation of a Dream Witness, an instance, which knows that this is a dream. As a rule the mind in this situation then gets caught by the new, creative possibilities, which are lying in the lucidity. You can transform dreams as you want and have fantasy to. You can fly through walls, walk on water and wish yourself to other planets etc., etc.

Dream Yoga is about, that if a dream becomes lucid, you add – from the habit with meditation in the waking practice – the second function, namely the neutrality, that just – in dreams – to observe and not control, intervene or in other way interfere in the dream's own stream. If both factors are active in dreams, there is no functional difference between awake neutral observation and dreaming neutral lucidity.

According to experience there are a couple of dream situations, or elements, which favour the rise of lucidity, for example stress, illogical situations, etc. Furthermore it is possible to train lucidity in dreams; there both exists ancient Tibetan ways, Shamanistic ways and new American ways.

In spiritual practice however, you neither ought to train or worship lucidity. What on the other hand is appropriate is to use lucidity for Hara practice; that is, that you in the lucid dream focus your awareness in Hara, and therewith looks into your self, at the same time as your are observing the dream. In this way the dreaming awareness changes accent from the dream production, from the content of the dream to the dreaming awareness itself.

The most suitable training in lucid dreams is therefore to begin to practice the continuous supporting exercises. Second best, but however still excellent, is to seek towards light, which brings you closer the lucidity and thereby the Source. Alternatively to seek towards a spiritual teacher, or in lack of a such, to seek towards a person of wisdom, archetypical understood. But best is to begin to practice the supporting exercises.

3): The astral "dream state" can evolve spontaneous, or evolve out of the lucid dream. In an astral "dream state" you know, that you are lying in the bed in this chamber and are sleeping, alternatively dreaming. In the lucid state you know, that you are dreaming, while you are dreaming. But you dont know, that this happens, while you in fact are lying sleeping in your bed. However in the astral state you also know, that

you are lying in your bed sleeping. The sleeping body, the bed and the room is included in the astral "dream state". The consciousness is often located outside the body, observing the sleeping body from outside.

The temptation to here, either to become afraid, or experiment with various possibilities (astral projection, clairvoyance, telepathy etc. etc.) is huge. You are suddenly Peter Pan. It is a very forceful state. The creativity and the reality creating ability are much more free than in the lucid dream state. However you are still on the collective history of the astral plane, which work fragmented in sequences in past and future, and there is danger for, either that you remain here, in the fascination and the enthusiasm, whereby your spiritual development stops, or that you directly end up in a spiritual crisis.

In spiritual practice the most appropriate is again to use the astral state to begin to practice the continuous supporting exercises. For example you can centre the astral consciousness in the Hara centre of the sleeping body, or in the heart centre.

If you as a sleeper remember to use such an opening spiritual seen correct, this can give your total development a considerably lift forward.

But in order to do this it is of vital important that you examine the nature of lucid dreams and astral states. Let's therefore look a bit further into it.

Another aspect of lucid dreams is as mentioned the astral state: astral travel or astral projection (out-of-body experiences). In both ordinary and lucid dreams the dreamer, in the vast majority of cases, is not aware that, and where, the body is lying sleeping. The astral state is characterized by, that the consciousness knows that the body is sleeping and can watch the sleeping body. The consciousness is here located outside the body, floating over the body in a not all too long distance. This consciousness is called the dream body.

Dalai Lama has this to say about awakening our dream body and using it for spiritual progress and development: "There is said to be a relationship between dreaming, on the one hand, and the gross and subdue levels of the body on the other. But it is also said that there is a 'special dream state.' In that state, the special dream body (the astral body) is created from the mind and from vital energy (*prana*) within the body. It looks like the physical body, but is of a finer and transparent substance. Through training it is possible to learn to send the dream body out of the body; it then works completely as an extension of the physical body, because the senses and the consciousness of the body seems to follow".

This special dream body is in other words able to dissociate entirely from the gross physical body and travel elsewhere, and experience the astral worlds of the collective time.

One way of developing this special dream body is first of all to recognize a dream as a dream when it occurs. Then you find that the dream is malleable, and you make efforts to gain control over it. Gradually you become very skilled in this, increasing your ability to control the contents of the dream so that it accords to your own spiritual practice. Eventually it is possible to dissociate your dream body from your gross physical body. In contrast, in the normal dream state, dreaming occurs within the body. But as a result of specific training, the dream body can go elsewhere.

Even though it has only come to the attention of the general public in the last few decades, lucid dreaming is not a modern discovery. In the 8th century, Tibetan Buddhists and Bonpo were practicing a form of Dream Yoga held to maintain full waking consciousness while in the dream state. This system is extensively discussed and explained in the book *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light*, by Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, an eminent Tibetan Lama, and his student Michael Katz, a psychologist and lucid dream trainer. One of the important messages of the book is the distinction between the Dzogchen meditation of *Awareness* and *Dream Yoga*. The Dzogchen *Awareness* has also been referred to by the terms *Rigpa Awareness*, *Contemplation*, and *Presence*. Awareness during the sleep and dream states is associated with the Dzogchen *practice of natural light*. This practice only achieves lucid dream as a secondary effect – in contrast to Dream Yoga, which aims primarily at lucid dreaming. According to Buddhist teachers, the experience of lucidity helps us understand the unreality of the phenomena, which would otherwise be overwhelming during dream or the death state.

An early recorded lucid dreamer was the philosopher and physician Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682). Browne was fascinated by the world of dreams and described his own ability to lucid dream in his *Religio Medici*: “...yet in one dream I can compose a whole comedy, behold the action, apprehend the jests and laugh my self awake at the conceits thereof”. Similarly, Samuel Pepys in his diary entry for 15 August 1665 records a dream “that I had my Lady Castlemayne in my arms and was admitted to use all the dalliance I desired with her, and then dreamt that his could not be awake, but that it was only a dream”. Marquis d’Hervey de Saint-Denys argued that it is possible for anyone to learn to dream consciously. In 1867, he published his book *Les Rêves et les moyens de les diriger; observations pratiques* (“Dreams and How to Guide them; Practical Observations”), in which he documented more than twenty years of his own research into dreams.

An interesting modern computer-analogy to lucid dreaming and astral projection is *Second Life*, an online virtual world, where the users, called Residents, can interact with each other through avatars (the dream body in astral projection). Residents can explore the world (known as the grid), meet other residents, socialize, participate in individual and group activities, and create and trade virtual property and services with one another.

Like lucid dreaming the users of *Second Life* are of course aware, that they are in a virtual (unreal) world, but they differ in how absorbed, fascinated, they become over the possibilities in this world. The Danish documentary *My Avatar and Me*, is a creative documentary-fiction film, and a film that might expand your sense of reality. It is the story about a man who enters the virtual world Second Life to pursue his personal dreams and ambitions. His journey into cyberspace becomes a magic learning experience, which gradually opens the gates to a much larger reality (read more about Second Life and the documentary in my article **Me and my Avatar**).

As mentioned, lucid dreaming is a learnable skill, though achieving lucid dreams on a regular basis can be difficult. In the following I will mention three techniques, that are consistent with spiritual practice:

- 1) Dream recall
- 2) Wake-initiated lucid dreams (WILD)
- 3) Reality testing

1) Dream recall

Dream recall is the ability to remember dreams. Good dream recall is often described as the first step towards lucid dreaming. Better recall increases awareness of dreams in general; with limited dream recall, any lucid dreams has can be forgotten entirely. To improve dream recall, some people keep a dream journal, writing down or recording dreams. The writing down shall happen in the same moment you wake up.

2) Wake-initiated lucid dreams (WILD)

Wake-initiated lucid dreams occur when the sleeper enters REM sleep with unbroken self-awareness directly from the waking state. There are many techniques aimed at entering a WILD. The key to these techniques is recognizing the hypnagogic stage, which is in between being awake and being asleep. If a person is successful in staying aware during this stage, that person will eventually enter dream while lucid. Meditation, or training of awareness will improve this ability by itself.

3) Reality testing

Reality testing (or reality checking) is a common method used by people to determine whether or not they are dreaming. It involves performing an action and observing if the results are consistent with results expected when awake. By practicing these tests during awake life, one may eventually decide to perform such a test while dreaming, which may fail and let the dreamer realize they are dreaming.

As a part of this training is critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance). In my book **A Dictionary of Thought distortions**, I have made a list over such thought distortions. When you are dreaming, such thought distortions dissolve in images, which can show as extremely complicated visionary scenes of unreality, that are almost impossible to understand. The important thing is, that you in the awake state investigate such thought distortions, and don't identify with them, whereby you avoid being controlled by them. When you identify yourself with thought distortions, you believe in them; you believe, that they are expressions of valid facts, and thereby they control you. Therefore you should confront yourself with the fact, that the thought distortions not are expressions of valid facts, that they diminish your quality of life and hinders you in using your abilities and potentials. A good exercise in that connection is reality testing.

So, these not quite ordinary states in dreams, are caused either by goaloriented conscious training, or for example by near-death experiences, threatening psychosis, shock, high fever or similar dramatic circumstances. In rare cases they can occur undramatically and spontaneous.

The primary importance of lucid dreaming to the practice of Dream Yoga has four stages:

- 1) In order to make the time we spend dreaming more meaningful, we must first recognize that we are dreaming. That is the initial exercise.
- 2) The next step is called transforming the dream.
- 3) The third is known as multiplying.
- 4) The fourth practice is to unify the dream with the clear light.

Recognizing, transforming, multiplying and unifying the dream with the luminosity of the true nature: these four outline the essential applications of Dream Yoga.

Tibetan Dream Yoga is also described by Evans-Wentz in his book *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* as one of the six subtypes of yoga elaborated by the Tibetan guru Marpa and passed down by his disciple Milarepa. The author here describes six stages of Dream Yoga:

- 1) In the first stage, the dreamer is told to become lucid in the dream.
- 2) In the second stage, the dreamer is instructed to overcome all fear of the contents of the dreams so there is the realization that nothing in the dream can cause harm. For instance, the lucid dreamer should put out fire with his hands and realize fire cannot burn him in the dream.
- 3) Next the dreamer should contemplate how all phenomena both in the dream and in waking life are similar because they change, and that life is illusory in both states because of this constant change. Both the objects in the dream and objects in the world in the Buddhist worldview are therefore empty and have no substantial nature. This is the stage of contemplating the dream as maya (illusory), and equating this sense of maya with everyday experience in the external world.
- 4) Next, the dreamer should realize that he or she has control of the dream by changing big objects into small ones, heavy objects into light ones, and many objects into one object.
- 5) After gaining control over objects and their transformations, in the fifth stage, the dreamer should realize that the dreamer's dream body is as insubstantial as the other objects in the dream. The dreamer should realize that he or she is not the dream body. The dreamer who has gained complete control over dream objects could, for instance, alter the body's shape or make the dream body disappear all together.
- 6) Finally, in the sixth stage, the image of deities (Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or Dakinis) should be visualized in the lucid dream state. These figures are frequently seen in Tibetan religious art (thangas) and used in meditation. A Western parallel is the use of Christian icons. They are said to be linked to or resonate with the clear light of the void. They can therefore serve as symbolic doorways to this mystical state of being (the Void or clear light). The dreamer is instructed to concentrate on these symbolic images without distraction or thinking about other things so that the revelatory side of these symbols will become manifest.

In my book **Dream Yoga** I have in the article *The Value of Religion and Supporting Exercises* described how the instinctive survival strategi (the Ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma.

Our suffering, our painbody is according to the wisdomtraditions, through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego.

That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can't heal Man from the ground. In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the astral plane's collective history. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma. The concepts indicate, that the inertia projects beyond the personal history (growing up conditions, traumatic bindings, painful experiences etc.) and far down into the collective inherit-backgrounds of history (genes, environment, society-ideals, the archetypes and the primordial images of the dreams, fantasies, fairy-tales, myths, and finally: instincts inherited from the animals). It is a factor, which lies in the evolution itself, in the genes, in the collective subconscious, in the collective history.

When therefore therapy requires a change, then the instinctive survival-preparedness in us reacts and protests. Man has survived on willfulness and a consciousness-structure, which mental and psychic sign is Egocentredness. The bigger Ego, the bigger survival chance.

Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategi (the Ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma. You can't, by therapeutic strategies, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through therapy. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions.

I have in my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist** set up six steps in such a spiritual practice:

- 1) The separation of the observer and the observed
- 2) Religion and supporting exercises
- 3) Passive listening presence
- 4) Discrimination
- 5) Creative emptiness
- 6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

The first step, the separation of the observer and the observed, is the step where you are completely ignorant and are suffering. The next step is religion and supporting exercises. Religion and supporting exercises are a valuable early stage in a spiritual practice.

Religion has to do with the pious attitude and way of thinking, which stands for the observance of religious virtues, duties and rituals. In this way you can bring a unity and direction into the mind, an order and tranquillity in the thinking, a consistency between thought and conduct of life, an awareness of your relationship with persons, things and ideas, which no therapy is able to. In a spiritual practice it serves as a frame of reference. As described in the above-mentioned stage 6, such a frame of reference is linked to or is resonating with the clear light of the void. It can therefore serve as a symbolic doorway to this mystical state of being (the Void or clear light).

The supporting exercises are the beginning of the spiritual practice, where you begin to activate the higher functions of the mind. In order to discover and break the identification with the samsarical producer of the mind, the subject must discover the hidden source in the awareness or in the innermost of consciousness. It happens by neutralizing the Ego's, or the thinking's, functions. This happens through meditation. (the supporting exercises are described in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**)

So, when you in this way do your part of the work, then you will discover that the enlightened consciousness (God, Christ, Buddha), already have 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.

The two main reasons why religion and supporting exercises is a necessity is partly, that the ongoing self-confirmation of the ego and its negative automatic thoughts, is replaced by a spiritual remembrance, partly that the collective inertia is purified and prepared, so that the Ego is made transparent along with that original sin and negative karma are transformed and transfigured in the contact with the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness, the saints etc.) These two processes mutually fertilize each other, and will with time also happen in dreams (also see my article **The Value of having a Religion in a Spiritual Practice**).

If we practice religion and supporting exercises regularly and faithfully we will begin to dream about doing them, as the above-mentioned stage 6 reinforces.

According to contemporary Dzogchen teachers Namkhai Norbu, Lopön Tenzin Namdak and Tenzin Wangyal, the perceived reality and the phenomenal world are considered to be ultimately “unreal” – an “illusion” (refer Mahamaya): a dream, a phantasmagoria, a thought-form. All appearances and phenomena are a dream or thought-form, inter- and intra- reflecting and refracting jewels and mirrors of possibility and potentiality, “arising in relationships” or “dependent co-arising”.

It is held by these lineages and due to the realizations of the spiritual practice, that the dream of life and regular nightly dreams are not dissimilar, and that in their quintessential nature are non-dual.

The non-essential difference between the general dreaming state and the general waking experience is that the latter is generally more concrete and linked with attachments, samskara and skandha; whereas, standard non-lucid dreaming is ephemeral and transient, and generally reinforced as baseless and empty.

In Dream Yoga, living may become the dream, and the dream may become the living. Progressing the spiritual practice may be metaphorically likened to living the scientific hypothesis of a resolved superposition. The resolved superposition being a mindstream conflation of Dharmakaya with Shunyata and Indra's Net.

The entwined Mantrayana lineages of Nyingmapa, Bonpo, Ngagpa and Mahasiddha are saturated with trance and dream transmissions of teachings, doctrine, etc., etc., that transcend constructs of time, place and space, these are often called "whispered traditions" and terma. Refer lucid living.

Also according to this teaching, there is a correspondence between the states of sleep and dream and our experiences when we die. After experiences of intermediate state of bardo an individual comes out of it, a new karmic illusion is created and another existence begins. Taking stock of store consciousness (the Akashic Records) is the spontaneous perpetuant and fuel of the transmigration process.

So, the primary aim and foundation of dream practice is to realize during a dream that one is dreaming. Once lucidity has been established the applications are limitless. One can then dream with lucidity/astrality, and do all sorts of things, such as: spiritual practice; receive initiations, empowerments and transmissions; go to different places, planes, heavens and hells, other planets, both physical and astral planets; dialogue with sentient beings, creatures and people such as guru; fly; shapeshift, etc.

In the astral state the creativity of the consciousness is, as mentioned, set even more free than in the lucid dream state. Controlled astral states give, among other things, access to clairvoyance, telepathy and astral travel (astral projection). This has to do with, that time and its images still work fragmented in sequences in past and future, though on a much more fascinating collective/astral level.

But in spiritual practice it is of vital importance, that you begin to practice Hara (or other supporting religious/spiritual exercises as in the above-mentioned stage 6), if there should occur an astral state. This consists quite simple in stopping the

fascination of the anti-spiritual (ego-based) experiences and their temptations, and instead focus the awareness in Hara, and therewith lead the awareness into your self. This will lead the consciousness towards the more universal images of time, which work in synchronism with the Now.

If you remain in, or explore the astral worlds of the collective time, which the astral state gives access to, then you in other words distract your awareness in past or future. This can cost awakeness and life energy, if you not are under guidance of an enlightened master, and can in addition cause Ego-inflation and other spiritual crises (see my article **Spiritual Crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

It is in other words very important that you do not move accent from awake day to dreams and sleep, do not use drugs or one-sided development techniques, which promise you great experiences concerning either lucidity or astrality.

You have to have patience. Even for people with a regular and well-ordered practice (2-3 hours every day) there can pass weeks, months or years between the reflections into the processes of dreams and sleep. However if practice is appropriate, the spiritual consciousness will with time automatically penetrate the nightlife's vegetative forms of consciousness.

The spiritual process (meditation in the awoken hours and Dream Yoga during sleep) is both a slow process of awakening. The consciousness about the universal images of time, which work in synchronism with the Now, penetrates little by little everyday life. You gather time around you in transparent presence. Investments in the past and the future of the material world, whether it is the personal or collective time, becomes undramatized and uninteresting in relation to the Now's open intensity.

In this way the grab, which the material world's past and future has in your mind, is automatically reduced. The past and the future are no longer maintained by that energy, which from the challenges of the situations, becomes canalized into the specific reaction-pattern of the past and the future. This gives a constant increasing sense of freedom, of an unconditional state. The past and the future of the material world loose their attraction. The energy flows back to the Now. The Now becomes the important; your awareness is being filled by the clarity of the presence. The magnet of attraction, which the ego, and all demonical powers, are controlled by - (the ego's identity with the material world: instincts, sexuality, emotions, desire, collective ideals, ownership, power) - looses its attraction.

During the daytime everything appears in a new light, and you will discover new life possibilities. During the night you'll progressively experience dreamless sleep.

Dreams are, as Borges says, a work of fiction we can improve. In dreams we not only need to be in hell, we can also be in heaven. We can accompany Dante on his ascent through the Purgatory towards Paradise.

Finally I will therefore mention the actual sleep state. Each time you fall asleep, you in fact move through the three aspects of meditation, namely relaxfullness, awareness and heartfullness – until you finally arrive in the Source, the Good, the True and the Beautiful. The great spiritual masters have been aware of this since the dawn of time. Already in the Upanishads you can find it deccribed in the principle: the enlightened state is akin to deep, dreamless sleep.

Furthermore it is claimed, that you go through the same planes in the moment of death. Dreams are reflections, not only of your personal thoughts, but also of past lifes, of both compensatory and progressive karma, and finally the states you experience after death. So, Dream Yoga is also about developing states of meditation in the death process, as well as lucidity and astrality in the death process.

The first condition, in order to fall asleep, is that you can relax in the body and in the mind. The relaxationprocess creates a neutrality in your attitude to all the various expressions of tension (the awareness). This again brings about a melting, a letting go, a devotion (the heartfullness). In this letting go the fall into the Source happens. Unlike meditation meanwhile, then this fall implies that the awakeness is lost, and that the sleep happens. Some times people experience this opening inwards as a shivering fall, which you with a jump again wake up from.

But the actual fact that you in the deep dreamless sleep are in the Source, is the reason why the sleep is so healing. It is actually a satisfactory and happy state. It is the same state, an enlightened person is in, for example Jesus or Buddha. The sleeper doesn't know it under the sleep. That is the whole of the difference. And after all it is quite fascinating to think about, that you at least one time a day are in the Source to everything.

In this way the dream yogi can have a very strong experience and with this comes understanding of the dream-like nature of daily life. This is very relevant of diminishing attachments, because they are based on strong beliefs that life's perceptions and objects are real and as a consequence, important.

When one realises and embodies the doctrine of Dream Yoga, complete realization is imminent and elementary. Namkhai Norbu gives advice, that the realization that life is only a big dream can help us finally liberate ourselves from the chains of emotions, attachments, and ego and then we have the possibility of ultimately becoming enlightened.

The four philosophical hindrances and openings

In my first book **Meditation as an art of life – a basic reader** I presented what I call the four philosophical hindrances and openings in towards the Source. I presented them in order to show what I think characterizes the spiritual practice, as it exists in all the traditional wisdomtraditions. Ever since I have become increasingly puzzled over, how the self-help industry - which claims to work in accordance with spirituality - is turning this upside down. The paradox is that while the self-help industry is claiming to create the authentic, autonomous, resource-filled and competent human being, at the same time is doing the exact opposite: it is making people dependent of therapists, coaches, others ideas and ideals; making them modeling and imitating so-called successful people, etc., etc.

The one face of this paradoxical Janus head is the empowerment culture, the other face is the victimization culture (and the connected recovery movement) - read more about this paradox in my articles **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity** and **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing**.

The self-help industry is today often calling its method positive psychology. It has especially three sources of inspiration:

1) The American New Thought movement, which is the subjectivistic belief, that your thoughts are creating reality, and that by focusing on what you find positive, and avoiding what you find negative, you can create your life in accordance with your wishes, feelings and needs (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**). The “positive” is identified as success, money, sex, personal power, material glory, etc.

2) Humanistic psychology is the belief, that if you focus on your emotional experiences, needs, will and wishes, you will find your authentic self, which is claimed to be more or less divine. Religion has in that way been reduced to psychology. Humanistic psychology is a central inspiration for management theory (see my articles **Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**, **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice** and **Management theory and the self-help industry**).

3) The postmodern intellectualism, which supports the subjectivistic and relativistic idea, that there doesn't exist any objective truth. Truth is something we create ourselves, either as individuals or as cultures, and since there doesn't exist any objective truth, there doesn't exist any objective scale of truth. Therewith it also says, that we live in a Matrix, a dream/fantasy, a kind of virtual reality, we have created ourselves, and that there is no chance of getting out of this. Therefore the best is to be interested in finding ways of getting on in this world, rather being interested in finding ways of discovering the truth (see my articles **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry** and **The Matrix Conspiracy**).

This conspiracy is characterized by what you could call The Mythology of Authenticity. It has two world-images, which are closely connected: humanistic psychology and constructivism. And the two methods used by these world-images are psychotherapy (humanistic psychology) and coaching (constructivism). It is a mythology because it isn't something real, it is the dream about becoming another, a life in a constant state of in-authenticity; in contrast to true spirituality, which you could call the reality of authenticity, because it here is about being precisely what you are, no matter how insignificant, or negative, it might seem in relation to your own or others' ideals.

The five main programming technologies of the conspiracy are Management theory, New Age, Nonviolent Communication (NVC), Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), The law of attraction.

It is on the background of these sources of inspiration, that the self-help industry is turning the philosophical hindrances and openings upside down, so that the hindrances are considered as positive, and the openings are considered as negative. I call this the 666 aspect of the Matrix conspiracy. In the following I will present the philosophical hindrances and openings, and explain the 666 turn further:

The philosophical hindrances are (the mythology of authenticity is written in italic):

1) A rational where you take your assumptions, conceptions and values for absolute truths (*hereunder the subjectivistic and relativistic point of view that the power of thought can create reality as it fits you*) and hereby end up in a contradiction between your thoughts and lived live.

2) A life-philosophical, where you are circling around your own past and future (*the idea that you should get in contact with your hidden resources to either becoming yourself as you once were: humanistic psychology and the idea about your inner*

core, and its method: psychotherapy and the dream of a lost past – or to become the other, you want to become: the constructivistic idea about your potentials, and its method: coaching and the hope for a richer future) and hereby are creating a closed attitude, inattention, absent-mindedness and ennui.

3) An existence-philosophical, where you in your opinion formation and identity formation strive towards being something else than what you are (*the dream about that you in reality are another (humanistic psychology) – or that you always can become another (constructivism)*), where you imitate others, are a slave of other's ideas and ideals (*life is about becoming something fantastic and/or becoming a success; you ought to model fantastic and/or successful people; the conception of Man as chronic in-authentic, a victim who constantly has to heal (humanistic psychology and psychotherapy) or form (constructivism and coaching) himself in the therapeutic practice; psychotherapists and coaches as the new authorities*), and where your actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt.

4) A spiritual where you are identified with your lifestituation, are dependent on political or religious ideologies (*the supreme good is lying out in the future, and the end therefore justifies the means; you ought to find ways of getting on in the world rather than finding ways of discovering the truth; it is alright to use thought distortions in this quest*) and where you hereby exist on a future salvation. And this evaluating fragmentation is the separation of the observer and the observed.

According to the traditional wisdomtraditions these four hindrances constitute a malfunction in the human mind. And it is this malfunction, which is the cause of the ignorance of the source of life. Ignorance is again the cause of suffering. In this way spiritual practice becomes a practice, which seeks to correct this malfunction. And therefore the two main concepts in spiritual practice are ignorance and suffering. In that way you get the four philosophical openings in towards the source:

1) A rational, where you examine the validity of your assumptions, conceptions and values, and search for coherency between your thoughts and your lived life.

2) A life-philosophical where you are present in the Now, and hereby achieve that self-forgetful openness and absorption in the world, which is a condition for love, spontaneity, joy of life and wisdom.

3) An existence-philosophical, where you in your opinion and identity formation are yourself in the sense of being precisely what you are here and now (no matter how insignificant, or negative, it might seem in relation to your own or others' ideals), live

in accordance with your own essence, and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action.

4) A spiritual, where you aren't identified with your lifesituation, and where you, independent of religious or political ideologies, live from something deeper: The source itself; the Good, the True and the Beautiful. Said in another way: where essence (the form of consciousness, meditation, the divine source) is one and the same with existence (being precisely what you are, existential presence in the now, life itself, the otherness). And this realized oneness is the wholeness of the observer and the observed.

I am well aware that the self-help industry is using the concepts of the openings as positive concepts (especially the existence-philosophical opening with its concept of authenticity; that it is good to work with yourself, and realize your illusions, etc.), and therefore would disagree with my claim that they see them as negative. The use of the concepts of the openings is also the reason why it can be hard to discover the paradoxes. But the problem arises because they see them as future-oriented goals or ideals. And in order to reach these ideals you need therapy or coaching. And it is in this "practice" they end in the hindrances. That should be easy to see, when looking at the concepts of the hindrances. What they misunderstand is that the openings precisely are a practice in themselves: the true spiritual practice.

Such a spiritual practice can again be said to contain three aspects:

- 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 (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 the spiritual practice**)

The reason why the self-help industry considers these three aspects, and therefore the four philosophical openings, as negative, is as follows:

- 1) There is no objective scale of truth that can decide whether something is positive or negative; it is entirely your own subjective feelings, that decide what is positive or negative. Therefore thought distortions can be seen as positive means of getting on in the world.

2) The positive psychology of the self-help industry is avoiding and ignoring all negative; that is: your shadow, your ignorance, your painbody, your suffering, your dark side.

3) It is not possible to go beyond your ideas and images. The only thing you can do is to change them into what you find positive.

In my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**, I explain how the self-help industry, unknowingly, is supporting a kind of black magic, or satanism, which show the essence in the 666 conspiracy, namely that the ego has become an object for “spiritual” worship. This will end in spiritual crises, especially the “positive” aspect of the spiritual crisis called ego-inflation (see my articles **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena** and **The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help environment**).

Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr

I have in my book **Dream Yoga** looked at the abuses of quantum mechanics, which we see so widely-spread in New Age circles, and wherein the misinterpretation consists. However there has right now been published a new book by my professor in philosophy, David Favrholt, about the philosophy of Niels Bohr. Favrholt followed Bohr’s lectures and talks closely from 1951 to his death in 1962. He has read all his letters from his earliest youth, has edited parts of the world edition of *Niels Bohr: Collected Works*. He has worked together with many of Bohr’s students, inclusive Aage Bohr, has had discussions with Werner Heisenberg and corresponded with many of the great names within nuclear physics. So, Favrholt is one of the World’s leading experts in quantum mechanics, and is probably the only person, who in depth has investigated Bohr’s philosophy.

It is David Favrholt who has taught me about the philosophical aspects of Niels Bohr’s thinking. His new book is called *The Philosopher Niels Bohr*, and I will here summarize the most central aspects of this book, in order to show the misinterpretation in a new way.

On Manchester University in 1913 Niels Bohr produced his atomic theory, which with his own words broked with the ”customary forms of experience within the physics”. The atomic theory was nothing less than a showdown with classic physics

and the way, in which we look at the world. Mind you, Bohr's atomic theory doesn't *replace* classic physics, as many are claiming. Here we find one of the misinterpretations. It is showing where the limit is for our way of observing the world. But it ushered the atomic age, as David Favrholt is writing in his book.

The quantum mechanics, as it came to be called, and which is about physics on atomic level, was so great a dispute with rational thinking, that only a few physicists at that time were willing to accept it. Bohr's most famous opponent, Albert Einstein, tried in many years to disprove the theories of the Dane, but David Favrholt claims, that there today is common agreement about, that Niels Bohr won that debate.

Bohr found out, that we have to establish certain rules in quantum mechanics, which we can't use in classic physics. He discovered, that when we have to measure an electronic movement around the atoms, we come, with our units of measurement, to intervene in what we are investigating. In the same moment, we want to decide the location of the electron, we have disturbed its course.

Shortly said, then Bohr discovered, that we can't observe the physics on atomic level without coming to influence it. In 1927 he goes forward and ends a discussion, which had taken place through centuries. It had been about, what light is consisting in – is it waves or particles?

Bohr shows, that light in some experiments behaves, as if it is particles, and in others as if it is waves. And here we have the foundation for the next misinterpretation, that goes on, that it is the *consciousness* of the physicist, which affects the light. This has led to the misunderstanding in the public, that quantum mechanics should imply, that there isn't given any objective or true description of the physical reality, consequently that it is the human consciousness, which produces the phenomena: subjectivism. The same misunderstanding characterizes by the way also Einstein's theory of relativity, that this should support relativism.

But it is *not* the consciousness of the physicist (the subjective), which makes the electron behave like a particle or a wave. It is the macrophysical (material) experimental devices, which affect the electron in a certain way, so that you *unambiguous* know, that if you work with this type of apparatus, then it will *always* behave like a wave, and with another type of apparatus, like a particle.

Nonetheless there has been created a lot of philosophical theories, which claim to be supported by quantum mechanics, and which have lead a war against the time of enlightenment, as well as against the classic physics and the connected rationalistic thinking. You could gather them under the word constructivism. Constructivism claims, that it is Man, who through his language and interpretations, creates the

reality/truth. And you can swiftly see, that it for example is this idea the New Thought movement and law of attraction are based on (see my articles **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry** and **The New Thought movement and the Law of Attraction**).

The theories is in this way characterized by relativism and subjectivism, since they claim, that there doesn't exist any objective order, which defines what is true or false, and that truth therefore exclusively is due to our own idea- and language constructions. Relativism exists in many forms, but generally you can talk about an individualistic relativism, subjectivism, which claims that it is the individual himself who creates his truth, and a collectivistic relativism, social constructivism, which claims, that it is groups of people, that create their own truth.

And both directions consequently, in richly way, use quantum mechanics to support their theories. But does it actually do this? No, the absurd is, that it actual directly pulls the carpet away under such theories. And these theorists could have discovered this, if they had read a bit of Niels Bohr's own scriptures, instead of repeating from others, who continue the misinterpretation. But now David Favrholt consequently has written a book about the *philosopher* Niels Bohr.

First of all: if we now take the claims of for instance New Thought, then it say, that if you think in a certain way, then the universe will reward you in a certain way. This is actually a claim, which in extreme way is based on the principle of causation, namely that a certain way of thinking will cause an effect from the universe.

But what nuclear physics and the quantum mechanics learn us, is, that there exists processes, which precisely *not* is cause determined, and which do *not* follow the old rule about, that everything has to be continuous. In our brains and thoughts, as well as in nature and evolution, there exist processes, which in a wide extent are quantum mechanical, and since the quantum mechanics breaks with the principle of causation and determinism, then neither the human brain/thought, or nature and evolution, are fully cause-determined systems. And then you precisely *can't* explain processes in our brains and thoughts, or in nature and evolution, from theories such as New Thought.

Secondly, then Niels Bohr actually claims, that it is not us that put reality in order, as for example New Thought, and other relativistic and subjectivistic theories, claim, but reality, that puts *us* in order; a claim that involves that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism and relativism) are invalid point of views. Let us investigate it.

Bohr's new discovery made of course the physicists ask: "So what is light then?" And Bohr answered, that this you can't ask about. The only thing we can do, is to

say, that in some experiments we can make wave-descriptions, in others particle-descriptions. They supplement and contradict each other, but we can't go behind our experiments and say what they are in themselves. From this Bohr founds the complementarity theory.

It appears, that when you are using a certain type of experimental device, then the electron *always* behaves as a particle, and when you use another type of apparatus, the electron *always* behaves as a wave (again: it is *not* the consciousness of the observer, which creates these phenomena!!). The two types of experimental devices mutually exclude each other, so that you – by choice of experimental device – can determine, whether you want, that the electron shall behave as a wave or as a particle. The same relationships exist in a number of areas within nuclear physics.

However, both types of examinations are equally necessary, if you want to understand the microphysical world. Bohr speaks about, among a lot of other things, that particle and wave experiments are complementary to each other, because they mutually exclude each other and at the same time necessarily must supplement each other. Generally the same relationship exists in all quantum physical examinations.

General you can formulate Bohr's conception of complementarity in the following way: A complementary description from an area of phenomenon is a description by means of two sets of concepts, which mutually exclude each other, but where both the incompatible sets of concepts are equal necessary for a fully description of the area of phenomenon. You call the mutually excluding sets of concepts complementary.

Bohr himself had the opinion, that complementarity relations are a fundamental feature of the human cognition, which you can find analogies of in many other connections than in quantum physics. And it is exactly this, which the wisdom traditions also speak about, for example in the teaching of yin and yang, and in Nagarjuna's teaching.

As an example, among countless, of an analogy, you can observe the experience of music. In a concert hall you can experience the music so strongly, that you not at all are aware that you are sitting and listening to music. You can describe this as "*to become completely lost in the music*".

On the other side you can also relate *analyzing* to the music, because you are concentrating about noticing, for instance the performance of the violin soloist, the orchestration, the tempo etc. You can switch back-and-forth between these two ways of experience, but you can't have them both at the same time. Both ways of experience are necessary in order to understand, what music is. They mutually

exclude each other, at the same time as they supplement each other, they are both necessary in a fully description of the area of phenomenon; they are in other words complementary.

In the same way with subject and object; inside-and-out perspective, and outside-and-in perspective; macrophysical phenomena and microphysical phenomena; etc., etc.

And now back to the problem of light. Could you then not imagine, that light is an entirely third phenomenon, which both consists of light and particle properties? No, Bohr claims. No matter how we try to imagine it, it is not possibly to imagine, that anything can be a wave and a particle at the same time. It is not possible.

In 1927 Bohr invented the so-called two-split experiment, and it has been discussed ever since. He says, that if you send electrons against a plate with two openings, it produces a wave phenomenon. But what happens along the way? He answers, that along the way you can't see, what happens. But there must happen something? Yes, but you can't make a description of it. But this you will be able to some day? No. If you intervene into it in order to see, what happens along the way, the whole of the phenomenon disappears.

Using the conventionally conceptions which is lying in our culture, we say, that you must be able to make a theory of everything, as for example the New Age philosophers Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber.

In New Age pseudoscience it is not (yet) so much a political agenda that distorts science, as occult and religious point of views. In the works of Fritjof Capra, though, you see the beginning of the combination. Fritjof Capra (born February 1, 1939) is an Austrian-born American physicist. He is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California, and is on the faculty of Schumacher College.

Capra is the author of several books, including *The Tao of Physics* (1975), and *The Turning Point* (1982). The abuse of quantum mechanics within New Age seems to have originated with Capra in his book *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*. The book's first two parts are excellent expositions on ancient religions and modern physics. The third part, which tries to connect the two, is an abysmal failure. Nevertheless, it has been this third part, which has influenced numerous New Age advocates to claim that quantum mechanics proves the reality of everything from Clairvoyance to Time Travel: the so-called quantum mysticism (see my articles **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies** and **Time travel and the fascism of The WingMakers Project**).

Capra's other book, *The Turning Point*, shows the ideology in it, where he combines quantum mysticism with reductionism, especially reductionisms such as historicism and sociologism (though he is very aware of the reductionism of the "old" mechanical worldview) – see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**.

Since the first publication of his ideas at the age of 23, Ken Wilber has also sought to bring together the world's far-ranging spiritual teachings, philosophies, and scientific truths into one coherent and all-embracing vision. This integral map of the *Kosmos* (the universe that includes the physical cosmos as well as the realms of consciousness and spirit) should then offer an unprecedented guide to discovering your highest potentials.

Wilber introduces his vision by saying, that during the last 30 years we have witnessed a historical first: all of the world's cultures are now available to us. In the past, if you were born, say, a Chinese, you likely spent your entire life in one culture, often in one province, sometimes in one house, living and loving and dying on one small plot of land. But today, not only are people geographical mobile, we can study, and have studied, virtually every known culture on the planet. In the global village, all cultures are exposed to each other.

Knowledge itself is now global, Wilber claims. This means that, also for the first time, the sum total of human knowledge is available to us – the knowledge, experience, wisdom and reflection of all major human civilizations – premodern, modern, and postmodern – are open to study by anyone.

Wilber asks: What if we took literally everything that all the various cultures have to tell us about human potential – about spiritual growth, psychological growth, social growth – and put it all on the table? What if we attempted to find the critically essential keys to human growth, based on the sum total of human knowledge now open to us? What if we attempted, based on extensive cross-cultural study, to use all of the world's great traditions to create a composite map, a comprehensive map, an all-inclusive or integral map that included the best elements from all of them?

Wilber asks: Sound complicated, complex, daunting? In a sense, it is, he answers. But in another sense, he continues, the results turn out to be surprisingly simple and elegant. Over the last several decades, there has indeed been an extensive search for a comprehensive map of human potentials. This map uses all the known systems and models of human growth – from the ancient shamans and sages to today's breakthrough in cognitive science – and distills their major components into 5 simple factors, factors that are the essential elements or keys to unlocking and facilitating human evolution.

Ken Wilber calls these 5 elements **quadrants, levels, lines, states** and **types**; that is: quadrants of development, levels or stages of development, states of consciousness, and a human personality typing system, a typology. All of these elements are, right now available in your own awareness, he claims. These 5 elements are not merely theoretical concepts; they are aspects of your own experience, contours of your own consciousness.

What is the point of using this integral map or model, Wilber asks. First, whether you are working in business, medicine, psychotherapy, law, ecology, or simply everyday living and learning, the integral map helps make sure that you are “touching all the bases.” If you are flying over the Rocky Mountains, the more accurate a map you have, the less likely you will crash. An integral approach insures that you are utilizing the full range of resources for any situation, with the greater likelihood of success.

Second, if you learn to spot these 5 elements in your own awareness – and because they are there in any event – then you can more easily appreciate them, exercise them, use them...and thereby vastly accelerate your own growth and development to higher, wider, deeper ways of being. A simple familiarity with the 5 elements in the integral model will help you orient yourself more easily and fully in this exiting journey of discovery and awakening (read more in my article **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method**).

It is very popular in New Age, inspired by writers such as Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber, to term their positions as “Holism”. But both Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber’s systems, can be seen as substantive philosophies of history; that is: searches for overall meaning in human history; searches for theories of everything.

In the West, substantive philosophy of history is thought to begin only in the Christian era. In the *City of God*, Augustine wonders why Rome flourished while pagan, yet fell into disgrace after its conversion to Christianity. Divine reward and punishment should apply to whole peoples, not just to individuals. The unfolding of events in history should exhibit a plan that is intelligible rationally, morally, and (for Augustine) theologically. As a believer Augustine is convinced that there is such a plan, though it may not always be evident.

In the modern period, philosophers such as Vico and Herder also sought such intelligibility in history. They also believed in a long-term direction or purpose of history that is often opposed to and makes use of the purposes of individuals. The most elaborate and best-known example of this approach is found in Hegel, who thought that the gradual realization of human freedom could be discerned in history even if much slavery, tyranny, and suffering are necessary in the process.

Marx, too, claimed to know the laws – in his case economic – according to which history unfolds. Similar searches for overall “meaning” in human history have been undertaken in the twentieth century, notably by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) author of the twelve-volume *Study of History*, and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), author of *Decline of the West*.

Anyway, Bohr says, that *you can't make a theory of everything*.

The movements of the electrons are fundamentally not able to be experienced. But we can very well talk about it. Should we eventually create theories about everything, it is not in three dimensions, then it is in nine or several dimensions; this we can't. It would end in the thought distortions *Nondual bias* and *Endless split of the thought* (see my book **A Dictionary of Thought distortions**).

David Favrholt continues, that Bohr's philosophy in this way originates from his physics. And Favrholt says, that Bohr's philosophy hasn't gained so much a footing as his discoveries within the physics. But this it ought to. Bohr's basic view on language is epochal, Favrholt claims, though he must admit that the epoch not yet has turned up.

What is Bohr's philosophical viewpoint?

According to Bohr's philosophy, then it is correct that we actually from our thoughts, language and interpretations construct our self-images and world-images. But we can precisely *not* do it as it fits us, in the way constructivism claims. On the contrary it is this idea, which creates the whole of our illusion about reality, and therefore our problems and suffering.

Bohr says: If a person moves from A to B, it takes a certain time, and the faster he moves, the less time it takes. Here we suddenly have the concepts location, distance, movement, speed, time. It is therefore not ourselves who determine, how reality looks like. It is the constitution of nature, which determines, how we shall use the concepts in order to explain reality. This is lying in direct opposition to what the constructivists claim, and by the way to a number of Western philosophers up through time.

It is not us who put reality in order, it is reality which puts us in order. That is the soul in Bohr's philosophy. Then comes the next, where Man as a rational being suddenly again has entered into the discussion. Bohr says, that when we have to establish the unambiguous language, then this is due to, that two persons can look at a thing and agree about, that the thing is round or square. They can't agree about, whether it is beautiful or ugly. That is subjective. But they have an intersubjective

agreement about, what means what, which you then can establish a language of physics about. A language of physics is nothing else but specified every day language.

The rise of quantum mechanics has in this way *not made classical physics invalid*; it is still valid, but Planck's constant (the quantum postulate) has given it a *limitary area of use*.

That classical physics can be regarded as a borderline case of quantum mechanics appears from the fact, that the equations in the matrix mechanics of Heisenberg become identical with the equations in classical mechanics, when you set Planck's constant to zero; an act which is allowed by the observation of macrophysical relationships. In accordance with Bohr *quantum mechanics is a generalization of classical physics* and the complementarity viewpoint is a generalization of the classical causality principle. The theory of relativity is also a generalization in another direction of classical physics.

Nor can you – in Bohr's opinion – replace classical physics with quantum mechanics, because *the validity of classical physics is a necessary precondition for, that you can describe the quantum mechanical phenomena* and make account for the macroscopic ("classical") experimental arrangement. Bohr is writing in a famous discussion contribution against Einstein, who didn't want to accept, that the causality principle has no validity in nuclear physics:

"...the account for all experiences – regardless how far the phenomena are lying outside the reach of classical physics – must be expressed in classical concepts. The reason is simply, that we by the word "experiment" refer to a situation, where we can tell others what we have done and what we have learned, and that the experimental device and measuring results therefore must be described in the usual language with appropriate use of the terminology of classical physics."

Niels Bohr: *"Atomfysik og menneskelig erkendelse"*, Schultz' Forlag, København 1957, s. 53.

Note, that Bohr here speaks about the usual language (*everyday language*) supplemented with the terms of classical physics. This is due to, that he regards the *concepts of classical physics as a more explicit formulation of everyday language*. In that sense *everyday language is a necessary precondition for all natural scientific realization*, and nor can everyday language be replaced by an unambiguous and formalised, logical scientific language. David Favrholt has developed this important theme in Bohr's epistemology further in his own philosophy. He works with, what he calls *The Core* in everyday language.

Favrholdt asks us: please observe following concepts: Time – object – space – logic – body – person – experience – memory.

The phenomenalist/idealist claims, that we only with certainty can know, that the here italicized concepts stand for something real; that is to say: something from the concepts different: *Time – object – space – logic – body – person – subject – experience – memory*.

The materialist claims, that we only with certainty can know, that the here italicized concepts stand for something real; that is to say: something from the concepts different: *Time – object – space – logic – body – person – subject – experience – memory*.

Favrholdt claims, that since these concepts are interdependent, they all represent something. Together they are what he calls *The Core* in everyday language. That they are interdependent means, that they have to be used in a certain way in relation to each other, if we at all want to talk meaningful. The relations between them are not established by arbitrary definitions. We have discovered, that we shall respect the relations between them, if we want to describe something, whether we want to describe, that there is lying a phone book on the desktop, or that we have an experience of the phone book.

What we must say is as follows: When we as ordinary people – before we have heard anything about philosophy – orientate in life, we form a concept about reality. We associate with humans and animals and plants and non-living things in our daily lives, and we learn to discriminate between, what is dream and reality, - and what is lie or illusion, and reality.

Any human being understand, what we mean by saying, that the witness explained in the court, that the thief had a pistol, but *in reality* the thief was unarmed. We also learn to talk about the poetic reality, about the experienced reality etc. We learn to talk about things, which exist, despite that no one experiences them, or have consciousness about them. When they found the Golden Horns at Gallehus, they found something, which no one knew were there. But they *found* them. Is wasn' t so, that they *arised*, because they were experienced.

Then certain philosophers are coming and saying, that we don't know, whether there is anything behind our experiences. What can you do but ask them about, what they mean with "experiences". Then they explain this. But it turns out, that they only can do this by using the whole of *The Core*. And in this set of fundamental concepts is

included the concept "object" or "thing" which represent "things, which exist whether they are experienced or not".

This is included as a necessary precondition for, that we can define or explain, what we shall understand by experience. So, because they have explained, what they mean by "experience" - so that we know the correct use of this concept - they have already accepted, that we in our description of reality must assume a correct use of the concept "things, which exist, whether they are experienced or not".

Why the conceptual relations in the *The Core* not are conventional or accidental, but unavoidable as the relations in the number theory, is precisely because reality - the from our experiences and consciousness independently existing reality - is included in the determination of, how we have to use our concepts in order to be able to realize it, and describe it.

We can choose not to describe it and instead soak ourselves in Hinajana Buddhistic meditation (or music, as already described), but *if* we want to describe it, *if* we want to find out, what is subjective and objective, *if* we want to achieve realization within physics, biology, psychology etc., then we must use our fundamental concepts in a correct, non-arbitrary way.

This involves, not an ontological dualism, but an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological dualism. Unambiguous description has the distinction between subject and object as a necessary precondition. And the fact itself, that we have to discriminate between subject and object in order to communicate unambiguous, actually indicates, that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism, relativism) are mistaken points of views.

And the same is the case in order to think clearly. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others (again: see my book **A Dictionary of Thought distortions**).

Magical thinking, for example, has a lot of thought distortions built into it, for example the thought distortion *arbitrary inference*, which means, that you make a causal linking of factors, which is accidental or misleading. The main reason for the rise of magical thinking is that you don't discriminate between image and reality, the map and the landscape; or said in another way: between subject and object.

Central in critical thinking is the discrimination between subject and object. And discrimination is also a central virtue in true spirituality. The Dominican mystics call this steps *discriminatio*, the ability to discriminate between how the energy is used temporal or religious. And despite that magical thinking actually can create

something magical, then in true spirituality it is still something temporal, or relatively (black magic/occultism), which will create negative karma if practised. The Orientals call it viveka, discrimination, the ability to use your will on that part of the energy, you can steer yourself, and steer it towards exercises, prayer, mantras, meditation, instead of towards career, worldliness, self-unfolding, as for example New Thought does.

So, all this is implying an opinion about, how we observe the world – and here Bohr picks inspiration from his own discoveries within the atom theory. We can't place ourselves outside our own idea about reality, Favrholt explains. The physicist can't be a kind of God's eye, who looks at the world from outside, because he is himself a part of the world. We can't possibly think ourselves out of reality. But that is what for example Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber are doing in a cultural relativistic way, and New Thought in a subjectivistic way; that is: in constructivistic ways.

Personally I have had the honour of participating Favrholt's lectures on Chinese philosophy, which is another of Favrholt's passions. And the Taoist teaching in China matches well with Bohr – it is therefore that Bohr's coat of arms, when he got the elephant order, carries the yin and yang-symbol.

In accordance with Taoism there is nothing beyond the world, Favrholt explains. You can't see the world from outside. You are in the world, and you can only define something from its opposition. What is the good? This you understand, if you know what the evil is. You can't say anything about the world as a whole, because you can't put the whole in opposition to anything.

In my article **What is karma?** I suggest, that a human being seems to have two aspects: an energy-aspect and a consciousness-aspect. Seen from the energy-aspect lawfulness rules: your body is subject to the physical laws of nature; your psychic system is subject to the lawfulness of the energy fields and of the energy transformations. Seen from the consciousness-aspect, then a human being seems to be akin to the wholeness, to be transcendent in relation to these lawfulnesses.

These thoughts you find in all wisdomtraditions, in all the spiritual directions within the religions. There exists a fundamental dualism, which the spiritual practitioner must understand, in order to reach into non-dualism. That is also the soul in Nagarjuna's argumentation. You can't say anything about the wholeness, and if you do it will be a distortion.

The problem with holistic theories such as Theosophy, Capra, Wilber, is in short **that they want to reduce the mystical nondualistic experience, to a theory.** In this they

completely misunderstand the spiritual traditions, and commit the thought distortion called *Non-dual bias*.

Bohr often told the story about the ethnographer, who is sent out to learn about Indians in the Amazon jungle. He begins to dress and dance, as they do, but he is still an observer. He learns their language, but is still Danish. Gradually he has eventually forgotten his Danish, and he throws his camera and the typewriter in the river. Now he knows, how it is to be Indian, but now he can't write about it.

Favrholdt says, that Bohr always ended this history saying with a smile: "Well then we must send a new ethnographer."

The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Such questions are then solved by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories, that can be tested through new experiences, or serve as the best explanations.

So, one crucial principle in science is, that a certain theory has to be testable. Another crucial principle is the use of abductive reasoning (inference to the best explanation).

Is it testable whether God exists or not? No! Is it testable, that the human consciousness only consists in some physical-chemical reactions in the brain, or that it only is a social construction? No!

Is the best explanation for crop circles, that they have been made by extraterrestrials? Although it is undoubtedly true, that strange patterns are sometimes found in cornfields (crop circles) - it doesn't follow that they must have been made by extraterrestrials. There is a wide range of far more plausible alternative explanations of the phenomenon, such as that they have been made by pranksters.

Pseudoscience is philosophical, political, religious/occult theories, that seek legitimacy by claiming, that they are scientific theories, while the fact is, that they either not is testable, or that they abuse the use of abductive reasoning.

Pseudoscience is for example seen in the New Age environment, where they demand that science has to be integrated with so-called "alternative sciences", such as

Intelligent Design, Cryptozoology, Dianetics, Eugenics, Graphology, Homeopathy, Morphic Resonance, Perpetual Motion, Astrology, Personology, Phrenology, Theosophy, Physiognomy, Pyramidology, Quantum Mysticism, Quantum biology, Radionics, Time Cube, Ufology, Vitalism, and many more.

New Age pseudoscience is always based on some kind of religious or occult viewpoint.

More accepted pseudosciences is seen in the intellectual environment in form of reductionisms, where they for example claim, that Man fully can be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they claim, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

But all this is not testable. Often the reductionisms then claim, that their theories are the best explanations. The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man? The reductionisms' explanations of this always end up as philosophical shipwrecks. Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer the question of Man, or reality as such. But no single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

It is unfortunate that the reductionisms are so accepted, because it is them that have created distinctions such as "Jewish" and "Aryan" physics; "bourgeois" and "socialist" biology; IQ tests; Eugenics; Personality typing - and a lot of other political inferences from science that have had catastrophic consequences (see for example my article **Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice**).

Where New Age pseudoscience typically is based on the claim that science has to integrated with occult and religious viewpoints, then the pseudoscience of reductionism typically is based on that science has to be integrated with (or is the same as) atheistic and/or political viewpoints. (see my article **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**).

What can be a serious problem in the future, is that a new kind of pseudoscience is trying to unite New Age pseudosciences with some of the pseudosciences of reductionism (see my article **The Matrix Conspiracy**).

Both New Age pseudoscience and the pseudoscience of reductionism are common in sharing some kind of scientism; that is: they overestimate the importance of science, for example by claiming:

- 1) that philosophy and religion need to be founded in science
- 2) that certain single branches of science can give an explanation of everything
- 3) that certain single branches of science are self-sufficient and that philosophy and religion are superfluous.

In New Age it happens in the demand of “alternative sciences.” In reductionism it happens in the form of pseudoskepticism.

Pseudoskepticism is an important concept in my work as a paranormal investigator, because pseudoskepticism usually is used in opposition to an assortment of questionable claims (from UFOs and paranormal phenomena to alternative medical practices to religious ideas). Pseudoskepticism refers to arguments which use scientific sounding language to disparage or refute given beliefs, theories, or claims, but which in fact fail to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism.

The term “pseudoskepticism” has gradually been expanded to include any unsubstantiated invalidation of a theory.

The term was coined by professor in sociology, Marcello Truzzi. Truzzi attributed the following characteristics to pseudosceptics:

- 1) The tendency to deny, rather than doubt.
- 2) Double standards in the application of criticism
- 3) Tendency to discredit, rather than investigate
- 4) Presenting insufficient evidence or proof
- 5) Assuming criticism requires no burden of proof
- 6) Making unsubstantiated counter-claims
- 7) Counter-claims based on plausibility rather than empirical evidence
- 8) Suggesting that unconvincing evidence is grounds for completely dismissing a claim

Truzzi characterized true skepticism as:

- 1) Doubt rather than denial; nonbelief rather than belief
- 2) An agnostic position, one that says the claim is not proved rather than disproved
- 3) Maintains that science need not incorporate every extraordinary claim as a new "fact."
- 4) As a result, has no burden to prove anything
- 5) Discovering an opportunity for error should make such experiments less evidential and usually unconvincing. It usually disproves the claim that the experiment was "air tight" against error, but it does not disprove the anomaly claim.

An example of pseudoskepticism within reductionism is the British ethologist Richard Dawkins. He is well known for his criticism of religious pseudoscience such as creationism and intelligent design, but is himself, in his atheistic faith, ending in the pseudoscience of reductionism (biologism), for example in his book *The God Delusion*.

Other examples of the pseudoscience of reductionism is the American philosopher Daniel C. Dennett, who in his book - with the ambitious title *Consciousness Explained* - seeks to explain consciousness, partially through computer analogies, partially through neurology and psychology.

Personally I am supporting true skepticism within science, but my method is not itself building on science, but on philosophy. I consider myself as a philosophical investigator, who is using critical thinking, and not a scientific investigator, who have to follow the precepts of conventional scientific skepticism. This is due to, that I have experienced spiritual crises and paranormal phenomena (therefore I can't be an agnostic), but at the same time I am critical towards how to describe and behave in relation to such phenomena.

In the following I will show six ways of identifying pseudoscience:

1) Use of vague, exaggerated or untestable claims

- a) Assertion of scientific claims that are vague rather than precise, and that lack specific measurements.
- b) Use of obscurantist language, and use of apparently technical jargon in an effort to give claims the superficial trappings of science.

2) Over-reliance on confirmation rather than refutation

- a) Assertions that do not allow the logical possibility that they can be shown to be false by observation or physical experiment.
- b) Over-reliance on testimonial, anecdotal evidence, or personal experience. This evidence may be useful for the context of discovery but should not be used in the context of justification (e.g. statistical hypothesis testing).
- c) Presentation of data that seems to support its claims while suppressing or refusing to consider data that conflicts with its claims. This is an example of selection bias, a distortion of evidence or data that arises from the way that the data are collected. It is sometimes referred to as the selection effect.
- d) Reversed burden of proof. In science, the burden of proof rests on those making a claim, not on the critic. “Pseudoscientific” arguments may neglect this principle and demand that skeptics demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that a claim (e.g. an assertion regarding the efficacy of a novel therapeutic technique) is false. It is essentially impossible to prove a universal negative, so this tactic incorrectly places the burden of proof on the skeptic rather than the claimant.

3) Lack of openness to testing by other experts

Evasion of peer review before publicizing results (called “science by press conference”). Some proponents of theories that contradict accepted scientific theories avoid subjecting their ideas to peer review, sometimes on the grounds that peer review is biased towards established paradigms, and sometimes on the grounds that assertions cannot be evaluated adequately using standard scientific methods. By remaining insulated from the peer review process, these proponents forgo the opportunity of corrective feedback from informed colleagues.

4) Absence of progress

- a) Failure to progress towards additional evidence of its claims. Terence Hines has identified astrology as a subject that has changed very little in the past two millennia.
- b) Lack of self correction: scientific programmes make mistakes, but they tend to eliminate these errors over time. By contrast, theories may be accused of being pseudoscientific because they have remained unaltered despite contradictory evidence.

c) Statistical significance of supporting experimental results does not improve over time and are usually close to the cutoff for statistical significance. Normally, experimental techniques improve or the experiments are repeated and this gives ever stronger evidence. If statistical significance does not improve, this typically shows that the experiments have just been repeated until a success occurs due to chance variations.

5) Personalization of issues

a) Tight social groups and authoritarian personality, suppression of dissent, and groupthink can enhance the adoption of beliefs that have no rational basis. In attempting to confirm their beliefs, the group tends to identify their critics as enemies.

b) Assertion of claims of a conspiracy on the part of the scientific community to suppress the results.

c) Attacking the motives or character of anyone who questions the claims.

6) Use of misleading language

a) Creating scientific-sounding terms in order to add weight to claims and persuade non-experts to believe statements that may be false or meaningless.

b) Using established terms in idiosyncratic ways, thereby demonstrating unfamiliarity with mainstream work in the discipline.

The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind

Along with the development of the sciences the so-called reductionisms have got status of whole research programmes. After Darwin many thought, that everything could be explained biological. In Logical Empiricism materialism lived onwards in the form of Physicalism, which was about, that all sciences eventually can be reduced to classical physics – or eventually to "the intersubjective controllable language of things". Psychologism was one of the other ravaging reductionisms in the twentieth century. Freud and Jung thought separately, that they had the key to the understanding of diverse cultural phenomena because of the storeroom of the unconsciousness. Moreover there was Historism, which followers thought that they could generalize hermeneutics also to include the exact sciences. The latest craze in

reductionism is Social Constructivism (see my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**).

Surely – many are the people, who become seduced by the reductionisms. Maybe not so strange after all: all reductionisms imply a simplification, a manageable solution to all problems, a key, which saves the supporters for having to think fundamentally over the philosophical questions – which after all only a few are capable to.

What is reductionism? Science can't give answers to the problems of lifeviews and view of values. Single branches of sciences can't out of hand answer questions about values or moral standards.

However this they nevertheless often do, but then it ends in reductionism. And there has not been a lack of trying to understand Man from one or the other single branch of science. As already mentioned: They have for example claimed, that Man fully could be described and explained with the methods of natural science. This happens in various forms of Naturalism, Positivism and Behaviourism. Or they have thought, that psychology, sociology or history can give the total and superior understanding of, what a human being is. These viewpoints are described respectively as Psychologism, Sociologism and Historism.

These viewpoints are forms of reductionism; that is to say: they reduce or devaluates Man to a phenomenon of a single type. The problem is then to lead all other sides of Man back to this single type, for example to explain ethics, politics and mathematics as pure historical or psychological phenomena. Here the reductionisms always end in various forms of explaining away, which often is direct absurd.

The reductionisms observe Man from fragmented viewpoints, for example as organism, as physical-chemical system, as society being, as psyche, as producer and user of language and meaning. But what becomes of the wholeness? What unites all this knowledge to a total image of Man?

The reductionisms view themselves as scientific approaches, but they are not. It is here the fundamental invalidity in the reductionistic viewpoints arises, since their basis not is building on argumentation, but on the claim, that they are founded in science. But science is as mentioned not able to answer problems of lifeviews and values. Reductionisms are *philosophical* viewpoints, which under cover of being science seek to answer questions of values or moral standards. No single branch of science gives anything else than a limited perspective on Man or reality. If the reductionisms should be taken seriously, then they shall contain a unifying perspective on all knowledge about Man.

Our wonder over Man becomes philosophy, when it reaches the question of Man as such. Philosophy throws out answers to the question, argues for the answers and investigates their consequences. This happens first of all by reflecting and meditating over the things, not by experience-scientific way.

Philosophy is in that way a deepening of our everyday understanding. It is a reflection over well-known subjects. Its answers lie in continuation of our immediate knowledge and understanding. Similar you can say, that philosophy is a deepening of the forms of understanding, which lie in for example science, art and religion.

Philosophy seeks for *oneness* and *coherence*. This means, that it both ask for the fundamental trait of the essence of Man, and for how all other traits of Man is connected therewith. The answer to, what the essence of Man is, has to throw a light of transfiguration over everything we know about man.

Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man, the *common* or *universal* which all of us have part in, in spite of the fact that we can behave so different and be studied in so many various ways. Here it is about what, we can call the essence of Man, and the question is solved, not by experimenting, collecting systematical observations and from them draw up theories. It is only solved by reflecting and meditating over everything we already know about Man, and by searching for oneness and coherence in it.

The sciences ask limited questions about Man, or questions about specific sides of the human life. Philosophy asks the most universal question about Man. The sciences collect systematical experiences and throw out theories, that can be determined by new experiences. Philosophy uses alone the tool of reflection and meditation.

Reductionisms are philosophical viewpoints, because they seek to answer the question about Man as such, but as philosophical viewpoints they are cognitional and ethical shipwrecks.

Let us first try to look at the cognitional shipwreck. The truth, which philosophy seeks to achieve, is a truth that raises over human views, yes over the whole of the human existence. That something is true means in philosophical sense, that it is true independently of, who claims it, and when it is claimed. And independently of, whether anybody at all has claimed it, thought it, believed it or knows it. Truths are therefore, in philosophical context, both time-independent and idea- and consciousness-independent.

Since *all* philosophical views *qua* views claim to be true in precisely this sense (also relativism and subjectivism!!), then it should be clear, that views, which try to *reduce* or *cause explain* all views, are self-refuting views.

A self-refuting view can't be saved by saying, that it shall apply to all views except itself. For in that case you have to accept, that there exists at least one scientific and/or philosophical doctrine, which are independent of what you seek to reduce everything to, and this is precisely what the understanding itself claims, that there isn't.

It seems to be a common trait of the self-refuting philosophical views, that they pull the carpet away under themselves, because they seek to reduce fundamental concepts such as "meaning", "truth", and "validity" to something factual, for example physical, biological, psychological, social or historical. Herewith they at the same time claim, that if these conditions had been different (because they are changeable), then all our concepts about meaning, truth and validity also had to be different. But therewith they deprive themselves the possibility for being regarded as meaningful, true or valid.

Let us now try to look at the ethical shipwreck, which the reductionisms lead us out in.

My concept of Illuminati is based on the rise of pseudoscience. As suggested, there are especially two kinds of pseudoscience: 1) the pseudoscience of New Age, which demands "alternative" sciences with spiritual content. 2) The pseudoscience of reductionism, which connect their "sciences" with certain atheistic and/or political views.

Both are a part of The Matrix Conspiracy because they both support subjectivism and relativism, which are a fundamental philosophy of this ideology. In the following I will concentrate about the reductionism.

The heredity and environment ideology and the problem of mind

When you today ask: what is a human being? Then most people answer, that Man "is a product of heredity and environment". This has become a whole ideology in the Western world, and a fundamental part of the Illuminati aspect of The Matrix Conspiracy. It is actually a kind of sociobiology, or social Darwinism.

Both Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett advocate some kind of sociobiology. Social biology became notorious in 1975, when the American biologist Edward O. Wilson published a major treatise on the subject: *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*.

Accusations of sexism and racism were leveled because Wilson suggested that Western social systems are biologically innate, and that in some respects males are stronger, more aggressive, more naturally promiscuous than females. Critics argued that all social biology is in fact a manifestation of Social Darwinism, a nineteenth-century philosophy owing more to the English philosopher Herbert Spencer, than to Charles Darwin, supposedly legitimating extreme laissez-faire economics and an unbridled societal struggle for existence.

But the search for a synthesis of the heredity and environment split, a holism, is common in the pseudoscience of reductionism.

Within the pseudoscience of New Age the American physicist Fritjof Capra, has in his book, *The Turning Point*, outlined an ideology, where he combines quantum mysticism with reductionism, especially reductionisms such as historicism and sociology (read more in my article **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies**).

And, since the first publication of his ideas at the age of 23, the American New Age guru, Ken Wilber, has also sought to bring together the world's far-ranging spiritual teachings, philosophies, and scientific truths into one coherent and all-embracing vision. This integral map of the *Kosmos* (the universe that includes the physical cosmos as well as the realms of consciousness and spirit) should then offer an unprecedented guide to discovering your highest potentials.

It is very popular (if not directly a doctrine) in New Age, inspired by Theosophy, and writers such as Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber, to term their positions as "Holism". But both Theosophy, Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber's systems, can be seen as substantive philosophies of history; that is: searches for overall meaning in human history; searches for models of everything (read my articles **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr** and **The fascism of Theosophy**).

As mentioned: In the West, substantive philosophy of history is thought to begin only in the Christian era. In the *City of God*, Augustine wonders why Rome flourished while pagan, yet fell into disgrace after its conversion to Christianity. Divine reward and punishment should apply to whole peoples, not just to individuals. The unfolding of events in history should exhibit a plan that is intelligible rationally, morally, and (for Augustine) theologically. As a believer Augustine is convinced that there is such a plan, though it may not always be evident.

In the modern period, philosophers such as Vico and Herder also sought such intelligibility in history. They also believed in a long-term direction or purpose of history that is often opposed to and makes use of the purposes of individuals. The most elaborate and best-known example of this approach is found in Hegel, who

thought that the gradual realization of human freedom could be discerned in history even if much slavery, tyranny, and suffering are necessary in the process.

Marx, too, claimed to know the laws – in his case economic – according to which history unfolds. Similar searches for overall “meaning” in human history have been undertaken in the twentieth century, notably by Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) author of the twelve-volume *Study of History*, and Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), author of *Decline of the West*.

The main problem with all the above theories, are that they, in different ways, reduce consciousness to heredity and environment. They also commit the thought distortion *Nondual bias* (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

If Man only is a product of heredity and environment, then he has no longer any responsibility for his actions. Even the murderer, who is standing accused in court, is able to defend himself with, that he basically can't help, that he has committed a murder. Firstly he was born with some unfortunate genes, which made, that he wasn't all too clever. Therefore he was bullied in the school, and thereby he was developed to become aggressive and hot tempered. All this caused, that he in a certain situation committed a murder, but this he could not help. Heredity and environment led him precisely to this situation. Guilty? No, many people would say today, he is no more guilty, than a person is to blame, that he came to cough in a place filled with smoke. No, on the whole it is society and environment, which are to blame for the murder.

When you are advocating a reductionism and are claiming, that Man *is nothing else than* for example a product of heredity and environment, then concepts such as responsibility, guilt and duty loose all meaning. And it becomes meaningless to talk about human ideals. Why admire people, who have achieved something great? They have only good genes and a beneficially environment. Why condemn people, who spoil and break down society? They can't help it.

The self-help industry, and its belonging therapeutic techniques, thereby exposes the paradox, that the more resource-filled a human being is conceived to be, the more it has to be supported therapeutic. The more self-actualizing a human being becomes, the more it is in need of help to actualize itself. And the more responsibility a human being is said to have for its own life, the more this same human being, as a *basic* starting point, is considered as a victim, as non-authentic, and therefore as powerless.

The one face of this paradoxical Janus head is the empowerment culture, the other face is the victimization culture (and the connected recovery movement). Read more about this paradox in my articles **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**,

The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing, and Self-help and the mythology of authenticity).

Typical enough (foolish enough), then heredity and environment also are being used as a political tool. Often with followers on the respective sides of the extremities. In the dispute between heredity and environment it is for example considered political progressively ("*left wing*") to think, that the environment is more or less the sole decisive factor. The environment (upbringing, social conditions) is people themselves in the principle able to control and change through political actions. This is also background for, that *Lamarckism in the form of Lysenkoism* – which almost completely refuses the biological genetic meaning – got monopoly on engaging themselves with heredity in Soviet.

Similar it is regarded as political reactionary ("*right wing*"), if you believe, that the hereditament (genes) of the individual is the most important factor, which determines its actual development. Ideological this is connected with, that in that case a social reformatory policy is not for a lot of benefit: the biological inheritance has so far been a destiny, which you have to tolerate. Right wing politicians have for example claimed, that aggression or competition is inborn in the biological nature of man. Therewith the assertion can be used to justify, that specific social conditions, for example warfare or the capitalistic, economical system, is "natural". Evolutionism "proves" that the unlimited competition is as natural, as the survival of the best fitted. Moreover we know Nazism's use of biological theories.

As mentioned, the combination of the two extremities – the heredity and environment ideology – looks like a kind of social Darwinism. Before we go further it is important to mention, that evolutionism – also in its most modern Neodarwinistic version – is a natural historical report, and not a natural scientific theory. Neodarwinism can – as all other historical sciences – only *retrospective* explain the development up to now in a rational way. This appears clearly from the fact, that it can't give any scientific well-founded prediction of the future development. It is *not possible* with any reasonable precision *to predict the future biological development* on the background of the theoretical foundation of evolutionism.

Until today Man has not been able to do anything in order to change his genes. This has been changed with the modern genetic engineering, which already in principle has made it possible to change the genes of our gametes. In the future the problem about conscious changing peoples' genes in order to improve certain characteristics is not any technical difficulty. It is in turn a serious *ethical* and political problem about setting limits and about, where these limits have to be set.

As mentioned in my article **The fascism of Theosophy**, then the reductionism of Theosophy is due to the attempt of synthesizing spirituality and science. Theosophy is especially inspired by Darwinism, and its theories about human evolution. And the idea continues today in New Age and Ufology, where spirituality, apart from Darwinism, furthermore is sought synthesized with new developments within psychology, psychotherapy, natural science, especially biology and quantum mechanics. The whole thing is presented as an ideology with a lot of attempts to predict the future evolution of Man, often connected with eugenics: the applied “science” or the bio-social movement (social Darwinism) which advocates the use of practises aimed at improving the genetic composition of people, usually referring to human populations (see for example my articles **A critique of The Human Design System**, **Time travel and the fascism of The WingMakers Project** and **The new feminism and the philosophy of women’s magazines**).

But it could also be, that it is wrong to say, that Man *only* is a product of heredity and environment. Has science really proven this assertion? No, it hasn’t. Firstly science till today has not been able to give any explanation of, that we have a consciousness, that we are conscious about ourselves and are able to reflect and meditate over our own wishes, actions and doings. In natural science all explanations are *quantitative*; that is to say: they are given within the frames of, what can be measured, scaled and counted. It speaks from an outside-and-in perspective on Man. But when we speak about everything, that the word consciousness covers – thoughts, feelings, considerations, pains etc. – then it seems quite clear, that it is not something that is quantitative. When we are using an inside-and-out perspective and describe our states of consciousness and our experiences of, what we think is beautiful, ugly, attractive, repelling etc., - then we use a completely other language than the quantitative language of natural science. So how should one be able to reduce everything to natural science?

The interesting is however, that the more science develops, the more you have to give up backgrounds, which once occurred evident to everyone. In nuclear physics and the quantum mechanics we have learned, that there exist processes, which is not cause determined, and which do not follow the old rule about, that everything has to be continuous. Brain functions are in a wide extent quantum mechanical, and since the quantum mechanics breaks with the principle of causation and determinism, then the human brain is not fully a cause determined system. And then you can’t up from the ground explain brain processes from genetical and environmental factors.

(Read more in my article **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr**, where I also present, not an ontological dualism, but an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological dualism. Unambiguous description has the distinction between subject and object as a necessary precondition. And the fact itself, that we have to

discriminate between subject and object in order to communicate unambiguous, actually indicates, that both materialism and idealism (subjectivism/relativism) are mistaken points of views).

Just as inexplicable is it, what an "I" or a "Self" is. I wake up in the morning, and I know, that I am the same as yesterday or ten years ago, in spite of the fact that my body since then has changed look and that the content of my thoughts in many ways has become something else. What is this "Me"?

It is not my body, because then I should each morning go out in the bathroom and look in the mirror, in order to find out who I am. Nor is it the content of my consciousness, my thoughts and my memories, because then I first had to evoke a line of memories each morning, before I knew who I am. The whole of the total science has no explanation of, what a "Self" is, or what personal identity is.

In this there also lies another factor, namely the question about the free will, the possibility of Man consciously to decide on his own present condition and within some limits to make a free choice.

Meanwhile I mean, that the concept of free will and free choice is unfortunate concepts. In my understanding the will is the will to power, and belongs to the Ego, which makes it choices on background of the past, and which therefore is determined by both its personal and collective history. Therefore the Ego always strives towards being something else than what it is, it imitates others, are a slave of others ideas and ideals, and its actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt. A more fortunate concept would in my understanding be the freedom that lies in the existential concept of being yourself; that is: where you live in accordance with your own essence and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action. I will therefore use the concepts of freedom of action and freedom of decisiveness.

The assertion that Man is nothing else than a product of heredity and environment, has become an ideology, a part of the planlessness of our welfare society, where no one is responsible, where no one can help anything, where everything is to blame the genes or the society. However facing this reductionism you can place a more true understanding, which has science on its side: Man is a product of heredity and environment, yes, but also of your own consciousness about yourself.

I am born with some specific genes, which to a high degree put limits for, what I am able to and not able to. In some ways I have had good growing up conditions, in others bad. But I have since my childhood been conscious about myself and my surroundings, and have more or less freely been able to decide on something, rather than something else, within some limits. So therefore I am not only a product of

heredity and environment, but also a person, which has become what I am, due to a line of decisions, which I have made through life.

It is a viewpoint between two extremes. On the one hand we have the assertion, that no one can help, that he is as he is. No one is able to change himself. My answer is: yes, you can. You can within some given limits work with yourself, and conscious decide to reflect and meditate over your background, your past, your environment, the whole of your character. You can decide to start a spiritual practice, which you know in longer term will change your outlook and way of being. In a spiritual practice you can change yourself quite considerably.

On the other hand we have Sartre's assertion about, that a person's life is determined alone by all the choices, he makes; that is to say: by the evaluations, which the inner thinker makes by saying yes and no, justifying and condemning, accepting and denying. But this is an overstatement, which sounds a bit too much of "everyone is the architect of his own fortunes". Moreover there is the problem with the Ego and its thought distortions (see my book **A Dictionary of Thought distortions**).

It is therefore not true, that freedom lies in choosing to become what you want to. You can for example without guilt become beaten down by an assailant, so that you have to spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair. Here it is so so with being the architect of your own fortunes.

Truth lies in the middle of these extremes. Heredity and environment put some limits for, what we can do and not can do. But our self and our consciousness, which scientifically seen can't be explained alone from heredity and environment, makes us capable runningly to decide on, how we want to react in a lot of the situations, life puts us in. Therefore you can in some situations talk about a personal responsibility.

The Dream Hypothesis and the Brain-in-Jar Hypothesis

We almost all have an experience of, how our senses and thoughts can deceive us. Therefore the question about, whether life could be a dream or an illusion, also always has occupied Man.

In the scriptless people's religions, or in the world of the child, the dreams are episodes in the waking condition. To the poets - and in the various wisdomtraditions in Western mysticism and in Eastern philosophy - it is not impossible, that the whole

of the waking condition is a dream. As Shakespeare says in his play the *Tempest*: "We are of the same matter as our dreams; our short life is encircled by a sleep."

The spiritual practice can be said to consist partially of meditation, partially of Dream Yoga. Meditation and Dream Yoga are two sides of the same thing. If you nevertheless should try to discriminate, then you about meditation can say, that the three aspects of meditation are relaxfullness, awareness and heartfullness. These three aspects are trained through supporting exercises such as relaxation, Hara practice, as well as Tonglen practice (see the supporting exercises in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**).

In Dream Yoga you can say, that the day practice of Dream Yoga consists - besides the continuous exercises of meditation - in understanding the nature of thought distortions; in seeing their illusory nature, in seeing how they create your reality; that is: to realize, that a lot of your waking life also has character of a dream (the night practice of Dream Yoga is about writing your dreams down, and practising in conditions of lucidity, as well as astrality, if such states should occur). – See my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**, and my article **What is Dream Yoga?**

A lot of philosophers within European philosophy have also claimed, that life is a dream, or that the whole world is our own construction, created either by sensation or thinking. The best known examples are probably George Berkeley and René Descartes.

In European philosophy there is namely a strong tradition for only reckoning with two forms of cognition: sensation and thinking. Berkeley reckoned with sensation, whilst Descartes reckoned with thinking. Berkeley is famous for the sentence *Esse est percipi*, which means that being, or reality, consists in being perceived (to be is to be experienced). The absurdity in Berkeley's assertion is swiftly seen: If a thing, or a human being for that matter, is not being perceived by the senses, then it does not exist. In accordance with Berkeley there therefore does not exist any sense-independent world. He ends in the so-called solipsism. That we will return to.

Descartes was also very dubious concerning how much we can trust our senses. Therefore also he took up the question *Is life a dream?* However his intention with this was in his *Meditations* to develop a confident cognition-argument.

In his *Meditations* Descartes presents the problem approximately like this: I frequently dream during the night, and while I dream, I am convinced, that what I dream is real. But then it always happens, that I wake up and realize, that everything I dreamt was not real, but only an illusion. And then is it I think: is it possible, that

what I now, while I am awake, believe is real, also is something, which only is being dreamt by me right now? If it is not the case, how shall I then determinate it?

Precisely because Descartes not even in dreams can doubt, that 2 plus 3 is 5, he leaves the dream-argument in his *Meditations* and goes in tackle with the question, whether he could be cheated by an evil demon concerning all cognition, also the mathematics. This radical skepticism leads him forward to the cogito-argument: *Cogito ergo Sum* (I think, therefore I exist). – Note that Descartes' *philosophical* skepticism not is the same as *scientific* skepticism (about scientific skepticism: read my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**)

In modern discussions about the reliability of our cognition you often meet a variation of Descartes' argument of the evil demon. The argument is: some day surgery will have reached so far, that you will be able to operate the brain out of a human being and keep it alive by putting it in a jar with some nutrient substratum. At that time computer research perhaps will have reached so far, that you will be able to connect a computer with such a brain and feed it with all possible data – that is: supply us with an experiential "virtual reality", so that we think that we have a body, that we have a life and walk around in the world believing, that we can perceive our surroundings, whilst we in reality only is a brain laying in a jar. It is this thesis the movie *The Matrix* is based on. It is also a central theme in New Age.

A lot of so-called reductionists believe, that it is possible (again: see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**). There are computer scientists, who believe, that you can understand consciousness as "soft-ware" and the brain as a "hard disc", and that you in a very few years will be able to decode a human being for the whole of its content of consciousness, immediately before it dies, and therewith ensure its soul an eternal life – admittedly on a discette, but what the hell, it is after all certainly always better than to pass into nothingness, and the discette will after all could be played again and again.

The Brain-in-jar Hypothesis says it in this way: existence, that which I, Morten Tolboll, calls reality, is an illusion, because the fact of the matter is this, that I haven't got any body or any sense organs, but only are my brain, which is in a jar with a nutrient substratum, and which is connected to a computer, which provides me with experiences.

The problem is exactly the same as in Descartes' Dream Hypothesis: existence, that which I, Morten Tolboll, calls reality, is a period, which after its end (that is to say: when I wake up from it) will be realized as illusory, in the same way as I realize a dream as illusory, when I wake up from it. That is to say: that, which I call "reality",

is a dream, and that, which I call "dream" (that is: the thing I am dealing with, when I am sleeping) is a dreamt dream.

Both the Brain-in-jar Hypothesis and the Dream Hypothesis are important in the ideology I call The Matrix Conspiracy (see my article **The Matrix Conspiracy**). An important pedagogy of The Matrix Conspiracy is namely subjectivism and relativism, which claim, that there doesn't exist any objective truth. Truth is something we create ourself, either as individuals or as cultures, and since there doesn't exist any objective truth, there doesn't exist any objective scale of truth. Everything is our own thought-construction.

Let us try to look at three logical problems, which the Dream Hypothesis runs into: The infinite regress, the solipsism, as well as the polarization-problem.

First the infinite regress:

I presuppose, that I - with the assertion about, that what, I now call reality, is a dream - believe, that it in principle is possible, that I wake up from it and realize, that it only was a dream. In that case I shall after all find myself situated in a new reality, which relate itself to what I now call reality, as this relate itself to my nightly dreams. This "new reality" you could then term "the R-reality".

When I wake up to the R-reality, I realize, that what, I till then called reality, only was a dream. But using the Dream Hypothesis (whatever argument I might have for it) I must already now conclude, that the R-reality also could be a dream, which I, if I some day wake up from it, shows itself to be contained in a R-R-R-reality – and in this way I can keep on.

If i say, that reality is a dream, and therefore ought to be called "dreamt reality", yes then I can not find any argument against, that it is a "dreamt dreamt reality" or a "dreamt dreamt dreamt reality" etc., indefinitely.

If you then take the solipsism:

Solipsism (of lat. *Solus ipse*, I alone), is the opinion, that I alone, and my states of consciousness, exist, or that I, and my states of consciousness, are the only things, which really can be realized. Everything else, for example other people's consciousnesses and material things, which are claimed to be outside my consciousness, are problematic things.

The Dream Hypothesis can for example only be stated in first person. There are not two persons who can agree about it, because all other persons than the person, which put forward the Dream Hypothesis, ex hypothesi are dream phenomena in his dream.

When I – in first person – analyzes the eventual arguments *against* the Dream Hypothesis, I realize, that I don't need to take them seriously, because they ex hypothesi only are dream phenomena, which can't be compelling. But at the same time I realize, that all my arguments *for* the Dream Hypothesis for the same reason nor can be considered compelling. I have ended up in a self-contradiction.

And if you then finally take the polarization-problem:

Reality seems to be an Otherness, which determines and defines the world – that is: a negation-principle. Any concept, any thing, is defined by its negation; that is to say: what it not is. A dream can in other words only be defined from what it not is. It is for example not reality. This logic seems to be impossible to get around. How can you altogether assert that life, or reality, is a dream, unless you know what a dream not is?

The Brain-in-jar Hypothesis runs into exactly the same logical problems.

To the common consciousness, or the common cognition - that is to say: sensation and thinking - life could very well be thought to be a dream. The wholeness could possible be sleeping. You could here very well imagine the validity of the above problems, but you end up in the three logical problems. It is precisely these logical anomalies, paradoxes and problems, which create Samsara's wheel of eternal repeating up-cycles which is followed by eternal repeating down-cycles and vice versa (for example life and death, success and fiasco, joy and sorrow) – as well as the ignorance and the suffering when you are caught into this wheel, for example in the experience of nightmare and anxiety. All Jorge Luis Borges' small stories are about these logical and philosophical problems. His stories are filled with mirrors, masks, endless series and regresses, labyrinths, doppelgängers, time, solipsisms and dreams (I have examined these logical and philosophical problems in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**, especially in the thought distortion I call *Endless split of the thought*).

As mentioned there is also within the wisdom traditions a lot of talk about, that life is a dream. The Chinese philosopher Chuang Tsi wrote for example:

"One time I dreamt, that I was a butter-fly. Pleased with my fortune I flew around and wasn't thinking about anything else than being a butter-fly. About Chuang Tsi's existence I suspected nothing. Then suddenly I awoked, and it stood clear to me, that I was Chuang Tsi. But now I just don't know, whether I was Chuang Tsi, which dreamt that I was a butter-fly, or whether I am a butter-fly, which dreams, that it is Chuang Tsi. There is necessarily a difference in being Chuang Tsi and in being a butter-fly."

At first Chuang Tsi's text seems to be even more radical than Descartes. But what you can say, is, that there is a radical difference between Chuang Tsi and Descartes. Descartes and Berkeley reckoned namely, as before mentioned, only with two forms of cognition, sensation and thinking.

Chuang Tsi, as well as Medieval philosophers and a lot of Catholic philosophers in the present day, however speak about revelation as a third cognition-form. Some of our temporal existentialists speak about a type of being-cognition, which neither is due to sensation or thinking. And finally a couple of European mystics, as for example Plotin, Meister Eckhart and William Blake, have spoken about an occult cognition of God and higher powers, which reaches far beyond the areas of sensation and thinking. You could term it the wholeness-cognition. And in the East (for example Chuang Tsi) such a third cognition is well known (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with mystical experiences**).

To this third form of cognition, life is *not* a dream, but the Good, the True and the Beautiful itself – reality. The path to this can be described as in the education novel: at home – the homeless - home. In the start, at home (if you not, through meditation and Dream Yoga, are working with the third cognition-form), the wholeness is sleeping. If you however start to work with this cognition, the education journey out in the world begins. The wholeness starts to dream. But the more realization trained, the more you realize the illusory aspect of the dream of the wholeness, and then the journey home starts. The wholeness begins to wake up, for finally, in the revelation, to be completely awake.

The truth in this awakeness - and which of course also is there hidden, both when the wholeness is dreaming and sleeping - is precisely the instance which creates the logical, and insoluble problems with theories which only work with two forms of cognition, sensation and thinking.

This truth is reality, or the Otherness.

Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy

Philosophical practice is a new alternative form of counseling to people, who don't feel, that priests, doctors, coaches or psychotherapists, can offer them enough help concerning their spiritual/existential questions and problems. It is a possibility for asking a *philosopher* for advice.

It is a rebirth of something very old, perhaps close to the authentic origin of philosophy, for example Socrates' philosophical dialogues at the town square in Athens, or the philosophers in ancient India and China, who ordinary people could come and consult regarding their daily problems.

The idea about philosophical practice, in its current form, originally came from the German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach. The first of May 1981 he opened, as the first, a philosophical counseling-practice. In 1982 he founded the German Society of philosophical practice, and ever since the phenomenon has spread all over the world.

In 2002 the Danish Society of Philosophical Practice was founded and established by a circle of philosophers, psychologists, idea-historians and people of education, with the purpose to create a professional forum in Denmark for development, research and information about the philosophical practice. This happens through lectures, courses, network, and others activities, which can promote the understanding and interest in philosophical practice, as well as the society has plans about continuing education and certification of philosophical practitioners in Denmark.

However there doesn't exist an actual education to philosophical practitioner. But in order to ensure the professional competence, and not to become mixed with the fount of educations, which is found in the alternative therapy market, most philosophical practitioners agree, that a minimum requirement to a philosophical practitioner is a MA in philosophy or history of ideas.

In addition to this it is possible to take an education as Master in counseling, where philosophical counseling is included as one of the modules. This education is offered by Denmark's Pedagogical University. One of the pioneers of this education is associate professor at DPU, Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, who also is the first in Denmark who has involved philosophical counseling in an academical treatise: *Det filosofiske Liv – et dannelsesideal for eksistenspædagogikken* (Gyldendal 2002)

The relationship between science and alternative health care/consultation is a subject, which is very popular for the time being. In this connection philosophical practice is an extremely interesting phenomenon, partially because it features many of the elements which the educations in the alternative therapy market also seek to implicate, partially because there at the universities (especially at DPU) are being worked with developing philosophical practice as a serious and scientific well-founded way of counseling. However this still happens in a rather academical way, and in Denmark there are still very few practising philosophical practitioners.

Philosophical practice is a unifying term of two different basic methods: philosophical counseling and the philosophical café. Where philosophical counseling

mainly is connected to dialogues face to face, then the philosophical café of course is used in groups. Both methods are however common in that way, that they, through dialogue, involve the participants in a self-inquiring practice, where it is about asking philosophical questions.

In the following I will concentrate about philosophical counseling, and show differences and similarities in relation to psychotherapy and religious counseling. I will of course concentrate about the method I use in my own form of philosophical counseling. I will end the article with a short appendix about the philosophical café.

Philosophical counseling

In philosophical counseling philosophy is understood as a way of life, where you strive after wisdom and happiness; that is to say: where you practise a certain realized and clarified way of life. In this it differs from the academical philosophy, where the work with philosophy is a purely theoretical activity, included the so-called practical philosophy.

Traditions where the concept of philosophy slides in one with a certain existential form of training and therapy, is found, both in the East and in the West. From the East can be mentioned Indian and Buddhist philosophy, Taoism and Zen Buddhism. From the West can be mentioned Greek and Roman philosophy, and the whole tradition of mysticism within Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

A good introduction to this is Aldous Huxley's book *The Perennial Philosophy*. A more academical introduction to the understanding of philosophy as a way of life, is found in Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life - Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*.

Even though the modern concept of philosophical counseling primarily goes back to the Stoics and Socrates, then the great philosophers within all the different wisdomtraditions always have seeked to pass on an art of life of a more or less philosophical kind. They namely asked philosophical questions - that is: not in an intellectual way as in the academical philosophy, and not as that to repeat a mantra - no, they asked philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way, as the wordless silence within a strong, existential wonder. As Aristotle said, then philosophy begins with wonder. We all know the wonder we can feel when we look at the stars, or when we are confronted with all the suffering in the world. This wonder fills us with a silence, in which all thoughts, explanations and interpretations withers away. It is in this silence we ask ourselves the great, philosophical questions, open inwards and outwards, without words, without evaluations.

The wordless silence within the existential wonder is the same as asking philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way. And it is this philosophical questioning which can be the beginning of a deep examination of Man and reality – a lifelong, philosophical voyage of discovery towards the Source of life: the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

However most people lose this silence, and get satisfied with explanations and interpretations. That is the difference between the great philosophers and ordinary people. The great philosophers had a strong longing after something inexpressible, after something which couldn't be satisfied by explanations and interpretations – perhaps a longing after awakening – or after realization. With the whole of the body, with life and blood, with soul and spirit, with brain and with heart, they asked into, and were investigating themselves and life. They asked questions to everything, and were investigating it in a meditative way, as if it was something completely new. Simply because this philosophical questioning and inquiry itself constitutes an absolute central meditation-technique, which opens the consciousness in towards the Source. In other words they used philosophical questions as universal koans. All other spiritual exercises were in fact only used to support this.

It is the philosophical questioning and inquiry that in the end will open the consciousness in towards the Source. In all wisdomtraditions you can find descriptions that show that the moment of enlightenment happens in this way, either alone, or in a dialogue with a master.

Philosophical counseling is not guru-centric and can't succeed without the guest's own active participation (philosophical counseling doesn't talk about clients, but about guests). The insights are the guest's own, as well as the relief from false conceptions, restrictive assumptions and thought distortions.

Philosophical counseling is in other words a rebirth of that kind of dialogue, which is not based on religious/political doctrines, ideologies, myths or conceptions (or as today: psychological theories/management theories), but on realization and inner transformation, and which has been used by great masters such as Socrates, Epicurus, Confucius, Ramana Maharshi, Krishnamurti, Dalai Lama and Eckhart Tolle - see my article **The philosophy of Krishnamurti**.

Even though these masters give answers to questions, then these answers therefore are not conclusions to anything, as you for example see it in politics or religion. The answers are only tools for the questioner's own self-inquiry. That will say, that they are a help discovering the implicit philosophical questions of the problems, and investigating them in a meditative-existential way. And this is the central about philosophical counseling. This also means, that philosophical counseling is not a

philosophy-class (teaching history of philosophy). And if there are involved answers, which other philosophers or theories have given, then it is only with the purpose of the self-inquiring practice.

In that connection philosophical counseling contains three important concepts:

1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others - my book **A dictionary of thought distortions** functions as a manual on critical thinking and therefore on philosophy).

2) Investigating the shadow (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**)

You may say, that philosophical counseling follows the teaching that *truth is a pathless land*. In that way philosophical counseling helps the guest to develop spiritual by developing his own teaching - to become a light for himself, to become his own teacher where he happens to stand – and at the same time has the philosophical aspects of the spiritual practice with him, as it is the core in all wisdom traditions.

Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy

What is the difference between philosophical counseling and psychotherapy?

Philosophical counseling (and therefore true spiritual counseling) claims that our problems, and suffering as such, are due to a separation of the observer and the observed (this separation is a central theme in my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist**). In its practice it directs itself away from the observed, towards the observer himself (the form of consciousness: the one who evaluates, who says yes and no, who accepts and denies, who compares with earlier and hopes/fears something else), and not the observed (the contents of consciousness: feelings, thoughts, experiences, sense impressions, memories, wishes, hopes, fears, lusts) as in psychotherapy. Its questions therefore become of existential, conceptual, ethical, epistemological and metaphysical kind. They are therefore in their essence philosophical, as for example the question: *Who am I?* (To ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way is a central theme in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**).

Psychotherapy is a branch of psychology, and therefore something scientific, which directs itself towards aspects of the observed, that can be empirical tested. Therefore

it must not contain philosophical and/or religious theories. But this is precisely what the whole of the New Age and self-help environment are doing, when they reduce religion and philosophy to psychology, and in neglecting the observer, they are misguiding their clients philosophical and spiritual (see my articles **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy** and **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

Since the observer is the producer of thought distortions, the consequence is that they overlook the problem of thought distortions, This is especially seen in the ignorance of Subjective validation. Numerous psychologizing therapies and techniques within New Age and self-help simply can't be understood, nor succeed, without understanding the thought distortion *Subjective validation* (for example Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), Nonviolent Communication, Law of Attraction, Personality typing, Hypnotherapy, The Work, Astrology, Clairvoyance, Channeling, Human Design System, different healing methods, etc., etc.).

These therapies and techniques are dependent of that Subjective validation is active in the client, or else they won't work. They, and Subjective validation, are two sides of the same coin. They are therefore also dependent of, that all kinds of critical thinking are eliminated. The role of Subjective validation in these therapies and techniques are therefore also the reason for, that there never has been a successful scientific validation of them under properly controlled conditions. The effects of these therapies and techniques will therefore not go beyond the effects of Subjective validation.

Subjective validation is active when people will validate a set of statements allegedly about themselves as highly accurate even if these statements *not* are accurate (read more about Subjective validation and other thought distortions in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

A special problem in connection with the New Age turn within psychotherapy, is the positive psychology of the self-industry. The movement of positive psychology is especially caught by the thought distortion called *Illusion of control*.

Control makes us feel powerful, which is a good feeling. And feeling that there is a right order in the universe – a law of attraction - and that some kind of “positive” thought technique can control everything that happens - is comforting to many people today.

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 and your wealth, or somebody

else's health, spiritual development and wealth, by your thoughts and prayers or other superstitious actions.

The shadow, our dark side (the painbody), is, through the inner evaluating ego, 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.

In philosophical counseling you will be encouraged to find a religion you can use as a frame of reference in your spiritual practice (see my article **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice**). Because, only an intervention from the source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of 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 re-structure the ego's ownership to things, food, personal power, sexuality and emotions. Spiritual practice is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatic identification with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. And religion functions as good frame of reference in this work. First thereafter the mystical process can begin.

The magnet of attraction, which the ego is controlled by – (the ego's identity with the material world: instincts, sexuality, emotions, desires, 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 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 of life? How does man preserve 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 grab, which the material world has in your mind, is automatically reduced (again: 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 many people have today done an illusory work of trying to re-define this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction directly is becoming the object of worship. That's what positive

psychology and the law of attraction movement are about (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**).

Another aspect of the true spiritual practice is that you break the automatic process of compensatory karma, which is closely related to the material world, laws of nature, cycles of life, yes actually pure causal regularity of mechanical kind. It would be an illusion to connect such things with a superior intentional divine order.

Furthermore you have your free will either to 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) – about karma see my articles **What is karma?** and **A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork**.

I have in my book **A Portrait of a Lifestylist** set up six steps in such a spiritual practice:

- 1) The separation of the observer and the observed
- 2) Religion and supporting exercises
- 3) Passive listening presence
- 4) Discrimination
- 5) Creative emptiness
- 6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

The first step, the separation of the observer and the observed, is the step where you are completely ignorant about your painbody; that is: completely identified with it, and therefore in its control. The next step is religion and supporting exercises. Religion and supporting exercises are, as mentioned, a valuable early stage in a spiritual practice. Religion and supporting exercises cleanses and prepares transformation on a collective, unconscious-instinctive, level.

The two main reasons why religion and supporting exercises is a necessity is partly, that the ongoing self-confirmation of the ego and its negative automatic thoughts (which, as explained, also can be illusions of positivity), is replaced by a spiritual remembrance, partly that the collective inertia is purificated and prepared, so that the Ego is made transparent along with that original sin and negative karma are transformed and transfigured in the contact with the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness, the saints etc.) And these two processes mutually fertilize each other (also negative automatic thoughts are based on thought distortions – again: see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

Religion has to do with the pious attitude and way of thinking, which stands for the observance of religious virtues, duties and rituals. In this way you can bring a unity and direction into the mind, an order and tranquillity in the thinking, a consistency between thought and conduct of life, an awareness of your relationship with persons, things and ideas, which no therapy is able to. In a spiritual practice it serves as a frame of reference.

The supporting exercises are the beginning of the spiritual practice, where you begin to activate the higher functions of the mind (you can find the exercises on this blog). In order to discover and break the identification with the samsarical producer of the mind, the subject must discover the hidden source in the awareness or in the innermost of consciousness. It happens by neutralizing the Ego's, or the thinking's, functions. This happens through meditation.

The Ego's functions constitute what you could call the ordinary consciousness. You can talk about four such, lower, functions of the ordinary mind:

1. Evaluation (accept/denial, yes/no)
2. Focus
3. Activity
4. Language (words, images)

The source of awareness, the naked consciousness, is hidden because it has melted together with these four functions. They have become a kind of veils, or layers, which are maintained by what you could call the ego-religion and the ego-exercises. The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego's incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: "it is no use with me!"; or: "wonderful me!". Both, either the denial or confirmation (which is what positive psychology is focusing on) of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity and the ego-centralization. The ego's religion and exercises are the ego's needs and longings and will: I want to, 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....

In my articles **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**, and **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching**, I have described how the worship of the ego can lead to black magic.

Meditation is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with these functions. Then you can talk about four higher functions of the consciousness, which are becoming activated through meditation:

1. Neutral observation

2. Passive listening presence (or wordless prayer) (defocus)
3. Non-activity (non-action)
4. Non-language (wordless)

The whole proces is like a flower opening itself.

As mentioned: Philosophical counseling is training people in critical thinking, and critical thinking is in opposition to thought distortions such as *Subjective validation* and *Illusion of control*. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions, and examining them by presenting reasons and evidence in support of conclusions. Critical thinking is the only tool you can use in order to explore, change and restructure thought distortions.

But philosophical counseling is, as we have seen, also training people in investigating their shadow, as well as spiritual practice. So, besides the pure rational aspect in training people in critical thinking, it also involves both life-philosophical, existence-philosophical and spiritual aspects.

Personally I work with what I call the four philosophical hindrances for the opening in towards the Source. They are:

- 1) A rational, where you take your assumptions, conceptions and values for absolute truths, and therewith end in a contradiction between your thoughts and your lived life.
- 2) A life-philosophical, where you are circling around your own past and future, and hereby create a closed attitude, inattention, absent-mindedness and ennui.
- 3) An existence-philosophical, where you in your opinion formation and identity formation strive after being something else than what you are, where you imitate others, are a slave of others' ideas and ideals, and where your actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt.
- 4) A spiritual, where you are identified with your lifestituation, are dependent on religious or political ideologies, and where you therewith exist on a future salvation.

You may say, that these four hindrances constitute an actual malfunction in the human mind. And it is this malfunction, which is the cause to the ignorance about the Source of life. Ignorance is again the cause of suffering. In this way philosophical counseling is a practice, which helps the guest to correct this malfunction.

In that way you can conversely, when you have helped the guest in progress with asking philosophical questions, talk about the four philosophical openings in towards the Source:

- 1) A rational, where you examine the validity of your assumptions, conceptions and values, and are searching for coherence between your thoughts and your lived life.
- 2) A life-philosophical, where you are present in the Now, and hereby achieve that self-forgetful freedom and absorption in the world, which are a condition for love, spontaneity, joy of life and wisdom.
- 3) An existence-philosophical, where you in your opinion formation and identity formation are yourself, live in compliance with your own essence, and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action.
- 4) A spiritual, where you are not identified with your lifestituation, and where you independently of religious or political ideologies, lives from something deeper: the Source itself: the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

(Read more the hindrances and openings in my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**).

Coherently I call my method *Meditation as an Art of Life*.

Philosophical counseling as an alternative to religious counseling

In this way philosophical counseling more reminds about religious counseling. They both have focus on convictions and ideas, and see these as a condition for feelings, not as a result of feelings, as in psychotherapy. They are both engaged in the moral and ethical aspects of the convictions, and especially in the understanding of the meaning of life. Moreover they both involve the spiritual area.

What is then the difference between philosophical counseling and religious counseling?

If you for example take the great religions, then there within these religions arised what I call philosophical oriented therapy-forms. Thus Gnosticism and Mysticism arised in the early and Medieval Christianity, Sufism in Islam, Hasidism and Cabbala in Judaism, Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism, and Zen and Dzogchen in Buddhism.

Unlike the established religions then these philosophical therapies presuppose no religious doctrine, ideology, myth or conception (or psychological theory/management theory). They put their emphasis on realization and inner transformation. And the masters within these philosophical therapies are precisely using a philosophical way of counseling, rather than a traditional religious counseling.

That means, that the silent assumptions, things that are taken for granted, and premises within the religions, themselves are facing examination in philosophical counseling. Is there coherence in it? It is self-contradictory? What about one's way of being, is it self-circling or self-forgetful? And what about the autonomy and the power of action? Are you yourself or dependent on others, etc.

The answers in philosophical counseling are not conclusions to anything (as they are within the established religions), but only tools for the guest's own self-inquiry. As the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein says in his *Tractatus*, then the words only are a ladder, which you can use to rise up above them with. Afterwards you throw it away. In the same way they say in Zen, that the words only are a finger pointing at the moon. You must never confuse the finger with the moon. That, whereof you cannot speak, about that you must be silent.

And then you have stepped into the wordless silence.

Appendix: The philosophical café

As mentioned in the start, then the philosophical café includes the same elements as philosophical counseling, but on group-level. So the philosophical café is a workshop also based on that concept of philosophy which in particularly the Stoics and Socrates had, namely that philosophy is an Art of Life, or a lifetransforming exercise - an idea also to be found in other wisdom traditions, however more known under what traditionally is understood as meditation.

In this way the philosophical café has a great relevance in a time with a lot of stress, but also because it is a time where people more and more asks for meaning and coherence in life. This does not only apply for the individual. Within the education- and health sector, as well as within company- and organization development they progressively talk about ethics, value clarification and value based management, and focus are directed towards issues of more existential, ethical and philosophical character.

The philosophical café is a common term for the various forms of social gathering around the philosophical, which Socrates' Symposium was a precedent for. It can be used both by private persons in form of an event, as well as by organizations in form of teambuilding.

Traditionally a philosophical café is held in an ordinary café room, and is open for all, but it is also possible to organize such a café in an "alternative café", for instance by creating such a café in an organization, a bookshop or in private homes. To be

mentioned there is the philosophical dinner in which a group of people, over a dinner, get themselves a philosophical conversation in a couple of hours. Or a philosophical salon, in which you start and co-ordinate running salons of philosophical character (also with other introductory speakers than the philosophical counselor himself). Furthermore you can create running cafés over specific topics.

The philosophical café can shortly said be arranged anywhere, where you can talk about a social gathering around the philosophical, on a mountain-top, in a wood, on journeys, holidays, spiritual retreats.

The participants suggest the topics themselves, and the function of the philosophical counselor is only to function as a facilitator for the participant's own self-inquiry. This means that the philosopher functions as a help finding the topics' implicit *philosophical* questions, and investigating them in a meditative-existential way. The participants need in that way no philosophical skills.

The philosophical café is an exercise in developing the philosophical self-understanding and value clarification on group level. It trains the participants in inquiring and listening in a more existential way, and it develops an ethical conversation culture. The philosophical café is in other words brilliant in connection with teambuilding, but can be used in all kinds of connections, in which a group of people want to look at things from a deeper perspective.

About philosophical practice in my books:

In my book **Dream Yoga** you can read about philosophical practice in the article *Philosophical Practice*

In my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist** you can read several texts on philosophical practice, for example in chapter III; The Life Artist as a Desirous being (2.A: *The difference between psychological counseling and philosophical counseling*; and 3.E: *The need of philosophical counseling*; and chapter V: The Life Artist as a Communicative being (2: *The dialogue in philosophical counseling*)

The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing

In my article **The Matrix Conspiracy**, I show how all these tendencies - postmodern intellectualism, management theory, New Age, Self-help and different kinds of reductionisms - today is working as one, global spreading ideology, though it can be hard to discover it, because many of the viewpoints within it seem to disagree in between. You could call it Consumer Capitalism, but there is a danger that this might melt together with Chinese Communism in a strange Matrix Hybrid, which will be the end of democracy and human rights (read futher in my articles **The Sokal Hoax**, **Management theory and the self-help industry**, **Six common traits of New Age that distorts spirituality**, and **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**).

You can very well say that this ideology also has a kind of Thought Police, what I call The Hermeneutics of Suspicion.

In this article I will show what this precisely means. I will also show the built-in paradox it has, and why I myself have become an apostle of loafing. The article is divided into four parts:

- 1) What is ideology?
- 2) What is anger?
- 3) The paradox of the self-help industry
- 4) Why I am an apostle of loafing

1. What is ideology?

What is an ideology?

Ideologies have always been a reflection of time, which manifests itself in the thoughts of human beings, specially the thoughts' direction towards the future. The collective manifestations of the future have either appeared in form of rigid religious believe systems, or ideologies such as nationalism, national socialism, communism and liberalism. They all function with the implied assumption, that the supreme good lies in the future, and that the end therefore justifies the means. The goal is an idea, a point out in a future, projected by the mind, where the salvation comes in some form – happiness, satisfaction, equality, liberation, etc. It has not been unusual that the means to get there have been to make people into slaves, or by torturing them and murdering them here and now.

That a thought-system has developed into an ideology shows in, that it is a closed system, which is shared by a large group of people. Such a closed system has

especially two distinctive characters: 1) It allows no imaginable circumstance to talk against the ideology. 2) It refuses all critique by analysing the motives in the critique in concepts, which is collected from the ideology itself (an ideology always thinks black and white, and therefore always has an anti-ideology, an enemy image, which it attribute on to everyone, who don't agree).

An ideology is therefore characterized by, that it is not able to contain, or direct refuses, rationality and critical thinking. We all know how dissidents have been killed, jailed and tortured under totalitarian ideologies (read more about ideology in my article **The difference between philosophical education and ideological education**).

The ideology today is consumerism, or consumer-capitalism, and the supreme good in the future is constant increasing production, constant increasing consumption. The thought-system behind this ideology comes from the so-called Management theory, which again builds on New Thought, Humanistic psychology, New Age and Postmodern intellectualism - and their relativism and subjectivism.

With the industrial modernization Man has cultivated a mind, which can solve almost any technological problem; that, which the German philosopher Habermas calls the instrumental reason. But apparently human problems have never been solved. On the contrary mankind are about to be drowned in its problems: problems concerning communication, the relationship with others, heaven and hell. The whole of the human existence has become one extremely complex problem. And apparently it has been like that through the whole of history. Despite the knowledge of Man, despite his millenniums of evolution, Man has never been free from such problems.

The solutions to such problems require a communicative (philosophical/spiritual) reason, a reason, which understands the human community. But as Habermas says, then we are not using such a reason, on the contrary we are using an instrumental reason on human problems, where it only should be used on technical problems. We seek to solve human problems technically, where they should be solved in a philosophical way. The systems (the market, the economy, the bureaucracy, the systems) have colonized the lifeworld.

An aspect of, that the instrumental reason has conquered territory from the communicative reason consists in, that we in connection with human problems treat each other as means or as items, which have come on the wrong course (the treatment society). It is interesting, that the New Age movement, which actually should be a spiritual alternative to this, and be an advocate for a communicative reason, on the contrary is one of the most aggressive advocates for the instrumental reason. This is due to its psychologizing of philosophy. New Age is possessed with all kind of self-

invented forms of treatment, and with pseudoscientific attempts to justify them as science. Often they manipulatively use instrumental/scientific inspired terms about their methods, but which are without any scientific meaning at all. It is just a rhetorical trick to persuade people to pay the fee

Ideologists can be called Hermeneutics of Suspicion.

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur has referred to the “hermeneutics of suspicion” encouraged by writers such as Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. What people think, and the reasons they produce, may not be the real reasons at work. It then becomes easy to become suspicious of the motives of everyone, whether as the representative of an economic class or the purveyor of a morality, or just as an individual with psychological problems to solve.

The last mentioned is a typical trait of the management theories and their use of coaching and psychotherapy (for example Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP – see my article **Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)**) in leadership theories and personality developing courses. In this way they end up in concealing power relations at the workplace, they lead to difficulties assigning responsibility towards children in the schools, they reduce our spouses to means for our personal development (self-improvement), and remove political incitation and social responsibility by disguising social problems as personal/psychological problems.

In my article **The Matrix Conspiracy** I claim, that a serious problem in the future, is that a new kind of pseudoscience is trying to unite New Age pseudosciences with some of the pseudosciences of reductionism (see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**). I call it the Illuminati aspect of the Matrix conspiracy.

Because you can see the same development in the so-called diagnosed life, where large pharmaceutical companies are speculating in creating new diagnoses, which have to be treated with medicine: a product of a reductionistic view of human nature (biologism), where they for example have removed spiritual and philosophical claims about the meaning of suffering (see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**). In the self-help industry the same is happening in form of the so-called positive psychology (where the “positive” is about material glory, money, success, personal power, sex, health, beauty) and where you have to ignore, repress, turn your back to everything you find negative (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**). Here the concepts of suffering and negativity also have been removed. So though the psychiatrists and doctors of the pharmaceutical industry, and the coaches and psychotherapists of the self-help industry, may be in

opposition to each other (as shown in the movie Cuckoo's Nest) it is in my view a product of the same Matrix conspiracy.

It is therefore interesting to compare the characteristic traits of New Age (the self-help industry) and the pharmaceutical industry with Aldous Huxley's novel Brave New World. This novel foresees the end of democracy in a pseudoscientific, technological fixated meritocracy. The novel is about a totalitarian state, which keeps psychological and genetic control with everybody, so that they surrender to the claimed "blessings" of the progress of the instrumental or technical reason; that is: through the reductionisms of psychologism and biologism.

Everything, also humans, and human problems, are treated instrumental or technical. Psychology and genetics are controlling people down to the smallest details, children are being born and "grewed" on bottles, brains are being trimmed, characters are being converted after the needs of the dominant state. Notice the similarities with the New Age product called NLP which are about programming your brain so that you can become a success in society; that is: so that you work in favour of Consumer Capitalism.

The people in this meritocracy are considered as being happy. If they experience some kind of negativity, they are in large quantities supplied with the drug Soma, which makes them "happy" again. All religion, philosophy, literature and art have been removed. Science is strictly political controlled. The entertainment is so-called sensitivity-entertainment. You can go to sensitivity-parties, or you can watch sensitivity-movies, etc. Everywhere the people are meeting sensitivity-influences.

Somewhere in the novel there is a discussion between the main character Johannes and the President about the lack of truth and beauty in this society. The President argues that it might very well be that there isn't any truth and beauty, but the people are happy. Johannes objects, and says that the whole society is completely meaningless. The President continues: "Yes, but the people are happy!"

When I read this novel I remember the quote from a nonviolent communication coach, whom I had a discussion with: "Would you rather be right, than happy?" – see my article **Nonviolent Communication is an instrument of psychic terror**.

The politicians in Denmark – which is one of the most secularized, management-oriented and coaching-controlled countries in the world – have had scientists to make an investigation, that shows that the Danes are the most happy people in the world. A bit of a paradox, because other investigations also show, that they are the largest consumers of Prozac in the world. Prozac is in Danish called "lykkepiller", which directly translated to English means Happiness-pills.

I have personally several times been attacked by NLP-coaches and psychotherapists for no other reason than being a philosopher; that is: a person who uses rationality and critical thinking (which is Old-thinking in their point of view). I have even, several times, been advised to seek NLP-psychotherapeutic treatment, in order again to be able to think new, and be flexible and willing to change (to claim that I have psychological problems, without any justification, and without being in a treatment-situation, is actually a very serious insult).

They call it self-improvement, which again is one and the same as adjustment to society, and therefore to the ruling ideology. An advice that doesn't differ much from the theories behind the re-education institutions in China. A direct Stalinistic approach, which almost all companies today is using more and more (see other kinds of insults in my article **The Sokal Hoax**).

As mentioned in the start I actually think, that there is a danger that this ideology, in its fascination of economical growth and consumerism (personal power, success, and so-called NLP induced self-imagined X factors (=I am a fantastic superhuman), might melt together with Chinese Communism, which more and more is importing Western Consumer Capitalism, is growing more and more as an economical power, but which still is a totalitarian ideology, that doesn't accept democracy and human rights.

We more and more see how Western theorists of all kinds are praising China, how they more and more talk about what we can learn from China, but without mentioning China's violation of human rights. That we in the Western world gradually will accept the violation of human rights is now seen in how we for example have subjectified and relativized the freedom of speech, so that it can be used as a means of offending other people (see my article **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**). It is also seen in the treatment of the unemployed – “defect consumers” – who are treated as a kind of criminals. Their rights have in many cases directly been taken away from them, and they are put in re-education institutions, and work-training camps, precisely as in China.

Chan Koonchung's novel *The Fat Years*, newly translated into English, portrays a China of the very near future that can best be described as slightly off-kilter. The year is 2013 and, following a calamitous worldwide economic meltdown, China has emerged seemingly unscathed.

It basks in a “Golden Age of Prosperity and Satisfaction,” as Jason Beerman writes in a review of the novel - complete with Lychee Black Dragon Latte-slinging baristas at Starbucks, which has been acquired by the Chinese conglomerate Wantwant. China is

the preeminent world power thanks to its economic dominance and its soft power strategies which, among other things, have resulted in a Sino-Japanese free trade sphere.

Meanwhile, the Chinese people have achieved an accelerated course in yuppiedom thanks in large part to a rapid rise in domestic demand, which has resulted in higher living standards for newly urbanized and rural dwellers alike.

There is a catch, however, Beerman continues. The entire month of February 2011—a brutal and chaotic period immediately before the beginning of China’s Golden Age—has gone missing from people’s memories and no one other than the social misfits who figure at the center of the novel’s plot seems to realize or care. Simply put, everyone else is too busy making money.

This sounds like the type of late night fantasy a Politburo member might have after ingesting too much baijiu at a banquet. But Beerman writes, that the premise isn’t a classic dystopian one per se since the amount of control that the state exercises over the people remains somewhat of a mystery. A central plot point revolves around whether the government forced a collective amnesia upon its people by drugging the water supply or whether the people simply willed the missing period from their minds by ignoring it en masse.

The rhetorical question that lies at the center of the novel is this: “Between a good hell and a counterfeit paradise, which one would people choose?” Or in the context of the general Chinese populace portrayed in the novel, would people choose to forget or ignore an ignominious past in favor of a prosperous present and future?

The author of the novel, Chan Koonchung, grew up in Hong Kong and Taiwan but now lives in Beijing. *The Fat Years* was written in 2009 after Chan observed a major change to the Chinese mentality in 2008. Following the grandeur of the Beijing Olympics and China’s reaction to the world economic crisis, Chan felt a general domestic confidence boost vis-à-vis China’s place in the world, and he wanted to write a novel that examined this phenomenon.

Indeed, Beerman writes, the China of 2013 portrayed by Chan seems to have lurched forward into a stroke of good fortune, and the country scrambles to capitalize on this as best as it can. This means that while external factors have catapulted China to sole superpower status, its intact political system—corrupt, bloated, and paranoid—is ill-equipped to handle the change.

Chan uses this framework to poke holes in the country's current political structure. Call it prosperity with Chinese characteristics.

For instance, in the novel, Chinese people have “90 percent freedom.” They're free to make money, to be sure, but they're also free to watch whatever is on TV, browse whatever books are in the bookstore, and read whatever articles appear in the newspaper or on the Internet. The catch is that all this readily available information is tightly controlled and access to non-sanctioned information remains out of reach. Furthermore, the political narrative of the Communist Party of China originally revolved around the ideals of class struggle and equality. Following the dual debacles of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the Party conjured a new storyline of having saved China from foreign imperialism and humiliation in order to deflect attention from its own failings. In the novel, its *raison d'être* has come to include the idea that it should “accomplish big things” in order to rationalize one party rule and differentiate it from democratic systems of governance.

This type of protean leadership benefits greatly from a populace that willfully forgets. *The Fat Years* draws easy comparisons to both *1984* and *Brave New World*. Like Winston in *1984*, Chen, the protagonist of *The Fat Years*, clings to old newspaper articles whose facts have since been wiped from the official record. And like in *Brave New World*, state-produced drugs are used to stabilize the population.

Beerman thinks, that what makes *The Fat Years* even more jarring than either of these classics is that it is rooted much more closely to current events and it is, at times, eerily prescient.

Much of the novel's long epilogue section is a deconstruction of China's hypothetical reaction in the wake of its rise to sole global dominance. The immediacy of the novel's time horizon is such that the predicted trappings that would accompany China's superpower status — a freely convertible yuan, an alienated and isolated West, the construction through Iran of a “Pan Eurasian Energy Bridge” — are really not that far-fetched.

In our brave new world, Beerman concludes, it is this plausible realism that fact makes *The Fat Years* a gripping, if not terrifying, treatise on the rise of China, present and future.

And, in the brave new world of *The Matrix Conspiracy*: if you not are behaving precisely as the ruling ideology wants you to behave, then you'll meet the thought police of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion. From the coaches and psychotherapists of the self-help industry, you will, more or less explicit, be told that there is something

wrong with you, that you not are “normal”. From the psychiatrists and doctors of the pharmaceutical industry, you could even get yourself a diagnose, which paradoxical enough gives you some rights, but which also stigmatizes you.

The approach of The Hermeneutics of Suspicion is to attack the character of the person with whom they are arguing rather than finding fault with his or her argument. This move is within philosophy well known as arguing *ad hominem* (Latin for “to the person”). It is a technique of Rhetoric (communicative swindle), since discrediting the Source of an argument usually leaves the argument itself intact. Shifting attention from the point in question to some aspects of the arguer’s personality or behaviour are irrelevant to the point being discussed (see my book **A Dictionary of Thought distortions**).

To try to have a normal conversation with, for example, a NLP-coach or psychotherapist, can be an odd experience. Have you ever met a person, that to everything you say, answers: “I can see, that you mean something else, than what you say” – (implicit: what the coach thinks you mean). Then you might answer: “No, I meant what I said!” Then the person answers: “When you say no, I see that you with that answer means something else, than what you say” – (implicit, what the coach thinks you mean)? Well, then you probably have met one of our days thousands of NLP coaches. In my article **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)** I give concrete examples. You see the same in other New Age psychotherapies – for example the so-called Giraffe language – see my article **Nonviolent Communication is an instrument of psychic terror** – But as mentioned, it could also come as a diagnose from a psychiatrist or doctor.

But how can they know this? How can they play the role as someone who know who you are better than yourself, at the same time as they totally denies and renounce what you think, and the reasons you produce; that is: your experiences, your education, your arguments, your articles, your books?

Well, the only way they then can get their knowledge from, is from their own theories (which are without psychological, scientific, and philosophical foundation – see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**). It is pure prejudice. Prejudice is a belief held without good reason or consideration of the evidence for or against its being true. The funny thing is that philosophy - that is: rationality and critical thinking – precisely is opposed to prejudice. We are all riddled with prejudices on a wide range of issues, but it is possible to eliminate some of them by making an effort to examine evidence and arguments on both sides of any question. Human reason is fallible, and most of us are strongly motivated to cling on to *some* beliefs even in the teeth of evidence against them (for example wishful thinking);

however, even making small inroads into prejudice can transform the world for the better.

But these people do the opposite. They try to remove rationality and critical thinking through the hermeneutic of suspicion. And they have success. As already mentioned, then a whole time-tendency within school, folk high school, universities and continuing education, focus on so-called "self-improvement – self-help", which are inspired by them.

But you don't only meet the problem of the hermeneutics of suspicion within high developed theories. You also meet it within the so-called common, mediocre life (see my article **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**). For example the whole of Karen Blixen's life is a rebellion against this mediocrity of the common life, which tried to clip her wings in her childhood. It is a human insult. I will say that this is probably the biggest wall you will meet on your spiritual journey. And it is much more painful when you also meet it from friends and family, if you not are behaving "normal". Like this it is somehow something that is coming from "within".

But to stand up against these influences, and keep your philosophical integration intact, will for certain create a spirit of greatness. In some cases it is best totally to avoid these people, because they will clip your wings if they get the chance for it.

Do as Epicurus, treat people with friendliness and compassion as long as it is possible, but withdraw to your garden when they try to lure you into the world's noise and political quarrels, because they think that this is a part of being "normal". When you in peace are cultivating your garden you can also keep on cultivating your philosophical integration and the refined pleasure in this. But not without being critical! I will return to this under the concept of anger.

The removal of genuine rationality from the stage leaves open the possibility of accusations of rationalizations for ulterior motives. This form of analysis (leading us to think of groups or individuals "what is in it for them?"), is not only corrosive of trust in society. It is bound eventually to undermine itself. Why are such views themselves being propagated? What are those spreading them going to gain?

I think it is time for rebellion against this tendency in society, and especially within leadership theories. If we shall save our democracy and welfare society it is absolutely necessary, that we in relation to democracy-parasitic ideologies become philosophical rebels like Socrates, Henry David Thoreau, Gandhi, Martin Luther King or Krishnamurti – a kind of spiritual anarchists.

2. What is anger?

In that we of course have to deal with the question of anger, not only the anger, which is implicit in an ideology, but also the anger in the critique of an ideology. Because ideology should be criticized, but not end up in debate, and eventually violence.

There are three kinds of anger: the philosophical anger, the painful anger, and the mix between the two.

The philosophical anger

The philosophical anger is the anger over prejudice, hypocrisy, manipulation and injustice, which philosophy is in opposition to. This anger is controlled through objective thinking, critique and argumentation.

Objective argumentation is an ethical way to convince others about your views, because it in real sense shows what is appropriate or inappropriate about a case. Objective argumentation contains some of the following elements: summary or abstract, information, description, reason, concrete choice of words, nuanced objective statement.

The hallmark of philosophy is exactly to use objective argumentation, and to show the untenable aspect of painful anger, subjective argumentation and inappropriate assumptions. This is the essence in using philosophical dialogue.

In the philosophical dialogue you focus on, what cooperation and conversation require of you in order to that you at all can exist: that you speak true (don't lie), that you are prepared to reach mutual understanding and agreement (don't manipulate), don't make an exception of yourself (but treat others as equals). From this rises the eternal moral values (as for example that it is wrong to lie), and generally our ideas of right and justice: the so-called human rights, the idea about the individual person's autonomy and dignity: you shall treat the other *not only as a mean, but also as a goal*.

Many NLP-coaches and psychotherapists, as already mentioned, often misunderstand the philosopher's rationality and critical thinking as a symptom on a problem with anger – on the contrary, it consists in love to wisdom.

Jesus said that anger is a sin, yet himself got angry, for example in the temple. Is he a hypocrite, or is he a man with psychological problems which have to be solved by a NLP-coach? Of course not. The anger of Jesus is the philosophical anger.

The painful anger

The painful anger is coming from the emotional painbody. A thoughtpattern can create an enlarged and energycharged reflection of itself in the form of a feeling. This means, that the whole of the thought's past also can create a reflection of itself in the body. And if this past is filled with pain, then it can show itself as a negative energyfield in the body. It can nearly be seen as an invisible, independent creature.

The painbody is the inner demon, or the devil in the heart. Some painbody's are relatively harmless, some are anxietyfilled or angry, others are directly malicious and demonical. They can be passive or active. Some are passive 90% of the time, others are active 100% of the time.

The painbody is activated in the same moment as specific challenges activate the inappropriate basic assumptions, which have been created by bad experiences in the past. And they are being maintained by the vortex of negative automatic thinking, which follows from these basic assumptions.

This anger is controlled through neutral observation, and flexible (critical) thinking (also see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**).

The mix between philosophical and painful anger

Often this mix is coming to expression in the culture of debate (*débat*, from *débattre*, struggle, quarrel). The culture of debate is especially seen in politics, but is the common used form of communication in the whole of society.

In debate people all the time work against each other and are seeking to show each other's flaws. They often only listen to each other in order to find flaws and defend their arguments. They more and more harden their own perspectives, because they are so busy judging the positions of others. They defend their own positions as the best solutions and eliminate others' solutions. They fundamentally seem to have a closed attitude, which is due to a fixed decision to be right. They wholeheartedly invest in their own conceptions, and they therefore calculate others' positions, without being aware of feelings or relations, yes, they even often happen to play down and offend the other person.

But is this not exactly what the philosophers' critical thinking and objective argumentation also do? No!

The debating attitude is unethical, and leads to violence and war, where the painbody suddenly also is released. Why? Because it is based on subjective argumentation. Subjective argumentation is an unethical way to convince others about your views,

because it doesn't show, what in reel sense is appropriate or inappropriate about a case, but manipulates with it.

Subjective argumentation contains some of the following elements: innuendoes, distortions, generalizations, over-/understatements, sarcasm, satire, irony, postulates, emotional affections, coloured choice of words, choices and exclusions, subjective style.

Each and every time you, in this way, feel anger, then remember the virtues of philosophy: objective thinking, critique and argumentation. Avoid subjective thinking, critique and argumentation, because you in that case would be a hypocrite (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions** and use it as a manual).

If you in your anger all the time remember objectivity, you will discover, that you have to withdraw from, or avoid being involved in, many confrontations.

And a last advice. Always take a night's sleep before you give expression for your anger (read more about anger in my article **Cathartic psychotherapies**).

3. The paradox of the self-help industry

As mentioned: with my concept of the Matrix Conspiracy I claim that the self-help industry today is a central part of the ideology of the society as such, which is introduced in schools, in education, on workplaces (psychotherapy and coaching), in politics (spin doctors), mass media (reality shows, talent shows, internet, etc.), in activation courses for unemployed, etc., etc.

But when the self-help industry tells people, that they through self-improvement can become themselves, it opens the doors for its own built-in paradox. It promises people liberation and praises the responsible and self-leading human being – but creates at the same time people, who are dependent of continued therapeutic intervention. The more people are told, that they can treat themselves, the more they are in the risk of being made into uncritical objects for therapeutic treatment.

The widespread psychologized, emotionalized and therapized belief in the hidden aspects of humans (the unconscious) has not only given humans a new way of self-creation, but also a new outer definition of new authorities (self-help consultants, practitioners, identity-experts, therapists, coaches, spin doctors), who are characterized by, that they neither want to be authorities or to be looked at as authorities. People in the age of authenticity will no longer suppress others or be suppressed from the outside, they want to express others and themselves be expressed from within. But the expression doesn't come by itself; it has to be established in a

self-help process, which builds on the idea that people have a chronically authenticity-problem and therefore are in need of treatment.

The self-help industry, and its belonging therapeutic techniques, thereby exposes the paradox, that the more resource-filled a human being is conceived to be, the more it has to be supported therapeutic. The more self-actualizing a human being becomes, the more it is in need of help to actualize itself. And the more responsibility a human being is said to have for its own life, the more this same human being, as a *basic* starting point, is considered as a victim, as non-authentic, and therefore as powerless.

The one face of this paradoxical Janus head is the empowerment culture, the other face is the victimization culture (and the connected recovery movement).

Fortunately some other critics have also discovered this paradox, for example the investigative reporter Steve Salerno in his book *SHAM – How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless*, and the American lawyer and writer Wendy Kaminer in her book *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions*

Self-help: To millions of Americans it seems like a godsend. To many others it seems like a joke. But as Steve Salerno reveals in his groundbreaking book, it's neither—in fact it's much worse than a joke. Going deep inside the Self-Help and Actualization Movement (fittingly, the words form the acronym SHAM), Salerno offers the first serious exposé of this multibillion-dollar industry and the real damage it is doing—not just to its paying customers, but to all of American society.

Based on the author's extensive reporting—and the inside look at the industry he got while working at a leading “lifestyle” publisher—SHAM shows how thinly credentialed “experts” now dispense advice on everything from mental health to relationships to diet to personal finance to business strategy. Americans spend upward of \$8 billion every year on self-help programs and products. And those staggering financial costs are actually the least of our worries.

SHAM demonstrates how the self-help movement's core philosophies have infected virtually every aspect of American life—the home, the workplace, the schools, and more.

Salerno shows the paradox by claiming that SHAM has two polar camps: One camp is Victimization. The other camp is Empowerment. And Salerno exposes the downside of being uplifted, showing how the “empowering” message that dominates self-help today proves just as damaging as the blame-shifting rhetoric of self-help's

“Recovery” movement, which are connected with the Victimization culture.

SHAM also reveals:

- How self-help gurus conduct extensive market research to reach the same customers over and over—without ever helping them.
- The inside story on the most notorious gurus—from Dr. Phil to Dr. Laura, from Tony Robbins to John Gray.
- How your company might be wasting money on motivational speakers, “executive coaches,” and other quick fixes that often hurt quality, productivity, and morale.
- How the Recovery movement has eradicated notions of personal responsibility by labeling just about anything—from drug abuse to “sex addiction” to shoplifting—a dysfunction or disease.
- How Americans blindly accept that twelve-step programs offer the only hope of treating addiction, when in fact these programs can do more harm than good.
- How the self-help movement inspired the disastrous emphasis on self-esteem in our schools.
- How self-help rhetoric has pushed people away from proven medical treatments by persuading them that they can cure themselves through sheer application of will.

As Salerno shows, to describe self-help as a waste of time and money vastly understates its collateral damage. And with SHAM, the self-help industry has finally been called to account for the damage it has done.

Wendy Kaminer’s book *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions* is a non-fiction book about the self-help industry.

The book is a strong critique of the self-help movement, and focuses criticism on other books on the subject matter, including topics of codependency and twelve-step programs.

The author addresses the social implications of a society engaged in these types of solutions to their problems, and argues that they foster passivity, social isolation, and attitudes contrary to democracy.

Of the self-help movement, Kaminer writes: "At its worst, the recovery movement's cult of victimization mocks the notion of social justice by denying that there are degrees of injustice."

Kaminer also criticizes the lack of a free-forum for debate and reasoning within these groups, noting that those who disagree with the tenets of the organization are immediately branded "in denial", similar to the way a fundamentalist might characterize a free-thinker as a heretic.

Kaminer gives a deconstruction of the history and methodology of some of these groups, which are depicted in the book as simplistic and narcissistic. She blames New Age thinking for encouraging "psychologies of victimization."

She explains a two-step process used to write a popular self-help book: First, "Promote the prevailing preoccupation of the time," (either health or wealth) and then "Package platitudes about positive thinking, prayer or affirmation therapy as sure-fire, scientific techniques."

Kaminer maintains that self-help has negative effects on both politics and personal development.

Kaminer acknowledges that there are those who have real problems and receive benefit from groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, but she also "picks apart the tenets of the recovery religion – for she sees striking parallels with religious fundamentalism."

In addition to Alcoholics Anonymous and the codependency movement, other books and self-help movements critiqued in the book include Norman Vincent Peale's 1952 book *The Power of Positive Thinking* and Werner Erhard's *Erhard Seminars Training "est" organization*.

The writings of Mary Baker Eddy, and Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* are also analyzed and critiqued.

Though Kaminer "ridiculed the excesses of self-help psychology and theology," she approved of the motivational work done by Rabbi Harold Kushner.

Kaminer criticized the effect that talk shows have on American society, and recounted how a producer for The Oprah Winfrey Show coached participants to "jump in" and interrupt each other on the show.

Kaminer writes that it is not the content that appears on talk shows that is the problem, but rather that "they claim to do so much more than entertain; they claim to inform and explain. They dominate the mass marketplace and make it one that is inimical to ideas."

At the time of the book's publication, Kaminer cited a statistic from industry sources asserting that ninety-six percent of the population in the United States were victims of codependency and warped family upbringing.

Note: In connection with the postmodern intellectualism (subjectivism and relativism) I claim that both the Empowerment culture and the Victimization culture are closely related to the power of reductionism in our culture. When you today ask: what is a human being? Then most people answer, that Man "is a product of heredity and environment". This has become a whole ideology in the Western world, and a fundamental part of the Illuminati aspect of The Matrix Conspiracy. It is actually a kind of sociobiology, or social Darwinism.

If Man only is a product of heredity and environment, then he has no longer any responsibility for his actions. Even the murderer, who is standing accused in court, is able to defend himself with, that he basically can't help, that he has committed a murder. Firstly he was born with some unfortunate genes, which made, that he wasn't all too clever. Therefore he was bullied in the school, and thereby he was developed to become aggressive and hot tempered. All this caused, that he in a certain situation committed a murder, but this he could not help. Heredity and environment led him precisely to this situation. Guilty? No, many people would say today, he is no more guilty, than a person is to blame, that he came to cough in a place filled with smoke. No, on the whole it is society and environment, which are to blame for the murder.

When you are advocating a reductionism and are claiming, that Man *is nothing else than* for example a product of heredity and environment, then concepts such as responsibility, guilt and duty loose all meaning. And it becomes meaningless to talk about human ideals. Why admire people, who have achieved something great? They have only good genes and a beneficially environment. Why condemn people, who spoil and break down society? They can't help it (read more about this in my article **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**).

The paradox of the Janus face of Empowerment and Victimization is rising because of the self-help industry's goal-oriented ideology, where the supreme good is lying

out in the future, and where the end therefore justifies the means. The goal is an idea, a point out in the future, projected by the mind, where salvation is coming in some form; a form which is based on the ideals created by the New Thought movement: success, prosperity, personal power, health, beauty, material glory.

Philosophy and spirituality are in opposition to all kinds of ideology (again: see my article **The difference between philosophical education and ideological education**). In philosophy of existence (and in true spirituality) the concept of being is covering the concepts of being yourself, of authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action. It is also covering the concept of happiness: the existential and life-philosophical concepts of reality, co-operation, movement, safety and meaning. Being yourself is therefore the same as being yourself present in the now, no matter what you are, no matter how much you are suffering, how poor you are, or how incompetent other people are conceiving you to be (see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**). Being yourself present in the now (passive listening presence, silence, or meditation) will by itself awaken a spirit of greatness.

In the self-help industry all this is turned upside down because of its ideological aspects. The second aspect of the above-mentioned paradox is therefore, that instead of focusing on being (where the self-help industry has the word authenticity from), it presses people to focus on becoming. In philosophy of existence (and in true spirituality) the concept of becoming is covering the concepts of trying to become something else than what you are, where you imitate others, are a slave of others ideas and ideals, and where your actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt. In short: non-authenticity. It is also covering the concepts of suffering: the existential and life-philosophical concepts of unreality, division, stagnation, anxiety and meaninglessness. Trying to become something else than what you are, is therefore the same as being yourself absent in the future, and it will directly create suffering in you.

It is this aspect of the self-help industry that has made me puzzled over that this industry actually is supporting what you in traditional philosophy and spirituality consider as the four philosophical hindrances for the opening in towards the Source. But not enough with that, it directly hates the corresponding four philosophical openings (see my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**).

This leads to the third aspect of the paradox, namely The Hermeneutics of Suspicion. The self-help industry ends up in a prejudiced worldview, where it condemns being; that is: it not only condemns what people are (we saw that it, as a *basic* starting point, considers people as non-authentic and powerless if they have not accepted their ideology and therapeutic techniques, and want to become something else), it also condemns people who actually are themselves present in the now, people who live in

accordance with their own essence, and who have achieved that self-forgetful openness and absorption in the world, which is a condition for love, spontaneity, joy of life and wisdom: the true philosophers and spiritual masters.

Why? Because the teaching of such people will be in direct opposition to the teaching of the self-help industry: they will focus on being and not becoming.

Read more about the self-help industry's paradox in my article **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity**.

4. Why I am an apostle of loafing

That being invisible to the culture of self-help – that being unregarded, ignored, devalued, is in a culture of self-assertion a curse. I have myself experienced that in a rather special way, namely in connection with my awakening of kundalini, which threw me out in a spiritual crisis, years of investigating this crisis, university-studies in philosophy, and the slow development of my teaching **Meditation as an Art of Life** - and then that, again and again, being unregarded, ignored, and devalued by my surroundings - made me think of my own life as being befelled by a curse. First it was the devaluation of the kundalini-experiences I have had. But after I had got my education in philosophy, it was this education in itself that was being devaluated.

Let me therefore sum this article up by describing how the whole thing has influenced my own life:

Today I travel around in the world as a Philosophical Globetrotter, Life Artist and Idler.

I campaign against the work ethic and promote liberty, autonomy and responsibility; in reality: the fine art of doing nothing. In this I take an anarchic approach to the everyday barriers that come between us and our dreams.

So, today I'm in for spiritual anarchism, civil disobedience, and the right to be an idler.

I hold a MA in philosophy (University of Southern Denmark 1996-2001) and a minor in psychology (Aalborg University 2002-2005).

I have practised yoga and meditation since 1985, and during this period I have developed the concept of **Meditation as an Art of Life**. In 2008, 2009, and 2010 I

have published this teaching in three books: *Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader* (2008), *Dream Yoga* (2009), and *A Portrait of a Lifeartist* (2010).

The development of this teaching is connected with my experience of a spiritual crisis (see my articles **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena** and **The awakening of kundalini**). Therefore the teaching also has some critical things to say about certain areas of spiritual environments and theories, simply because they – due to my experiences - are misleading and dangerous, many times directly wrong. This applies especially to New Age and the self-help industry.

When I in 2005 began to promote my teaching on the internet I, to my astonishment, experienced that there ruled some kind of spiritual censorship created by self helpers and New Agers – not organized – but created by individuals who share the same ideas.

The presence of these people on the internet is enormous. And everytime someone is promoting spiritual issues (and also often scientific issues) you will have them on your comments area and on your email.

My “problem” was that I introduced the concept of *Philosophical counseling*. Philosophy is in the eyes of these people, in some weird way, banned in spirituality – it is somehow a terrible thing (probably due to the use of critical thinking – explanation follows).

And they didn't want to go into discussions about it, they didn't want to argue for their disagreement (argumentation is negative in their point of view). Instead they tried to silence me through mumbo-jumbo and condescension. So where philosophy tries to investigate, restructure and change thought distortions, these people are directly using thought distortions in order to get on in the world (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

In the start I closed down a couple of websites, blogs and forums, simply because I was unprepared for the enormous degree of attacks.

But also in the real world I began to meet these people everywhere. I discovered that their theories are introduced in schools, continuing education and on workplaces; yes that they even are on the top of EUs project on lifelong learning and education. I also discovered the connection with postmodern intellectualism and different kinds of reductionisms practised on the Universities. Furthermore I discovered the connection with consumer capitalism, advertising industry and the entertainment industry.

Though many of the theories disagree in between there is a red thread going through them all: subjectivism and relativism - the indifference to truth, and the following distortion of spirituality, philosophy and science.

I realized that what I have met is a new kind of Sophists. The relationship between the Sophists (teachers of rhetoric) and Socrates (the philosopher) is the central issue in the whole of Plato's work (see the introduction to my book **A dictionary of Thought distortions**).

In lack of a better term I have decided to call the whole of this circus the Matrix Conspiracy. And I call the agents of this conspiracy The Matrix Sophists. The Matrix Sophists are a common term for the tens of thousands of consultants, coaches, practitioners, identity-experts, therapists, sexologists, educators, teachers, social workers, spin doctors, psychotherapists and psychologists, who all share the ideas of The Matrix Conspiracy; that is: some kind of mix between postmodern intellectualism, management theory, self-help and New Age.

In my first book *Meditation as an art of life – a basic reader* I presented what I call the four philosophical hindrances and openings in towards the Source (see my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**). I presented them in order to show what I think characterizes the spiritual practice as it exists in all the traditional wisdomtraditions. Ever since I have become increasingly puzzled over, how The Matrix Conspiracy - which claims to work in accordance with spirituality - is turning this upside down.

As already mentioned: the paradox is that while The Matrix Sophists are claiming to create the authentic, autonomous, resource-filled and competent human being, at the same time is doing the exact opposite: it is making people dependent of therapist, coaches, others ideas and ideals; making them modeling and imitating so-called successful people, etc., etc.

The Matrix Conspiracy, and its belonging therapeutic techniques, thereby exposes the paradox, that the more resource-filled a human being is conceived to be, the more it has to be supported therapeutically. The more self-actualizing a human being becomes, the more it is in need of help to actualize itself. And the more responsibility a human being is said to have for its own life, the more this same human being, basically, is considered as a victim, as non-authentic, and therefore as powerless.

That means that if you don't share their ideas, and even are critical, you are considered as a non-authentic, powerless victim. That is one of the reasons why they think they don't have to argue with you but instead are trying to silence you through

mumbo-jumbo and condescension. I have especially met this attitude in relation with 1) my kundalini-experiences, 2) my education, 3) when I tried to take an education as a health care assistant, 4) in my time as unemployed, and 5) from friends and family.

I will describe these points in short. With the words of my professor David Favrholt, then we here speak about a movement, which conclusions are so rabid and stark raving stupid, that I hardly can give an account of them without immediately becoming accused of having distorted them. I can only say that I haven't distorted anything, but due to the limitation of this article I can only here give a short example of the essence of the stupidity involved. If you want to get the full picture, just read my books and articles as such.

The points are:

1) My kundalini-experiences

When my kundalini-experiences had the aspect of *The Dark Night of the Soul* I tried to seek help from other spiritual people. The problem is that when you try to seek spirituality, for example on the internet, you will eventually meet New Agers or Self-helpers. Not surprisingly they had no clue about what I was experiencing, but as coaches and therapists (self-proclaimed spiritual teachers), they acted as if they knew everything. The message to me was that the crisis was due to my negative thoughts, and that the crisis would disappear if I from my vocabulary removed all the negative words connected with the crisis.

2) My education

I have again and again been confronted with the claim that my education in philosophy (and psychology) is outdated; that I am caught in an old way of thinking which does that I am closed-minded. And precisely because most New Agers and self-helpers not are particularly qualified in philosophy (or any other higher education), then they claim that this is a significant condition for contributing to the development of new ways of thinking in philosophy; that is: contrary to me they are much more open-minded; or said in another way: they understand philosophy much better.

Such statements are typical in the New Age environment. Normally they are directed towards educated scientists though. In order to explain where they have got such strange ideas from I will here (just one example among many) quote John Grinder, who is one of the founders of Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) (The other founder is Richard Bandler):

*My memories about what we thought at the time of discovery (with respect to the classic code we developed – that is, the years 1973 through 1978) are that we were quite explicit that we were out to overthrow a paradigm and that, for example, I, for one, found it very useful to plan this campaign using in part as a guide the excellent work of Thomas Kuhn (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*) in which he detailed some of the conditions in the midst of paradigm shifts. For example, I believe it was very useful that neither one of us were qualified in the field we first went after – psychology and in particular, it's therapeutic application; this being one of the conditions which Kuhn identified in his historical study of paradigm shifts. Who knows what Bandler was thinking?*

The only thing Grinder here is demonstrating is that he doesn't understand Thomas Kuhn (precisely because he is not qualified in philosophy). Kuhn did not promote the notion that not being particularly qualified in a scientific field is a significant condition for contributing to the development of a new paradigm in science. Furthermore, Kuhn did not provide a model or blueprint for creating paradigm shifts! His is an historical work, described what he believed to have occurred in the history of science. He made no claim that anything similar happens in philosophy and he certainly did not imply that anything NLP did, or is doing, constitutes a paradigm shift (read more about the inspiration from Kuhn in my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**).

In my article **The Sokal Hoax** you can find other examples of this way of attacking science and other highly educated people. In my article **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies** I give an example of how the New Age guru Deepak Chopra is using this way of "argumentation".

Read more about NLP in my article **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)**

3) when I tried to take an education as a health care assistant

After I had finished my psychology studies in 2005, I tried to take an education as a health care assistant because there in this area were plenty of jobs. I had to stop it though, because a great deal of the theoretical part directly is based on the self-help industry. On the fixed curriculum were for example NLP and Nonviolent Communication; that is: in order to take the education you are forced to work with these theories, and you are being examined in them. Moreover I experienced to be bullied in the classes when I asked critical questions; that is: mumbo-jumbo and condescension.

4) in my time as unemployed

When you are unemployed in Denmark you have to attend so-called activation-courses (note: you are forced to, or else you lose your money). Most of them are run by the self-help industry. I have attended quite a few. I will just mention one of them. It was a so-called job-seeking course. Most of the participants were under 30. Some of them were newly educated graduates, a couple of engineers, and a graphic designer. Others had simply lost their jobs.

The slogan of the course was that “From scratch we build up human beings as a wholeness.” Notice here the obvious view of the participants as scratch; that is: they were considered as non-authentic, powerless victims (also the participants who had had jobs for years).

The course had five parts:

a) A test of personality. Besides that the test in my case was completely wrong, then let me just mention the central issue: the attractive personality. In order to explain what the attractive personality is the consultant kept on using the same example, which she thought was quite obvious: namely that people with boyfriends/girlfriends had attractive personalities, while people without boyfriends/girlfriends had unattractive personalities (one of the participants found this a bit strange since she had just lost a boyfriend who had got killed in a car accident) – read more about personality typing in my article **Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice**.

b) How to give a handshake

c) How to smile

d) How to use a telephone. Here we learned how to ring up, say hello and goodbye

e) How to use the internet. Here we learned how to switch on the computer, go on the internet, search on google, and as the most advanced part: how to open an email account on google (Gmail).

The course lasted one month, so you can figure out how many days were spent on each of these parts. In the start of the course we learned how to shout in chorus: “waaauw!”. This we did several times each day. We had to do it each time one of the consultants had made an “obvious” conclusion.

5) *from friends and family*

In my first three books you can see my starting critique of all this. But since the main issue of the books is my spiritual teaching, the critique is rather sporadic and unsystematic. As you can see in the descriptions of the books, I had actually also decided that this critique should be the final critique. But after 2010 I experienced how The Matrix Conspiracy increasingly was creeping into all aspects of my life.

Especially because I also began to meet it in friends and family, I decided to write two books on The Matrix Conspiracy (The Matrix Conspiracy - part 1 and 2), which are dedicated the revelation of what I seriously see as the most dangerous ideology on Earth. But it is also connected with the re-introduction of philosophical counseling and my teaching.

My book *A Dictionary of Thought Distortions* is a follow-up book to the first three books on my teaching. It is also a reference book to the two books on the Matrix Conspiracy. In this way it is a kind of bridge between my teaching and the two Matrix Conspiracy books.

As I have said before then it was actually my education in philosophy that taught me how to think clearly, and which was a main reason for, that I at all got out of my spiritual crisis. And that is also the reason why I again and again emphasize the importance of philosophy in a spiritual practice.

As far as I can see, then anyone, who is going to start a spiritual practice, ought to take some academical classes in philosophy. Though the spiritual practice not is intellectual when it is going beyond all concepts and ideas, then it must begin with the training of critical thinking, and here an intellectual and academical study in philosophy is crucial. And besides, this is not something new in spirituality. The monks, in, for instance Tibetan Buddhism, are going through up to ten years of studies in philosophy. The same is the case in the philosophical schools of India.

And, by the way, many of my philosophy-teachers on the university are actually some of the most spiritual humans I have ever met, and who have been the inspiring sources behind most of what I write in my books.

But the experiences with, again and again, being devaluated, without fully knowing what was going on, caused that I went into periods with periodical alcohol-abuse which I found justification for in the works of the Beatwriters, who also were the first kinds of dropouts I felt inspired by. I could also suddenly explode in extreme anger, where I insulted a lot of people, often in my nearest family. All this of course didn't

made my situation better, and just confirmed people in the belief, that I was totally helpless, and in need of treatment.

I had to go into what was going on. It was necessary for me to investigate this enormous market alongside with the development of an art of life, or a teaching about how to live in this society. And today, where I have entered into my critical "Matrix Conspiracy Phase" I'm beginning to laugh of the implicated stupidity of this ideology, and I'm glad to report, that a lot of comedians also have discovered the comical side of all this.

Anyway, to understand and be free from self-assertion, and to do something, which you really love to do – regardless what it is, how small or how little remarkable it is – awakens a spirit of greatness, which never is seeking others' approval or reward, and which do a thing for its own sake, and therefore possesses strength and ability not to lie under for mediocre influences.

Here is that being invisible to the culture directly a blessing – that being unregarded, ignored, and devalued, can be an impetus to take another route: the quiet way, the gentle, steady, behind-the-scenes path. This is the invisible way of empowerment, the slow path of alchemy. Soul work takes time. This meant I intentionally had to make time, especially in our increasingly hyperactive, extroverted secular culture.

My own discovery of this was what finally turned my crisis into a healing and transformative spiritual practice. Instead of seeing my life as befelled by a curse, I began, deeply inspired by Karen Blixen, to realize that this might be God's plan with me. I could begin to see the dreamtracks and songlines in the artwork of my life (see my article **The philosophy of Karen Blixen**).

The question I had to ask, involved as I was in exploring extraordinary phenomena devalued by mainstream consciousness, was whether the burden of being disregarded by noninitiates is truly greater than the burden of trying to convince them that I had an experience that, at least by implication, made me somehow "special". I began to adopt an Epicurean way of life.

Epicurus (341-270 b.c.) was a Greek philosopher and Life Artist, who contrary to most other Hellenistic philosophers, was Athenian citizen. His place of birth was however on the island Samos by the seaside of Asia Minor, and on this, and on the other, cultural seen, rich islands in the eastern Aegean Sea, Epicurus came in contact with Philosophical traditions, that hardly was alive in Athens; especially the thoughts of the great philosopher of nature, Democritus.

Epicurus left Samos after having stepped his philosophical child-shoes on the island, and established as philosopher on the island Lesbos. However he was banished from the island because of his viewpoints. In 307 he travelled to Athens with the mental ballast, that he was Athenian citizen; this meant that he, contrary to the other philosophical schools, had the right to own land in Athens itself.

Epicurus established one of two central schools in Athens. It was in constant sharp opposition to the Stoics. I will not go deeper into the philosophical opposites, just mention, that philosophy of nature was central in Epicurus, whilst the Stoics had a concept of a god, which in them was the central. But both are common in the view of philosophy as an art of life.

The school of Epicurus was called The Garden, and since then the concept "to cultivate your garden" has in European way of thinking been synonymous with living a life retired from the world's ups and downs, to give up all ambitions about social status. This is a completely central aspect in my own way of life.

Epicurus had a real garden, a kitchen garden with vegetables, and to that he retired, and lived of own productions. It was an attempt to avoid the bindings of the world, just like the Stoics, but in quite another way. The Stoics were radically extroverted, and went into Athen's central buildings, where they, among the cloisters, forced themselves speech access to the citizens, whereas Epicurus retired, and avoided all kind of – also political – debate. As he said: "Live in secret!"

Note, that avoiding debate doesn't mean not to lead a critical dialogue in philosophical sense. Epicurus wrote critical texts, and his way of life is in itself a deeply critical attitude. I have already investigated the difference between debate and critical dialogue.

In his garden he realized his own life-ideal: together with friends and pupils to live a life in silent peace and joy, in peace to cultivate his garden and his needs, afar from the world's noise and political quarrel. It was a kind of philosophical commune, which stood open for all sections of population and for both sexes, and where the master with his friends practised, what they taught. The teaching of Epicurus is in other words a way of life, a teaching, which puts undisturbed happiness and refined pleasure up as the supreme good.

This Epicurean attitude became a central inspiration for my own life, my teaching, my kind of philosophical counseling and cafés.

It is a passive way of meditation, a non-acting, receptive receiving, relaxed, enjoying, easy laid-back holiday-like kind of awareness, as when you listen to the birds or the breeze in the trees.

So today I live like a kind of philosophical mendicant friar, in poverty, chastity and obedience to some philosophical principles. I began to ask people the question: What philosophy of life would you choose if money was no object?

As the man who quit money, Daniel Suelo, says: “Wild Nature, outside commercial civilization, runs on gift economy: ‘freely give, freely receive.’ Thus it is balanced. Commercial civilization runs on consciousness of credit and debt; thus it is imbalanced. What nation can even balance its own budget or environment? Gift Economy is Faith, Grace, Love - the core message of every religion. The proof is inside you: Wild Nature is your True Nature, crucified by commercial civilization.”

Following this philosophy of gift economy (freely give, freely receive) all my services (including philosophical counseling and cafés) are free of charge. All my articles and books are available in free PDF Versions. Links can be found on my blog: www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com

Both the three basic books on my teaching, the follow-up book *A Dictionary of Thought Distortions*, and the two books on The Matrix Conspiracy, can in this way be seen as a kind of free internet library for people, who want to go into a deeper study of my teaching. The philosophy behind my teaching is namely the central foundation for my critique of The Matrix Conspiracy.

So, I earn my living from what people give me (the “freely give, freely receive,” philosophy) and what the society can offer in form of social security benefit (which I see in the light of a kind of “Robin Hood-philosophy”). This is sometimes not very popular, but as I have mentioned, sometimes you have to be a kind of spiritual anarchist, a philosophical rebel, if you want to live in accordance with your calling in life. And not so different from how monks and nuns, or artists, always have lived.

Krishnamurti said, that it would be wise to retire in the age of 40 or 45, or even younger. Not in order to enjoy the fruits of what the world can offer, or what you have gathered of worldly things, but retire in order to find yourself, to think and feel deeply, to meditate and discover reality; because then you would actually be able to help the world in quite another way, because you not are identified with it. An insider in society is namely an outsider in relation to life itself, while an outsider in relation to society, is an insider in life itself (see my article **The philosophy of Krishnamurti**).

So now I have retired from the world's noise and political quarrels – especially the work ethic. In the period 1985-1989 I worked as a gentlemen's outfitter in Harrods in London. It was here the spiritual process began. Thereafter I went through the spiritual crisis, and have taken an education in philosophy.

Now it is time to go deep into the teaching I have developed during this period. People might get angry, and call me an idler. And they are correct. With the words of the great life-philosopher and idler, Lin Yutang, I call myself an apostle of loafing. But people have to remember, that I am not anymore contributing to the world's noise and political quarrels, and therefore not to conflict, violence and war. On the contrary I try to help people to get out of this confusion. I do this by offering free philosophical counseling and cafés. Mostly this happens in Rold Forest, Denmark, which is the place I have retired to. But it also happens when I'm traveling.

I also offer free philosophical counseling and cafés in the virtual world Second Life (read my article **Me and my Avatar**). Besides this I'm writing two blogs on what I call **The Peter Pan Project** - an experiment connected with all of the above-mentioned (see my blog www.MortenTolboll.blogspot.com).

So, as an apostle of the philosophy of loafing, I am actually working quite hard. My art of living is an idle philosophy born of an idle life. And if my life raises the suspicion of lolling, then look at my actions. I am trying to help people, and are favouring a person who would react freely and incalculably to external circumstances, pitting their individual liberty against the process of society: the little man eluding the clutches of the traffic warden.

And look at what the wisdom of the art of loafing has given us. Chinese literary tradition is rife with the jottings of non-achievers – the cultured vagabond, the scholar recluse, the Taoist wanderer. Already in 500BC, the sage Lao Tzu recommended that one should “never be the first in the world”. Only he who is not wanted by the public can be a carefree individual, runs the Taoist adage. The importance of living is peopled with educated dropouts – for instance poets such as Su Tungpo and Tao Yüanming; Su, who sang about “the clear breeze over the river and the clear moon over the mountains”, and Tao, who sang about “the hen, which rested in the top of a mulberry tree”.

So after having followed the Beatwriters' way of living, then the Chinese kinds of dropouts have become the new great source of inspiration in my life.

Like Lin Yutang I actually see the art of loafing as democratic in its nature. But, as Walt Whitman is pointing out in his *Democratic Vistas* – it is the ideal of free men and women in the Now, not the ideal of the democratic progress or improvement

(today Consumer Capitalism and the growth fanaticism of the self-help industry) - just look at Laurence Sterne on his “sensitive journey”, or at Wordsworth and Coleridge, wandering on foot through Europe, with a great sence of beauty in their hearts, but with a very few money.

The philosophical refined pleasure in the art of loafing is something, which costs much less than the lust for luxury. The only thing the pleasure of loafing requires is a creative emptiness, a life enjoyed as it is lived. Play without reason; travel to see nothing; a perfectly useless afternoon spent in a perfectly useless manner – these are the kind of activities that redeem the art of living from the business of living, which also Henry David Thoreau has shown in his *Walden*, where he describes his life in the woods, retired from the world’s ups and downs.

Look at nature! All nature loafes, while Man alone works for a living!

No, I have retired to Rold Forest, where I participate in the joys of conversation on a moonlit night; to be in the middle of a joyful gathering of happy friends, like in Wang Hsichih’s immortal little essay *The Orchid Pavilion*.

Only in such an art of life the magic of philosophical counseling and cafés can begin.

Part 2: The Matrix Conspiracy and its five programming technologies

The Matrix Conspiracy

If one should believe the many conspiracy theories, the world looks completely different, than we usually imagine. Conspiracy theories are modern myths, which challenge the official truth. Some seem plucked out of the air, while others are based on serious and thoroughgoing research. Even though the greater part of the conspiracy theories are overinterpretations of suspicious circumstances and accidental coincidences, then it is important to make oneself clear, that parts of history, as we know it, are an illusion.

Furthermore there - especially known from Indian and Buddhist philosophy - is the idea, that the world, as such, is an illusion, or a dream, which it is about to wake up

from. People who are identified with this illusion – and most people are - tend to create new illusions. The Matrix conspiracy is closely connected with this idea.

Many of the popular conspiracy theories come from USA. This is hardly because that the European governments, companies, institutions and organizations are more reliable than the American. However, the freedom loving Americans all feel a personal responsibility as the society's watchdogs. For better or for worse it is lying as a fundamental value within the culture, that you hunt the truth at any price. This mentality has created a line of interesting stories, which all point towards another truth, than the one we know – or have become deceived to believe in.

Many think, that all conspiracy theories have been made up by people, who can't accept the world as it is. That is undoubtedly true in some cases, but when the popular conspiracy theories live onwards, this is because the theories are based on suspicious events or incredible coincidences, which raise justified doubt about the truth, we know. It is therefore important to discriminate between the serious and the unserious theories. But even the serious theories are criticized and taunted by the established society. In this way the world still is medieval. It is namely worth to remember, that the first, who claimed, that the Earth is round, got a similar critique.

There also exist true conspiracy theories, since all scandals have begun as a suspicion and a theory. The Watergate case is a classic example of a scandal, where the involved were seeking to cover up the truth, and prevent an exposure.

When the exposures first begin to roll, it often happens quickly, but there also exist theories, which through longer time have challenged the official truth. Karl XII's death is one of the most interesting examples, but also Napoleon's death and the tapping system Echelon are theories, which have managed to change the official truth.

We live in a postmodern society, where the distinction between reality and appearance/superficies is about to disappear. Reality is often the images, we receive through the stream of information. And it becomes more and more difficult to see, which objective reality that lies behind. It seems more and more to be the images, which are real, and not some behind lying reality. In that sense all images are equal true - (because there is no objective instance to decide what is more true than something else) - but they are not equal good, for some images are more fascinating than others, some images affect us more than others. Therefore the expression of the image has come in focus. The expression of the image – it's aesthetics – decides, whether it fascinates us or bores us. What apply for today, is the intensity and seduction of the expressions. The new truth criterion is, whether something is

interesting or boring. Eternal values such as goodness, truth and beauty fall more and more away.

This postmodern society is the society of the new wandering Sophists, whom I have categorized as The Matrix Sophists. The Matrix Sophists are a common term for the tens of thousands of consultants, coaches, practitioners, identity-experts, therapists, sexologists, educators, teachers, social workers, spin doctors, psychotherapists and psychologists, who all share the ideas of The Matrix Conspiracy; that is: some kind of mix between postmodern intellectualism, management theory, self-help and New Age.

The death of the eternal values namely doesn't only apply for reality, but also the personality. The individual human being lives in a space without truth, in a time without direction, and with an information flow so huge, that the manageability beforehand has to be given up. How are we to live then? Well, these wandering Sophists say, you do this by creating yourself in a never-ending new production.

The personality then becomes a persona (mask), an eternal change of role, because when the role begins to stiffen, it becomes uninteresting and boring. New is good, as these Sophists say. What before characterized the personality's relationship to the world, was a call. Now the relationship has become a project (or as the Sophists say: a good story, a good branding, a good spin), which is formed, quickly is being carried out and dropped for the benefit of a new project, that can maintain the constant demand for intensity and seduction.

Such a postmodern society, which seemingly is without any truth, is therefore also a society of conspiracy theories. Because it is the strength of the conspiracy theories, that they force us to think over the things, instead of just accepting everything, that historians, gurus, politicians, media and spin doctors tell us.

But the paranoid conspiracy theories have thrown a bad light over conspiracy theories in general. It is actually a pity, because even if many theories are far out and have passed the borders of reason long ago, then there also are many serious theories, which are pointing towards official explanations, which we not directly ought to accept. And if a conspiracy theory is an attempt to create an illusion rather than an attempt to uncover the truth, then it is perhaps a conspiracy within a conspiracy. Then there are many examples of within the Matrix conspiracy.

In this way it has for a long time been looked bad at when someone is occupying himself with mysteries and challenges to the accepted history, but if you can do it without declining to easy arguments or fanaticism, then the hunt for the truth is a very

noble goal. And conspiracy theories have this hunt for the truth, or love of the truth, in common with philosophy.

The Matrix Conspiracy

The background for the word Matrix, used in my context, is the movie Matrix (the word Matrix is actually a mathematical concept, which is too complicated to be explained here).

In our time it is the very popular to compare the consciousness with a computer. Among others in the supporters of the new materialism, which the development of computers with still more extensive programs, neural networks and so on, have been a source of inspiration for. For instance the American philosopher Daniel C. Dennett, who in his book - with the ambitious title *Consciousness Explained* - seeks to explain consciousness, partially through computer analogies, partially through neurology and psychology.

Within cognition psychology the so-called "information processing theory" has been dominating for a number of years. In this theory is focused on the "inner psychic" processes looked on as symbolic information processing in analogy with the processes which happens in computers.

Both in Eastern and Western philosophy they have always worked with the so-called Dream Hypothesis; the philosophers have always reflected over, whether life is a dream. These philosophical questions have always followed them: whether we sleep, whether we dream this long dream, which is life? How can we know that life not is a dream? How can we know, that we are not lying sleeping somewhere, dreaming the whole world?

The philosopher René Descartes created his own variant of the Dream Hypothesis, the Argument of the Evil Demon: How can I know, that I am not deceived by an evil demon concerning all realization?

In the discussion about the reliability of our realization you often meet a variant of Descartes' Argument from the Evil Demon. The variant (the so-called Brain-in-jar Hypothesis) says as follows: Some day surgery will have reached so far, that you will be able to operate the brain out of a human being and keep it alive by placing it in a jar with some nutrient substratum. At that time the computer research will perhaps have reached so far, that you will be able to connect a computer to such a brain and feed it with all kinds of data, so that the brain thinks that it is a human being, who lives in the real world with all the experiences, memories etc., this is implying, while

the fact is that it only is a brain in a jar (read more in my article **The Dream Hypothesis and the Brain-in-jar Hypothesis**).

It is this hypothesis the movie Matrix is based on. Here humans are used as a kind of batteries (slaves) for machines, that get their energy by supplying them with a virtual reality, while the fact is, that they only are lying sleeping in a jar, giving their energy away.

There certainly exist computer scientists, who think, that you can understand the consciousness as "soft-ware" and the brain as a "hard disc" - (Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) is for example very close to this thought) - and that you in very few years will be able to decode a human being for its whole content of consciousness, immediately before it dies, and therewith provide its soul an eternal life – admittedly on a discette, but what the hell, it is after all always better than to pass into nothingness, and the discette will after all be able to be played again and again.

I don't talk about people as batteries for machines, but as batteries for an ideology: The Matrix Conspiracy. An ideology is a malfunction in the human mind, which functions with Machiavelli's implied, terrible, assumption, that the end justifies the means, and where the means to get there is to make people into slaves for this goal. Today people undoubtedly are being made into empty consumer machines. There is no doubt either, that we, through the teachings of the Matrix Sophists, are being supplied with some kind of virtual reality, that seems to justify Machiavelli's famous and notorious assumption – for instance through elimination of critical thinking, which thereupon is replaced by magical thinking.

It is a fact, that we today see an ideology behind the democracy, where true spirituality, philosophy and science systematical are seeked destroyed; that is: the destruction of the best tools Man has in his love of wisdom, and quest for truth.

The main theory of this ideology is relativism. There both exists an individual version of relativism, and a collective version. The individual version is called subjectivism. This version is often connected with a right-wing individualized liberalism. The other version is a collective relativism, cultural relativism, which often is connected to a left-wing socialism. However both are common in distorting both science and human rights. Both are demanding "alternative" views of science, and for example also human rights. And both are introducing intellectual apartheid in different ways, by seeking to eliminate critical thinking.

Both subjectivism and relativism claim, that there doesn't exist any objective truth. Truth is something we create ourself, either as individuals or as cultures, and since

there doesn't exist any objective truth, there doesn't exist any objective scale of truth. Therewith they also say, that we live in a Matrix, a dream, a kind of virtual reality, we have created ourselves, and that there is no chance of getting out of this. Therefore the best is to be interested in finding ways of getting on in this world, rather than being interested in finding ways of discovering the truth.

To teach people this, is the main job of the Matrix Sophists. But this is in opposition to the message of the movie the Matrix, which is, that we should create a rebellion, and try to get out of the illusion. In that way you can say that the new Sophists are the "machines", or the rulers of the Matrix, which keep people as slaves.

All truths are in this Matrix said to be equally true and equally valid, and if one person's truth, or one culture's truth, try to intervene in the truths of other individuals or cultures, then this is considered as an aggression.

Through this we have reached the highest level of postmodern development for better or for worse. The same fully individualized core of personality, which makes us able to step out of the past's fixed and subconscious attachment, has itself become our main interest, center for our identity in a degree, that almost all our awareness are directed inwards in a global seen exceptional narcissism. That is one of the ways the Matrix keeps us in the illusion.

But isn't narcissism what for example social constructivists try to avoid? Yes, but with the opposite result – they haven't examined the inner thinker's (the Ego's) ingenious ways of using thought-distortions in order to defend itself. Individually we have namely created a large scale self-image, which in a quite high degree is based on assumptions/ideas. This self-image we almost continuously defend, by filtrating the impressions we receive from the world. We want to be in peace with our self-images, and quite convenient the Matrix therefore has created a cultural pluralism (=culture relativism), which forbid actual value judgment. I have my truth, and you have yours. Respect! Self-accept! I am Okay, you're Okay! It all run together in a fear of hierarchies, where it is political incorrect to claim that something is higher than something else. "You judge", is the same as "you condemn."

The Matrix has in this way succeeded in creating an illusion of, that it is a kind of sacrilege (intolerance/thought-crime/old-thinking) wanting to utter yourself about, what is good and evil, true and false, beautiful and ugly, at the same time as the Matrix Sophists do this themselves in all possible quibbling ways, under cover of concepts such as tolerance or new-thinking.

Ego-worship has in that way become a common accepted ideology. A whole time-tendency within school, folk high school and continuing education, focus on so-called

”self-improvement”. Inspired by for example Sartre and postmodernism you are being encouraged to an unrestrained and Egoistic self expression, where you are letting your choices (story-telling, self-branding) decide everything, in the belief that you through your choices (thoughts) can create a successful life as it fits you. From the Matrix Sophists you hear slogans such as: ”It is not facts, but the best story, which wins!”

The idea that we through the power of thought can create reality as we want to is the central message of The Matrix Sophists. Notice here the similarity with precisely Descartes’ cogito-argument: *Cogito ergo Sum* (I think, therefore I exist). The Matrix Sophists are teaching people in thinking in terms like this: I think I am a success, therefore I am a success; I think I am a fiasco, therefore I am a fiasco; I think I am rich, therefore I am rich; etc., etc.

All this is a part of the Matrix Conspiracy. But why is the Matrix Conspiracy so focused on the ego? Because the ego is the central element, that is feeding the Matrix with energy. The ego is the main battery of the Matrix. The reason is, that the Ego always is in a state of becoming. Becoming is the central concept in personal development: all the time to be in a state of becoming something else than what you are, a constant striving from past to future, where the goal is constantly increasing success. In this you give your energy to that part of the Matrix ideology, which is Consumer Capitalism.

Contrary to true spirituality where being is the central, being in the sense studying what you are, to be what you are, to give up past and future, and be in the Now with what you are. In this the energy is flowing away from the Matrix, back to yourself. That is also why I consider the art of loafing as a part of the rebellion against the Matrix Conspiracy (see my article **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing**).

Becoming is the central concept in the false spirituality of the Matrix Conspiracy. Being is the central concept in true spirituality.

So, the main mover of the Matrix Conspiracy is subjectivism and relativism. You could call subjectivism and relativism for the main Matrix philosophy.

I have connected the Matrix Conspiracy with three other known conspiracies. Note that though there might exist groups/societies with these names then I don’t concretely refer to these (The Bilderberg Group does exist). I use the names as metaphors for tendencies in the postmodern Zeitgeist, which otherwise would be very difficult to explain.

Also, I don't think there exists any organized control coming from without; that is; secret societies, or groups of people who are speculating in what I here present. The control is coming from within; it is coming from individuals who share the same ideas, namely that they are free and authentic humans, who help other people to become free and authentic humans (about this illusion: read my article **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity**).

Here is a short introduction:

1. The Bilderberg Group
2. Illuminati
3. The 666 Conspiracy

1. The Bilderberg Group

Every year 100 of the most powerful men of the world is gathering in an informel talk about politics and economics. Of these men are 1/3 politicians and 2/3 intellectuals and leaders of multinational companies. Their ideological results? Facts about these are:

- A) The main political tool is economics and Consumer Capitalism.
- B) The main intellectual tool is subjectivism and relativism.
- C) The main pedagogy is based on psychology.

All these support each other in the five education-instruments of Consumer Capitalism; which you also, with inspiration from Neuro-linguistic Programming, could call the five main programming-technologies of the Matrix:

- 1) Management theory (see my article **Management theory and the self-help industry**)
- 2) New Age (see my article **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**)
- 3) Nonviolent Communication (see my article **Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is an instrument of psychic terror**)
- 4) Neuro-linguistic Programming (see my article **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)**)
- 5) New Thought (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**)

A headline for these technologies could be the concept of self-improvement (personal development). A concept you as a fact see described in EU's project on lifelong learning and education. Management theory and its self-help tools are directly described in EU's project. More or less accepted are also Nonviolent Communication and NLP, which in many educations are on the fixed curriculum. New Age is a more popular, common movement. But they all include the same ideas.

2. Illuminati

The Bilderberg Group is said to be run by Illuminati, which is a secret society, that goes way back in history. The background is real. This organisation has in fact existed. The goal was a challenge to for instance the church, working towards a new world order, and with connections to occultism. The goal was a world without religions, often referred to as the New World Order.

Illuminati is said to be an advocate for a scientific world-view, but this has nothing to do with true science. True science can't be connected with certain political views, and/or occultism. But there is an ongoing strong demand that science has to be integrated with New Age (occultism and spirituality) and/or reductionism (postmodernism and politics). You see these demands all the time, especially in New Age magazines and books.

So the "scientific" in Illuminati is rather pseudoscience. Note that I don't discriminate between the pseudoscience of New Age - (demands for that science has to be integrated with certain alternative "spiritual" sciences) - and the pseudoscience of reductionism - (demands for that science has to be integrated with, or is the same as, certain atheistic/political/postmodernistic point of views) - though these views can disagree highly in between. They all advocate subjectivism and relativism, and certain occult and/or political views (see my articles **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism** and **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**).

You can in that connection talk about the treatment society, where both the coaches and psychotherapists of the self-help industry, as well as the psychiatrists and doctors of the pharmaceutical industry, function as a kind of thought police, though these people most often are in opposition to each other, as seen in the movie *The Cuckoo's Nest* (read more about this in my article **The hermeneutics of suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing**).

They have, in the society, already succeeded in reducing religion to psychology, spirituality to biology, and philosophy to ideology (Consumer Capitalism). About the

psychologizing tendencies, see my articles **Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology** and **Self-help and the Mythology of Authenticity**.

So, there is in fact, a New World Order emerging: the world of Alternative History, Alternative Physics, Alternative Medicine and, ultimately, Alternative Reality. How, given the recent and sorry story of ideologically motivated conceptions of knowledge – Lysenkoism in Stalin’s Soviet Union, for example, or Nazi critiques of “Jewish science” – could it again have become acceptable to behave in this way? In my article **The Sokal Hoax** you can read more about this development.

3. The 666 Conspiracy

This conspiracy is about Evil’s plot against mankind. Is the third Antichrist among us, and will our worship of him be a sign of Judgment Day? (In my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings** I have investigated the 666 turn in depth).

The relevance of this conspiracy has five aspects:

A) That some of the subjectivistic and relativistic theories on the universities, which seek to undermine truth (and for instance philosophy and science) are so absurd, that there is nothing behind them than chaos (see my articles **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**, and **The Sokal Hoax**).

B) That ideology is a malfunction in the human mind.

C) That there is introduced a false spirituality where the main worship is the Ego, contrary to the traditional spiritual directions, where the main goal is the elimination of the Ego (see my article **The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help environment**).

D) That occultism within New Age creates spiritual misguiding, often with deep spiritual crises as a result (see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

E) That the Ego-extreme according to the true spiritual traditions will be contrabalanced by the laws of energy (hybris-nemesis, karma, the will of God, etc.) This will happen through crises, illness, natural disasters, etc. – see for example my articles **What is karma?** and **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**.

The Sophists

After centuries of successful trading, the local gods and festivals could no longer satisfy the religious needs of the ancient Athenians. Their spiritual hunger was exacerbated by the stress of city life, by the constant threat of destruction, and by the grim vision of totalitarian Sparta: the vision of Greeks living without light or grace or humour, as though the gods had withdrawn from their world.

Into the crowded space of Periclean Athens came the wandering teachers, selling their “wisdom” to the bewildered populace. Any charlatan could make a killing, if enough people believed in him. Men like Gorgias and Protagoras, who wandered from house to house demanding fees for their instruction, preyed on the gullibility of a people made anxious by war.

To the young Plato, who observed their antics with outrage, these “Sophists” were a threat to the very soul of Athens. One alone among them seemed worthy of attention, and that one, the great Socrates whom Plato immortalised in his dialogues, was not a Sophist, but a true philosopher.

The philosopher, in Plato’s characterisation, awakens the spirit of inquiry. He helps his listeners to discover the truth, and it is they who bring forth, under his catalysing influence, the answer to life’s riddles. The philosopher is the midwife, and his duty is to help us to what we are – free and rational beings, who lack nothing that is required to understand our condition. The Sophist, by contrast, misleads us with cunning fallacies, takes advantage of our weakness, and offers himself as the solution to problems of which he himself is the cause.

There are many signs of the Sophists, but principal among these is that they are subjectivists and relativists. Their teachings are about how to get on in the world, and not about how to find the truth. Anything goes: not facts, but the best story wins. And the result is mumbo-jumbo, condescension and the taking of fees. The philosopher uses plain language, does not talk down to his audience, and never asks for payment. Such was Socrates, and in proposing him as an ideal, Plato defined the social status of the philosopher for centuries to come.

No one should doubt that sophistry is alive and well. The Matrix Conspiracy is permeated with it. We see it in the postmodern intellectualism, in the management culture, in the self-help industry and in the New Age environment. The Sophists are back with a vengeance, and are all the more to be feared, in that they come disguised as philosophers and scientists. For, in this time of helpless relativism and subjectivity, philosophy and science alone has stood against the tide, reminding us that those crucial distinctions on which life depends – between true and false, good and evil, right and wrong – are objective and binding. Philosophy and science has until now

spoken with the accents of the academy and the laboratory and not with the voice of the fortune teller.

When Plato founded the first academy, and placed philosophy at the heart of it, he did so in order to protect the precious store of wisdom from the assaults of charlatans, to create a kind of temple to truth in the midst of falsehood, and to marginalise the Sophists who preyed on human confusion.

My mission is again to create such a temple to truth in midst of the falsehood of the Matrix Conspiracy.

The Matrix Conspiracy is my main term for the strange beliefs, amusing deceptions, and dangerous delusions, which today are manifesting in the outbreak of a culture of self-assertion, where the classical deadly sins have been turned into virtues. Self-assertion is the main tool used in order to keep us in the illusion.

It is a culture of personal development/self-improvement (Management theory, New Age, Nonviolent Communication, Neuro-linguistic programming, and New Thought), which is creating a “me-me-me-and-then-perhaps-you-if-it-serves-me-logic”, and a spirituality, where the object of worship is the ego.

It is a culture, where everything is psychologized, emotionalized and therapized, so that political incitation and social responsibility are removed by disguising social problems as personal problems. It is a culture where moral values only are based on what feels good. It is a culture of suspicion, that denies and renounce what people think, and the reasons they produce, in order to find the “real” reasons. It is a culture, where debate is about playing down or directly offending other people. It is a culture, where science and critical thinking have been replaced by magical thinking (you can create yourself and the world as it fit you).

But it is also a culture (though it on the surface sounds individualistic), which is about to develop into a global, totalitarian meritocracy, where psychology is controlling people down to the smallest details. This might happen when Western Consumer Capitalism and Chinese Communism in all probability will melt together (read more about this development in my article **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the Thought Police of the Self-help Industry) and why I am an Apostle of Loafing**).

Civil disobedience

I claim, that the rebellion against this ideology must be philosophy. We must become philosophical rebels and spiritual anarchists, who not are afraid of for example

practising loafing and civil disobedience; or said differently: who not are afraid of rejecting psychology in order to find our true calling in life.

A philosophical life-practice is a rebellion against the moral of society, against all images of life, both your own and the others'. If we shall save our humanity, and our democracy and welfare society, it is absolutely necessary, that we in relation to democracy-parasitic ideologies become philosophical rebels like Socrates, Henry David Thoreau, Gandhi, Martin Luther King or Krishnamurti – a kind of spiritual anarchists.

Also Albert Camus had this thought. In his book *The Rebel* he investigates the question of terror on many different levels, and have some distinctions, especially the distinction between rebellion and murder. He emphasizes that the rebellion – but not necessarily a violent – is necessary, if the world not shall stiffen, and if you at all shall be able to survive as a human being. A rebellion can cost human lives, as in the resistance movement during the Second World War, but murder must not be a goal in itself. In that connection he mentions the role of art, which creates a space in the single person where he in a situation of rebellion can orient himself, so that the rebellion not becomes inhuman. The problem with Albert Camus' philosophy is though, that it ends in subjectivism, which really can't function as ethical foundation.

I constantly makes the distinction between ideology and philosophy/human rights. A rebellion must not be ideological, where you treat humans as means for a goal out in the future; that is: you must not treat human problems instrumentally. A rebellion must always be a philosophical revolution, where you treat humans as goals in themselves; that is: where you treat human problems in a communicative way.

In that connection the concept of civil disobedience is important. Civil disobedience describes the situation, where a person offends the law by referring to moral values, which the disobedient puts above all citizens' duty to obey the law. Civil disobedience is therefore closely connected with ethical practice – and not the use of violence.

On the constitutional plane civil disobedience can contribute to, that there happens a change of system, and yesterday's disobedience can thereby become the next day's heroic deed.

The concept of civil disobedience as it is known today, was created by the American author Henry David Thoreau in an essay from 1849, wherein he advocated the private conscience's right against the state's demands, for instance the refusal to pay taxes under the war against Mexico.

Civil disobedience is especially known from Gandhi and Martin Luther King, and in the campaign of protest against the Vietnam War. In Denmark it was seen during the Second World War, where some people helped Jews to escape to Sweden.

The reason why civil disobedience is a necessary political tool is, that any political ideology in some way is offending the human rights by making humans into means for a goal projected out in the future by the mind of the ideologist, and that the end therefore, with Niccoló Machiavelli's famous and notorious words, justifies the means (Machiavelli's work *Il Principi* is a textbook in statesmanship, and have been source of inspiration for, for instance, Hitler).

Ideology of any kind, political or religious, is - to cut a long story short - a psychic disease, a malfunction in the human mind.

The correct understanding of the human rights is healing this malfunction. The human rights deal with the idea about the individual human being's autonomy and dignity: You shall treat the other not as a mean, but as a goal. Therefore the exact opposite of Machiavelli's preachings. This doesn't mean though, that I advocate totally pacifism. I have investigated this in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**, in the philosophical question How ought my attitude to war be?

The main goal of the philosophical revolution is the exposure of the Matrix Sophists. These Sophists use especially two kinds of pedagogy:

- 1) Ideology
- 2) How to get on in the world

1) Ideology

Let me explain with a distinction between two kinds of education: philosophical education and ideological education.

Philosophical education has its basic objectives, first, the disposition to seek truth, and, second, the capacity to conduct rational inquiry. Training scientists, for example, requires the inculcation both of an ethic of inquiry – do not fabricate or distort results, take care to prevent your hypotheses (or desires) from affecting your observations – and the techniques of inquiry appropriate to the discipline.

There are of course many different forms of philosophical education, corresponding to the numerous ways in which truth may be pursued. Nevertheless, these forms of education share two key features. First, they are not decisively shaped by the specific social or political/religious circumstances in which they are conducted, or, to put it the other way around, they are perverted when such circumstances come to have a

substantive effect. There is no valid distinction between “Jewish” and “Aryan” physics, or between “bourgeois” and “socialist” biology; truth is one and universal.

Secondly, and relatedly, philosophical education can have corrosive consequences for political (and/or religious) communities in which it is allowed to take place. The pursuit of truth – scientific, historical, moral, or whatever – can undermine structures of unexamined but socially central belief.

Ideological education - (today through psychology) - differs from philosophical education in all these respects. Its purpose is not the pursuit and acquisition of truth, but rather the formation of individuals, who can effectively conduct their lives within, and support, their political (and/or religious) community. It is unlikely, to say the least, that the truth will be fully consistent with this purpose. Nor is ideological education homogeneous and universal. It is by definition education within, and on behalf of, a particular political (and/or religious) order. Nor, finally, does ideological education stand in opposition to its political (and/or religious) community. On the contrary, it fails – fundamentally – if it does not support and strengthen that community.

Ideology altogether is a psychic disease. You are not in doubt about, that ideology is a psychic disease if you look at its collective manifestations. It appears for example in the form of ideologies such as Communism, Liberalism, Conservatism, National Socialism and any other nationalism, or in the form of rigid religious systems of faith, which function with the implied assumption, that the supreme good lay out in the future, and that the end therefore justifies the means. The goal is an idea, a point out in a future, projected by the mind, where salvation is coming in some kind – happiness, satisfaction, equality, liberation, etc. It is not unusual, that the means to come to this is to make people into slaves, torture them and murder them here and now.

That a thought-system has developed into an ideology shows in, that it is a closed system, which is shared by a large group of people. Such a closed system has especially two distinctive characters: 1) It allows no imaginable circumstance to talk against the ideology. 2) It refuses all critique by analysing the motives in the critique in concepts, which is collected from the ideology itself (an ideology always thinks black and white, and therefore always has an anti-ideology, an enemy image, which it attributes on to everyone, who don't agree).

An ideology is therefore characterized by, that it is not able to contain, or direct refuses, rationality and critical thinking. We all know how dissidents have been killed, jailed and tortured under totalitarian ideologies.

In philosophy you focus on, what cooperation and conversation require of you in order to that you at all can exist: that you speak true (don't lie), that you are prepared to reach mutual understanding and agreement (don't manipulate), don't make an exception of yourself (but treat others as equals). From this rises the eternal moral values (as for example that it is wrong to lie), and generally our ideas of right and justice: the so-called human rights, the idea about the individual person's autonomy and dignity: you shall treat the other not as a mean, but as a goal.

2) How to get on in the world

Ideologies are using propaganda in order to get their "truths" forced through. In that connection they use thought distortions.

The sophists were teachers of rhetoric, who against a fee, taught people how to persuade other people about their "truths". Rhetoric, or sophistry, is precisely the art of persuasion. Rather than giving reasons and presenting arguments to support conclusions, as Socrates did, then those who use sophistry are employing a battery of techniques, such as emphatic assertion, persuader words and emotive language, to convince the listener, or reader, that what they say or imply is true.

The sophists taught their pupils how to win arguments by any means available; they were supposedly more interested in teaching ways of getting on in the world than ways of finding the truth, as Socrates. Therefore any charlatan is welcome. And the use of thought distortions is seen as the best tool, when practising the mantra: "It is not facts, but the best story, that wins!"

Thought distortions are "techniques", that, unconscious or conscious, are used from an interest in finding ways of getting on in the world, rather than an interest in finding ways of discovering the truth. Thought distortions are the background for poor reasoning, diversionary ploys, seductive reasoning errors, techniques of persuasion and avoidance, psychological factors, which can be obstacles to clear thought.

Critical thinking, or philosophy, is in opposition to thought distortions. Critical thinking is about spotting thought distortions, and examining them by presenting reasons and evidence in support of conclusions (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

Latest news!

Strasbourg, April 7, 2011. The 47 Member States of the Council of Europe are close to finalizing a new convention that defines "gender" as Social Construct.

So, a quite certain trend within a quite certain single branch of science (Sociology), shall from now on define what a human being is. This trend is called social constructivism (or social constructionism), and is the latest craze in reductionism; that is: a pseudoscientific point of view with a political agenda. It belongs on the left-wing environment side of the heredity and environment ideology (read more about this reductionism in my articles **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry** and **The Sokal Hoax**).

Also read my article **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**. Here I show that The Matrix Conspiracy is a sign of the rising of a new Fascism (I consider the new feminism as playing a central role in the Matrix conspiracy).

So, we see, that my theory about the Matrix Conspiracy is very well alive and in progress.

Management theory and the self-help industry

We live in a postmodern society, where the distinction between reality and appearance/superficies is about to disappear. Reality is often the images, we receive through the stream of information. And it becomes more and more difficult to see, which objective reality that lies behind. It seems more and more to be the images, which are real, and not some behind lying reality. In that sense all images are equal true - (because there is no objective instance to decide what is more true than something else) - but they are not equal good, for some images are more fascinating than others, some images affect us more than others. Therefore the expression of the image has come in focus. The expression of the image – its aesthetics – decides, whether it fascinates us or bores us. What apply for today, is the intensity and seduction of the expressions. The new truth criterion is, whether something is interesting or boring. Eternal values such as goodness, truth and beauty fall more and more away.

The death of the eternal values doesn't only apply for reality, but also the personality. The individual human being lives in a space without truth, in a time without direction, and with an information flow so huge, that the manageability beforehand has to be given up. How are we to live then? Well, the management theorists claim, you do this by creating yourself in a never-ending new production. The personality then becomes a persona (mask), an eternal change of role, because when the role

begins to stiffen, it becomes uninteresting and boring. New is good, as these theorists say. What before characterized the personality's relationship to the world, was a call. Now the relationship has become a project (or as the management theorists say: a good story, a good branding, a good spin), which is formed, quickly is being carried out and dropped for the benefit of a new project, that can maintain the constant demand for intensity and seduction.

It is precisely the management theories, which are lying behind the companies' much talk about the employees' willingness to personal development, flexibility, innovation and readiness for change. Words, that appear in almost any job advertisement.

And therefore also so much bet on PR; that is: not only concerning consumer goods, but also concerning people, for example politicians. The image of the politician in the media is today more important for his choice than the politics, he may advocate. Politics becomes, like everything else, a ware, which has to be sold through good stories (branding, spin). Everything becomes a business, which have to be runned economical. The business community of the management culture, with its active leaders, is being transferred to all areas of life, where everything is being evaluated from if it can be sold, not from the Source of wisdom: the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

So the management theories, and its belonging self-help industry, have actual become a common accepted ideology. A whole time-tendency within school, folk high school and continuing education, focus on so-called "personal development/self-improvement". Therefore you can't avoid being encouraged to an unrestrained and Egoistic self-expression, where you are letting your choices (story-telling, self-branding) decide everything, in the belief that you through your choices can create a successfull life as it fit you. From the management theorists you hear slogans such as: "It is not facts, but the best story, which wins!"

The intention is to help people using their full potential, to help them in having success, both in work and in private life. The management theorists call it a win-win situation: both the private life of the individual, as well as the company, where the individual is employed, get profit by it – as they claim. What it in other words is about, within these theories, is to become something (be focused on the future), to get success, to conquer a place on the top, to become a winner. The virtues are self-assertion, storytelling, ambition and will to change. The terms of coaching and self-help are closely connected with these ideals.

There are especially three theories, which function as inspiration for these tendencies:

1) New Thought

2) Humanistic psychology

3) The Postmodern Intellectualism

1) 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.

The three major religious denominations within the New Thought movement are Religious Science, Unity Church and the Church of Divine Science (so it is important to know, that there is a special religious movement behind the management theories and the self-help industry, which everyone today, through education and work, is forced to accept – also the use of New Age methods is widely accepted - see my article **Six common traits of New Age that distorts spirituality**).

The main theory is the subjectivistic belief, that your thoughts create reality. By focusing on positive thinking, and by avoiding everything you find negative, you can create your life in accordance with your needs, feelings and wishes. The “positive” is identified as success, money, sex, material glory, etc. Examples of book-titles are: “Prosperity Through Thought Force”, “The Science of Getting Rich”, “Think and Grow Rich” (read more in my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**)

2) Humanistic Psychology (Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Rollo May) is a second fundamental inspiration for the management theories.

The humanistic psychology is based on a biological view of human nature; or said in another way: it believes that humans entirely are desirous beings. Carl Rogers is therefore in his self-actualisation theory focusing on the emotional experience of the individual. Abraham Maslow is in his self-actualisation theory focusing on different levels of needs in the individual. Rollo May is in his existential psychology focusing on the will and wishes in the individual.

It is especially from humanistic psychology the term of “self-help” is coming.

If you focus on these aspects of the human nature you will find your true authentic self, they claim. Like New Thought Humanistic Psychology namely has an idea about, that Man has a spiritual/divine core, which is called the self (you could also

simply call it the Ego!). Focusing on this is called positive thinking. The concept of positive psychology is therefore a mix of New Thought and Humanistic psychology.

Religion has in this way been reduced to psychology (feelings, will and wishes, – Carl Rogers and Rollo May), spirituality has been reduced to biology (needs – Abraham Maslow), and philosophy has been reduced to ideology (consumer capitalism). Spiritual practice is therefore the same as psychotherapy (see my article **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**). Read more about Humanistic psychology in my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**.

3) A third central influence on management theory is the Postmodern Intellectualism (Constructivism, Social Constructivism, Pragmatism, Feminist Epistemology, Deconstructivism, and much more - see my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**). We have already looked at postmodernism. But there are especially three aspects of the postmodernistic intellectualism you see repeated in the management culture and the self-help literature:

1) George Orwell's novel 1984. The novel is not mentioned (because it actually is a warning against its own terms), but the terms of old-thinking and new-thinking is widely spread .

2) Quantum mechanics. Here the pseudoscience of quantum mysticism is spreading a web of lies, where quantum mechanics is used to prove everything from clairvoyance and time travel, to consumer capitalism, healing, law of attraction, etc., etc. (see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**)

3) Thomas Kuhn's work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts is again used in a pseudoscientific way. The intention is to avoid critique, and get the management theories forced through.

Read more about the three aspects of the postmodern intellectualism in my articles **The Sokal Hoax**, **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies**, and **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr**

Where the main method in humanistic psychology is psychotherapy, then the main method in postmodern intellectualism (constructivism) is coaching. The paradox in both methods (the management theories and the self-help industry as such) is that while claiming to create the authentic, autonomous, resource-filled and competent human being, at the same time is doing the exact opposite: it is making people dependent of therapists, coaches, others' ideas and ideals; making them imitate and

model so-called successful people (read more about the two methods and the paradox in my article **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity**)

Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality

When someone is going to question the New Age movement, then it can be hard to send the critique to a certain address. It is often only a minority within the New Age movement, who stands behind a certain practice, and a critique of a certain practice might be irrelevant for another part of the movement. The movement is namely based on all kinds of imported spiritual traditions mixed with Western psychotherapy, coaching and management theory (see my articles **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy** and **Management theory and the self-help industry**).

One central inspiration, though, is the ideology and syncretism of Theosophy (see my article **The fascism of Theosophy**).

Most people, who can be characterized as New Agers and/or Self-helpers, therefore often don't recognize themselves as such. Most often they speak about themselves as spiritual free-thinkers not belonging to any religion, movement or ideology. This is not true though. In the following I will show six common traits of New Age, that show how it distorts true spirituality, and why it must be characterized as an ideology. My main name for this ideology is **The Matrix Conspiracy**.

1. The psychologizing of religion and philosophy

This causes, that the practitioners turn their minds towards the content, and not the form, as true spirituality does. It also causes that the main focus is turned towards feelings. In true spirituality the main focus is the thoughts (see for example my articles **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**, **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity** and **Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy**).

2. The elimination of critical thinking

The psychologizing therefore also causes that critical thinking is seen as something negative, as a symptom of problems with your feelings. This turn is coming from relativistic and subjectivistic theories on Western universities, which forbid actual value judgment (notice the self-contradiction). And it has nothing to do with

spirituality, and causes that the practitioners close themselves to both own problems, and problems of the world. In true spirituality critical thinking is quite central, because the practice here is about discovering both own thought distortions, and thought distortions of the world (see my articles **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**, **The New feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**, **The Sokal Hoax**, and my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

3. Incompetent teachers

The many short self-made and private educations within the New Age ideology, cause that there are extremely many teachers without enough experiences and philosophical training. This causes a lot of spiritual misguiding.

4. Pseudoscience

New Age is filled with all kind of loose, self-invented and directly wrong interpretations of science. Furthermore there is a manipulative, and non-founded, tendency to call their own practices science. This also causes a lot of misguiding (see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**).

5. Narcissism

The same fully individualized core of personality, which today makes us able to step out of the past's fixed and subconscious attachment, has itself within New Age become the main interest, center for the identity in a degree, that almost all awareness here are directed inwards in a global seen exceptional narcissism. The ideological use of relativism and subjectivism sounds like this: "I have my truth, you have yours!" "You judge" is the same as "You condemn." In true spirituality the central goal is the elimination of the Ego (see my article **The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help industry**).

6. Ideology

An ideology functions with the implied assumption, that the supreme good is lying out in the future, and that the end therefore justifies the means. In New Age this goal is the so-called New Age; the New World Order, or the Age of the Aquarius. In the self-help industry the goal is success, personal power, money, etc. An ideology is always used from an interest in finding ways of getting on in the world, rather than an interest in finding ways of discovering the truth. Spirituality has nothing to do with ideology, but with philosophy, which is based on an interest in finding ways of discovering the truth (see my articles **The difference between philosophical**

education and ideological education and Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy).

Typical methods used in New Age are clairvoyance, channeling, astrology, personality typing, hypnosis and psychotherapy.

Nonviolent Communication is an instrument of psychic terror

Nonviolent communication (NVC, also called compassionate communication, or Giraffe language) is a communication process developed by Marshall Rosenberg in the 1960s and 70s. As many other self-help direction it is inspired by the so-called Humanistic psychology (see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

NVC often functions as a conflict resolution process. It focuses on two aspects of communication: *honest self-expression* (defined as expressing oneself in a way that is likely to inspire compassion in others) and *empathy* (defined as listening with deep compassion).

NVC is based on the idea that humans are innately compassionate, while violence (psychological and physical) is learned through culture. NVC theory supposes all human behaviour stems from attempts to meet a small set of human needs. Needs are believed never to be in conflict. Rather, conflict arises when strategies for meeting needs clash. NVC proposes that if people can identify the needs of others, and the feelings that surround the needs, harmony can be achieved.

So, NVC holds that most conflicts between individuals or groups arise from miscommunication about their human needs, due to coercive or manipulative language that aims to induce fear, guilt, shame, etc. These “violent” modes of communication, when used during a conflict, divert the attention of the participants away from clarifying their needs, their feelings, their perceptions, and their requests, thus perpetuating the conflict. The aim of NVC is then to steer the conversation back towards the needs, feelings, and perceptions, until the discovery of strategies that allow everyone’s need to be met. The reasoning is that from a position of mutual understanding and empathy, the participants will be able to find ways to meet their needs without compromising their opponent’s.

NVC advocates that, in order to cultivate a deeper understanding of each other, the parties should express themselves in objective and neutral terms, (preferring factual

observations about feelings and needs) rather than in judgmental terms (such as good versus bad, right versus wrong, or fair versus unfair).

Formal NVC self-expression follows four steps:

- 1) Making neutral *observations* devoid of interpretation or judgment (e.g. “I see two balls of soiled socks under the coffee table, and three next to the TV.”).
- 2) Expressing *feelings* without justification or interpretation (e.g. “I feel irritated”).
- 3) Expressing *needs* drawing from a list of fundamental human needs (e.g. “I need more order in the rooms we share.”).
- 4) Making clear, concrete, feasible requests (e.g. “Would you be willing to put your socks in the washing machine?”).

In response, the listener may build empathy with the speaker by responding with reworded versions of the speaker’s own statements (“I hear you saying that...”), thus confirming for them that they have been heard and understood.

NVC requires listening carefully and patiently to others, even when the speaker and listener are in conflict.

The two modes of use of the NVC model are:

- 1) Empathy, including both self-empathy, and empathy for another.
- 2) Honest self-expression, including “please” (request) and “thank you” (gratitude).

The empathy process practised in NVC is sometimes called “deep listening”. It involves the listener connecting with the essential core of an individual’s experience and offering a kindly energy of presence. The empathy process offered by NVC is often referred to as “giving empathy.” It is more accurately a procedure that supports the development of true empathy.

This process involves listening for, and sometimes guiding the other person towards describing:

- 1) Observations as to what happened
- 2) Feelings evoked, sometimes guessing what feelings might be, if the other is (for example) in blame mode.

3) Needs both met and unmet, although the unmet needs are most likely to be provoking the feelings involved.

While NVC is ostensibly taught as a process of communication designed to improve compassionate connection to others, it has also been interpreted as a spiritual practice, a set of values, a parenting technique, an educational method and a worldview.

The name “nonviolent communication” refers to Mohandas Gandhi’s philosophy of ahimsa or nonviolence. Unlike Gandhi, Rosenberg endorses the use of protective force – the use of force to keep injury from occurring, so long as it is not punitive, i.e., force applied with the intention to punish or harm someone for a past deed. Rosenberg says the desire to punish and the use of punitive measures only exists in cultures that have moralistic good/evil worldviews. He points out that anthropologists have discovered cultures in many parts of the world in which the idea of someone being “bad” makes no sense. He says such cultures tend to be peaceful and do not rely on punitive force to correct maladaptive or harmful behaviors. One example of such a culture is the Semai people in Malaysia.

I would like to hear more about who these anthropologists are. I simply don’t believe it is true what Rosenberg here says. I will just point out, that there has been produced many wrong theories of language in connection with other cultures, and that one should be critical towards claims like Rosenberg’s. An example is The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which is about, that the Hopi Indians in New Mexico have a quite other language than ours, and therewith quite other concepts about time and space, concepts, which even should be closer to the theory of relativity than our own concepts about it. It has since shown, that this hypothesis has no foundation in reality (read more about this in my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**).

Anyhow, there certainly is a constructivistic element in NVC since it believes you can make people compassionated just by changing their language. This is of course an illusion. Making people compassionated requires many years of meditative-existential training of the mind and the heart, and only a very few people will actually be willing to do this work. So, as in many other New Age directions, NVC tries to create easy solutions, and as we shall see, with only one result: dangerous delusions.

Rosenberg is clearly aligned with Gandhi, Ram Dass and other practitioners of compassionate and non-violent communication. There is in NVC a hidden emphasis on the supernatural. In other words: Rosenberg understands NVC to be a fundamentally spiritual practice. Marshall Rosenberg has, in fact, described the influence of his spiritual life on the development and practice of NVC:

“I think it is important that people see that spirituality is at the base on Nonviolent Communication, and that they learn the mechanics of the process with that in mind. It’s really a spiritual practice that I am trying to show as a way of life. Even though we don’t mention this, people get seduced by the practice. Even if they practice this as a mechanical technique they start to experience things between themselves and other people they weren’t able to experience before. So eventually they come to the spirituality of the process. They begin to see that it is more than a communication process and realize it is really an attempt to manifest a certain spirituality.”

Rosenberg further states that he developed NVC as a way to “get conscious of” what he calls “Beloved Divine Energy”.

The emphasis on spirituality is potentially troubling for both atheists/agnostics and people who adhere to particular religions (e.g. Christians).

Because NVC practitioners repeatedly seek legitimacy by claiming NVC is scientific based (that there has been carried out research of the practice and its theoretical basis; that there is evidence of its effectiveness, etc.), NVC must be evaluated as a pseudoscience. Why? In its emphasis on spirituality it can be classified as a kind of New Age pseudoscience (see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**). And in its way of claiming, that all human behaviour stems from attempts to meet a small set of human needs, NVC is also a reductionism. Rosenberg is for example proclaiming that, “all needs are universal; every human being in the world has the same needs.”

Reductionisms reduce or devalue the many aspects of a human being (for example history, time, rationality, spirituality, communication, truth, meaning, beauty, suffering, passion, love, etc., etc., - or said in one word: the wholeness) to a phenomenon of a single type. In NVC – as well as in Maslow’s version of Humanistic psychology - this phenomenon is needs.

Needs are in NVC seen in relation to two types of feelings: feelings when your needs are satisfied, and feelings when your needs are not satisfied (on many NVC websites you can find lists of fundamental needs and the two types of feelings). So NVC is about how you can get your needs satisfied. But when you reduce, for example universal values such as the good, the true and the beautiful, to needs (“Universal needs”), then the whole thing is being turned upside down, because then your being is seen as something not-yet satisfied, a state of becoming, and therefore desire. And with becoming and desire you have the ego: the direct opposite of the good, the true and the beautiful (remember that in for example Buddhism they see desire as one of the main poisons of the mind). In my article **The four philosophical hindrances and**

openings I have investigated this *turning spirituality upside-down paradox* which the whole of New Age and the self-help industry are characterized by. Also see my article **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind** for a deeper explanation of the epistemological and ethical shipwrecks all reductionisms end up in.

A main problem in connection with this reductionism is that NVC one-sided is focusing on needs and feelings, and thereby is neglecting the important function of thoughts, yes, it directly abjures the thoughts. Feelings are the body's reaction on the mind (the thoughts). There is always a thought coming before a feeling. But NVC abjures the thoughts. The confusion is that neither feelings, nor needs, can be expressed neutral as NVC is claiming. All feelings, and all needs, are evoked on the background of thoughts; that is: on the background of judgmental terms (such as good versus bad, right versus wrong, or fair versus unfair). Irritation is for example evoked because of a negative automatic thought. You can therefore neither express a feeling of irritation, nor the needs in connection with this irritation, without the implied negative automatic thought (the judgment). But that is what the formal NVC self-expression claims. And in the following oblivion of the thoughts, NVC actually is allowing negative automatic thoughts to speak without control. And negative automatic thoughts are the cause of violence (see my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**).

All negative feelings (and a lot of "positive" feelings) are caused by thought distortions. Therefore thought distortions (and the following negative automatic thoughts) should be clarified through critical thinking. Critical thinking is the only tool you can use in order to explore, change and restructure thought distortions (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

But NVC not only abjures critical thinking, but thinking as such. And in the following oblivion of the thoughts, NVC is allowing the thought distortions to speak uncontrolled.

A famous phrase of Rosenberg's sounds: "Would you rather be right, than happy?" Personally I have been met with this phrase several times from NVC consultants, when I am using critical thinking. And always with a triumphant look in their faces. But try to look closer at the phrase. It actually exposes a world-view, which focuses on an interest in finding ways of getting on in the world, rather than an interest in finding ways of discovering the truth; that is: a world-view controlled by thought distortions.

It is by the way interesting, just to comment on the above-mentioned phrase, that many of the highest ethical placed humans on Earth actually have sacrificed their

own personal needs, and even their lives, in the defence of truth, instead of just being happy over having their needs (greed) satisfied. It is after all so, that critical thinking is self-forgetful (=compassionated) in the sense that it is seeking a truth that goes beyond personal interests. Just take Gandhi and Martin Luther King. And take the Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, who in his defence of justice and human rights, is taking 11 years in prison (he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010). And take Jesus.

Try to use the phrase on these people. The answer could very well be, that these people rather should have been interested in own tiny narrow egoistic needs, instead of their quest of truth; that it would have been better for these people to use lies in order to get their egoistic needs satisfied, instead of insisting on truth. This is actually what the NVC theory could imply, and what exposes a side of it, that is without compassion and ethical understanding, yes, that it can be used with the direct opposite intention.

So the ancient use of critical thinking within philosophy, and which time after time has shown to be the best tool to clarify thoughts, is eliminated within this theory. The only thing left then, is to rummage about in your own wishes, feelings and needs, where you can be manipulated by any charlatan that feeds your ego; and eventually: violence.

And here the main problem of NVC shows its cruel face. NVC is in extreme way self-contradictory. The extreme is, that NVC ends in the direct opposite of what it preaches. It is a moralizing, violent and manipulative use of language, that tends towards psychic terror.

The reason why it also is called Giraffe language is that the Giraffe's heart is so big. This "nonviolent" Giraffe language is then put up as an opposition to what NVC is calling the "violent" Wolf language. Rosenberg is often sitting with giraffe gloves and wolf gloves on to demonstrate this. NVC has directly, in an extreme black and white way, made lists of, what is considered as good and bad use of language. On the "bad" wolf side is for example critical thinking.

So NVC is antithetical to critical thinking, is based on an inaccurate picture of human nature and has no research to support its claims. Rosenberg's relinquishment of thinking is based on a failure to acknowledge that NVC requires cognitive work. Rosenberg is averring that, "any time you're thinking, your chance of getting what you need is greatly decreased."

Rosenberg is demonstrating a process of critical thinking even if he abjures it. And this "critical thinking" is poisoned by a number of thought distortions, precisely because he abjures thoughts, and therefore the possibility of clarifying them.

And Rosenberg's understanding of the human condition is reductionist (again: see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**) As mentioned is Rosenberg proclaiming that, "all needs are universal; every human being in the world has the same needs." (that is: universal values reduced to needs). As Chapman Flack has said, then this means for Rosenberg, that the only thing human beings are ever saying is "please" and "thank you." Any apparent more nuanced expressions amount to tragic suicidal expressions of "please."

While NVC ostensible encourages active listening, it rather may encourage repetitive attempts to diagnose the feelings and needs of the speaker. This may result in "apparent listening" which is in fact a deflection of responsibility for action and a lack of authentic presence. An example of what I call The Hermeneutics of Suspicion - see my article **The Hermeneutics of Suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing**. It is enforcing a situation of no thinking, of one-manship, using pop-psychologizing diagnosis, and a deflection or refusal of responsibility for action by the person versed in the method. It can be used for manipulation and often creates rancor rather than healing it.

It is interesting that NVC coaches seem unaware of the thought distortion called *Priming effect*, because they praise the neutral approach, while using a theory, which not at all is neutral. Included is also the thought distortion called *Communal reinforcement* (again: see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

NVC is a method with flaws used with possible opposite intent in ways and times and places it was never intended to be used. The result is predictably opposite to what intended. It is violent, harmful, disrespectful, especially because it refuses to listen to those who are using a normal language, and especially to those who are using critical thinking.

NVC has harmed friendships, relationships and dear ones by well-meaning attempts to apply NVC. It doesn't seem to understand that put-downs, ruination of reputation, and emotional torture, also are violent.

Today we live in a so-called postmodernistic dystopia, where eternal values such as goodness, truth and beauty fall more and more away – and where we have been invaded by the ideology of relativism, which rulers, in creeping ways, use the same phrases as the rulers in George Orwell's dystopian novel 1984, as if they had used it as inspiration. The name *Newspeak* is the name Orwell gave the language, which the rulers in his novel had created. The intention with it was to control thinking, to make some ideas impossible to think, including concepts such as good and evil, true and false, beautiful and ugly. In this connection they used concepts such as old-thinking

and new-thinking, so that people get a feeling of guilt, everytime they use concepts within old-thinking. The nearest to an attempt of actually *creating* a new language, which implies some rules about what is considered as “negative” and “positive”, is in my opinion NVC.

This way of communication is especially characterized by one thought distortion, namely *That’s judgmental*. That’s judgmental is a statement sometimes mistakenly treated by its utterer as a knock-down argument against what has just been said. The assumption so obviously being made by those who use this phrase to silence discussions, or critique, is that, for some usually unspecified reasons, judgments are considered as an invention of the devil; that is: judgmental terms such as good versus bad, right versus wrong, fair versus unfair.

I will mention two reasons though: namely subjectivism/relativism and misunderstood spirituality.

Both subjectivism and relativism claim, that there doesn’t exist any objective truth. Truth is something we create ourselves, either as individuals or cultures, and since there doesn’t exist any objective truth, there doesn’t exist any objective scale of truth. All truths are therefore equally true and equally valid, and if one person’s truth, or one culture’s truth, try to intervene in the truths of other individuals or cultures, then this is considered as an aggression.

In order to explain the misunderstood spirituality, I will mention the three aspects of spiritual practice:

- 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 (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**)

The misunderstanding happens when you only focus on 3; for example in meditation where you practise neutral observation, passive listening presence, etc.; that is: where you try not to make judgments - because in order to exist in the world you must think, and therefore make judgments. In every act of communication you must think, and therefore make judgments. The art is then to make these judgments liberated from

thought distortions, and therefore liberated from the painbody. Critical thinking is a central aspect of exploring, changing and restructuring thought distortions.

NVC has directly put *That's judgmental* into system by combining subjectivism with misunderstood spirituality, where 1 and 2 precisely has been removed. You are, as mentioned, here encouraged to observe neutral (this is possible in meditation) and express your feelings and needs without judgments (this is not possible). The contradiction here is, as already explained, that if you for example have a feeling of anger, then this anger is caused by a thought and therefore a judgment, and therefore you can't express it neutral. Shortly said: a feeling is a judgment (if you actually were observing neutral then the anger hardly would emerge – or said differently: the painbody would not be active). But NVC completely abjures thoughts, and in the oblivion of the thoughts, NVC allows thought distortions to speak uncontrolled. And since the negative thought pattern behind the painbody consists in thought distortions, NVC also allows the painbody to speak uncontrolled.

To be a witness to a NVC group session is therefore something of an experience. Nobody notice the self-contradictions; not even the obvious division of language in giraffe language (good) and wolf language (bad). It is heart breaking to see the manipulation, the creation of rancour, the disrespectfulness, the put-downs, the ruination of reputation, and the emotional torture, which in NVC happen in the name of compassion and nonviolence. And due to another thought distortion *Subjective validation* most of the participants will say that it was a good experience though it wasn't. So, rather than saying that judgments are an invention of the devil, you could say that the thought distortion *That's judgmental* is an invention of the devil.

The problem of NVC is characterizing the whole of the New Age and self-help industry, which are based on the same fundamental psychologizing sources of inspiration. Besides that I myself constantly are being attacked with *That's judgmental*, then one of the more funny examples is a New Thought online expert, who not only advised her client to remove the word critique from his online-material, but also to remove “all judgmental terms.” If he should take that literally, he might as well close his website.

The idea that we should not be judgmental is therefore not an easy position to defend in any context since almost every aspect of our lives which we are likely to argue about is infused with judgments: we make implicit judgments in nearly everything we say. There is rarely any justification for deeming judgments impermissible. What you can discuss are judgments characterized by thought distortions.

The statement *That's judgmental* can itself be construed as judgmental: it is a judgment that what has just been said is worthless because it is judgmental. The act

of deeming worthless itself involves being judgmental, so this position is self-refuting.

Read more about NVC in my article **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines** (The new feminism is an active user of giraffe language).

Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)

It is difficult to define Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) because those who started it and those involved in it use such vague and ambiguous language that NLP means different things to different people (a fact, which also is quite revealing). I think, though, that the critical thinker Robert T. Carroll, has done a quite good job in his critique of NLP. In the following I will use parts of Carroll's definition and critique, supplied with my own critique of NLP.

Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) was begun in the mid-seventies by a linguist (John Grinder) and a mathematician (Richard Bandler) who had strong interests in (a) successful people (b) psychology (c) language and (d) computer programming.

NLP has something for everybody, the sick and the healthy, individual or corporation. In addition to being an agent for change for healthy individuals taught en masse, NLP is also used for individual psychotherapy for problems as diverse as phobias and schizophrenia. NLP also aims at transforming corporations, showing them how to achieve their maximum potential and achieve great success.

While it is difficult to find a consistent description of NLP among those who claim to be experts at it, one metaphor keeps recurring. NLP claims to help people change by teaching them to program their brains. We were given brains, we are told, but no instruction manual. NLP offers you a user-manual for the brain. The brain-manual seems to be a metaphor for NLP training, which is sometimes referred to as "software for the brain."

Furthermore, NLP relies heavily upon (1) the notion of the unconscious mind as constantly influencing conscious thought and action; (2) metaphorical behaviour and speech, especially building upon the methods used in Freud's interpretation of dreams and (3) hypnotherapy as developed by Milton Erickson.

NLP is also heavily influenced by the work of Gregory Bateson and Noam Chomsky.

In short you can say that there are three main sources of inspiration:

- 1) **The New Thought movement** (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**)
- 2) **Humanistic psychology** (see my articles **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology** and **Self-help and the Mythology of Authenticity**)
- 3) **Management theory** (see my article **Management theory and the self-help industry**)

A central problem of NLP is pseudoscience (see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**). NLP is extreme in its way of creating scientific-sounding terms in order to add weight to claims and persuade non-experts to believe statements that may be false or meaningless. NLP is also using established terms in idiosyncratic ways, thereby demonstrating unfamiliarity with mainstream work in the discipline.

An example of this is the use of the term paradigm shift. John Grinder denies, that his and Bandler's work is an eclectic hodgepodge of philosophy and psychology, or that it even builds from the work of others. He believes that what he and Bandler did was "create a paradigm shift."

The following claim by Grinder provides some sense of what he thinks NLP is:

My memories about what we thought at the time of discovery (with respect to the classic code we developed – that is, the years 1973 through 1978) are that we were quite explicit that we were out to overthrow a paradigm and that, for example, I, for one, found it very useful to plan this campaign using in part as a guide the excellent work of Thomas Kuhn (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions) in which he detailed some of the conditions in the midst of paradigm shifts. For example, I believe it was very useful that neither one of us were qualified in the field we first went after – psychology and in particular, it's therapeutic application; this being one of the conditions which Kuhn identified in his historical study of paradigm shifts. Who knows what Bandler was thinking?

As a comment to this Carroll says: "One can only hope that Bandler wasn't thinking the same things that Grinder was thinking, at least with respect to Kuhn's classic text."

Kuhn did not promote the notion that not being particularly qualified in a scientific field is a significant condition for contributing to the development of a new paradigm in science. Furthermore, Kuhn did not provide a model or blueprint for creating paradigm shifts! His is an historical work, described what he believed to have occurred in the history of science. He made no claim that anything similar happens in philosophy and he certainly did not imply that anything NLP did, or is doing, constitutes a paradigm shift (read more about the inspiration from Kuhn in my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**).

So, a central part of NLP is the use of obscurantist language, and use of apparently technical jargon in an effort to give claims the superficial trappings of science.

Michael Corballis (1999) stated that “NLP is a thoroughly fake title, designed to give the impression of scientific respectability”. NLP adapted many scientific sounding terms, such as eye accessing cues, non-elective surgery, metamodeling, micromodeling, metaprogramming, neurological levels, presuppositions, representational systems, and submodalities.

None of these terms have any scientific meaning at all.

In the following I will go into four central aspects of NLP:

- 1) NLP as a user-manual for the brain
- 2) NLP as observation of behaviour
- 3) NLP as a Primary Representational System
- 4) NLP as Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)

1) NLP as a user-manual for the brain

One common thread in NLP is the emphasis on teaching a variety of communication and persuasion skills, and using self-hypnosis to motivate and change oneself. Most NLP practitioners advertising on the internet make grand claims about being able to help just about anybody become just about anything. A presupposition is that “if someone can do something, anyone can learn it.”

NLP claims that its “experts” have studied the thinking of great minds and the behaviour patterns of successful people and has extracted models of how they work. “From these models, techniques for quickly and effectively changing thoughts, behaviours and beliefs that get in your way have been developed.”

So, you can say, that NLP is about programming your brain with such models, like when you are downloading a new program to your computer.

This statement comes from people who claim they understand the brain and help you reprogram yours. As Carroll says, then NLP wants you to think that the only thing that separates the average person from Einstein or Pavarotti or the World Champion Log Lifter is NLP.

In order to explain NLP Dr. Steven Novella (MD) tells about that there is an episode of Spongebob (one of those cartoons accessible to both young children and adults) where Patrick, upset that his friend Spongebob has won so many awards and he has won none, decides to copy everything Spongebob does. Patrick is a lazy, dumb, pathetic, (but charming) do-nothing, and he is no less so by simply mimicking Spongebob's every move. NLP, at its core, takes the Patrick approach to success and counseling.

Briefly NLP is based upon the notion that success can be achieved by simply modeling the language, behavior, and thought patterns of successful people. Various versions of this have been applied to counseling by simply modeling the language and behavior of supposedly successful counselors.

NLP coaches and psychotherapists are, in sessions with clients, themselves using such influence techniques as mirroring and matching, reframing, pacing, and anchoring, which include noticing eye movements, gestures, breathing patterns, voice tone changes, pupil dilation, and skin color changes. It's a matter of noticing and interpreting subtle cues, then mirroring them back at the other person. Essentially this means that when you are with someone, you mimic that person's behavior and attitudes so that he or she feels comfortable with you. Instant bond! Instant communication! You then have the upper edge and can more easily influence that person and obtain the results you desire.

Bandler and Grinder claimed that their techniques allowed a person to look at the external behavior of another person and reliably determine that person's internal state. This in effect says that you can look at the outside of a human and tell what is going on inside. You can judge a book by its cover. And not only that, so the claim goes: by using NLP you will also increase your influence over others.

I remember the behavioristic joke about a couple after their sexual intercourse, where the man asks his partner: "It was good for you, was it also good for me?"

In the following I will give two examples of NLP sessions from Margeret Thaler Singer's book *Crazy Therapies* (page 173-174):

- 1) The Echoing Therapist
- 2) The Miming Therapist

1) The Echoing Therapist

“Louise” had been assaulted during a nighttime robbery of her apartment. She was having trouble not thinking about her incident. Her family doctor referred her to a new therapist in the office building. “I never returned after my first visit,” Louise said, “because the experience was just weird.” She went on to say:

“The guy was in his late twenties, I guess, well dressed and sort of trendy looking. He sat facing me, watching my every move. He seemed to be doing some repeat maneuvers, for example, echoing what I had just said, or asking series of questions about every statement I made. I felt like I was in high school English class and the teacher was prodding me to expand every sentence into a paragraph. In the end, we never connected as human beings because he was always saying things like, ‘You seem to be looking at that idea,’ ‘You have a picture in your mind about that,’ or ‘Picture yourself seeing that.’

“He seemed hung up on ideas of looking, having mental pictures and visualizing things. I tried to see if he knew anything about how to get rid of my mental distress and fear at night. I told him I was having trouble studying, reading. But he never really heard what I said. Even though he picked at and parroted my words and phrases, he didn't seem to get anything and I never got an answer from him.

“He didn't seem to want to learn from me. I guess his thing was to play some kind of game with sentences. Finally the hour was over and I never went back. Luckily I eventually found a good therapist who knew what I was talking about, who related to me, and heard what I saying in a real sense. The first guy was just plain weird.”

2) The Miming Therapist

“Nick” had recently begun working on a master's degree. He'd been a police officer, but a leg injury from a shooting had forced him to retire from that line of work. He went to a therapist because he felt “down” and was having trouble adjusting to his new sedentary lifestyle. A friend at school said he really liked his therapist, who used a technique called NLP, so Nick thought he would give it a try.

“I only went to him once,’ Nick said. ‘I mean, give me a break! After all, at the police academy I’d been trained in interviewing and observation, you know. It didn’t take me long to figure out that he was reflecting back at me everything I did. He’d adjust his body like me, cross his legs, try to speak in the same way, the same volume, with the same inflections. It was as if I were at the amusement park in front of one of those glass boxes where a pantomime artist imitates every little move you make until you just crack up in laughter. Only the therapist wasn’t that good. But he was that obvious. At one point I asked him, ‘Why are you doing all that?’ He told me it was a great way to build rapport. I said, ‘Not with me.’ I never went back, and found a new therapist who’s a real person.”

.....

Teachers on NLP courses (also the so-called “qualified” and “listed” NLP educations) keeps on telling the students, that everything the teachers say and do, are supported by “new research”, without making account of who has carried out this research (the thought distortion *Reseach has shown that...*).

NLP *has* in fact been investigated scientifically. And it turns out that the assumptions of NLP, namely that our cognition, behavior and emotions can be “programmed” by mimicking the more superficial aspects of those with desirable attributes (for example posture and mannerism) are wrong. The last thirty years of research have simply shown that NLP is bunk. NLP has failed every test of both its underlying theories and empirical tests of its efficacy. So, in short, NLP does not make sense and it doesn’t work. In fact: NLP has been recognized as among a **Top Ten of Most Discredited Interventions**, according to a published research survey by Norcross et al (2008).

It turns out that improving one’s cognitive ability and emotional stability is hard work – there is no quick short cut. The brain is not infinitely reprogrammable – it can learn and change, but there is an underlying structure and function that is pretty resistant to change, and this resistance increases as we age. Change is possible, but it is hard work. You can’t just download a new personality.

The concept of resistance to change is also very known within spirituality and religion, where they talk about original sin and negative karma (see my articles **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can’t heal it**, and **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice**).

If you want to read more about the scientific research, read the articles [Neurolinguistic Programming and other Nonsense](#) by Steven Novella, and [NLP – no longer plausible](#), by Donald Clark. Also do yourself a favour and read the comments to these two articles, where you see how advocates of NLP are attacking

the scientific research with a battery of pseudoscientific techniques and thought distortions such as Ad hominem, Testimonials, Anecdotal evidence, Research has shown that..., Pseudo-profundity, Rhetoric, etc., etc. - see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**. For a definition of pseudoscience, see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**. Also see my articles **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry** and **The Sokal Hoax**, about how postmodern intellectuals are attacking science (while themselves claiming their theories to be science).

(Let me add in parenthesis a couple of other interesting blogs on NLP by Donald Clark, where he for example describes Richard Bandler as a cocaine addict, who was arrested for murdering a prostitute by shooting her in the head, the girlfriend of his drug dealer: [Click here](#))

Anyway, besides the scientific problems, NLP is also filled with spiritual and philosophical problems. One of these problems is the problem of hypnosis.

Hypnosis is a typical sophistic technique. Being hypnotized is usually characterized by (a) concentration (b) relaxation, (c) suggestion, and (d) expectation.

The versatility of hypnosis is unparalleled. Hypnosis occurs under dramatically different social settings: the showroom, the clinic (hypnotherapy), and the police station.

The best definition for hypnosis is probably The Power of Suggestion. All hypnosis effects are simply the power of suggestion. The more suggestible someone is, the better their results. And the more suggestions someone complies with, the more likely they are to comply with further suggestions.

What is then the problem with hypnosis? The problem is not, that it can help some people loose weight, quit smoking, or overcome their fear of flying. The problem is that it opens you for the power of suggestion. If you open yourself for the power of suggestion you close yourself to your own essence. This shows in four philosophical ways:

- 1) A rational where you take your assumptions, conceptions and values for absolute truths (hereunder subjectivism and relativism), and hereby end up in a contradiction between your thoughts and your lived life.
- 2) A life-philosophical, where you are circling around your own past and future, and hereby create a closed attitude, inattention, absent-mindedness and ennui.

3) An existence-philosophical, where you in your opinion formation and identity formation strive towards being something else than what you are, where you imitate others, are a slave of others ideas and ideals, and where your actions are characterized by irresoluteness and doubt.

4) A spiritual where you are identified with your lifesituation, are dependent on religious or political ideologies, and where you hereby exist on a future salvation.

Read more about hypnosis in my article **Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception**. About the four philosophical ways, read my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**.

2) NLP as observation of behaviour

NLP is said to be the study of the structure of subjective experience, but a great deal of attention seems, as already shown, to be paid to observing behaviour and teaching people how to read “body language.” That implies that NLP has some conclusions to what a certain body language or behavior means. This is invalid simply because there are far too many other alternative reasons for why persons, in certain situations, with certain inner and outer impulses at that certain moment, are behaving as they are. Ignoring this is to end in the thought distortion *Ignoring alternative explanations* (see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

As Carroll says: “If someone tells me that the way I squeeze my nose during a conversation means I am signaling him that I think his idea stinks, how do we verify whether his interpretation is correct or not? I deny it. He knows the structure, he says. He knows the meaning. I am not aware of my signal or of my feelings, he says, because the message is coming from my subconscious mind. How do we test these claims? We can’t. What’s his evidence?”

Carroll is here touching the problem of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion.

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur has referred to the “hermeneutics of suspicion” encouraged by writers such as Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. What people think, and the reasons they produce, may not be the real reasons at work. It then becomes easy to become suspicious of the motives of everyone, whether as the representative of an economic class or the purveyor of a morality, or just as an individual with psychological problems to solve.

To try to have a normal conversation with NLP coaches and psychotherapists can be an odd experience. Often they just look at you with these empty eyes that says: “Well, it might well be that you think what you think, and that you produce the

reasons you do, but I know better, I don't think that is the real reasons at work. I think you have some psychological problems to solve!"

But how can they know this? How can they play the role as someone who know who you are better than yourself, at the same time as they totally deny and renounce what you think, and the reasons you produce; that is: your experiences, your education, your arguments, your articles, your books?

Well, the only way they then can get their knowledge from, is from their own theories. It is a refined way of justifying prejudice. Prejudice is a belief held without good reason or consideration of the evidence for or against its being true. Philosophy is opposed to prejudice. We are all riddled with prejudices on a wide range of issues, but it is possible to eliminate some of them by making an effort to examine evidence and arguments on both sides of any question. Human reason is fallible, and most of us are strongly motivated to cling on to some beliefs even in the teeth of evidence against them (for instance wishful thinking); however, even making small inroads into prejudice can transform the world for the better.

But the NLP analysis (leading us to think of groups or individuals "what is in it for them?"), is not only corrosive of trust in society. It is bound eventually to undermine it'self. Why are such views themselves being propagated? What are those spreading them going to gain? - read more about *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion* in my article **The hermeneutics of suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry) and why I am an apostle of loafing.**

3) NLP as a Primary Representational System

NLP claims that each of us has a Primary Representational system (PRS), a tendency to think in specific modes: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, olfactory or gustatory. A person's PRS can be determined by words the person tends to use or by the direction of one's eye movements. Supposedly, a therapist will have a better rapport with a client if they have a matching PRS. Again: that implies that NLP has some conclusions to what certain words and eye movements mean. This is invalid simply because there are far too many other alternative reasons for why persons, in certain situations, with certain inner and outer impulses at that certain moment, are using their words, and moving their eyes, as they are. Ignoring this is to end in the thought distortion *Ignoring alternative explanations* (again: see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

PRS has therefore not been supported by the scientific literature.

What is interesting is, that NLP in a session of NLP-psychotherapy, or NLP-coaching, praises the neutral approach, while forgetting that the therapist is sitting and using a theory (PRS), which not at all is neutral. NLP is here the victim of the thought distortion called *Priming effect*. Another thought distortion involved is *Communal reinforcement*.

Let us look at this “value neutrality.” NLP is often connected with so-called “spiritual self-improvement”. Many NLP therapists are connecting NLP with everything from Akasha healing and hypnotherapy to the personality typology The Enneagram. But in order to get some “scientific credibility” other NLP consultants are discriminating sharply between NLP and spirituality. It is from such consultants that you hear that NLP is a complete neutral theory, yes even that it is not at theory, but a neutral practice. This is also what you hear from other coaching directions (coaching as such is building on the same sources of inspiration as NLP).

And these sources of inspiration are based on subjectivism and relativism; therefore not at all neutral. A central mantra in NLP is for example, that the map is not the landscape, which might seem like some kind of absolutism, where it must be possible to discriminate between the map and the landscape, subject and object. But at the same time NLP claims, that you can't go beyond your own linguistic mappings, behavior or thought patterns. This of course leads to the Socratic question: From where does NLP then know, that the map is not the landscape? And we have just seen, that the NLP consultant claims to know your body language, because he knows the structure, the meaning behind, which is coming from your subconscious mind. But how can *he* know the whole of this, actually quite complicated landscape, when at the same time telling, that nobody can know the landscape?

Anyway, the only thing you can do, according to NLP, is to change your linguistic mappings according to what you *yourself* find positive. Because it is only your own subjective evaluation, which can provide something with value. There neither exist valid values, which come from the community, or objective values, which come from nature, the universe, or life itself. Nothing has value in itself, unless it comes from the individual's subjective experiences, will, needs and wishes.

So, there is nothing “neutral” in this view of truth and moral. And NLP's view on moral is not only a subjectifying, which attributes the source of morals to the subjective itself, but also an emotionalizing, since it is the individual's *feelings*, which decide the moral quality of something. What it is about is to do what “*feels*” right. It is the individual's emotional experience of something, which defines values, not conversely. And this is fully in thread with Consumer Capitalism, where the customer (and his or her's experiences, wishes, will and needs) always is right. The consumer society, the therapeutic self-actualization, and the subjectifying of the

moral, go hand in hand. The moral – the individual's relation to himself – is therapized, and the moral is subjectified.

Iben Krogdhal is a researcher on Science of Religion on Aarhus University in Denmark. As a part of her PHD project she followed a NLP education on the Danish NLP institute. She writes in her book about NLP (*The New Myths – from religion to psychology, 2011*) that the assumption, which is mostly discussed on the education, is the central sentence about the positive intention behind all behavior (here we see the inspiration from positive psychology, which again has its roots in the American religious movement New Thought). Many students find it difficult to understand, what this positive is. To *whom* is it positive? The teachers have to answer many times, before the students accept the answer. The positive is what is positive to the individual person. Krogdhal also writes, that it is her impression, that the teachers often got irritated over having to spend time on giving answers to something that evident.

But it is *not* evident. The question *To whom is it positive?* is again a Socratic question. When the assumption about the positive intention behind all behavior is the basic assumption, then you must accept, that everything from Nazism, Fascism, Dictatorship, popular murder, terror and violence is as equally positive as democracy, negotiation and dialogue.

NLP often uses phrases such as “There is no such thing as failure. There is only feedback.” As Carroll says, then this would imply that NLP could be invented by the US Military to explain their “incomplete successes.” When the space shuttle blew up within minutes of launch, killing everyone on board, was that “only feedback?” If I stab my neighbour and call it “performing non-elective surgery” am I practicing NLP?

Another version of this is, that NLP often refuses critique, because the critic "falsely is assigning bad motives to the good intentions of people", and therefore somehow is a bad person. That is another version of the thought distortion called *Ad hominem move*, which has absurd consequences, because a lot of dictators, terrorists, and other ideologists probably all have "good intentions" - read about the thought distortion *Good Intentions Bias* in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**.

This *reductio ad absurdum* problem is the problem of all the management theories and the self-help industry as such. As I have mentioned before, the Danish psychologist Nina Østby Sæther says that the psychologized self-help ideal about the self-actualizing human being seems in remarkable way to remind about the actual behavior of the psychopath (see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

Krogsdal writes furthermore that the NLP method was introduced in Denmark by the NLP therapist Ole Vadum Dahl, who has written the basic textbooks on NLP, which are used in Denmark. Later he has dissociated total from NLP, because it was his experience, that it was used for manipulation, that it produced false, inflated self-images, and that it made the clients dependent of it, because their “peak experiences” only lasted for a short while. Ole Vadum Dahl is in that way, paradoxical enough, today both Mr NLP in Denmark, and persona non grata in many NLP environments (about the problem of peak experiences see my article **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching**).

Krogsdal’s book also has some wonderful inside knowledge about how NLP is used in connection with sickness and healing. It is namely so that NLP consultants in public forums are more cautious about the statements they are using.

The NLP teachers on the education weren’t hiding, that they think NLP can heal *all* kinds of sickness, both mentally and physical, and both mild and severe illnesses. And that is actually fully in thread with the claims that you via NLP can become whatever person you like; *there are no limits*. As they say, it depends on how skilled you are in using NLP. And, precisely as in the positive psychology of New Thought, they think that *all* sickness are due to negative thoughts.

Also here there are some objections from the students. One student says: “But there must be a bottom limit! For example in connection with children with cancer - children don’t die just because they *think* they are going to die? Often they don’t know it!”

The teacher answers: “Children can easily sense the adults’ anxiety and worry: children take everything in, they are very well aware that it is serious.” When the student keeps on holding on to, that there must be a bottom limit, another woman says: “So, that is *your* point of view! Who says there is a bottom limit? Who says that everybody can’t be healthy?” The teacher agrees and says: “What you say is that the Earth is flat!” She says that one day such a point of view would die out (page 101).

Another example is when one of the students, Carl, is complaining about having fever. The teacher begins to use NLP on him. And not surprisingly he comes to the conclusion that Carl’s fever is due to his negative thoughts. If he hadn’t had negative thoughts, he would not be able to catch any illness at all. But the teacher goes even further, and talks about that it can get directly dangerous when people not only have negative thoughts, but also a negative identity.

Here Krogdald herself is asking the teacher, if he isn't inducing people great guilt, when he says, that they can think themselves healthy. In other words: Krogdald talks against the thought, that people's illnesses are their own fault. The teacher answers that there in him neither exists shame or guilt: "You can't use those concepts for anything" he says. "They are namely negative thoughts. You are *always* yourself the cause of your illness, *everything* comes from yourself!" – note here the similarity with the self-help coach that seduces a female client as a part of personal development – see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**.

The same day, when the students were going to train in groups, one of the students refuses to sit next to Carl, because he was afraid catching the fever. The teacher says: "Just tell yourself that you are not going to be ill!" (Really not an advice I would encourage people to follow).

A few days later Carl is well again. His fever had shown to be a severe stomach poisoning due to a dinner on a restaurant. He asks the teacher what this has to do with his thoughts? Strangely enough the incident doesn't have any influence on neither the teacher nor the students. So, we see that NLP involves precisely the same mind cure problems as the positive psychology of New Thought - read more about these problems in my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**.

Krogdald's book is also loaded with all the self-contradictions the teachers are involved in. On one page they say that *everything* comes from within, on the next they talk about how other people influence us in a bad way. On one page they can talk about how the unconsciousness only allow things to come in, which it *wants* to come in, on the next about how the society are inducing bad things in it without our wanting it to be so. On one page they say that all kinds of sickness/suffering can be abolished by the power of the thought, on the next that sickness is controlled by something that is greater than thoughts, for example past lifes and karma, etc., etc., etc.

Such self-contradictions can of course not be tolerated on any serious education.

Back to PRS. The problem with PRS is the same as the problem of personality typing.

There exists several different kinds of personality typing, and there are still coming more. Each new number of a New Age magazine with respect for itself, must include at least one new "revolutionary" theory of personality types, in the same way as it must present at least one new "revolutionary" spiritual theory "proved" by quantum

physics (see my articles **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**, and **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies**).

Both in New Age, and in coaching, which claims to be purely neutral and scientific, the so-called Enneagram is very popular. It is a New Age mandala, a mystical gateway to personality typing, and through this to spiritual consciousness and fuller being. The enneagram represents nine personality types. It is original developed by Oscar Ichazo (b. 1931), who claims to have received it in a vision.

Later the enneagram has turned up in several new versions, funny enough often developed by people, who also claim to have received it in divine visions.

So how the types are defined depends on whom you ask. The classification systems seem to have been modified according to the inventors' own idiosyncratic beliefs. Often they do it in relation to astrology.

A personality typing theory categorizes people in different psychological types. Such theories of psychological types are comparatively easy to invent, and earn money on, and they are certainly harmful because they also involve all the problems of the Hermeneutics of Suspicion.

There is no evidence for such type-theories at all. How do we test these kinds of claims? We can't. (Read more about personality typing in my article **Personality typing is a refined system of prejudice**).

4) NLP as Large Group Awareness training (LGAT)

NLP is one of many New Age Large Group Awareness Training programs (LGAT). NLP is a competitor with Landmark Forum. Anthony Robbins, and legions of other enterprises which, like the Sophists of ancient Greek, travel from town to town to teach their "wisdom" for a fee.

Anthony Robbins (Tony Robbins) is probably the most successful "graduate" of NLP. He started his own empire after transforming from a self-described "fat slob" to a firewalker to (in his own words) "the nation's foremost authority on the psychology of peak performance and personal, professional and organizational turnaround."

On July 23, 2012, in San Jose, California., 21 people were treated for burns after walking barefoot over hot coals as part of an event called Unleash the Power Within, starring Tony Robbins. The American journalist Oliver Burkeman is the author of the book *The Antidote: Happiness for People Who Can't Stand Positive Thinking*.

In an article called *The Power of Negative Thinking* Burkeman is asking in a comment to the firewalker incident: What, exactly, did they expect would happen? In fact, there's a simple secret to "firewalking": coal is a poor conductor of heat to surrounding surfaces, including human flesh, so with quick, light steps, you'll usually be fine.

But Mr. Robbins and his acolytes have little time for physics. Burkeman says: "to them, it's all a matter of mind-set: cultivate the belief that success is guaranteed, and anything is possible". One singed but undeterred participant told *The San Jose Mercury News*: "I wasn't at my peak state."

Burkeman asks: "What if all this positivity is part of the problem? What if we're trying too hard to think positive and might do better to reconsider our relationship to "negative" emotions and situations?"

Consider the technique of positive visualization, he says, a staple not only of Robbins-style seminars but also of corporate team-building retreats and business best sellers. According to research by the psychologist Gabriele Oettingen and her colleagues, visualizing a successful outcome, under certain conditions, can make people less likely to achieve it. She rendered her experimental participants dehydrated, then asked some of them to picture a refreshing glass of water. The water-visualizers experienced a marked decline in energy levels, compared with those participants who engaged in negative or neutral fantasies. Imagining their goal seemed to deprive the water-visualizers of their get-up-and-go, as if they'd already achieved their objective.

Burkeman continues: Or take affirmations, those cheery slogans intended to lift the user's mood by repeating them: "I am a lovable person!" "My life is filled with joy!" Psychologists at the University of Waterloo concluded that such statements make people with low self-esteem feel worse — not least because telling yourself you're lovable is liable to provoke the grouchy internal counterargument that, really, you're not.

There are mainly two reasons for why this is happening:

1) Positive psychology is inducing several thought distortions in their clients such as False dichotomy, Compensation, Conversion to the opposite, Confirmation bias, Illusion of control, etc.

2) In the New Thought movement (the inspiration for positive psychology), and therefore also for NLP, they have redefined the concept of karma to what they call The Law of Attraction.

Let me explain why this is going wrong by describing the main thought distortions induced:

1) False dichotomy:

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, as 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 that 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, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. 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 not is possible.

2) Compensation:

You are for example trying to maintain a positive self-evaluation by avoiding areas of life where there are chances of fiasco and instead are seeking areas, where the chance of success is largest. This is in itself a compensation.

There is also another kind of compensation, because the unbalance in the above action will by the energylaws of life itself be compensated. Division consists in, that the Ego, through evaluations of the images of time, split the world up in opposites (good and evil, power and powerlessness, perfect and fiasco, love and hate). Thereby

is created a line of one-sided and extreme basic assumptions (for example "I always have to be perfect!") and rules of living (for example "unless I always am perfect, then I am a fiasco"). The energy laws of life will seek to balance these imbalances, for example through contrabalances (perfect becomes fiasco) – that is: through a compensation.

3) *Conversion to the opposite:*

You can for example convert your insecureness 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 (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**) directly is using Conversion to the opposite, like Confirmation bias, 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 *not* is. This means that a thought always contains a pair of opposites. So, you can not 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 in focusing on the one extreme of a pair of opposites, which is an unbalance. The energy-laws within the wholeness will therefore, as explained, seek to bring the thoughts back to the balance of middle. They do this through a contra-balancing movement; that is: a swing over in the opposite extreme. That is what is meant with compensatory karma (see my article **What is 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.

Conversion to the opposite, and the above-mentioned problems, also seems 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 art of life, where you are dancing between the opposites (as in the teaching of Yin and Yang), and through deep meditative-existential inquiry.

4) *Confirmation bias:*

Confirmation bias refers to a type of selective thinking whereby one tends to notice and to look for what confirms one's beliefs, and to ignore, not look for, or undervalue the relevance of what contradicts one's beliefs.

The tendency to give more attention and weight to the positive and the confirmatory has been shown to influence memory. When digging into our memories for data relevant to a position, we are likely to recall data that confirms the position.

Researchers are sometimes guilty of confirmation bias by setting up experiments or framing their data in ways that will tend to confirm their hypotheses. They compound the problem by proceeding in ways that avoid dealing with data that would contradict their hypotheses.

In the movement of New Thought and the law of attraction Confirmation bias is, like conversion to the opposite, directly used as a central part of their training.

The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego's incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: "it is no use with me!"; or: "Wonderful me!". Both, either the denial or the confirmation of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity, and the ego-centralization. The ego's religion and exercises are the ego's needs and longings and will: I want to, 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, where it is about moving the focus away from the denial of the ego (the negative, evil), and encourage the confirmation of the ego, which is considered as 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 unconditional 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. She concludes that giving yourself positive confirmations are synonymous with healthy thoughts, and that such thoughts are good thoughts, light thoughts, super thoughts.

If you find it difficult, she says, you must borrow (here we see that Anni Simonsen also is a NLP coach, and that New Thought is the source of inspiration for both the law of attraction and NLP). She continues the exercise: Let yourself be inspired by a person, whom you would like to be like, and use this model to create your own self-image. When this self-image is ready, it is time to put sound on. 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. She ends the article with a preconceived response to critique. If you think that the image not is true, but only is fantasy, then remember that everything is subjective.

Such thoughts are actually an expression of black magic, a way of turning spirituality upside down.

First of all: Subjectivism means that truth *only* is something you create yourself – there is no absolute, or objective truth; which actually means: no divine source. 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 only is 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-subjectivistic (see the thought distortion *Self-refuting arguments* in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**). Besides this self-contradiction, then 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, that religion, and therefore spirituality, has been reduced to psychology; a reductionism, a 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: The ordinary ego-consciousness functions by being identified with the physical world, with 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 with a restructuring of the ego's ownership to things, food and power, and they re-structure sexuality and emotions. First thereafter the mystical process can begin. Again: it should now 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 also have 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 spiritual, then the ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside, and the energy is turned into the now, and therefore in towards the source and the spiritual dimension. The people, who around a spiritual teacher, constitute an energy-mandala, are in this way made transparent for a higher common human spirituality.

In a lesser realized person's use of energy the contact with, and the ability to manipulate with such collective forms of astral energy, can be used for other purposes than spiritual. It can be creative, ego-affirmative, political, demonical, and so on.

The powers that, by realized spiritual teachers are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same powers can be turned in through the ego-structures, and therewith into past and future, and fragmentation (conflict). In this way there can be opened creative channels, created super egos (super thoughts), created 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 history and from literature. In the story of the temptation in the desert, we can see these possible ways of using the energy pictured in anticipated form. Here you see the possibility of using the freedom and the power, to elevation of the ego and the consequent power and material glory. But Jesus abstains from this deification of the ego. It is also known from the Faust myth, described by for example Goethe and Thoman Mann.

When you in a selfish way use the powers from the collective history of the astral plane, and which demonical astral beings will help you with (because the ego phenomenon is their magnet of attraction), you can create personal power and material glory. That is the essence of Black Magic, and it is the background for the creation of the concept of the law of attraction (though 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**).

But you will eventually meet the compensatory karma, or Nemesis.

You can in short not 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 contra-balanced through the opposite categories. New Thought here exposes its worshippers for the possibility of Nemesis.

An example: as soon as your thoughts spread themselves too much out in an extreme, the energy-system compensates by seeking to bring itself back to the balance of the middle. The system does this by seeking over towards the opposite extreme (for instance from perfectionism to a feeling of fiasco). That is: through a contrabalancing, a compensation. The energy works as a pendulum. The more energy, which is invested in an extreme of a pair of opposites, the larger the swing in the opposite direction will become (read more in my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

5) Illusion of control:

Control makes us feel powerful, which is a good feeling. And feeling that there is an order in the universe (the law of attraction) which you can control via the power of thought is 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 and your wealth, or somebody else's health, spiritual development and wealth, by the power of 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.

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 with a transcendence of 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 re-structure the ego's ownership to things, food, personal power, sexuality and emotions. Spiritual practice is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. First thereafter the mystical process can begin.

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 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 of life? How does man preserve 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 grab, which the material world has in 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 (positive psychology and therefore also NLP) has today done an illusory work of trying to re-define this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction directly is becoming the object of worship.

Another aspect of the true spiritual practice is that you break the automatic process of compensatory karma, which is closely related to the material world, laws of nature, cycles of life, yes actually 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*).

Furthermore you have your free will either to 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) – about karma see my articles **What is karma?**, and **A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork**.

In Taoism and Zen they talk about the concept of Wu Wei, which means non-activity, passive listening presence, non-control, non-interfering, which lead to Tzu-jen, spontaneity and naturalness. In Zen they for example talk about that when practising 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 they in the New Thought movement often quote these wisdom traditions as if the New Thought ideology is in perfect harmony with these. The fact is that New thought is an extreme example of the illusion of control, when believing that you via the "power of thought" can attract (control) everything you can dream of.

So, as Burkeman points out in his article, even goal setting, the ubiquitous motivational technique of managers everywhere, isn't an undisputed boon. Fixating too vigorously on goals can distort an organization's overall mission in a desperate effort to meet some overly narrow target, and research by several business-school professors suggests that employees consumed with goals are likelier to cut ethical corners.

Though much of this research is new, the essential insight isn't. Ancient philosophers and spiritual teachers understood the need to balance the positive with the negative, optimism with pessimism, a striving for success and security with an openness to failure and uncertainty. The Stoics recommended "the premeditation of evils," or deliberately visualizing the worst-case scenario. This tends to reduce anxiety about the future: when you soberly picture how badly things could go in reality, you usually conclude that you could cope. Besides, they noted, imagining that you might lose the relationships and possessions you currently enjoy increases your gratitude for having them now. Positive thinking, by contrast, always leans into the future, ignoring present pleasures.

Buddhist meditation, too, is arguably all about learning to resist the urge to think positively — to let emotions and sensations arise and pass, regardless of their content. It might even have helped those agonized firewalkers.

Burkeman says that very brief training in meditation, according to a 2009 article in *The Journal of Pain*, brought significant reductions in pain — not by ignoring unpleasant sensations, or refusing to feel them, but by turning nonjudgmentally toward them (also see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the source**).

From this perspective, the relentless cheer of positive thinking begins to seem less like an expression of joy and more like a stressful effort to stamp out any trace of negativity. Mr. Robbins's trademark smile starts to resemble a rictus, as Burkeman says. A positive thinker can never relax, lest an awareness of sadness or failure creep in. And telling yourself that everything must work out is poor preparation for those times when they don't. You can try, if you insist, to follow the famous self-help

advice to eliminate the word “failure” from your vocabulary — but then you’ll just have an inadequate vocabulary when failure strikes. The advice to try to eliminate negative words from your vocabulary shows how much the self-help industry is inspired by postmodern intellectualism (again: see my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry** as well as the thought distortion *NewSpeak* in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**). We have already looked at this tendency. As mentioned: in my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**, I describe how a Danish self-help guru is seducing one of his pupils, and wants to have the word guilt removed from his vocabulary. Here I also show how the personality ideal of the self-help industry reminds about a psychopathic personality.

The social critic Barbara Ehrenreich has persuasively argued that the all-positive approach, with its rejection of the possibility of failure, helped bring on our present financial crises. The psychological evidence, backed by ancient wisdom (as we have seen in connection with compensatory karma), certainly suggests that it is not the recipe for success that it purports to be.

Americans are a "positive" people - cheerful, optimistic, and upbeat: This is their reputation as well as their self-image. But more than a temperament, being positive is the key to getting success and prosperity. Or so we are told.

In the utterly original debunking book *Bright-Sided – How Positive Thinking is Undermining America*, Barbara Ehrenreich confronts the false promises of positive thinking and shows its reach into every corner of American life, from Evangelical megachurches to the medical establishment, and, worst of all, to the business community, where the refusal to consider negative outcomes - like mortgage defaults - contributed directly to the current economic disaster. With the myth-busting powers for which she is acclaimed, Ehrenreich exposes the downside of positive thinking: personal self-blame and national denial. This is Ehrenreich at her provocative best - poking holes in conventional wisdom and faux science and ending with a call for existential clarity and courage.

Tony Robbins reportedly encourages firewalkers to think of the hot coals as “cool moss.” Burkeman says with a good common sense: Here’s a better idea: think of them as hot coals. And as a San Jose fire captain, himself a wise philosopher, told *The Mercury News*: “We discourage people from walking over hot coals.”

Anyway: Tony Robbins says: “I built my fortune by modeling the success of others...Now **you** can copy **my** mindset and make **your** millions!”

We have already looked at how philosophy of existence is turned upside down in NLP. Philosophy of existence traditional says that you in your opinion formation and identity formation must be yourself, live in compliance with your own essence, and thereby achieve authenticity, autonomy, decisiveness and power of action.

If you follow NLP the direct opposite happens: In your opinion formation and identity formation you will strive after becoming something else than what you are, you will imitate (model) others, be a slave of others' ideas and ideals, and your actions will be characterized by irresoluteness and doubt. The paradox is, that while NLP is claiming to create the authentic, autonomous, resource-filled and competent human being, at the same time is doing the exact opposite: it is making people dependent of therapists, coaches, others' ideas and ideals; making them imitate and modeling so-called successful people, etc., etc. (read more about this paradox in my articles **Self-help and the Mythology of Authenticity**, **The hermeneutics of suspicion (the thought police of the self-help industry)** and **why I am an apostle of loafing**, and **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**)

Such existence-philosophical shipwrecks are much more widely spread than most people think. You see them in the talent shows and reality series of the Mass Media, where they have closed down the professional editorial offices, where there were people with knowledge about their areas. In the Mass Media the level of entertainment is higher valued than objectivity, so that all points of views are seen as equally good, and the contempt for professionalism goes from top to bottom.

The winners in this meritocracy are therefore not receiving their talents from being, from the Source itself; the Good, the True and the Beautiful, but from the masks and roles they are playing, from their ability to tell stories. It is a meritocracy of people wearing The Emperor's New Clothes. Such ideas of personal power and success are often based on a NLP induced, self-imagined X factor (I am a fantastic superhuman).

LGAT is a personal development training program in which dozens to hundreds of people are given several hours, to several days, of intense instruction aimed at helping participants begin to discover what is hindering them from achieving their full potential, and living more satisfied lives.

LGAT, or self-help programs, have also been developed for corporations and public agencies, where the focus is on improving management skills, conflict resolution, general institutional strengthening, and dealing with the eternal problem of employees who drink too much or use too many drugs (see my article **Management theory and the self-help industry**).

LGAT gurus claim to know to help people become more creative, intelligent, healthy, and rich. They focus primarily on the role interpersonal communication plays in self-esteem, and in defining our relationships with others. LGAT gurus claim to know why their participants are not happy, or why they are not living fulfilled lives. They assume everyone are being hindered by the same things, and that one approach will suit all.

Some LGAT gurus use public television and books as their vehicles. Others give seminars in hotel ballrooms. Some use infomercials and peddle books and tapes to the masses to help them on the path to self-realization and success.

It is a typical American phenomenon, which we see copied all over the world. It is penetrating everything, even on the highest political levels. We all know the concept of spin doctors. The famous coaches within the area travel around in the world as superstars, and their “shows” - with extremely high fees on tickets - are being attended by the highest placed politicians and business leaders, who worship them as divine beings.

Though some coaches within the area advocate visualization, self-hypnosis, and other techniques for achieving self-actualization, most LGAT programs focus on communication skills and the effect of language on thought and behavior. As with other personal development phenomena, the whole thing is mixed with religion, spirituality and philosophy: a New Age phenomenon.

As Carroll says, then the importance of the messenger and the way the message is delivered can't be overestimated in LGAT. The messenger must be believable. He or she must appear sincere. He must exude confidence. She must know how to use her voice and body to get her message across. He must be a master of communication skills. She must have wit and humour. He must be a raconteur. She must not only talk the talk but appear to clearly walk the walk as well. And he must do it with a large group and utilize the energy and enthusiasm of the group members to infect each other. If she or he is successful, the participants will leave charged up and ready to take on the world. The revival will have revived them. They will be running on sixteen cylinders. They will be tuned up, turbocharged, and empowered to change their lives. They will have experienced a peak experience.

In 2007 Denmark had a visit from Tony Robbins, who must be said to be the world's leading business coach and LGAT guru. The man, who is said to be the father of the concept of coaching itself, and who has coached Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela and many more. His books and dvds has reached out to more than 50 million people, and on a November evening the already mentioned researcher on science of religion Iben Krogdøl met him in Aarhus Arena together with 1.500 well dressed people, who had

paid up to \$600 in admission fee. She wrote about the experience in an article under the title *The Discreet Return of the Superhuman*

On the tickets was written: 'Life on the top - create your own fantastic life.'

Krogsdal writes in the article: "Anthony Robbins enters the scene wearing black jacket and cheek microphone. He asks how it can be, that some get the life they want - while others don't? Robbins answer is, that it neither is about good luck or background. Instead success or non-success is about thought-patterns, purely and simply. Life is created from the inside; the individual has the power over his own destiny.

"Robbins' message is simple: Within each human being there exists a leader - an inner giant - and this leader has to be awakened. The one who feels strong and believes unconditionally in himself, can become succesful and prosperous. The weak, on the contrary, achieves nothing.

"Robbins now engages the audience with some exercises: 'You have to feel power, you have to feel yourself on the top, and you have to do it without restriction. The inner critic has to be removed, if you want to achieve anything.'

"And the audience follow Robbins' requests. They stretch their hands forward and are in flock answering his directive question. Soon the assembly has changed to a self-celebrating, uncritical mass.

"Celebrate yourselves!' Robbins shouts. And people shout jubilant on command, while their exultation is shown on giant screens in the background.

"There only exist the limits you yourself set,' Robbins preaches, 'life can always get better!' The hall is boiling. People shout with joy, they scream, dance, jump. The speakers play 'Born to be Wild.'

"After 5 hours collective intoxication Robbins ends the show by telling an anecdote: As a twenty-four-year-old he was on a street asked for a coin by an old, male beggar. Robbins decided to teach the beggar a lesson and asked him, if it really only was a coin, he wanted?

"Robbins caricatures the beggar with a foolish facial expression and shows, how the beggar reached his hand forward and stupidly nods: 'Yes, just a coin.'

“Robbins now shows how he took a large bundle of bank notes up from his pocket and demonstratively turned over the pages of the bank notes, till he found a coin between them. The old man glared at the many money, took his coin and slunked silently off.

“Robbins asks the assembly: ‘What was the difference between the old beggar and me?’ And he answers: ‘The difference is that **I won't be contented!**’ He shouts his final point out to the jubilant audience: ‘All of us here: **We demand more!**’

“The jubilation will no end take; there is shouting, jumping, jubilation, applauding.

“The music is turned up, and Robbins runs around among audience and gives high-fives, before he leaves the hall.

Responsibility for own destiny? Krogstad asks.

It is the second time during a year, Tony Robbins visits Denmark and attracts thousands of coaches, publicity departments, self-employed, business leaders, politicians and private persons.

Krogstad writes that Robbins with his presentation of man as a self-determining being, and with his demand about constant progress, represents a pure and uncompromising neo-liberal growth-ideology. The individual is here accessed the total responsibility for his own destiny, all outside structures are set aside.

To judge from the ecstasy of the audience Robbins' message is falling in fertilized ground. The highly individualistic anecdote about man as his own life's sovereign creator apparently doesn't separate much from the audience's conceptions about, that we as individual persons can and need to lead ourselves towards a never-ending progress.

Robbins' anecdote is perhaps American, Krogstad continues, but it exists in a Danish version, which clearly shows itself in the whole of the self-improvement tendency, which increasingly takes possession of the Danish education- and working life itself. Self-improvement is today understood by most employees as something you quite naturally ought to occupy yourself with: You have to strive after achieving the good life - and the good the life is the life which *feels* good.

The meaning of life is emotionalized - and is reduced only to be about the individual person's happiness. The eye is directed inwards; my life is my own project, and I actualize myself by working with my own development.

It is Krogsdal's claim, that the working life in these years connects so close to the self-improvement paradigm, that work today, for many people, has become synonymous with self-improvement. And self-improvement is increasingly seen as the meaning of life itself. You are therefore all the time focused on your own development, and the goal for the constant self-improvement project is, that the individual actualizes himself. The good life is therefore the life, where the individual has actualized his or hers own dreams.

With the spread of this self-improvement ideology within, especially the past 10-15 years, the interest for the common, and for the community, has slipped more and more in the background. Instead of the historical conscious and social oriented citizen, steps forward now the self-conscious - but historical unconscious - human being.

Krogsdal writes: That is precisely the human being, who raises her hands towards Anthony Robbins in entire ecstasy over the optimistic anecdote about the individual person's path towards personal happiness. It is precisely the human being, who this evening in the arena doesn't recognize his or hers own roots in a social context. Here the right to wealth and happiness is taken for granted - while the connection to, and the debt to the community, are set aside.

Therewith the self-conscious human being represents a naive win-win ideology, which pictures life as a cornucopia of happiness, everybody can and ought to demand.

Perhaps the 1.500 people, which are celebrating themselves in the arena, therefore also can be seen as children of a welfare- and affluent society, which in a paradoxical way is in progress of undermining itself, by - direct against its own intention - producing a mentality, which doesn't recognize the individual person's debt to the collective, but on the contrary supports the individual person's right to demand more of everything to oneself.

The altogether uncritical reception of Anthony Robbins in Denmark, Krogsdal writes, can be seen as a frightening consequence of the self-improvement trend: When it only is about one's own happiness, you are evidently ready to give yourself totally away to the control of the feelings and therefore you disconnect from both reason and common decency.

Robbins' invitation to the assembly this Saturday evening in the arena is tremendous easy: Energize yourself and get a fantastic life - already now tonight!

At first it seems harmless. Why not celebrate yourself unrestrained, when you yourself (or your company) have paid for it? It is after all only about yourself. About that you in a few hours can become stronger and more happy. But the conception about, that this only is about me, and that my life only is my own project, expresses this Saturday evening's alarming collective repression: that the one who praises the right of the strong and doesn't tolerate own weakness neither tolerate others' weakness.

And it is precisely this repression, Krogstad writes, which makes the evening's mass intoxication so dangerous: that the individual not at all understands, what project he or she is participating in.

It is in itself frightening, she says, that 1500 Danes can worship the pampered conception, that you can get everything you demand by using an inner feeling of power. And that the misfortune of the beggar therefore only is connected with his own choices.

But the really frightening this evening is, Krogstad continues, that you precisely in a apparently harmless demander-ideology's name quite obvious, and to great amusement, caricature and taunt the weak human being, the depressed, the poor, the one who not are a part of the party. The beggar has after all only himself to thank for his own misfortune: His crime is that he hasn't demanded enough, and therefore he is presented by Robbins as a pure idiot. He neither deserves sympathy nor help - but becomes instead taunted and degraded. And, mind you, to great amusement for the assembly.

Krogstad ends her article with following words: It is a matter of a thought-provoking brutalization, which doesn't ought to remain unchallenged. There is every reason to talk against the individualistic self-improvement ideology, which Anthony Robbins represents. Because where the individual person's happiness is presented as the only goal, the eye for the community and for the fellow human being disappears together with the historical consciousness. And thereby also the memory about, how superhumans' contempt for weakness historical seen has developed into different totalitarian regimes (about how ego-structures develop into super Egos, political leaders and popular seducers such as Hitler and Stalin, read my article **The Philosophy of Karen Blixen**).

Perhaps it is also therefore, that Tony Robbins can be allowed to stand on a scene in Denmark in 2007 and make fun of an old beggar, while 1.500 strong people uncritical stretch their arms towards him, screaming in total ecstasy. Here is manifested, in

frightening sense, the right of the strong - also to be blind (also see my article **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching**. Here you can read about Tony Robbins' involvement in this cult (and control over it), and where he supposedly has reached the position as an "Oneness Blessing giver"; that is: some kind of divine being, who can bless other beings with his divine energy).

When reading Krogstad's report I remember another story about a beggar. This other story was told by the Jewish mystic and philosopher Martin Buber. It goes like this:

"When I was a child I read an old Jewish legend, which I didn't understand. The legend wasn't telling anything else than this: 'Outside the gates of Rome is sitting a leprous beggar waiting. It is the Messiah.' I met an old man and asked him: 'What is he waiting for?' And the old man answered something, which I at that time didn't understand, and first much later learned to understand. He said: 'He is waiting for you!'"

When Martin Buber in 1910 told the story of the beggar, the point already contained that, which a decade later should be the main point of his principle work, the wonderful poetic little book: *I and Thou*. And this point is: the *Thou*. The Messiah is only Messiah because of, and for "you". Life is a meeting with the *Thou* as the third beyond the *I* and the *It*. And not even the story itself – about the beggar – stands alone. It can only be understood through the old man's interpretation, through the dialogical principle.

The point of Tony Robbins' beggar story is the direct opposite, and it shows what I have been pointing out many times: New Age and the self-help industry are preaching a "spirituality" which message is the direct opposite of what all the different spiritual traditions are saying. Therefore I have called this aspect of The Matrix Conspiracy *The 666 Conspiracy* (read my article **The Matrix Conspiracy**).

There are examples of people having a psychosis after LGAT seminars. Two decades ago cathartic theories of screaming, pounding, fighting, sitting on the hot seat, and group confrontation were put into place in a number of therapy centers (see my article **Cathartic psychotherapies**). The popular therapies emerged out of Esalen and other "human potential" centers, growing out of groups like the Living Theater and the Theater of All Possibilities and evolving into myriad innovations like Bio-Energetics, Gestalt Therapy, and Psychosynthesis. Model confrontational programs, such as Synanon and its clones, were being praised left and right.

Another variant of the confrontation therapies appeared in the commercially sold large group awareness training programs such as Mind Dynamics, Direct Centering (aka Bayard Hora Associates, aka The Course, aka Naexus), Arica Institute, Insight Seminars, and Lifespring. These programs were sold to hundreds of thousands of customers over two decades, and some still exist in old, revised, and new forms. Marketed to individuals, organizations, and business and industry as experiential education, they typically use powerful psychological and social influence techniques, not always bringing about the advertised claims of success and profit to the buyer, and sometimes bringing psychological distress to the clients.

Varieties of these confrontation therapies and self-awareness programs are still with us two and three decades later; in fact, they're going strong as we see.

People are going bankrupt one after the other after having been involved in these groups. Criticism is often brutally crushed. Many LGAT gurus are so rich, that they can sue almost anyone. And that is precisely what they do. It is a scare tactic. Which company wants to be sued for running a critical story? These days none. Because the whole thing is also about eliminating critical thinking. Are you critical? Then you really are a nasty person/company. And there are examples on, that LGAT gurus have crushed newspapers' criticism, because they didn't want the hassle of dealing with the lawyers of these gurus. People, who were about to write critical about LGAT in books, have been stopped. The exact same tactic as Scientology, and it works; especially because it is a way of violating the freedom of speech, which has been governmentally accepted as legal.

So those running programs within LGAT must excel in persuasion skills. The trainers (coaches) are motivators. They must use their powerful communication skills to persuade the trainees to believe, that they only have experienced a small taste of the wonderful pleasure and fulfillment that awaits those who sign up for advanced training. In short: the trainers are not just teachers, they are sellers. Their main job is to motivate participants to buy more services, i.e., sign up for new courses.

The whole thing typical goes off as follows: you are being invited to attend a free course in for instance NLP. This course is about persuading you to buy an "actual" course in NLP. If you then go on and buy this course, then this course is about persuading you to buy a more advanced (more expensive) course and so on it continues. You are still not becoming that Einstein you would like to be. The only thing you might have learned, is how you yourself can become a coach; that is: a seller of courses (if you not have gone bankrupted). And if you complain, criticize, well then you must have psychological problems to deal with, and that also requires a course you must buy.

The fact that trainers are unlikely to do any follow-up on their trainees, except to try to persuade them to take more courses, indicates that their main interest is not in helping people lead more fulfilling lives (they can't, because the theories are wrong from the start – just look at the existence-philosophical shipwreck of NLP – and again, read my article **Cathartic psychotherapies**). No, the trainers have a sales job to do. They are paid commissions for the number of people they recruit and train, not for the number of people they truly help. It is not their interest/ability to do follow-up studies of their trainees. It is in their interest to do follow-up recruiting calls. Often this is done as hard pressure direct contact with participants, including phone-calls that border to harassment, according to some participants.

Some critics even think that recruitment is the main goal of the program. So there is a hard sell to sign up for future participants. Leaders encourage people to bring friends and family to a free session to celebrate their newfound love of life and invite them to enroll in the next available weekend, and hereafter pay the fee.

Personal development programs such as LGAT and NLP (and even cults like scientology) can point to many “successes.” They can demonstrate that their programs “work”. They can bring forth to testify on their behalf hundreds, if not thousands, of satisfied customers, among of them famous celebrities. But it is important to know, that testimonials do not validate a self-help program. Scientifically seen this is pure nonsense, and deeply manipulative. All talk about that testimonials are a proof, is a sign of pseudoscience. Furthermore, the sense of improvement, for instance peak experiences, might not be matched by improved behavior. Just because they feel they have benefited doesn't mean they have. Often they just have become a nuisance for their non-initiated surroundings (we have already looked at the problem about the question *To whom is it positive?*).

So, when looking at testimonials one must always consider the power of a long line of thought distortions such as, for example, *Subjective validation, Selective thinking, Confirmation bias, Motivated reasoning, Classical conditioning and placebo effects, and Proof by ignorance*

The problem with LGAT, NLP, and other similar programs - and their way of distorting philosophy - can be seen by comparing them with the relation between the Sophists and Socrates. Socrates was a true philosopher, he was seeking wisdom, an absolute truth that transcends us, and his way to reach this truth was through the Socratic dialogue. But this is certainly not what is meant with great communication skills within LGAT and NLP. No, LGAT and NLP must support the Sophists.

The Sophists were subjectivists and relativists. They didn't believe in any absolute truth that transcends us, but in, that there are many truths, which each of us create

through our senses and language. And because there is no objective truth-criterium to decide truth, each truth must be equally true; but not equally good, because some truths fascinate us more than others. And here we precisely have the slogan of the management theories: “It is not facts, but the best story, which wins!”

The Sophists were teachers of rhetoric, who against a fee, taught people how to persuade other people about their “truths”. Rhetoric is precisely the art of persuasion. Rather than giving reasons and presenting arguments to support conclusions, as Socrates did, then those who use rhetoric are employing a battery of techniques, such as emphatic assertion, persuader words and emotive language, to convince the listener, or reader, that what they say or imply is true. The Sophists taught their pupils how to win arguments by any means available; they were supposedly more interested in teaching ways of getting on in the world than ways of finding the truth, as Socrates. Therefore any charlatan is welcome.

Epilogue

On a more cheerful note, Bandler has sued Grinder for millions of dollars. As Carroll says with a smile:

“Apparently, the two great communicators and paradigm innovators couldn’t follow their own advice or perhaps they are modeling their behaviour after so many other great Americans who have found that the most lucrative way to communicate is by suing someone with deep pockets. NLP is big on metaphors and I doubt whether this nasty lawsuit is the kind of metaphor they want to be remembered by. Is Bandler’s action of putting a trademark on half a dozen expressions a sign of a man who is simply protecting the integrity of NLP or is it a sign of a greedy megalomaniac?”

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, negativity. This shows 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.

The article is in that way divided into 6 parts:

- 1) New Thought
- 2) The redefinition of karma and suffering
- 3) The Secret
- 4) The Law of Attraction is the law of black magic
- 5) Ethical problems connected with the Law of Attraction movement
- 6) The use of testimonials

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 that 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 onto 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 business man 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 result 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 American physician, psychologist, philosopher, and investigator in 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.”

The number of New Age promoters of the delusion of mind cures is staggeringly high. Television and 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. To name just a few: Barbera Brennan, Rosalyn L. Bruyere, David L. Cunningham, Cyndi Dale, Donna Eden, David Feinstein, Guy Finley, Richard Gerber, Burt Goldman (Quantum Jumping), Soleira Greene, Stanislav Grof (Holotropic Breathwork), Stephen 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 and Marianne Williamson.

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 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 their own fault: their bad thoughts, stinkin' thinkin', negative ideas, lack of faith, etc., cause all misery.

2) The redefinition of karma and suffering

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 article **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, that have 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 about 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 on 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 she already in the beginning 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 in others as well (as if the definition will decide what karma is). Also note that when she is talking about love she is talking about 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 that know the dangers and pitfalls, and which will lead you in the correct direction. As a 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 are their own fault, because they are thinking negative thoughts (or, as other ignorant religious people can claim: have done bad things in their past lives; are lacking faith, etc.). There are two main reasons:

1) The karma philosophy is about understanding the meaning of suffering (which New Thought is ignoring in the same way as 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 only can be realized by oneself. Just an example: Jesus was without original sin (negative karma), and yet he died suffering. That was due to that he took on other peoples' original sin. The same we see all enlightened masters do – 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 with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions.

So, when you in this way do your part of the work, then you will discover that the enlightened consciousness (God, Christ, Buddha), already have 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 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 is 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 is 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 not 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 with a transcendence of 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 re-

structure the ego's ownership to things, food, personal power, sexuality and emotions. Spiritual practice is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatic identification with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. First thereafter the mystical process can begin. And here begins what is called progressive karma, which also is 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 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 of life? How does man preserve 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 grab, which the material world has in 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 has today done an illusory work of trying to redefine this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction directly is becoming the 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 what is called negative karma or original sin. Compensatory karma is closely related to the material world, laws of nature, cycles of life, yes actually 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, which you can read about in my article **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method**.

There are cycles with success, where things come to you, and you flourish, and cycles with defeat, where they 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, this 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 one-sided is focusing on that the up-cycles are positive, while the down-cycles are negative. In this way it induces in people the thought distortion called False dichotomy. 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, as 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 that 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, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. 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 not is

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 *not* is. 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 in 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 middle. They do this through a contra-balancing movement; that is: a swing over in the opposite extreme. That is what is meant with 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 seems 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 art of life, where you are dancing between the opposites (as in the teaching of Yin and Yang), and through deep meditative-existential inquiry.

As long as your awareness is identified with thinking you will have lost the contact with your deeper being, and only exist in the movement of time. You'll have your identity in your lifestituation and be ignorant about the Source of Life. Therefore you will also suffer by being subject to the energy-laws and life-cycles in the movement of time. But suffering is closely connected with the fact, that you make resistance against impermanence. It is therefore 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 judgement.

Furthermore you have your free will either to 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 lead to Tzu-jen, spontaneity and naturalness. In Zen they for example talk about that when practising 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 they in the New Thought movement often quote these wisdomtraditions as if the New Thought ideology is in perfect harmony with these. The fact is that New thought is an extreme example of the illusion of control, when believing that you via the "power of thought" can attract (control) everything you can dream of.

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

This is because, that when you practise intensively, then you in a short time have to run through a lot of existential stuff that has to do with your painbody and later your past lifes. Therefore 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 (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 though you wake up to 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 wisdomtraditions consider this stuff as 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 deep 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 energyfields, as well as their lawfulness within the wholeness, which forms so-called karmacially 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. Experiences from here are experiences such as kundalini, clairvoyance, astral travels, mythological visions, miracles, channeling, UFOs, memories from past lifes, Near-Death Experiences, possession states.

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

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 horizon 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 in you is sleeping. And therewith the wholeness is sleeping. When the contents of the consciousness fall silent, the consciousness itself begins to light 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 indicates a map of the inner journey towards awakening, which is known in all wisdomtraditions.

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

This refers to the three forms of states 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 states the wholeness can be in can also be described as the personal time, the collective time and the universal time. These three states can further more - when we talk about going through them in a spiritual development process - be said to reflect the structure of the education novel. The education novel is especially 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) – and which actually, in very symbol satiated form, describes a spiritual development process. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is another example on 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 make themselves current in the image of reality. The clearness from your dissolved and evaporated thoughts and content will expand the consciousness out towards the borders, behind which the collective common human structures exist.

The thoughts become in other words less personal, more common, more collective, deeper, more philosophical. And these, common deep thoughts of mankind, your consciousness can *see*, by force of its increased clarity, as visions (primordial images, religious images, symbols, teachers, higher worlds, other dimensions etc.). Your consciousness then observes a worldaspect of vibrant, soundfilled energyfields, which shimmer in symbols and colours. It observes a world of auric colours, archetypical symbols and yantric or other energetical structures. It begins to sense karmacially phenomena.

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

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

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

But the collective time is a very dangerous intermediate area. The temptation to here, either to 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 in "The Divine Comedy". Tolkien about it in "The Lord of the Rings", Ursula Le Guin in "The Wizard Ged". The shamans had to dare the journey to the underground kingdoms with their shadow-inhabitants, demons and dead. And they had to handle the journey to the heavenly regions, where gods and goddesses, heros and heroines, accomodated. The mystics had to experience the descent to hell with its belonging devils, fire and sulphur and torment and suffering. And they had to handle get off to heavenly hosts of angels and light-creatures, if the temptation was as difficult to resist as the sexual impact of the devil.

The creativity, and the reality-creating ability, is in the collective time set free in fascinating degree. However you are, in this astral state, still on the plane of the collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and you are in danger ending up in a spiritual crisis. A spiritual crisis is an expression of, that you have gone out in the collective time with your Ego, without 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 is broken down or being exceeded out of hand, for example through LSD or through one-sided development techniques, or in shock, the consciousness and the personality will slide crucial out of balance and therefore

suffer. The Ego will sideways with its personal identity and lifesituation, suddenly experience break in 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, memories from past lives. These experiences will, because that the Ego's nature has not been realized, be characterized by unreality and division, anxiety of going mad and anxiety of death, or the experience of a total meaningless and dark extinct world.

2) The personality can receive informations through the break in of astral and collective energies, images and symbols: information about, what approaches human beings from outside (from other people, from chance, destiny, life etc.). However informations through collective images are contradictional and split. Many have therefore been seduced by these colourful experiences and have remained there, with the ability to see the aura, with the ability to create images, to create in reality.

When the collective time is used spiritual in genuine sense, then the Ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside. However the same forces can be used for other intensions. It can be 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 themselves be turned in through the Ego-structures and open creative channels, create super Egos, create political leaders and popular seducers.

The problem, or the danger, does not consist in using 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 honour, or blows itself up, the transformationprocess of consciousness stops, the growth forward towards the goal: illumination and later enlightenment.

The most appropriate in spiritual practice is in other words to use the dreaming state of the wholeness, to begin to practice 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 an opening in the wholeness spiritual seen correct, then this can give your total development a considerably lift forward.

It is in other words very important that you do not move accent from awake everyday life (for example a good earth-bound job, ordinary people and family) to dreams and sleep, 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 regular and well ordered 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 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, intensive, 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 genuine 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 both self-enquiry and enquiry 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 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 beliefs in 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 on 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, advice 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 preachers 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 of 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 healed (got success) after they began thinking more positively and developed some self-confidence. Such anecdotes are often used as "proof" of 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 thousands letters from readers of *The Secret*.

Before the film and the book were released Rhonda Byrne (born 12 March 1951) 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 1910 get-rich-quick classic *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace D. Wattles, a book that led her to a deep immersion into 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, then New Age will, in the future, in large scale be based on the ability to tell a good new story. This will often be mixed with an ability to use modern technology within computer science and production of films. 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 though, and a New Age guru, 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 now is defending his story as being true, against critics, who say that the story is a hoax. Hempel precisely have a background working in the computer and IT industry (see my article **Time travel and the fascism of The WingMakers Project**).

Or take the Human Design System, which is 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 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 about that what I call **The Matrix Conspiracy** (which is a strong advocate for the use of hypnosis and hypnotherapy) will be made propaganda for 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 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 titlecard, “The Secret was suppressed,” though we never learn how, or by whom). This is also an example of pseudohistory within New Age.

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 visualises a brand new bicycle and gets one from his dad; a woman focuses on some jewellery in a shop, and gets it; a man is visualizing a parking space, and vupti, there it is! At one point the “miracles coach” Joe Vitale likens the universe to a giant shopping catalogue. 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. Its really that easy.”

On the official website (www.theseecret.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 Aladdins 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 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 – with that Rhonda Byrne, one day at the end of 2004, discovered the secret laws and principles behind the whole of the universe, and therewith made her able to see through the secret behind everything, that has made the world’s large 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, by first view, talks about ancient spiritual/universal laws. However these laws become distorted to fit together with the management theories.

It is shortly told a giant manipulation-project, which purpose is to scrape so many money to itself as possible. The circulation of the idea happens via multi-level-marketing structures - that is to say: sales networks, which are built up in a pyramid structure – the ideas that also lie behind the illegal pyramid games.

The central concept in The Secret is – as we have seen - ”The Law of Attraction” – that is to say: if you think in compliance with this law, then you can attract a successfull life as it fit you. This is because, as the book says, that your thoughts directly creates the world, including the physical world. Everything that happens to you of negative or positive, is in other words due to your own negative or positive thoughts. You therefore have to change these negative thoughts with more positive thoughts.

Here the book, apparently in compliance with the wisdomtraditions, 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 you, not as something negative, but as something positive. It has nothing to do with the spiritual concept of love where you feel compassion with 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

It is this demonical turn I have referred to as the 666 aspect of the Matrix Conspiracy. The Law of Attraction idea is the most obvious example of the use of black magic/satanism within the Matrix Conspiracy (read more about the 666 turn in my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**).

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

The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego’s incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: “it is no use with me!”; or: “Wonderful me!”. Both, either the denial or the confirmation of the ego, maintain the ego-proces, the ego-identity, and the ego-centralization. The ego’s religion and exercises are the ego’s needs and longings and will: I want to, 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 where it is about moving the focus away from the denial of the ego (the negative, evil), and encourage the confirmation of the ego, which is considered as 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 unconditional 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 are

synonymous with healthy thoughts, and that such thoughts are good thoughts, light thoughts, super thoughts.

I don't know which research has shown 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 Secret* does 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 also is a 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 like to be like, and use this model to create your own self-image. When this self-image is ready, it is time to put sound on. 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 not is true, but only is 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 *only* is 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 only is 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-subjectivistic (see the thought distortion *Self-refuting arguments* in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

Besides this self-contradiction, then 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 that religion, and therefore spirituality, has been reduced to psychology; a reductionism; a 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 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 with a restructuring of the ego's ownership to things, food and power, and they re-structure sexuality and emotions. First thereafter the mystical process can begin; where your so-called progressive karma (good karma) is beginning to work. Again: it should now 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 also have 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 spiritual, then the ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside, and the energy is turned into the now, and therefore in towards the source and the spiritual dimension. The people, who around a spiritual teacher, constitute an energy-mandala, are in this way made transparent for a higher common human spirituality.

In a lesser realized person's use of energy the contact with, and the ability to manipulate with such collective forms of astral energy, can be used for other purposes than spiritual. It can be creative, ego-affirmative, political, demonical, and so on.

The powers that, by realized spiritual teachers are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same powers can be turned in through the ego-structures, and therewith into past and future, and fragmentation (conflict). In this way there can be opened creative channels, created super egos (super thoughts), created 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 history and from literature. In the story of the temptation in the desert, we can see these possible ways of using the energy pictured in anticipated form. Here you see the possibility of using the freedom and the power, to elevation of the ego and the consequent power and material glory. But Jesus abstains from this deification of the ego. It is also known from the Faust myth, described by for example Goethe and Thoman Mann.

When you in a selfish way use the powers from the collective history of the astral plane, and which demonical astral beings will help you with (because the ego phenomenon is their magnet of attraction), you can create personal power and material glory. That is the essence of Black Magic, and it is the background for the creation of the concept of the Law of Attraction (though 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, 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 very manipulating. 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**).

You can in short not 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 contra-balanced through the opposite categories.

I will repeat what we already have examined: as soon as your thoughts spread themselves too much out in an extreme, the energy-system compensates by seeking to bring itself back to the balance of the middle. The system does this by seeking over towards the opposite extreme (for instance from perfectionism to a feeling of fiasco). That is: through a contrabalancing, a compensation. The energy works as a pendulum. The more energy, which is invested in an extreme of a pair of opposites, the larger the swing in the opposite direction will become (read more in my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

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 has a problem with being too fat, then this is due to that you think 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 on 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 one simply think ‘thin thoughts’, refrains from observing fat people and follows 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 on 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 on, that 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 is as ethical problematic. Sick, weak and poor people are namely told, that their disease, weakness or poverty are their own fault, because they think sick, weak and poor thoughts. The examples on, how they instead shall think, are as absurd as Byrne´s own example: for example are cancer-sick people told, that they miraculously can heal their disease by watching funny films in three weeks, or by having send a few Gratitude-stones 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 correct, then such statements, as mentioned, are inducing a false dichotomy in people, that 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" wasn't good enough. She said: "Well, you get what you are asking for!" She simply thought, that the "wrong" men was 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 with 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 away 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 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 (see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

In the view of nature in natural science, nature is reduced to atomic particles, empty space, fields, electromagnetic waves and particles etc., etc. Characteristic is that nature is explained, and is 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 the supporters forward to combine it with an instrumental (technological) view of nature. This conception of nature is seeing it as pure material, or alone 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 to say: between inner and outer nature. Man is by force of his inner nature radical different from, and is standing over, the outer nature. This is, among other things, due to, that he, with reason and science, is in the position to master nature.

By the way, this thought characterizes almost all traditional Western philosophy, where that to philosophize is due to thinking alone, even though the theories within this tradition in other crucial points are highly contradictory. You find it in Christianity, in Descartes' view of Man as a self-dependant 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 impression of the discussion about the damage, which we have caused nature, there has in the later years been worked out conceptions, which claims, that nature has a value in itself. It is not only a means, but ought to be respected for its beauty and richness. It is by the way a point of view, which also is well known from older times. In lack of better you could call it a communicative view of nature, since it is implying, that we in some sense have a community with nature.

And as the above shows, then these two views of nature are inseparable connected with a 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 sensuous nature, 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 the alienation, in the modern world, and the many out-specializations of areas of knowledge, have led to, that there in today's society rules 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 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 technical competence we have gone far. The whole of that part of our lives has 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 about coming to an understanding with each other. It presupposes that we know our life-world. Among other things Habermas understands the life-world as the horizon of linguistic ability, cultural knowledge and individual skills, which is the condition in order to understand both the family jargon, as well as the tone between children, and in all the many communities. By the way Habermas argues for, that the difference between instrumental and communicative reason is given with fundamental structures in language, with different types of speech acts.

The core in Habermas' critique of culture is that the instrumental reason has conquered terrain from the communicative reason. The systems (the market and the bureaucracy) have colonized the lifeworld. This means, among other things, that political and philosophical questions are being made into technical questions, as when an election campaign is about details in the economical planning, as well as it leads to that we treat each other as means, or as items, which have come on a wrong course (the treatment society).

The instrumental reason is controlling and gets control. In accordance with Habermas there is nothing wrong in this in technical respect. The problem arises when this attitude come to characterize ordinary relationships between humans, as well as areas where values should be crucial; that is: in philosophical respect. It is also this attitude, which has caused that we, with reference to human problems, always shall hear what the specialists think, for instance economists, sociologists, historians, psychologists, biologists, etc. etc.

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

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

Another failure, where the wholeness-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 has investigated 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 which can be studied, be measured or manipulated, but as an 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 economical powers. This corresponds to the instrumental view of Man and nature.

Buber refuses the idea about that humans are isolated, autonomous beings, who act from abstract rules. Instead the reality exists between humans as they discover and change each other. Reality is shortly said dialogical in its nature. Buber describes God as the eternal THOU, the Thou, who never can 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, then Man, in this way, can relate to life in two radical different ways: either as a subject who experiences something, namely an object, an It, which he is standing outside. Or as a person who is in the 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 with itself. The basic purpose in 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 I and Thou. First in this *between* is Man's way of being constituted. The relationship with the Thou is in this way the mirror in which the "I" can discover itself. The relationship is a philosophical sparring partner.

In accordance with Buber, then the whole of the human existence goes off in the tension between challenge and reaction, which dialogical seen can be seen 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, in complete silence listen to the call of the Thou - hear the eternal Thou ask: "Where are you in thy life?"

And by observing your reaction - that is to say: see your way of being and discover yourself - you can answer: "Here I am in my life, this is what I am!"

Buber has herewith shown an important philosophical exercise, namely that to see the relationship with the surrounding world as 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.

Over the temple in Delphi was written: "Know thyself". And the intention with Socrates' dialogues on 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 dialogue 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 Lifeartist (see my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist**).

Our most intense identity-experiences we paradoxically enough have 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 for, 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 all the time something new? It is something which constantly is changed and 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: "By the Thou am I created. As I am created, I say Thou. All real life is meeting".

Man is a communicative being.

So the relationship is in connection with identity the mirror in which you can discover yourself. Without the relationship you are nothing. To be is to be in relationship, which is the actual life. You only live in 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-forgetful engaged in the relationship, and it is the lack of ability to understand this, which causes conflict.

The reason why that there no understanding is of the relationship is that you use relationships to achieve something, become something, to be remoulded, 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 as we see it unfolded in the Law of Attraction movement.

Another Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, worked, with inspiration from 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 a relation with, or in a meeting with "The Other". In the other's face, in thy neighbour's appearance, you meet an unfounded (metaphysical understood) demand about 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 to the world. Man, and also language, is constituted by the indispensable connection with the Otherness - (as we remember, then also Niels Bohr 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 for 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 in accordance with Levinas *The Other* whom you are standing face-to-face with, the other person. This relationship is the foundation of ethics, and not a system, or thought constructions created by idealists or subjectivist as The Law of Attraction devotees. So just like in Buber there also in Levinas is a disposition to a philosophical life-practice very similar to the philosophy of Krishnamurti.

The Law of Attraction's lack of understanding 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 of 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 to them.

Note that it is not only Byrne who answers in this way; it is a typical answer from Secreters, who of course always are asked these kinds of questions; for example in relation to children who are getting raped and murdered. And non-secreters 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 Second World War. The idea would actual be very useful in order to justify crimes in this style. It is, as mentioned, a way of thinking that is completely devoid of ethical thinking – 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**.

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) – as well as that all wisdomtraditions also are used to confirm them. But these people become – just like the wisdomtraditions - 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, which the authentic spiritual traditions try to explore, change and restructure, are namely in the film directly used to manipulate with. 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. Without any philosophical or scientific training. And 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 wallow itself in the philosophical viewpoints relativism/subjectivism – that is to say: philosophical viewpoints, which can justify the management theoretical idea about, that it is not facts, but 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 on the worst distorted (see my article **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies**).

The Secret’s performers/followers manipulative sign themselves with all kinds of titles. Here is some examples from the book (which, by the way, also is 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 them 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 send out returns to the Source. And that source is you.”

As Mel Lawrenz says in an article (The Secret-Revealed): “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 egoless 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 – what precisely is 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.

An extremely manipulating thought, because if we take the true spiritual laws, then they say, that there is a duality in the Universe 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 there comes an overweight of one of the poles 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 in the Law of Attraction in relation to the above-mentioned:

- 1) The believers close themselves in 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 causes a lack of ability to realize the laws of dualism. Their so-called exercises - which they think the idea of the Law of Attraction helps them with - is 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 train compassion with other people (see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**).

This causes that their empathy and compassion with other people can be hard to discover, illustrated Rhonda Byrne's words: If you as a woman feels you are too fat, then turn your back to fat people, so that their fat thoughts don't influence you - and in the words about, that peoples' suffering are their own fault, and that you should turn your back to 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 claim 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 over, 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, that they don't 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 stop of any spiritual development, 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, (instead of their easy-solution-to-everything-quest), were seeking other sources 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 then of course, partly that it says it is proven by science, but also that all great thinkers, artists and spiritual traditions, support it. As mentioned then 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 manipulative 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, then it is only in relation to that New Thought and the Law of attraction devotees themselves use this concept and therefore have a burden of evidence – I would not demand scientific proof if a theory not was 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 will power. 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 myself 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 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 that 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 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 sceptic 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 showing 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 not even are 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 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, to the most frightening thought: what if that psychopaths, massmurderes, dictators, terrorists, child abusers, etc., etc., got hold of the fact, that that there has arised 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 standards for good and evil!
- 2) Moral values are what you subjective *feel* is good!

Part 3: Karmic consequences of The Matrix Conspiracy

The ego-inflation in the New Age and self-help environment

The ”positive” aspect of a spiritual crisis is the most self-deceptive, because it usually ends up in ego-inflation and total lack of self-realization (read more about spiritual crises in my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

Self-help gurus, and New Age devotees, can be breathtaking in their combination of self-confidence and absurdity, where they with no hesitation are bullying highly educated and/or experienced experts. They don't care whether it is scientists, philosophers, or mystics, what they care about is whether such persons dare to be critical towards the ideology of the self-help industry (see my articles **Management theory and the self-help industry** and **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**).

The reason is that the subjectivism and relativism in these environments (as well as in many other areas), eliminate critical thinking (discrimination), and thereby makes you vulnerable for magical thinking and ego-inflation.

Through this we have reached the highest level of postmodern development for better or for worse. The same fully individualized core of personality, which makes us able to step out of the past's fixed and subconscious attachment, has itself become our main interest, center for our identity in a degree, that almost all our awareness are directed inwards in a global seen exceptional narcissism.

Individually we have created a large scale self-image, which in a quite high degree is based on assumptions/ideas. This self-image we almost continuously defend, by filtrating the impressions we receive from the world. We want to be in peace with our self-images, and quite convenient we therefore have created a cultural pluralism (=culture relativism), which forbid actual value judgment. I have my truth, and you have yours. Respect! Self-accept! I am Okay, you're Okay! It all run together in a fear of hierarchies, or a fear that someone might know something better than yourself, and where it is political incorrect to claim that something is higher than something else. "You judge", is the same as "you condemn."

Within the New Age and self-help environment this has opened the doors for people claiming just about anything about themselves and spirituality, without having any knowledge or experiences. At the same time the enormous alternative grey market of private educations offer people educations, where they in one or two weekends can get themselves a certification in just about anything within spirituality. If you think that the only thing left is a weekend education to enlightened master, then I can tell you that it already exists in the Indian Oneness movement, where you can get enlightened in 21 days, and get a certificate. If you then ask, that no serious person would buy this, then I can tell you that the famous American success guru Tony Robbins is one of main figures behind, and that thousands of people follow it, hereunder a large group of celebrities. I will return to this in the end of this article.

For a couple of years ago I had to spend some days with a meditation teacher in Los Angeles. He had a certificate and quite a large group of followers. To my astonishment I discovered that he actually didn't had any meditation-practice. He wasn't meditating in the mornings, afternoons, evenings, or any other time. At one time he showed me that he could sit in the lotus position, and that I didn't understood meditation, and wouldn't do any progress, because I wasn't sitting in this position when I was meditating. It was impossible to lead a normal dialogue with him, he was the teacher and couldn't be adjusted. There wasn't any sign of experiences in what he

told, or any interest in spirituality at all. The only thing he was interested in was his business as meditation teacher.

It is clear that the many people within New Age and self-help who have been caught up in this, will spoil their spiritual practice, if they actually have any – it will leave the rails, and end up blind. But worst of all, they will lead other people on the wrong track as well.

The great Tibetan meditation-master Sogyal Rinpoche says in his book *The Tibetan book of Living and Dying*:

”The most important is to avoid to get caught in the ”shopping mentality”, I see everywhere in the West: to ”go shopping” from master to master, from teaching to teaching, without any continuity or ongoing practice. Almost all masters in all traditions agree, that the essential is to master one path to truth, and this you do by following this path to the end with heart and mind, at the same time as you relate open and respectful towards others and others’ insights.”

Ego-inflation happens when the ego has embezzled itself energy, which rightly belongs to the collective time. The collective time manifests itself in a widely and indefinite area, for example could a broad spectrum of common human activities and organizations be called manifestations of the collective time: parties, state formations, wars, work communities, concerts, clans, tribes and sects, mass psychological phenomena, religious parishioners, fashion streams, group souls, etc.

When the ego is getting inflated there comes a feeling of, that the “old” ego has been altered, even disappeared. This feeling is sensed a being good, positive, yes it can even be a peak experience. The illusion is that the ego hasn’t disappeared, but instead has been inflated. Therefore the dark side of the ego, the whole complex of thought distortions, also has been inflated.

Ego-inflation is the cause of the sense of improvement, healing, or religious experiences people can have, when for example working with therapy, coaching, healing, clairvoyance, or when they have discovered a new ideology, religious or political. It is closely related to thought distortions such as *Subjective validation, Communal reinforcement, Groupthink, Illusion of control, Classical conditioning and placebo effects*. – see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**.

There are three main forms of ego-inflation: intellectual, identifi- cal and euphorical inflation.

1) Intellectual ego-inflation

Intellectual ego-inflation is extremely widely spread, especially today where so much knowledge is made common, and where practically everybody goes through one or the other form of theoretical education, or at least get knowledge of it through the medias. Intellectual ego-inflation is in fact one of the fundamental hindrances for the opening in towards the source, a malfunction in the mind, which is the crucial cause of the ignorance, conflict and sufferings of Mans (see my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**).

Intellectual ego-inflation has to do with lack of rationality. You take your assumptions, conceptions and values as absolute truths (hereunder subjectivism and relativism), whereby you end up in a contradiction between your thoughts and lived life. It is actually a lack of ground connection.

In general, in intellectual circles, in cultural connections, and in the political life, they have always accepted intellectual ego-inflation – but as mentioned: it is one of the most crucial causes of all the conflict, war and violence, which the world is characterized by. People and their opinions and –isms, political directions etc., all of it is, as a rule, mainly an intellectual play characterized by a contradiction between thoughts and lived life. One is idealist, another realist, one is Marxist, atheist, another Christian, charitable, but if you look these people after in their existence – in their lived life – then you soon discover the contradictions.

Kierkegaard called it “the litany madness”; people can repeat the right doctrines and principles by rote, but when it comes to reality, to their way of living, then you discover all the contradictions.

Within the alternative environment of New Age and the self-help industry, intellectual ego-inflation is, as mentioned, extremely widely spread, and when the game, as here, is about the development of Man, about the depths of the mind, about archetypical powers, about the source of life, then intellectual ego-inflation can be a hazardous play. When the intellectual knowledge begins to approach religious areas, wisdom of life, therapy, meditation, spirit, then the ego can misjudge itself by being intoxicated by its intellectual understanding of deep phenomena. It is easy to understand the profound in an intellectual way. Everybody can say: “meditation is to become silent, without thoughts, without words, images”, but try to be silent, try to be awake without thoughts.

It is a widely spread misunderstanding in the meditation-circles of New Age and self-help, that meditation consists in being completely without thinking (time after time I

have been criticized for that I emphasize the significance of philosophy in the meditation process). An enlightened master has admittedly no need of thinking, of philosophy, because he is in a condition of being (though he always uses a philosophical kind of counseling – see my article **Philosophical counseling as an alternative to psychotherapy**). But a person, who then just repeats this (“I have no need of thinking, of philosophy, because I am in a condition of being”), *without* being enlightened, has a serious problem with ego-inflation.

Socrates was fully aware of the problem in this, when he consistently called himself philosopher (a lover of wisdom, one who seeks wisdom, but who has not yet found it) – and *not* a sage (guru/enlightened master). It namely gives ground connection. All people, who are not enlightened, are in need of thinking, of contemplation, of reflection – of *philosophy*.

Many people caught up in intellectual ego-inflation (and the other two types as well) commit the thought distortion called Nondual bias. Nondual bias arises when you describe something as nondual, while forgetting that you can't describe anything without implying the negation of it.

The only thing that can be said to be nondual is the wholeness. According to the Taoistic teaching of Yin and Yang there isn't anything beyond the world. You can't see the world from outside. You are in the world and you can only describe something from its opposition. What is the good? This you understand if you know what the evil is. You can't say anything about the world as a whole, because you can't put the wholeness in opposition to anything. The wholeness is therefore the indescribable (Tao).

So clear thinking, and therefore clear communication, involves, according to Taoism, an epistemological, a so-called gnoseological, dualism (Yin and Yang). Clear, or unambiguous, description, has the distinction between subject and object, image and reality, as a necessary precondition. We have to discriminate between subject and object, image and reality, in order to communicate unambiguously. And we have to discriminate between a long line of other oppositions as well: under one called Yin and Yang. And this discrimination is characterized by the knowledge that oppositions are complementary to each other, because they mutually exclude each other and at the same time necessarily must supplement each other. If your thoughts slip out in one extreme you must remember the other extreme and bring it in. If you confuse oppositions, you must separate them (read more about complementarity in my article **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr**).

Unclear, or ambiguous, thinking, or communication, arises when you either are confusing the oppositions, or are thinking in one extreme of a pair of opposites. That is: dualistic unbalance, which creates thought distortions.

Clear thinking and communication therefore also involve critical thinking, where you try to spot thought distortions. Such a critical thinking must both be directed in towards the subject as well as out towards the object. And therefore clear thinking and communication are an ethical practice.

In meditation circles they often commit the Nondual bias by saying that meditation is to be completely without thoughts, because the enlightened consciousness (the wholeness) is without thoughts. This is without doubt a comforting thought for many people who might have had bad experiences within the area of thinking (for example education). They can then attack, for example critical thinkers, for being dual (that is: on a lower plane of consciousness), while themselves being nondual, and therefore on a higher level of consciousness. They just forget that they themselves are using thinking in order to communicate this, and that in a very unclear and ambiguous, even insulting way. In this way Nondual bias is used in combination with another thought distortion called *Truth by Authority* which I will return to. An actually enlightened master would never do this, because he knows he must think in order to communicate. And in this thinking he uses the complementarity principle, and the art of discrimination.

Therefore: always first look at how unambiguous/ambiguous so-called spiritual teachers, gurus, New Agers, and other people, etc., use their communication, before taking their claims seriously.

There are also many people caught in spiritual crises of different types, or clairvoyants, mediums channelers, etc., who experience non-ordinary phenomena, and where images and reality in their descriptions flow together in one big confusion. It can be very flattering to hear, and sound very “nondual”, but in reality they express themselves, not only unclear and ambiguous, but directly obscure. So instead of taking them seriously, you should remember that obscurantism means hostility towards enlightenment, or simply: darkness. So who knows what it is that expresses itself through them (about spiritual crises, see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

You can also see the Nondual bias in action when New Agers claim that their techniques, systems, therapies, methods, etc., etc., are nondual, or holistic, which is another word for nondualism. Here it is also often used as attacks on critics. The most

known example is the so-called “integral” method of Ken Wilber (see my article **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method**).

The Nondual bias is also active in philosophical theories of mind such as materialism and idealism.

An authentic spiritual practice can be said to contain three aspects:

- 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 (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 the spiritual practice**)

Intellectual the whole thing with development, with dream-understanding, with therapy and chakras, is very easy to understand. And very easy to tell others about – and get success on. There is incredible many in the world today, who speaks and talks about energy and chakras without ever really having had experiences with chakras and energy. This is intellectual theft. It is self-deception, it is ego-inflation – and it will unavoidably lead to misguiding of others.

Add to this the weird phenomena within New Age and the self-help industry, where most of the followers take an education as therapist, coach, clairvoyant, even spiritual teacher, without having any experiences (there are not many people in New Age, which you could characterize as disciples, students). Furthermore there are the many New Age speculators, that constantly are speculating in creating new forms of therapies, techniques and systems, which are deeply filled with scientific, philosophical and spiritual distortions – precisely because of the lack of training (see my articles **Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**, **Six common traits of New Age which distort spirituality**, and **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**).

Furthermore: a special danger in relation to the self-help industry is, that secularization here apparently has been removed. Personal development has directly been introduced on EU's project on lifelong learning and education. You therefore meet it everywhere in society: in schools, education, workplaces, etc. I seriously

think this is a sign of the rising of a very dangerous ideology, which I have called **The Matrix Conspiracy**.

The tool to be used against intellectual ego-inflation is in other words rationality and critical thinking, therefore philosophical training, where you investigate the validity of your assumptions, conceptions and values, and seek after coherence between your thoughts and lived life.

2) Identifical ego-inflation

Identifical ego-inflation is of two kinds: 1) Identification with an outer power, which not belongs to the ego (an institution, a teacher, others' techniques, meditations-centres, one's role, etc.). 2) Identification with an inner power, which nor belongs to the ego (God, master, healing energy, the collective time, collective images, etc.).

The tool to be used against this form of ego-inflation is authentic spiritual practice; that is to say: where you understand the difference between the content of consciousness and the form of consciousness – that in neutrality to separate yourself from the content of consciousness, for thereby to direct yourself towards the form of consciousness; discrimination, which again is a central part of critical thinking (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice**).

3) Euphorical ego-inflation

The euphorical ego-inflation is mainly due to up-streaming energy. There are then real transformation-processes in the chakra-system, and the transformed, or released, energy is rising upwards – it feels and is described this way, for then, in the consciousness, to bring about states of ecstasy, spiritual intoxication, exaltation, blissfulness. Oneness-consciousness as a spiritual *crisis* belongs to euphorical ego-inflation. Mystics in the West have called this euphorical ego-inflation “jubilatio”. It can escalate and completely take the ground connection away from a human being, so that you think, that you can fly, that you will be carried by angels. You fly in Sukavati, in Firdaus, in Paradise, in Elysium, as a balloon in the blue air.

The euphorical ego-inflation lies behind oneness-consciousness as spiritual crisis; that is to say: it is not a real experience of enlightenment, but precisely a crisis; rather than being a genuine mystical experience, it is a so-called peak experience.

It is without doubt the euphorical ego-inflation, which lies behind the so-called Deeksha phenomenon (transfer of enlightened energy or oneness-consciousness - see

my article **The philosophy of Karen Blixen** about transmission of energy and consciousness).

The Deeksha phenomenon is today specially connected with the Oneness/Deeksha-movement, which is founded by Amma and Bhagavan, two Indian gurus, wife and husband, who claim they have created the entire Universe (and are the first 100% Avatars throughout history) and that mankind will get enlightenment only if we will co-operate with them.

This movement spreads as a lightning these days, with slogans as: "Become enlightened in 21 days!" (For a huge sum of money of course). Thousands of people walks around and are claiming they are enlightened, and themselves able to give the enlightenment forward to others. After you yourself have become "enlightened" you yourself are becoming an "Oneness blessing giver", and ready to make money. You are even getting a certificate in this. Why on Earth waste time training yourself cognitional and ethical, when you after all just can have the enlightenment transferred by an Oneness blessing giver?

In parenthesis remarked, then many of these "enlightened" people never have experienced anything at all, but have become seduced into a web of lies, because the movement functions in that way, that you yourself shall get hold of new members by telling about how your life has been changed after you now have become enlightened – and you will after all prefer to keep a straight face to members you yourself have brought about. That is: they are also characterized by other forms of ego-inflation.

The spreading of the message is functioning in precisely the same multi-level-marketing-sales-networking-way as Large Group Awareness Training programs (LGAT), The Law of Attraction and so on – see my articles **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)** and **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction** - probably because of the involvement of the famous American success coach Tony Robbins, who has trained the movement's teachers in success coaching (read more about this in my article **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching**).

Tony Robbins has often been connected with NLP, and LGAT. He is probably the most successful "graduate" of NLP. He started his own empire after transforming from a self-described "fat slob" to a firewalker to (in his own words) "the nation's foremost authority on the psychology of peak performance and personal, professional and organizational turnaround."

Robbins says: “I built my fortune by modeling the success of others...Now **you** can copy **my** mindset and make **your** millions!” Tony Robbins is himself apparently a designated Oneness blessing giver, and oneness blessing is apparently a regular part of his seminars today.

The mystics (for example Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Seuse) discriminated between “jubilatio” and “inflammatio”, the ecstasy and the inflammation. And the euphorical inflammation is dangerous, very dangerous (see my articles **The awakening of kundalini**, **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**, and **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching**).

The tools to be used against this ego-inflation is partially ground connection (Hara, earth bound work, preferably with other people, for example as a social- and healthcare worker), partially again realization work, discrimination, humble separation of the ego and the spirit, between the ego and the rising, bubbling, jubilant delight. Moreover ethical practice, training of compassion, for example Tonglen practice (in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**, I have described both the Hara practice and the Tonglen practice in the supporting exercises The Hara-meditation and the Heart-meditation).

One of the deep reasons why they in monasteries anywhere in the world are letting the monks and nuns work with dirt, cleaning, cooking, taking care of sick people and dying, was in order to, that they never should lose reality and the ground connection of sight.

People who are being caught by ego-inflation, begin, as a rule, to act like kings and queens, they shall not anything practical do, they shall not be adjusted, they fly.

To all three kinds of ego-inflation there are in other words some philosophical principles and supporting exercises you ought to hold on to. And generally it is good to have knowledge about the thought distortion called *Truth by Authority*.

There are today a vast amount of non-enlightened New Age/self-help gurus (in science of religion they actually have no numbers of this enormous market). They might very well have strange paranormal abilities, it doesn't matter in this question – who get authority by claiming, that their teaching, either is coming from a state of enlightenment, is being channeled from some kind of divine source, or are coming from clairvoyant abilities (see my articles **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**, and **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with clairvoyance**).

If such teachers put their teaching forward in this way, you can be hundred percent sure, that this teacher has a problem with ego-inflation (if he is not directly a fraud - and then there are thousands of within New Age). Why? Because no real enlightened master would argue in this way. True enlightened masters, or sober spiritual teachers, speak from their own source, and are always characterized by humility. Just look at Dalai Lama, who incessantly claims, that he hasn't reached the full Rigpa, and that he is just a beginner. True enlightened masters, as well as sober spiritual teachers, are also always philosophers, who are giving reasons and presenting arguments to support conclusions.

Truth by Authority is about taking statements to be true simply because an alleged authority (experts, teachers, states of enlightenment, divine sources, paranormal abilities, etc.) on the matter has said/justified that they are true. A level of critical thinking is always appropriate, because the statement may be based on different kinds of thought distortions, for example the Non-dual bias (again: see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

People, who in their arguments/teachings, again and again, have to defer to some authority (experts, teachers, states of enlightenment, divine sources, paranormal abilities) in order to justify their arguments/teachings, are hundred percent on the wrong track, even if they should have some paranormal abilities. Again it is interesting to see, that true enlightened masters, as well as sober spiritual teachers, never do this. And interesting, that probably most of the many people, who have made a business on being clairvoyants/mediums/channelers etc., will fall for *Truth by Authority*.

In my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it** you can read about how ego-inflation, "positive" feelings, and the seven deadly sins, are connected with the emotional painbody.

The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it

The problem with New Age psychotherapy is, that it often one-sided is focusing on feelings, and thereby is neglecting the importance of thoughts (see my article **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**).

Feelings are the body's reaction on the mind (the thoughts). Feelings arise where the mind and the body meet. They are reflections of the mind *in* the body. Feelings can also be a reflection of a whole thoughtpattern. A thoughtpattern can create an enlarged and energycharged reflection of itself in the form of a feeling. This means, that the whole of the thought's past also can create a reflection of itself in the body. And if this past is filled with pain, then it can show itself as a negative energyfield in the body. Eckhart Tolle calls this the emotional painbody. It contains all the pain you have accumulated in the past. It is the sum of the negative feelings which you have "saved together" through life and which you carry. And it can nearly be seen as an invisible, independent creature. Therefore we also could, as H.C. Andersen does in his fairy tale, call it the Shadow.

The painbody is the inner demon, or the devil in the heart. Some painbody's are relatively harmless, some are anxietyfilled, depressive or angry, others are directly malicious and demonical. They can be passive or active. Some are passive 90% of the time, others are active 100% of the time.

The painbody is the expression of suffering itself.

The painbody is activated in the same moment as specific challenges activate the inappropriate basic assumptions, which have been created by bad experiences in the past. And they are being maintained by the vortex of negative automatic thinking, which follows from these basic assumptions. In other words it constitutes a rather particular reaction-pattern, a manuscript, which gets you to play the same role (or the same roles) again and again. That will say, that specific situations will continue to activate it, so that your actions become an eternal repetition of the same. It takes control over you, so to speak.

Therefore you should of course not seek to activate your painbody, as for example cathartic therapies believe you should, because you thereby also activate the negative thoughtpattern behind the painbody, which such therapies don't work with (cathartic therapies are therapies based on the notion that if you express your feelings you will purge yourself of your troubles).

The painbody lives of, that you are identified with the negative thoughtpattern behind it. In this way the painbody gets your energy. And for that reason you also give energy to your negative feelings, when you activate your thoughtpattern. Negative feelings will in other words increase if you express them. And the painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego. The energies found here are unfathomable, and when you direct them into your

painbody, you are really facing problems. That is what is happening in a spiritual crisis (see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

Instead you should relate completely neutral in relation to your painbody, and through critical thinking seek to change the inappropriate basic assumptions, which are the thoughtpattern behind the painbody. That is how philosophy and true spirituality works (the inappropriate basic assumptions are based on thought distortions – see my book **A Dictionary of Thought distortions**).

That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can't heal Man from the ground. In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the astral plane's collective history. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma. The concepts indicate, that the inertia projects beyond the personal history (growing up conditions, traumatic bindings, painful experiences etc.) and far down into the collective inherit-backgrounds of history (genes, environment, society-ideals, the archetypes and the primordial images of the dreams, fantasies, fairy-tales, myths, and finally: instincts inherited from the animals). It is a factor, which lies in the evolution itself, in the genes, in the collective subconscious, in the collective history.

When therefore therapy requires a change, then the instinctive survival-preparedness in us reacts and protests. Man has survived on willfulness and a consciousness-structure, which mental and psychic sign is Egocentredness. The bigger Ego, the bigger survival chance.

Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategi (the ego) appears as a resistance, an invincible inertia: original sin, negative karma. You can't, by therapeutic strategies, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through therapy. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions.

I already now hear advocates of the positive psychology of the New Thought movement claim, that if the painbody is created by a negative thought pattern, then you just have to change this thought pattern into a positive thought pattern (see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**). Therefore this distortion of the concepts of negativity and positivity, which this movement has created, must be clarified.

Problems of positive psychology

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. I use this concept because the concept of negative karma, also has been distorted by the positive psychology movement (into what they call the law of attraction).

The energy-laws function 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, which you can read about in my article **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method**.

There are cycles with success, where things come to you, and you flourish, and cycles with defeat, where they 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, this 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 one-sided is focusing on that the up-cycles are positive, while the down-cycles are negative.

In his book *The Good Life* Mogens Pahuus writes, that if you ask about, what the old Scandinavians saw as the highest and the greatest in life, the ecstasy of life, then the answer would be, that it is self-assertion – the assertion of oneself and the family. He also writes, that you in Christianity find a diametrically opposite view of self-assertion, – both in its Catholic form as in Protestantism. In Saint Gregory and Thomas of Aquinas haughtiness/pride/self-assertion was the first and greatest of the seven so-called deadly sins. And in Luther self-assertion nor was a goodness, but the vice over all vices. It is the seven deadly sins Dante in *The Purgatory* must look in the eyes one after one, in order to be able to progress. He must use the discrimination,

which is the purification process, where you look your destiny in the eyes and do penance after having realized how your perspective distorts reality.

So self-assertion is a vice. Self-assertion is a kind of self-interest, where everything turns around the Ego, and therefore makes the mind mediocre. To live in a world, which is controlled by self-assertion, without being self-assertive, means, truly, to love something for its own sake, without seeking a reward, a result; but this is very difficult, because the whole world, all your friends, your relatives, struggle to achieve something, to accomplish something, to become something.

Today self-assertion once again is considered as a virtue. The gurus are the many advocates for the market and the economical competition, as for instance several management theorists (management theory, and its use of coaching/psychotherapy, is directly inspired by the positive psychology of the New Thought movement – see my article **Management theory and the self-help industry**). And the education-instrument is the personal development movement. The disciples are the consumers; that will say, that this outlook of life obviously is shared by most people in our society: that it is about becoming something, to get success, to conquer a place on the top of the mountain, to become a winner. Mogens Pahuus believes that the modern ideal about becoming a success, a winner, is a perverted ideal. The society praises a self-assertion, which has gone over the top, and there dominates a self-assertion, which is a vice, because it both spoils the life of the self-assertive, and the lives of those, whom the self-assertive measures himself in relation to, and whom he wants to overpass.

Pahuus mentions some of the forms of self-assertion: 1) Vanity, which is a vice, because the vain-full always is bearing in mind, how he or she looks like, or is considered like, in the eyes of others. 2) Ambition, which is a vice, because you here constantly are on the way forward, or upwards. 3) Haughtiness, which is a vice, because you here, in your feeling of own superior value, look down at others, are letting others feel their inferiority; that is: because haughtiness is unethical. But also in the arrogant himself, haughtiness is destructive: it isolates. 4) Joy of power. The ethical seen most violating form of self-assertion is the joy of having power over others, of controlling others, or oppressing them.

The most extreme expression of the seven deadly sins, is ego-inflation.

If a person really succeeds in adopting the advices of the self-help books she really gets a problem. Not only does she have to fight with the never-ending development, and the egoism. She is also becoming a serious problem for her surroundings. Because she is now, as the Danish psychologist, Nina Østerby Sæther, says, a potential psychopath.

On a course about psychopaths Nina Østerby Sæther realized, that there was many similarities between psychopathic traits, and the advices, which are given in self-help books. It made her point out some frightening resemblances (see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

Though some of the self-help books' advices might sound similar to true spirituality (most often they directly quote and use spiritual texts), taken out of context, then you have to remember how the wholeness and otherness have been removed. Religion and philosophy have been reduced to psychology and psychotherapy. And when this happens it takes a totally wrong course.

The vice in the different forms of self-assertion is that it leads to an unreal life, where you are yourself absent in a state of becoming, and not yourself present in a state of being. You are suffering, it is therefore not at all positive (see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**).

In this way positive psychology induces in people the thought distortion called *False dichotomy*. 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, as 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 that 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, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. 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 not is possible.

This is 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 *not* is. 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, wishes, feelings or choices) convert negativity to positivity. If you nonetheless try to do this you will end up in 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 middle. They do this through a contra-balancing movement; that is: a swing over in the opposite extreme. That is what is meant with compensatory karma (see my article **What is 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.

Conversion to the opposite, and the above-mentioned problems, also seems 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**).

The movement of positive psychology is especially caught by the thought distortion called *Illusion of control*.

Control makes us feel powerful, which is a good feeling. And feeling that there is a right order in the universe – a law of attraction - and that some kind of “positive” thought technique can control everything that happens - is comforting to many people today.

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 and your wealth, or somebody else's health, spiritual development and wealth, by your thoughts and prayers or other superstitious actions.

As mentioned: the painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, 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.

And as mentioned: only an intervention from the source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of 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 re-structure the ego's ownership to things, food, personal power, sexuality and emotions. Spiritual practice is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. First thereafter the mystical process can begin.

The magnet of attraction, which the ego is controlled by – (the ego's identity with the material world: instincts, sexuality, emotions, desires, collective ideals, ownership, personal power) – will in a true spiritual practice loose 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 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 of life? How does man preserve 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 grab, which the material world has in 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 many people have today done an illusory work of trying to re-define this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction directly is becoming the object of worship. That's what positive psychology and the law of attraction movement are about (again: see my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**).

Another aspect of the true spiritual practice is that you break the automatic process of compensatory karma, which is closely related to the material world, laws of nature, cycles of life, yes actually pure causal regularity of mechanical kind. It would be an illusion to connect such things with a superior intentional divine order.

Furthermore you have your free will either to 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) – about karma see my articles **What is karma?**, and **A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork**.

I have in my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist** set up six steps in such a spiritual practice:

- 1) The separation of the observer and the observed
- 2) Religion and supporting exercises
- 3) Passive listening presence
- 4) Discrimination
- 5) Creative emptiness
- 6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

The first step, the separation of the observer and the observed, is the step where you are completely ignorant about your painbody; that is: completely identified with it, and therefore in its control. The next step is religion and supporting exercises. Religion and supporting exercises are a valuable early stage in a spiritual practice. Religion and supporting exercises cleanses and prepares transformation on a collective, unconscious-instinctive, level.

The two main reasons why religion and supporting exercises is a necessity is partly, that the ongoing self-confirmation of the ego and its negative automatic thoughts (which, as explained, also can be illusions of positivity), is replaced by a spiritual remembrance, partly that the collective inertia is purified and prepared, so that the Ego is made transparent along with that original sin and negative karma are transformed and transfigured in the contact with the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness, the saints etc.) And these two processes mutually fertilize each other (also negative automatic thoughts are based on thought distortions – again: see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

Religion has to do with the pious attitude and way of thinking, which stands for the observance of religious virtues, duties and rituals. In this way you can bring a unity and direction into the mind, an order and tranquillity in the thinking, a consistency between thought and conduct of life, an awareness of your relationship with persons, things and ideas, which no therapy is able to. In a spiritual practice it serves as a frame of reference.

The supporting exercises are the beginning of the spiritual practice, where you begin to activate the higher functions of the mind. In order to discover and break the

identification with the samsarical producer of the mind, the subject must discover the hidden source in the awareness or in the innermost of consciousness. It happens by neutralizing the Ego's, or the thinking's, functions. This happens through meditation.

The Ego's functions constitute what you could call the ordinary consciousness. You can talk about four such, lower, functions of the ordinary mind:

1. Evaluation (accept/denial, yes/no)
2. Focus
3. Activity
4. Language (words, images)

The source of awareness, the naked consciousness, is hidden because it has melted together with these four functions. They have become a kind of veils, or layers, which are maintained by what you could call the ego-religion and the ego-exercises. The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego's incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: "it is no use with me!"; or: "wonderful me!". Both, either the denial or confirmation (which is what positive psychology is focusing on) of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity and the ego-centralization. The ego's religion and exercises are the ego's needs and longings and will: I want to, 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....

In my articles **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**, and **A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching**, I have described how the worship of the ego can lead to black magic.

Meditation is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatic identification with these functions. Then you can talk about four higher functions of the consciousness, which are becoming activated through meditation:

1. Neutral observation
2. Passive listening presence (or wordless prayer) (defocus)
3. Non-activity (non-action)
4. Non-language (wordless)

The whole proces is like a flower opening itself.

James Arthur Ray and the sweat lodge tragedy

James Arthur Ray (born November 22, 1957) is one of guest speakers in the film *The Secret*, and is a co-author on the book. So Ray is also an advocate of the Law of Attraction; his teachings have been described as “including a mix of spirituality, motivational speaking, and quantum physics” (see my articles **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**, and **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies**).

James’ father was an Oklahoma preacher in occasional poverty for a decade until 1973 at Red Fork Church of God in Tulsa. At times they had to live in the church office. Money and spirituality were central to him. “the hardest part of my childhood was reconciling how Dad poured his heart into his work, how he helped so many people and yet he couldn’t afford to pay for haircuts for me and my brother,” Ray wrote in his 2008 book *Harmonic Wealth*. “How could a loving God keep me from Cub Scouts on account of not being able to afford a uniform?” coming to the conclusion that wealth and spirituality were not mutually exclusive.

Ray dropped out of junior college, joining AT&T, the phone company, as a telemarketeer, then as a sales manager teaching sales techniques. Ray had taught Stephen Covey Motivational seminars while at AT&T.

Ray said he began searching for more, reading about quantum physics, studying with a Peruvian shaman, with Amazonian witch doctors and a Hawaiian kahuna, travelling to the Egyptian pyramids. Finally he said, he fell into a deep depression and wandered in the Sinai desert for 10 days. Finding himself in the cave where Moses is said to have rested before receiving the Ten Commandments.

“That is where it all came together for me,” he wrote, “where the final pieces of harmonic wealth and the quantum physics material I had studied for a decade took form.”

According to Grant Cardone, James Ray consulted him for methods in 2000 to increase sales at business seminars, and was warned to teach only sound business practices. After this time, Ray began incorporating sleep deprivation, fasting, fire and glass walking, and sweat lodge methods after studying in South America.

Former attendees of Ray’s seminars have reported unsafe practices and lack of properly trained medical staff in 2005. A New Jersey woman shattered her hand after she was pressured by Ray to participate in a quasi-martial arts board-breaking exercise. After several unsuccessful untrained attempts, the woman sustained multiple fractures during the seminar that was held at Disney World.

Participants of a Ray's "Spiritual Warrior" exercise in 2006, after signing waivers, were told to put a sharp point of arrow used in archery against the soft part of the neck and lean against the tip. A man named Kurt sustained injuries during this exercise as the shaft snapped and the arrow point deeply penetrated his eyebrow.

In July 2009, Colleen Conaway attended a seminar hosted by James Ray International in which the attendees were directed to dress as homeless people. She fell to her death at the Horton Plaza Mall in San Diego. She died as a result of injuries, and according to police, she had no identification on her person.

In 2005, preceding the tragic events of October 2009, a serious injury involving hospitalization was reported at the Angel Valley Ranch during a "Spiritual Warrior" retreat led by Ray. Verde Valley fire Chief Jerry Doerksen's department responded to an emergency call that a 42 year old man had fallen unconscious after exercises inside the sweat lodge.

In 2009, Ray was the brightest and most influential star in the New Age-firmament. He had been catapulted into public consciousness on the back of *The Secret*. He rode the *Secret's* slipstream. He appeared on Winfrey's show again, on Larry King and on numerous other television and radio programmes. By 2009, Ray was at the apex of his success and influence. Two of his books, *Harmonic Wealth* and *The Science of Success* had made the New York Times bestseller list. He was represented by the William Morris Agency.

Ray was on the road for 200 days a year, preaching his very American gospel of success. It wasn't just his message that resonated so powerfully; it was his charismatic presence and delivery. The goodlooking, athletic 6ft tall Ray would roam the stages of large halls and convention centres, a New Age revivalist preacher, pumping rock music and precepts for positive living (about such Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT) – which also Tony Robbins uses – see my article **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)**).

By 2009, his company, James Ray International, based in Southern California, was making close to \$10m a year. He would soon be making much more than that, he believed, as the natural successor to first-generation New Age stars such as Deepak Chopra. Ray told followers he planned to become the first New Age billionaire. In March 2009, Ray bought a 7,234 sq ft house in Beverly Hills for \$4m.

On October 8, 2009, at a New Age "Spiritual Warrior" retreat conceived and hosted by Ray at the Angel Valley Retreat Center in Yavapai County near Sedona, Arizona,

two participants, James Shore and Kirby Brown, died as a result of being in a sweat lodge exercise. Eighteen others were hospitalized after suffering burns, dehydration, breathing problems, kidney failure or elevated body temperature. Liz Neuman, another attendee, died October 17 after being comatose for a week.

Spiritual Warrior was a five-day workshop. Although the cost of the course was very high - \$9,600, plus travel and accommodation – Ray promised it would be transformational. Kirby Brown (who used her life savings to pay) felt lucky she was allowed to sign up: Spiritual Warrior was Ray's pinnacle event, usually reserved for those who had completed all of the other courses in his Journey of Power Experience programme, which cost more than \$20,000.

As a way of showing their commitment to transformation, Ray wanted each "Warrior" to shave off their hair. The 56 people on the retreat hereafter spent the first two days listening to lectures by Ray. Ray made them watch clips from *The Last Samurai*, the Tom Cruise movie about an American who has to embrace the Samurai culture in Japan. On the third day, Ray made everyone play what he called the Samurai Game. In an article in *The Guardian* (guardian.co.uk, Friday 8 July 2011, by Christopher Goodwin) one of the attendees, Beverley Bunn, is interviewed:

"James played God," Bunn says. "He had on a white robe with a gold belt. You couldn't talk to God. If you talked to God, he killed you."

One of those who tried "talking to God" was Kirby Brown, who asked if she could use the toilet. Ray screamed, "Die! Die!" at her until she fell to the ground, not allowed to move for hours. She was so desperate to urinate, she later said, that she had to hold back vomit.

Before the Samurai Game, Bunn went up to Ray and told him that, as 40 out of the 56 people had already done, including a reluctant Brown, she would shave her head. "I don't give a fuck what you do," Ray snapped. "Shave your head. Don't shave your head. It doesn't really matter." Bunn says this retort stunned her, and made her even more concerned about what she had come to see as Ray's egotism and arrogance.

"The way we were treated was really bizarre," she says. "After paying \$10,000, we were told, 'you can't talk to James unless you are told you can. He doesn't eat with you. If he drives in the golf cart, you're not allowed to wave at him or acknowledge him or say hi.'"

After the Samurai Game finished, around midnight, the Warriors were led out into the desert for what Ray called a Vision Quest, which he said was a Native American spiritual tradition.

The Vision Quest is an idea he ripped off from the Lakota hanblechya ceremony, and the “sweat lodge” is stolen from the Lakota inipi ceremony, both of which are considered sacred by Native people. They weren’t authentic hanblechya or inipi ceremonies, of course, because people had to pay to participate and because they weren’t run by Native elders (more about the New Age abuse of Native peoples ceremonies below).

During Ray’s “Vision Quest” the attendees fasted for 36 hours before the sweat lodge. Participants were left alone in the Arizona desert with a sleeping bag, although Ray offered them Peruvian ponchos for an additional \$250. After this experience, participants ate a large buffet breakfast before entering the sweat lodge. A site owner reported she learned after the event that participants went two days without water before entering the lodge.

Ray gathered them all together to talk about the sweat lodge event, based on another Native American ceremony that he said he had studied. A traditional sweat lodge is a small, tented area, which, like a sauna, is taken to a high humid heat as water is poured over hot stones. During a lodge, usually with 10 people, a Native American shaman will lead the participants, chanting and helping people deal with the altered states they may go through.

“It will be the most intense experience, the most intense heat that you’ve ever experienced in your entire life, I guarantee that,” Ray told them. “You will feel as if you’re going to die. But you see the true spiritual warrior has conquered death and therefore has no fear and no enemies in this lifetime or the next, because the greatest fear that you’ll ever experience is the fear of what...death. You will have to get to a point where you surrender and its OK to die.”

“When I saw the sweat lodge, it concerned me because I thought it was going to be more like a teepee shape with ventilation at the top,” Bunn says. “This was a low dome covered with plastic tarps and blankets. I was worried we were going to suffocate, but I thought he must know what he’s doing because he’d done it before.”

Some 56 people were crowded into the sweat lodge, which was less than 5ft high in the middle and just 30 inches at the sides, and about 24ft across, with only one exit. It was completely dark. Ray started chanting and pouring water on to the red hot rocks that were brought into a pit in front of him.

So, participants were crammed into a four-foot tall sweat lodge, packed with superheated rocks, in a ceremony that was supposed to induce a “rebirthing” experience.

The problem with this is the tendency within New Age, where they reduce religion (the traditional spiritual traditions and their spiritual practices) to psychology and psychotherapy. Ray is - like the Czech-American psychiatrist Stanislav Grof and his therapeutic technique “Holotropic Breathwork” - combining Cathartic psychotherapies with Regression psychotherapies, and is calling this technique a spiritual practice with an ancient shamanistic lineage. The intention is to provoke paranormal phenomena of the same kind as those known from spiritual crises (the awakening of kundalini, para-psychic opening, Hero’s journey, the shamanic crisis, channeling, close encounters with UFOs, memories from past lives, near-death experiences, possession states, peak experiences – see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

The misunderstanding, and the following misleading of people, happen because of the psychologizing of these phenomena. Like Grof Ray wrongly thinks, that these experiences correspond with the theories within Cathartic psychotherapies and Regression psychotherapies, and that the goal is to re-experience or re-visit them; that is: you have go through heavy ordeals of cathartic and/or regressive kind, and experience death and rebirth (especially known from the shamanic illness and the Hero’s journey) in order to experience healing and personal transformation (in the appendix I explain the problem of this in depth).

Bunn says that by the second 15-minute round, when one man began staggering around, in danger of falling into the pit of hot stones, it was becoming clear that “this was really heavy duty”. By the fourth round, the intense heat and lack of air were more than Bunn and others could bear.

“I said I needed to get out, and other people were saying they were having trouble,” Bunn recalls. “But James kept saying, ‘You can get through this. Its mind over matter. Ignore what your body is telling you.’”

During the fifth round a disoriented man began screaming and yelling after he fell into the pit, badly burning his arm.

“People started vomiting,” Bunn says. She saw an unconscious woman being dragged out. “Then James Shore, who had helped pull the woman out, came back to his place,

next to Kirby, and shouted, 'She's not breathing! I can't get her to move!' Everyone was yelling.

"James went really ballistic and shouted, 'Everybody quiet down! I'm in charge here! The door is now closed and this round has now begun and we will deal with that at the end of the next round.' Ray continued the ceremony for the full eight rounds, continuing to admonish people not to leave.

At the end of the eight round, after some two hours, it was obvious that Ray's transformational sweat lodge had become a tragedy. A number of people were unconscious inside, others were being dragged out, vomiting and foaming at the mouth.

"There was a lady in front of me, unconscious," Bunn says. "We were pushing and dragging her towards the door. That's when I passed Kirby, and I heard this snorting sound coming from her. I didn't know if she was passed out or asleep, but it was a really bizarre gurgling, snorting sound.

"Once I was out, I saw a woman called Sidney on her side, barely breathing, not responding to anything, her eyes rolled back on her head, mucous coming out of her nose and mouth. A lot of other people couldn't walk or anything. Their motor skills were gone.

"I saw this other lady and she was on her side passed out. No one was with her and her arm was turning blue. I started helping her, and I rolled her over and her eyes were rolled back in her head, but she was breathing. Then I walked to the next person and he was unconscious. I rolled him over and he was breathing, but he opened his eyes and all the blood vessels had burst in his eyeballs. Another man was yelling, 'I've had a heart attack! I've had a heart attack!'

"A woman was screaming, 'James Ray! I want to fuck James Ray! James, why did this happen? James, I love you! I want to fuck you!' She was going crazy. People were holding her arms and legs.

"I started looking for Kirby, but I couldn't find her anywhere," Bunn continues. "I looked in the tent and I could see they were doing CPR on James Shore. His stomach was going up and down, up and down. Then I saw Kirby's stomach going up and down. They were doing CPR on her, right next to James." Both were foaming at the mouth and had turned purple.

“Ray was standing about 10ft from where they were doing CPR on Kirby and James,” Bunn says. “I looked to see if there was any expression on his face, any kind of emotion, but he just stood there the entire time. He never helped anybody. He never did anything. He just stood there.”

Ambulances and paramedics arrived. “One of them asked, ‘What happened here?’” Bunn recalls. “We said that it was a sweat lodge and she said, ‘You people are fucking idiots.’ That’s exactly what she said. Shortly after that, the helicopters started flying in.”

Nineteen people were taken to hospital suffering from heat exhaustion, some with kidney failure. Kirby Brown and James Shore, a 40-year-old father of three who worked for an internet company, died that day. Liz Neumann, 49, a divorced mother of three, was in coma for more than a week before she died. Autopsies attributed the deaths to heat stroke and organ failure.

Police from the local sheriff’s department arrived at Angel Valley around 6pm. “When I asked (his assistant) where James was, he told me that he was up at the main building eating dinner.” 2 Sgt Frank Barbaro said. “I thought this was interesting since emergency medical services was airlifting and transporting subjects at this time.”

After talking to his lawyer, Ray refused to answer any questions. He didn’t talk to any of the survivors. The following morning he took the first flight out of Arizona. A few days later he was back on the road, preaching.

About five days after Kirby Brown’s death, Ray called her parents. “Instead of an apology he said, ‘This is the most awful thing that has ever happened to me in my life,’” Ginny Brown, Kirby’s mother, recalled. He sent the family a cheque, marked “Honor of Kirby”, for \$ 5,000.

“Considering Kirby paid \$9,600 to be there, plus room and board, a \$5,000 cheque was just an insult,” Tom Mcfeeley, Kirby’s cousin, says.

On October 15, 2009, print media began reporting that Ray conducted a conference call with some victims, one of which recorded this call and provided it to the AP. During this call, a self-described “channeler” said that they had communicated with the dead and said they “were having so much fun” out of their bodies that they didn’t want to return. When Ray was later asked whether, “in some divinely or cosmically ordained way, this was the victims ‘time to die?’” he replied: “I don’t think I am qualified to answer that.”

Native American experts on sweat lodges have criticized the reported construction and conduct of the lodge as not meeting traditional ways. Native American leaders expressed concerns and prayers for the dead and injured. The leaders say the ceremony is their way of life and not a religion. It is Native American property, protected by US laws and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The ceremony should only be in the hands of sanctioned lodge carriers from legitimate nations.

Traditionally, a typical leader has 4 to 8 years of apprenticeship before being allowed to care for people in a lodge. Participants are instructed to call out whenever they feel uncomfortable, and the ceremony is usually stopped to help them. Characteristic of the New Age environment is its combination of Eastern philosophy with Western psychology/psychotherapy, and latest with various management theories and coaching techniques, and the herein built-in fount of “spiritual” educations, where they, in order to sell to so many as possible, conscious or unconscious, neglect the grounding of experience (see my article **Management theory and the self-help industry**).

An example is the calling to Shaman, which traditionally required that the Shaman aspirant was a person who had went through tremendous ordeals, the so-called Initiation Crisis, or Shamanic Illness (the Shaman was a chosen human being – a rare specialist – see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**). The modern Shamanism (New Age Shamanism) is a form of Shamanism, which has been accommodated postmodernism (for instance Serge Kahlili King’s book *Urban Shaman*). This form of Shamanism is standing in overt contrast to classic Shamanism, as regards the demands to the Shaman. Now everybody can, through various types of Shaman educations, learn it, as the phrase goes, regardless whether you have any experience or not. It is an “user-friendly” form of Shamanism - and therefore also saleable in massive quantities. A way of creating success and wealth.

The typical scene is the white middle aged American woman, who out of boredom, and who probably never even has met a Native American, take a course (extremely expensive) in a few weekends, whereafter she can call herself Shaman (with a certification, which even true classical Shamans haven’t got), and earn a lot of money taking people as clients. Relativism and subjectivism justifies it. Anything goes.

Today you can draw all kinds of “spiritual” educations in an automat, if only you have money enough. They are typical taken in a few weekends, after which you get yourself some homemade title as coach, psychotherapist, therapist, shaman, healer,

clairvoyant or spiritual teacher of one or the other kind. There almost seem to be speculated in creating new peculiar titles. But such educations can of course not give the sufficient competence, neither spiritual or educational.

But New Age worshippers don't care, they have relativism and subjectivism as justification (see my article **Six common traits of New Age that distort spirituality**).

Back to James Arthur Ray and the sweat lodge tragedy. The lodge was said to be unusually built from non-breathable materials. Charging for the ceremony is extremely inappropriate. The number of participants was criticized as too high and the ceremony was said to be too long. The importance of respect for elders' oversight helps to avoid sickness and injury during these sacred acts.

The tragedy was characterized as "plain carelessness", with a disregard for the participants' safety and outright negligence.

The Native American community actively seeks to prevent abuses of their traditions. The Angel Valley owners announced they have accepted Native American friends' help to "heal the land".

On February 3, 2010 Ray was arrested in connection with the death of the participants of his sweat lodge ceremony, and came on trial for manslaughter. He pleaded not guilty.

During the trial Ray tried to continue his business unabated, but later settled into a half-seclusion in his Los Angeles mansion, continuing to market new web videos about Harmonic Wealth and defend himself on his website.

As the authorities and others started to look more closely at Ray, it came evident that a lot of his claims were untrue. People with whom he had studied and worked with insisted he had lied about it. Ray had for example claimed that he had worked two years for the Covey foundation, although the company has no record of him as an employee or contractor. The Peruvian shaman with whom he claimed to have studied turned out to be a tour guide. Even his claims of childhood poverty were undermined by people who grew up with him. And, as mentioned, Ray was also denounced by Native Americans for abusing their rites and traditions. Some years before the 2009 tragedy, Ray had been "approached several times by native leaders and told he was not trained to run Native American ceremonies", said David Sitting Bear, a Cherokee Indian who lives in Sedona.

Pamela White is writing in an article [New Age outrage](#) (October 29,2009) that both the vision quest and sweat lodge ceremonies can be dangerous if run for the wrong reasons in the wrong way by the wrong people. The former involves putting someone on a mountain for four days of singing and prayer with no food or water. An inipi is a purification ceremony involving anywhere from an hour to several hours of praying and singing in the heat of the pitch-black sweat lodge.

Native spiritual leaders grow up observing and participating in the ceremonies of their people. They train for years before taking the mantle of leadership on themselves; as a result, they know how to run them safely and respectfully. Their focus is on service, not self.

Sadly, most media outlets know little about traditional Native ceremonies, and some of the coverage has been painfully ignorant. After the tragedy CBS ran a morning news segment about the tragedy, ending with the question, “How dangerous are these ceremonies?” and telling viewers that Ray didn’t have a building permit for his sweat lodge structure.

As a result, many in the Indian community are wondering when Guru Ray’s bungling of his “sweat lodge” ceremony will result in additional obstacles and hassles — Pamela White calls it “white tape” — for Indian people who want to pray in their traditional ways. Already, just holding an inipi comes with hassles enough.

White writes furthermore, that in Boulder Native people used to hold inipi ceremonies on Valmont Butte. Then one night (after the tragedy), a sweat lodge was broken up by law enforcement officials, who got a complaint about the fire and didn’t know that Indian people have used the Butte, which they consider sacred, since before white folks came to this valley. Try to imagine being forced out of your church or synagogue in the middle of prayer. It was a desecration.

Once apologies were issued and it was established that Indians can, indeed, use Valmont Butte for sweat lodge ceremonies, additional hassles arose. The spiritual leader who ran the lodges was told he would have to get a permit for the fire before planning a ceremony. As a result, Valmont Butte has fallen silent, and songs are now sung elsewhere.

[If people had the proper respect for Native culture, the three people who died in Sedona would still be alive.]

Who wants to get a permit to be able to pray?

Many Indian spiritual leaders worry that local and state governments will use the Sedona debacle as an excuse to regulate Native inipi ceremonies. Fire permits. Building permits. Maximum occupancy regulations. Licensing. The potential list goes on.

If people had the proper respect for Native culture, the three people who died in Sedona would still be alive. And yet Ray and those like him — men and women who pirate Native culture — probably don't think of themselves as being disrespectful. Something about the Native way of life calls to them, and they respond, seeking connection. But too often they respond in an egoistic way, demanding rather than humbly asking and bypassing tradition in favor of shortcuts to personal fulfillment.

White writes that a dear friend of her — a Native spiritual leader — has had strangers show up at his door, checkbooks in hand, wanting to know how they can arrange an Indian naming ceremony so that they can finally get the Indian name they picked out for themselves (inevitably something with “Wolf ” or “Eagle” in it). He's had men and women come to him uninvited, holding pipes they bought in tourist shops, wanting to be made “pipe carriers.” He's had people he doesn't know ask him how much he charges to run a vision quest ceremony.

If it weren't so pathetic and insulting, it might be funny, White writes.

For so long, the message from the Native world has been, “If you respect us and want to know more about our way of life, approach us and ask in a humble way.”

How sad it will be if James Arthur Ray's selfish actions, which have already sown tragedy enough, bring trouble to the elders who have safeguarded these ceremonies for centuries.

On June 22, 2011, a jury found Ray guilty of three accounts of negligent homicide in the October 2009 deaths of Kirby Brown, James Shore and Liz Neumann. Ray's potential sentencing options ranged from probation to as long as nine years in prison. After a nearly four-month-long trial, James Arthur Ray was on November 18, 2011, sentenced to two years in prison.

"There is a factor of deterrence that is very prominent in this case," Yavapai County Superior Court judge Warren R Darrow said. "I find the aggravating circumstance is so strong that probation is simply not warranted in this case."

Family members had been especially angry about Ray's seeming indifference after the event, saying that neither he nor his staff called (note that James Arthur Ray's

Law of Attraction philosophy teaches people to ignore what they find negative!!). They said they found out what happened either from police or from calling around to area hospitals on their own after hearing news reports.

Before the sentencing, Sheila Polk, Yavapai County prosecutor, said Ray "led the life of a pretender, and there are predictable consequences when one leads a life of pretense."

Prosecutors made the case that Ray had ignored plenty of warning signs that his events were becoming dangerous and that his stated desire to become the world's first "self-help" billionaire led him to become increasingly careless at his events.

Members of the American Indian community sat through almost the entire trial in silent protest of Ray's misuse of a sacred tradition.

But for now, Ray plans to offer his brand of positive thinking to his fellow inmates as he begins his two year stint in prison, his family said.

Ray doesn't seem to have listened to what Virginia Brown, mother of victim Kirby Brown, 38, of Westtown, N.Y., said: "My heart's been ripped out. My life has been blown apart, and the pieces are yet to land," "Mr. Ray is selling something that is faulty and needs to be recalled ... Please take him off the market."

Virginia Brown is here saying something very important, that seems to have been overlooked during the trial, namely the problems in Ray's teachings.

Personally I am precisely focusing on the scientific, philosophical and spiritual distortions in Ray's teaching (or The Law of Attraction as such), which I claim is the main reason why the tragedy happened.

I am not a prophet, but I would guess, that when Ray comes out of prison, he will continue the same teachings, and he will rise to more success than ever. This is namely the typical reaction in religious movements – due to the thought distortion called *Cognitive dissonance* – see my book **A dictionary of Thought Distortions**.

Already during the trial against Ray, several Law of Attraction devotees were out writing on their blogs and websites about the tragedy, with headlines such as: "The James Arthur Ray Trial doesn't mean that The Law of Attraction is not true". Not surprisingly they all involve especially two statements, that just confirm my critique:

1) It was not the law of attraction that failed, it was James Arthur Ray. He simply used the law of attraction in a wrong way; it was Ray that failed, not the law of attraction.

Peculiar, since James Arthur Ray until the trial was used as an example on how you use the law of attraction in the right way (there is a lot of people today, that have to delete statements on websites and in books). How precisely he used the law of attraction in the wrong way is impossible to get a valid answer to. As I say in my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**, one of the main problems of the law of attraction is the use of positive psychology (where the “positive” is about material glory, money, success, personal power, sex, beauty) and where you have to ignore, repress, turn your back to everything you find negative. That was precisely what James Ray did: he just followed the teachings (his behaviour is not due to that he is a psychopath, though it reminds about it – see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

It is typical for law of attraction devotees to claim, that if it doesn't work for you then it is your own fault. Besides that this is an invalid ad hoc clause, then it also induces in people a so-called false dichotomy. 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, as for example: ”Either you are with us, or you are against us” – ”if I'm not always a success, then I'm a fiasco”. It is very known within cognitive therapy that false dichotomy is the main reason for shame, anxiety and depression. Spiritual seen positive psychology leads to compensatory karma – see for example my article **What is karma?**

In close connection with this is the fact, that I haven't found any statements yet, that combine the Ray trial with any ethical evaluations (except those who have given up the law of attraction theory, or haven't vested too much interest in it). The statements are typically devoid of ethical thoughts about the incident (which again works as an insult against survivors and relatives). The reason is, that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to combine the law of attraction with any valid ethical foundation without undermining the law of attraction itself.

This leads to:

2) After having said that Ray used the law of attraction in the wrong way, the devotees keep on postulating the same things, which Ray himself also have said, namely that the Law of Attraction is about loving yourself, and how this will attract

material glory: money, success, personal power, sex, beauty, etc., etc., etc. – and that this is the basic universal spiritual principle behind the creation.

As an example of the above two statements, read Meryl Davids Landau's article [*Does the James Arthur Ray Trial Mean There's No Law of Attraction?*](#) (Huffington Post 06/12/2011). Remember to scroll down and read the comments to the article.

Meryl Davids Landau is the Author of the new spiritual womens' novel, "Downward Dog, Upward Fog." It also shows how the New Thought movement and the law of attraction are closely related to a new kind of feminism (see my article **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**).

Appendix

In July 2011, Chantal Lavigne of Quebec died as a result of a personal development seminar. Some month later a coroner's report confirmed that Lavigne was accidentally "cooked to death" during a class called "Dying in Consciousness." Participants were wrapped in mud and plastic, covered with blankets, and left immobilized for about nine hours. Cardboard boxes were placed over their heads and they were encouraged to hyperventilate. Lavigne died of hyperthermia when her body was unable to dissipate heat properly.

The seminar was held at a spa called Ferme Reine de la Paix and organized by Gabriella "Seréna" Fréchette. In her work as a holistic healer, Fréchette channels "Melchizedek," a mysterious king and priest that appears in the book of Genesis (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**). Lavigne had already completed 85 personal development seminars at the spa, for which she paid more than \$18,900.

This seminar may be related to the conscious dying movement, which explores ceremonies from world traditions such as Shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism that emphasize both preparing for death and gaining spiritual insight through near-death experiences. In audio recordings of the session, Fréchette allegedly states, "The time has come for this body of death that you believe is yours...Death is freedom...death is the truth."

This is not the first time tragedy has resulted from holistic therapies that involve heat and confined spaces. In 2000, ten-year-old Candace Newmaker was accidentally smothered to death during "rebirthing therapy" that involved wrapping her in blankets and sitting on her to simulate the experience of birth. The therapists received prison sentences of 16 years.

And then there is James Arthur Ray's poorly constructed homemade sweat lodge ceremony that also was supposed to induce a "rebirthing" experience.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation consulted Dianne Casoni, a criminologist from the University of Montreal who studies "cultic groups" including self-help groups. Casoni expressed concern both about the influence holistic health providers gain over their clients and the lack of oversight over such seminars. Holistic healers have, in fact, been framed as sinister and manipulative charlatans at least since nineteenth century.

The problems of traditions such as New Thought, water cure, and mesmerism (see my article **Hypnosis, hypnotherapy, and the art of self-deceit**) foreshadowed later concerns over cults. One blog has already labeled Fréchette, "a deranged New Ager." A Quebecois commenter called her "un garou de seet" (a cult guru).

The problem is shortly told the tendency, within New Age and the self-help industry, to reduce religion (the traditional spiritual traditions and their spiritual practices) to psychology and psychotherapy. An example is the Czech-American psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, who in his therapeutic technique "Holotropic Breathwork" is combining Cathartic psychotherapies with Regression psychotherapies, and is calling this technique a spiritual practice with an ancient shamanistic lineage. He even claims that this technique is able to skip years of meditation within the traditional practices. The intention is to provoke paranormal phenomena of the same kind as those known from spiritual crises (the awakening of kundalini, para-psychic opening, Hero's journey, the shamanic crisis, channeling, close encounters with UFOs, memories from past lives, near-death experiences, possession states, peak experiences – see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

The misunderstanding, and the following misleading of clients, happen because of the psychologizing of these phenomena. Grof wrongly thinks, that these experiences correspond with the theories within Cathartic psychotherapies and Regression psychotherapies, and that the goal is to re-experience or re-visit them; that is: you have go through heavy ordeals of cathartic and/or regressive kind, and experience death and rebirth (especially known from the shamanic illness and the Hero's journey) in order to experience healing and personal transformation.

In my article **A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork** I show what the misunderstanding consists in.

