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**THE IMPACT OF EMERSON'S
TRANSCENDENTALISM ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT**

An Inquiry into Parallels as a Way to Determine the Influence

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Abstrakt

This thesis provides details about historical background of American Transcendentalism, a theological, philosophical and literary tradition of the first half of the nineteenth century in United States and of New Age religion originating roughly at the turn of the same century and maturing in the 1970's in a form of the New Age movement. The work focuses on the influence of American Transcendentalism as one of the shaping factors, which contributed to the emergence of New Age. The attention is placed primarily on the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through a detailed analysis of selected Emerson's essays parallels are drawn between the beliefs held by the Transcendentalists, mainly Emerson, and general beliefs shared with the New Age community. Following the historical development of both traditions, we discover the point of convergence, namely the New Thought movement originating in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: transcendence, self-reliance, the idea of God, higher Self, powers within, reality creation, power of thought, self-responsibility, positive thinking

Abstrakt

Tato práce sleduje historický vývoj Amerického Transcendentalismu, teologického, filosofického a literárního hnutí první poloviny devatenáctého století ve Spojených státech amerických a duchovně orientovaného směru New Age, jehož kořeny sahají na přelom osmnáctého a devatenáctého století. Tento duchovně orientovaný směr dosáhl vrcholu svého vývoje v sedmdesátých letech dvacátého století, kdy začal být označován jako hnutí. Práce se soustřeďuje především na vliv Amerického Transcendentalismu, jež byl jedním ze směrů které významně přispěly ke zrodu New Age. Největší pozornost je věnována tvorbě Ralphi Waldo Emersona. Skrze detailní analýzu vybraných Emersonových esejí jsou naznačeny paralely mezi ideovým přesvědčením transcendentalistů, konkrétně Emersona, a idejemi, jež jsou obecně sdíleny mezi členy hnutí New Age. Při sledování historického vývoje obou tradic narazíme na bod, kdy se obě tradice začnou sbíhat a vytvoří tak jeden směr. Tímto směrem je hnutí New Thought, jehož počátky spadají do druhé poloviny devatenáctého století.

Klíčová slova: transcendence, sebedůvěra, představa Boha, vyšší Já, vnitřní síly, vytváření reality, síla myšlenky, zodpovědnost sama za sebe, pozitivní myšlení

Contents

Introduction	7
Key literature sources	8
Methodology	9
Assessment	10
The Contents	10
Transcendentalism	12
An Introduction of Transcendentalism	12
The Rise of American Transcendentalism	13
Thoughts, Ideas and Influences - the Predecessors of American Transcendentalism	13
Emerson's Harvard Divinity School Address and the Miracles Controversy	18
The Responses, the Implications and the Terrible Vexation of Mr. Andrews Norton	19
Emerson under the Influence of Coleridge and Wordsworth: Traces of Romantic Idealism in Emerson's Perception of the World	22
The Issue of Discursive versus Intuitive Reason – Reason versus Understanding	23
The Accusations of Plagiarism. The Concept of Consciousness Field and the Nonexistence of Time and Matter	24
The American Scholar Address and Emerson's view on History	28
The Brook Farm Project – Transcendentalists' View on Society, the Role of an Individual and its Parallels in the New Age Movement	29
New Age	36
The World of New Age	36
Defining New Age	36
Demarcation of the Field - New Age <i>Sensu Stricto</i> versus New Age <i>Sensu Lato</i>	41
Having the New Age Label – Practices From Around the World, Authors and the New Age Classics	41
New Age Science – Basic Terminology	43
The Quantum World – Metaphysics in New Age Teachings	44
Channeling	46
The Origins of New Age	47
The Definition of Western Esotericism and the Concept of Spirituality and Religion	47
The Origins of Western Esotericism	50
The Elements Composing Western Esotericism	51
Traditions Influenced By Western Esotericism	54
Eighteen and Nineteen Century Movements influenced by Esoteric Tradition: Romanticism and Occultism	54
Romanticism and its Influence on the Emergence of New Age	55
Occultism, Swedenborgianism and Mesmerism and Their Influence on the Emergence of New Age	57
Emanuel Swedenborg	57
Franz Anton Mesmer	61
Spiritualism of the 19 th century	62
Convergence –The Influence of Transcendentalism on the Predecessors of New Age	63
Quimby's New Thought Movement and its Offshoots - Mental and Religious Science	63
Ralph Waldo Emerson and the New Thought Movement	67
Self-Reliance versus Self-Responsibility – Transcendentalism versus New Thought	68
A Parallel between Emerson's and the New Age View of Evolutionism	69
Oriental Influences in Transcendentalism and the Scope of Influence of Eastern Traditions in New Age	70
American Harmonial Religions and the Psychologization of Religion	72
New Thought Ideas Giving Rise to New Age – From the 1920's until 1970's	73
Conclusion	75
Comparison of Basic New Age and Transcendentalism Tenets	75
Final Word	79
Appendix	83
Works cited	84

Introduction

The primary goal of this thesis is to point out the parallels and identical ideas of Emerson's American Transcendentalisms and the New Age movement, specifically its New Thought variety. Emerson is being honored not only for his indisputable literary qualities, mainly for his incredible eloquence, but also for his ideas that seemed to be rebellious and courageous at his time. A contemporary American society still values him highly for his literary as well as philosophical contribution, especially for his view of individual inner freedom.

I decided to seek the parallels between these two traditions because the New Age movement, for me, represents the utmost spiritual freedom one can have while walking the path of the soul. The idea of spirit or soul was in the centre of Emerson's contemplations and he saw it in everything present in his life. Both traditions see as essential for a human to discover the divine essence inside each and every one of us and then to act upon impulses which come from within. The idea to write this thesis occurred to me while studying Emerson's *Self-Reliance* during the American literature seminars. Emerson's essays remind me of today's New Age self-help books. However, Emerson did not aspire to adjust his ideas, and the way he presented them, to a wide public. Self-help books, on the other hand are written in the most user-friendly way possible. No wonder that some precious thoughts encoded in Emerson's high style might escape a wider attention of general public. New Age in a way strives to rediscover what could have been missed and presents the ideas of the Transcendentalists wrapped in a New Thought packaging.

The parallels will be uncovered through a detailed analysis of some of Emerson's essays as well as the works of selected New Age authors. We will follow the forming philosophies shared by both traditions. Since New Age is such a diversified tradition, I decided not to draw the parallels based solely on the works of art but rather to delve into academic studies explaining New Age thinking and the reason why its beliefs and opinions originated in the first place. It was necessary to look at general studies and summarizing overviews about New Age, since the individual works of art do not picture the general tendencies within the movement sufficiently.

New Age philosophy is a way of life, as well as Transcendentalism was. It influences one's conceptions about life, the universe, creation, about our role and life's purpose, about morals and the way we think and perceive the world around us. It is an amalgam of various traditions put together. Living in the contemporary world where one is overloaded with information, it is necessary to pick and chose beliefs that suit our individual needs.

New Age presents a possibility it offers a full plate. The goal being ‘Know Yourself’ and then you can make the right decisions.

Emerson’s message is the same as that of New Age; ‘Know Yourself’ and trust yourself. My goal was to pinpoint the most interesting and obvious parallels between his views on life and those of New Age by placing them next to each other for a direct comparison. Both traditions are highlighting the importance of the inner guidance as the only means how to orientate ourselves in the world, which appears to be a relevant problem not only for our contemporary society but clearly also in Emerson’s nineteenth century.

I also see as necessary to emphasize the fact that this thesis does focus on Emerson’s Transcendentalism primarily. It is not a detailed analysis of his work. Instead, the focus is placed on selected essays of his, their account is given in the *Methodology* section, which are then used to illustrate how these thoughts have been reflected in the New Age philosophy. Transcendentalism is seen as one of the shaping factors of New Age and as such, it is being dealt with.

Key literature sources

This overview only highlights the most relevant sources, and it certainly does not aim to present the entire volume of fiction and scholarship written on that subject.

Primary literature sources:

Joel Porte’s volume of Emerson’s essays *Essays & Lectures: Nature; Addresses, and Lectures. Essays: First and Second Series, Representative Men, English Traits, The Conduct of Life*.

For New Age, the ideas presented in this thesis are largely based on Esther and Jerry Hicks’ book *The Law of Attraction*. It is a channeled material. Esther Hicks channels the group entity known as Abraham. Her thoughts substantially pervade the New Age movement. She is also the only channeling author who runs her own radio show at Hayhouseradio.com the internet radio station operated by an enormously successful New Age publishing company the Hayhouse. Other primary sources are New Age movies *The Secret* and *What the Bleep Do We Know – Down the Rabbit Hole* and also other channeled but not published material such as Laura Knight Jadczyk channeling the Cassiopaeans (www.cassiopaea.org), Brad Johnson channeling Adronis (www.adronis.org) and Darryl Anka channeling Bashar (www.bashar.org)

Secondary literature sources:

For Transcendentalism, it is Perry Miller's *The Transcendentalists, An Anthology* with the author's valuable comments about lives and various issues the Transcendentalists had to face. Frederick Finseth's M.A. Thesis *Liquid Fire Within Me: Language, Self and Society in Transcendentalism and Early Evangelicalism* explaining the reasons of tension between Unitarians and Transcendentalists. Also, Patrick Keane's *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason: the transatlantic "light of all our day"* which goes into details about the influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge on Emerson.

Above all Paul P. Reuben's *American Transcendentalism* is providing an excellent overview of basic tenets of Transcendentalism. Paul P. Reuben Ph.D. is a professor emeritus at the California State university Stanislaus' department of English.

For New Age, it is Wouter J. Hanegraaff's *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. A truly extensive study of New Age phenomenon providing not only information concerning historical development, which I used primarily, but also information about New Age Science, Quantum Physics, the nature of channeling and the components that construct New Agers' perception of reality. This book was indispensable for my research. Also, Paul Heelas' *The New Age Movement*, a more contemporary perspective on New Age, focusing on sociological aspects and the tendency towards prosperity orientation within the movement having its root in the New Thought of the nineteenth century. Glenn R. Mosley's *New Thought, Ancient Wisdom: The History and Future of the New Thought Movement* a comprehensive overview of the development of this tradition, which constituted a point of ideological convergence of Transcendentalism and New Age. Finally yet importantly, Olav Hammer's *Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*, a source of information about New Age Science and the late development of the New Age movement.

Methodology

The thesis is conceived in a form of two large separate blocks, each describing the development of each respective tradition, drawing parallels with the other immediately on the spot when they occur. The reason for that was to make the comparison as obvious as possible without the need to refer to previous or following chapters all the time, although sometimes it was unavoidable.

Also, I chose not to include a more detailed look on Theosophy. Even though it is essential for the development of New Age, it represents a stream of ideas, which are not distinctly American, as opposed to New Age *sensu lato*, involving New Thought, and American harmonial religions, which are given the priority. In this case, I am adopting the methodology of Wouter J. Hanegraaff who distinguishes between New Age *sensu stricto* and New Age *sensu lato*.

As far as Emerson's essays are concerned I studied the following: *Nature, Commodity, Beauty, Language, Discipline, Idealism, Spirit, Prospects, The American Scholar, An Address (Divinity College), The Transcendentalist, Self-Reliance, Compensation, Spiritual Laws, The Over-Soul, Circles, Experience, Swedenborg; or, the Mystic*. So, the parallels are drawn on the basis of these essays, I do not claim to have studied the whole of Emerson's work which is rather extensive. Therefore, my thesis is by no means a comprehensive study of all possible similar or identical ideas between the traditions in question.

Assessment

Please note, that I read Emerson's essays through the lenses of New Age thinking as I was searching for similar or identical ideas this was a necessary strategy. Therefore, I do not claim that what I have discovered and my interpretations of the findings reflect accurately what Emerson thought and wanted to convey to his audience or readers. It is my personal interpretation adjusted to the aims of this thesis – to find some parallels.

As Emerson says:

*What can we see or acquire, but what we are? You have observed a skilful man reading
Virgil. Well, that author is a thousands books to thousands persons
...you will never find what I find*

Ralph Waldo Emerson (Porte 314).

The Contents

We will start with Transcendentalism and its development, the reason and ideas that lead to its emergence and the immediate predecessors of this tradition. Then we will have a look at the major cause that lead some Unitarians to reevaluate their beliefs, to become Unitarian

dissidents and later Transcendentalists, which is presented in this thesis by Emerson's *Harvard Divinity School Address*. We will also follow the responses that Emerson instigated. We will continue with the romantic traces of influence in Emerson's work, as Romanticism was influential for New Age as well. Then we will explore some philosophical concepts deriving from Romanticism, namely those of Reason and Understanding because there is a significant parallel of the lower self (ego) and higher self (our spirit) employed in New Age thinking. We will then proceed to slightly more metaphysical concepts in New Age, which can also be found in Emerson's essays, namely the essence of consciousness, time and matter. This part will be concluded with a description of the Brook Farm project, which has its parallel in the contemporary New Age Findhorn community.

Moving on to New Age section, we will start with general definitions and demarcation of the field as New Age is a broad concept. We will mention some practices typical of New Age as well as the most influential authors and their best-sellers. To grasp more fully the New Age thinking we will have a look at the beliefs and ideas about the functioning of our reality, or our universe which will be described in the chapter about New Age Science. Then we will learn about channeling being an important source of acquiring information within the community. Then finally to move on to the historical origins and development of New Age. This huge development section will start with Western Esotericism as a basis for the ideology. Then we will jump straight to eighteenth and nineteenth century Romanticism and Occultism, since Romanticism, as I have already mentioned, was important for the Transcendentalists. We will familiarize ourselves with two important figures, namely Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Anton Mesmer, as the former of the two influenced Emerson, and the teachings of the latter represented an important connecting element bridging the Transcendentalism, influenced by Swedenborg, and the New Age via the rise of the New Thought movement. We will explore Emerson's influence on New Thought and its offshoots. We will then continue with oriental influences of both traditions and the emergence of American harmonial religions, roots of which can be traced to Emerson. Finally, we will follow New Age achieving its maturity as a fully secularized movement in the 1970's.

In the last concluding section, we will compare the basic tenets of both traditions to see the parallels between their respective specifically expressed beliefs.

Transcendentalism

An Introduction of Transcendentalism

I was given to understand that whatever was unintelligible would be certainly Transcendental.

Charles Dickens in *American Notes* (Reuben).

I should have told them at once that I was a transcendentalist. That would have been the shortest way of telling them that they would not understand my explanations.

Henry David Thoreau in *Journal*, V: 4 (Reuben).

To be great is to be misunderstood.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (Porte 265).

Over the years, many minds have tried, with various success with respect to a target reader, to define the concept of Transcendentalism. The definitions provided by Transcendentalists themselves may appear to be ‘transcendental’ indeed to many who study it, using Charles Dickens’ terminology. In order to preserve the air of seriousness and at the same time show their eloquence they very often failed to have regard for the recipients of their texts, exactly as Perry Miller aptly observes: “That generation was, by our standards, terribly verbose” (4). Miller continues by saying that politeness was the main reason for their verbosity resulting in pages of “bowing, scraping, preliminary conciliation, and a display of erudition” (5). What is more, having the whole issue of *The Boston Quarterly Review* to fill up by himself, Orestes A. Brownson, one of the Transcendentalists, was highly repetitious (Miller 5).

‘To transcend’ means to be capable of seeing things from let us say non-standard, non-conform, surely minority point of view. The connotation of this word, thanks to this movement, acquired additional overtones suggesting ‘radical’ change of one’s beliefs, cutting oneself off from the social norms and standards, freeing oneself from the patterns gained through a process of socialization, reevaluating one’s religious beliefs and, most importantly, discovering a new authority – the authority of the Self. New Agers would use terms such as: to see the bigger picture, to perceive things from a higher perspective, to raise one’s consciousness, to escape from the ‘Matrix’. Surprisingly, these expressions apply to Transcendentalism of the nineteenth century as well as to the New Age movement of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

According to Miller, Transcendentalism was “the protest of these few troubled spirits against what their society had confidently assumed was the crowning triumph of progress and enlightenment...their protest was entirely spontaneous and instinctive” (8).

The Rise of American Transcendentalism

Paul Reuben quotes Paul Boller while explaining the reasons, which led to the rise of American Transcendentalism. Boller states that due to the convergence of “chance, coincidence and several events, thoughts and tendencies” the soil in 1830s New England was ready for an emergence of the Transcendentalism. First and foremost, he mentions the gradual fall of Calvinistic Puritanism (Reuben).

What was the problem with Puritanism? We may safely assume that people probably outgrew its considerably restrictive philosophy and started to be discontented with its teachings. The teaching of predestination, typical of Puritanism, draws on the teachings of Jean Calvin, and in effect minimizes the degree to which a person can shape his or her destiny.

Another important factor was the process of steady secularization, heavily influenced by technological development and science in general. In the 1830s, the world was in the middle of the first wave of Industrial Revolution. Few years later, in 1859, Charles Darwin’s masterpiece *Origin of Species* was published.

Society was facing the need to address various, not particularly easily solvable issues at once. It needed to deal with the revision of religious views, to address the issue of universal human rights, namely women rights and abolitionism (Reuben).

Thoughts, Ideas and Influences - the Predecessors of American Transcendentalism

In his study *Perspectives in American Literature*, Paul Reuben ranks Puritanism, Romanticism and Unitarianism among the direct predecessors of Transcendentalism. Transcendentalism was undoubtedly inspired by the Puritan idea of “the doctrine of divine light”; this idea is also very similar to the Quaker idea of “inner light“. However, Puritanism as well as Quakerism see God as the central authority as opposed to Transcendentalism which perceives the Self guided by intuition as the central authority. Reuben describes Unitarianism

as “a belief very much like Deism” and continues to point out that Unitarianism was more or less relaxed Puritan Calvinism (Reuben).

According to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the origins of Transcendentalism can be traced back to liberal New England’s Congregationalists. They departed from orthodox Calvinism for they did not resonate any longer with the Puritan idea of predestination and “inescapable human depravity.” Moreover, they emphasized the unity rather than the concept of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, they were later on called Unitarians (“The Transcendentalism”).

The Unitarian leading preacher William Ellery Channing¹ (1780-1842) in his sermon *Unitarian Christianity* (1819) proposes to employ our rationality while reading the Bible. He says:

Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner as that of other books...we feel it our bounden duty to exercise our reason upon it perpetually...to look beyond the letter to the spirit, to seek in the nature of the subject, and the aim of the writer, his true meaning, to make use of what is known, for explaining what is difficult, and for discovering new truths. (Finseth)

In *Likeness to God* (1828), Channing explains that humans share the God’s divinity and that they may actually achieve likeness to God (“The Transcendentalism”). Miller mentions the most important themes from Channing’s work that came nearest to the transcendental ideas. According to Miller, these were the following statements: “Nature is the revelation of the divine rather than formal dogma, the approach to nature is to be made through insight and not through a systemized theology” (22). Although he seems to relate here to the very transcendental idea of “the supremacy of the intuitive assurance over all reasoning”, not for a moment did he get rid of his eighteenth-century inheritance (Miller 22).

Emerson himself was a Unitarian minister. He resigned in 1832 (Reuben). It might have been this emphasis on rational thought, used as a tool for discernment of moral and immoral conduct, that Emerson found attractive at first. The focus on rational thought was in contradiction with Calvinist requirement of obedience. However, let us not be mistaken by the

¹ William Ellery Channing was the chief spokesperson for the Unitarian Church in New England. Emerson called him “our bishop”. As opposed to his fellow Unitarians, he was not a devoted follower of John Locke, neither would he be described nowadays as a Transcendentalist. He could perhaps be called a Pre-Transcendentalist, somebody not firmly rooted in traditional Unitarian beliefs, finding himself in a sort of transitional period. The Transcendental generation adored him (Miller 22).

word “rational“; it has a slightly different meaning in this context from the Enlightenment understanding of the word “reason.” For Transcendentalists the reason equaled the faculty of intuition. This will be explained in a greater detail later on.

Although Unitarians strove to appeal to their parishioners’ hearts and feelings, they could not be compared to the rural Evangelical Protestants. Unitarianism was first and foremost a religion for wealthy Boston citizens. The crucial difference between Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, according to Finseth, lay in the fact that for Transcendentalists “finding God depended on neither orthodox creedalism nor the Unitarians’ sensible exercise of virtue, but on one’s inner striving toward spiritual communion with the divine spirit. From this wellspring of belief would flow all the rest of their religious philosophy” (Finseth).

Another stream of thoughts that came from Germany with F.D.E. Schleiermacher’s *Critical Essay Upon the Gospel of St. Luke* (1825) also needs to be taken into account. This essay reflected the author’s skepticism about religion, seeing the Bible as a product of human history and culture, not as a source of knowledge obtained through divine revelation. Also, Johan Gottfried Herder doubted the authority of the Bible (“The Transcendentalism”). Schleiermacher’s mission, as George Ripley (1802-1880) puts it, was to bring scientific and religious views into some kind of harmony. He prompted everyone to “look beyond the letter to the spirit, to separate the central and absolute idea from the temporary forms”. He also tried to demonstrate the primary truths of the Gospel. On the one hand, he believed in the miracles and the divine mission of Jesus Christ but on the other hand, he warned against possible misinterpretations of the Bible and called on the authority of reason to be employed in interpretation of revelations, says Ripley (Miller 101).

Frederic Henry Hedge (1805-1890) can be seen as a prime source of knowledge about German philosophy for Transcendentalists. At the age of thirteen, he was sent to Germany where he not only acquired the language but also acquainted himself with German idealism. He spent four years in the Harvard Divinity School where he was held in high esteem for his capability to read Kant in the original (Miller 66). A Unitarian minister himself, he wrote a review of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s work in 1833 for *The Christian Examiner*. In 1836, Hedge started the ‘Transcendental Club²’ for discontented young Unitarian clergy (“The Transcendentalism”). Hedge’s, Ripley’s and Brownson’s essays for *The Christian Examiner* literally gave birth to the Transcendental movement (Miller 67). In his essay on Coleridge for *The Christian Examiner*, Hedge especially accentuated Coleridge’s fondness for German

² Emerson called it “Hedge Club”.

metaphysics. Speaking of German metaphysics, it is important to stress the role of the transcendental philosophy of Immanuel Kant (“The Transcendentalism”).

Kant’s idea of Copernican Revolution was of paramount importance not only for Romanticism (Coleridge, Wordsworth) but also for Transcendentalism and the New Age.

Hedge explains Kant’s concept of Copernican Revolution as follows: “Since the supposition that our intuitions depend on the nature of the world without, will not answer, assume that the world without depends on the nature of our intuitions” (“The Transcendentalism”).

As I came to understand this, Kant suggests that we look on the matter from a different angle. Since the unsatisfactory explanation stating that our inner feelings and perceptions depend entirely on conditions of the outside world is clearly not enough, he then proposes to accept the possibility that the opposite might in fact be true. He prompts us to assume that the conditions of the outside world do actually depend on our inner set-up. In other words, that we influence the outer reality by means of our inner tuning, emotions.

This assumption constitutes a foundation of the New Age movement and had great appeal for Transcendentalists. New Agers would likely summarize this concept into one and only sentence: “Thoughts become things.”

At the same time, Immanuel Kant was the one who opposed the sensational theory-philosophy of empiricism promoted by John Lock and David Hume. This was the theory known as “a tabula rasa” saying that all knowledge develops from sensational perception (Reuben). Locke and Hume agreed that there is nothing in the mind that has not been previously in the senses. Kant admitted a chance of a prior knowledge gained through the intuition.

Also, in his 1842 lecture *The Transcendentalist*, Emerson stated that Transcendentalism acquired its name “from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant” (Porte 198). Kant assumed that there was “a class of ideas, or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience is acquired”, he called them “intuitions of the mind itself or transcendental forms” (Keane 41). Keane continues by saying that whatever is associated with intuitive thought today is often being called ‘transcendental’ (41). Although these were the thoughts of Kant, Emerson acquired them through Coleridge and it was Coleridge’s version of “intuitions of the mind” that Emerson was adding to and developing (Keane 41).

According to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, there are three Kantian claims present throughout Emerson’s philosophy and these are: “Human mind forms experience.

Existence of such mental operations is counter to skepticism. ‘Transcendental’ does not mean ‘transcendent’ or beyond human experience altogether, but something through which experience is made possible” (“The Transcendentalism”).

Transcendentalists can be best depicted as omnivorous academically oriented thinkers. It is no surprise that among many influences, which can be found in their respective works, we can find traces of Hinduism (Upanishads, Bhagavad-Gita), Buddhism, Confucianism, Christian and Muslim mysticism and Neo-Platonism (Procházka 75). Keane adds other sources such as Swedenborgianism, which I will describe later on as it has influenced the development of the New Age movement substantially, Oriental influences, mainly the Persian poetry of Saadi and Hafiz, and British and German Romanticism with Goethe, Carlyle, Fichte and Jacobi (34).

With respect to Neo-Platonism, Transcendentalism is often described as an idealistic philosophy, which leads us directly to Plato. Plato’s Idealism was indeed one of the chief sources. According to Plato “the world is an expression of spirit, or mind” (Reuben). To develop it further, Plato’s views can be explained in the following way. Everything we are able to perceive around us as physical, material objects were thought forms first, projected through the mind of God. In other words, there was an idea of the object first conceived by the mind of God and then it became the solid 3D visible object. This of course applies to all living beings as well. At this point, it needs to be mentioned that Plato’s idealism is precisely what the New Age builds upon; it carries this idea even further.

Within the contemporary New Age movement throughout the world, not only in the US, there is a prevailing tendency to embrace fully this particular idea of creation. With one exception, the New Age sees every individual as being part of the super-consciousness called God. For better understanding, it is possible to say that God, according to New Agers, projected a part of himself or herself into every living being upon the planet. So that if all of us carry part of this super-consciousness it is justifiable to say that we are all God.

Emerson in his essay *Nature* came to exactly the same conclusion. He says: “Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space- all mean egotism vanishes. I become transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God” (Porte 10).

If we are all God, then we are also creators. We are those who create the visible reality through our thoughts in the same manner Plato imagined and very much like Transcendentalists who were promoting the concept of individual divinity for exactly the same reasons presented by New Agers a century later.

Emerson's Harvard Divinity School Address and the Miracles Controversy

Emerson's Divinity School Address in 1838 caused huge upheaval. He was disdained, called an infidel or a heathen and not welcome at Harvard for many following years. Here is what he said:

Jesus Christ saw that God incarnates himself in man, and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of his world. He said: "I am divine. Through me, God acts, through me speak. Would you see God, see me, or see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think." What a distortion did his doctrine and memory suffer in the same, in the next and the following ages! The figures of his rhetoric have usurped the place of his truth – churches are not built on his principles, but on his tropes.

Christianity is not the doctrine of the soul. It dwells with exaggeration about the person of Jesus. The soul knows no person. He is described as demigod...The sublime is excited in me by the great stoical doctrine, obey thyself...Man is an infinite Soul; he is drinking forever the soul of God (Porte 80-81).

Throughout the ages, as Emerson points out, Jesus Christ and his deeds were attracting so much attention that the idea of divinity started to be ascribed almost exclusively to him.

Unitarians, as much liberal as they were, promoted a doctrine presenting miracles carried out by Jesus as the solemn proof of the truth of religion. At that time, under the influence of Hume's skeptical statement that "no empirical proof of religion could be satisfactory" ("The Transcendentalism"), Transcendentalists considered the premise concerning miracles to be a flawed one.

Moreover, they declared that such a view contributes to alienation of humans from divinity (Finseth). This view clearly belittled the divine status of human beings in favor of Jesus Christ who was then perceived as the real embodiment of divinity as opposed to humans who were thus less perfect. Here is what Emerson said addressing the miracles issue: "He (Jesus) spoke of miracles; for he felt that man's life was a miracle, and all that man doth, and he knew that his daily miracle shines, as the character ascends. But the word miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is Monster" (Porte 80).

This miracles controversy, which Emerson addressed in his speech, presented a key factor for his resignation as a Unitarian minister.

Another issue he had with the Unitarian doctrine was the fact that he started to doubt the teachings of transubstantiation³ (Ruland, Bradbury 118).

The Responses, the Implications and the Terrible Vexation of Mr. Andrews Norton

This bold speech of Emerson attracted angry responses from many people, the most important of whom was Andrews Norton. He was known as the “Unitarian Pope” who concluded his treatise *The New School in Literature and Religion* (1838) by saying that Emerson’s address is “an insult to religion” (“The Transcendentalism”). He also expressed an opinion that by denying the existence of divine miracles and suggesting the possibility of an intuitive communion with God, Emerson in fact denies Christianity as a whole. In spite of this, most Transcendentalists thought about themselves as Christians (Finseth). Mr. Andrews Norton was a professor of Harvard Divinity School and it was he, who denounced Emerson and the others as infidels. Such an accusation was undoubtedly well pondered before he made it, as Norton was still painfully aware of similar accusations that had been raised against Unitarians, labeling them as heretics (Miller 6).

Unitarianism was a result of a century lasting struggle for freedom, elegance and liberality, and men like Andrews Norton or Francis Bowen deservedly regarded themselves as “guardians of a great tradition, progressive and forward-looking men” (Miller 10). They probably felt that now they won the battle they will keep the status of things unchanged for at least several centuries, but how wrong they were. Progress brought them face to face with a situation for which they were simply not prepared. They did not expect a new revolt to emerge that soon.

There is another very interesting thing to be mentioned, the students at Harvard College and in the Divinity School were actually between the years 1825-1835 subjected to two distinct forms of education. The first one came from the Unitarian ministers such as from Norton and Bowen and the other from the imported European materials. This fact and the numerous articles in *The Christian Examiner*, a pro-Unitarian list, slowly began to show signs of transcendental points of view and later on led to a huge influx of articles and books, which then could be described as not Unitarian at all but clearly transcendental in opinions.

³ Transubstantiation is a process of change of a bread and wine during the religious service into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The Harvard University officials were witnessing “a story of the triumph of the self-instilled education of the dormitory over the official tuition of the lecture rooms” (Miller 12).

In fact, Unitarians were the first who embellished their sermons with poetry quotations and literate style. Joseph Stevens Buckminster’s eloquence became legendary and set up a standard for the youth of 1830’s which they strove to achieve (Miller 10, 17). This inspiration might very well be the source of Emerson’s enormous verbosity.

Although a man of dignity, Norton must have been seriously aggravated when he decided to make his accusation publicly. They were his own students, Ripley, Emerson, Clarke, Cranch and the younger Channings, all of whom were summarily called ‘Harvard Brahmins’. The implications of such a charge were far reaching; the Transcendentalists suddenly presented a threat not only to church but also to the state. The Transcendentalists often stressed the differences existing among them, in order to focus attention on the individual personalities. Perhaps they might have wanted to disperse the notion of them forming a homogenous group, where the word ‘transcendental’ immediately evokes certain preconceptions the individual members need to share (Miller 7). Miller depicts them in the following way:

They can be seen as pretty much of a single stripe: they were all young Unitarians who between 1830 and 1840 revolted against Unitarianism (even those who came from non-Unitarian backgrounds, like Alcott and Brownson, had to move through a Unitarian stage in order thereafter to become Transcendentalists by rejecting it!) (Miller 7).

Although “the community of the heart” supposedly united them, as Miller puts it (8), Emerson nevertheless kept a certain distance from other Transcendentalists. It was easily detectable from his essays where he spoke about what ‘they’ do, instead of what ‘we’ do (“The Transcendentalism”).

The editors of *The Christian Examiner* found themselves in an unfavorable situation where they could no longer keep the impartial status. When asked whether the words of Mr. Emerson represent the opinions of the Unitarian ministers and the School they said that they believe that: “those notions are utterly distasteful to the instructors of the School and they are esteemed by them to be neither good divinity nor good sense” (Miller 197). Theodore Parker (1810-1860) observed, after Emerson’s address, that many believed “that Christianity, which has weathered some storms, will not be able to stand this gale” (Miller 198).

Orestes A. Brownson (1803-1876), however critical he was of Emerson's previous publications, could not suppress his contempt for the conventions of Boston society and showed appreciation for Emerson's courage to speak his mind. He acknowledged that progress, which the contemporary society loved, could not be achieved without freedom of speech. Nevertheless, Emerson, according to Brownson, might have shown "some little regret in departing from the faith of our fathers". Brownson also pointed out that Emerson's real objective was not the introduction of a new theory concerning man, nature and God, he just wanted men "to think for themselves on all subjects" (Miller 198-199).

It is doubtful to what extent Brownson's vindication of Emerson actually helped to smoothen out the whole situation. When we consider that fact that Brownson literally says:" His (Emerson's) object is to make men scorn to be slaves to routine, to custom, to established creeds, to public opinion, to the great names of this age, of this country, or of any other" (Miller 199). As a matter of fact, by these very words Brownson did not do much favor to Emerson. He named all the dangerous things that could possibly threaten the existence of bonds within society, norms, standards and manners, which contribute to its functioning as a system. Miller confirms this assumption by saying: "These insurgents had ideas about politics and economics, and about relations between the sexes, as well as about woodchucks and sunsets, the former sort were downright subversive" (12).

Brownson's words explaining what Emerson tried to convey to his public (i.e. to young Unitarian ministers) were unpalatable in many aspects back in 1838. Almost two centuries later, our contemporary society still has not reached the point where all what Emerson wished for men and prompted us to be aware of, would be realized by majority. Namely, the awareness of the Self and the benefits we can gain when we find a way to connect with it. We have completely disregarded the fact that through our higher Self we become one with the Source, the God, and the Omnipresent and thus we have access to infinite knowledge without needing a middle man (teachers, preachers, politicians etc.) This is, I believe, what Emerson was trying to say and it is precisely what the New Age movement is all about.

Here is what Brownson said:

To every man lies open the whole field of truth, in morals, in politics, in science, in theology, in philosophy. The labors of past ages, the revelations of prophets and bards, the discoveries of the scientific and the philosophic, are not to be regarded as superseding our own exertions and inquiries, as impediments to the free action of our

own minds, but merely as helps, as provocations to the freest and fullest spiritual action of which God has made us capable (Miller 199).

From the point of view of our contemporary society, Brownson's expression 'mind' could be understood in terms of logical reasoning. However, as we will see in the next chapter the Transcendentalists and Emerson primarily saw the concept of mind and reason in slightly different views than we do today.

Emerson under the Influence of Coleridge and Wordsworth: Traces of Romantic Idealism in Emerson's Perception of the World

In terms of Romantic line of influence, Patrick Keane in his book *Emerson, Romanticism, and Intuitive Reason* (2005) mentions Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth as Emerson's main sources of inspiration (4). Coleridge himself was very much influenced not only by Kant but also by John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1668). Keane quotes Alexander Kern saying that:

It is clear that Coleridge, more than Wordsworth, Carlyle, or any German writer, precipitated American Transcendentalism. His identification of Reason with Spirit became the catalyst. The emphasis on insight, intuition, and imagination permitted a contact with nature, which has dominated subsequent American literature and thought (6).

Here we need to clarify the term 'reason'. In order to do so we need to have a look at Milton's *Paradise Lost* and specifically at the character of Archangel Raphael. While explaining the Great Chain of Being he distinguishes between the lower (discursive) and higher (intuitive) Reason and this concept was later on adopted by Coleridge, Wordsworth, DeQuincey, Carlyle and Emerson (Keane 3, 7, 14).

Wordsworth insisted that man's mind was far superior to nature. This opinion of his was most certainly influenced by Coleridge who proposed the dominance of Reason over nature. By Reason, Coleridge understood "man's divine mind, his genius and imagination" (Keane 43). Both Coleridge and Wordsworth agreed on the image of active and powerful mind, which has the shaping power. Emerson then "writes of nature as obedient to spirit and counsels each of

us to build our own world” (“The Transcendentalism”). In terms of Wordsworth’s influence on Transcendentalists, Frank Thompson mentions in his article *Emerson’s Theory and Practice of Poetry* Wordsworth’s ode *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* as being supremely transcendental (Keane 31).

The Issue of Discursive versus Intuitive Reason – Reason versus Understanding

Coleridge was a mediator; he brought German philosophy to America, so that Emerson was able to acquaint himself with the Coleridgean version of Kant (Keane 14). Keane asks whether Emerson knew that Coleridge reversed Kant when he elevated Intuition over Understanding (intuitive reason over the discursive reason according to Milton’s terminology) (33).

In a letter to his brother Edward, Emerson describes how he came to understand the ‘Reason-Understanding’ concepts (Keane 51). We need to bear in mind that in order to understand this division he studied Coleridge, not Kant directly. He says:

Reason is the highest faculty of the soul – what we mean often by the soul itself; it never reasons, never proves, it simply perceives; it is vision. The Understanding toils all the time, compares..., adds, argues, [it is] near sighted but strong-sighted, dwelling in the present. Beasts have some understanding but no Reason. Reason is potentially perfect in every man – Understanding [,] in very different degrees of strength (Keane 51).

Here is the key to Emerson’s identification of Reason with Intuition, as a higher faculty and Understanding with analytical mind being a lower faculty. The latter was described by Milton as “discursive” Reason. New Agers perceive this division as well, they just use slightly different terminology. Discursive Reason or analytical mind is Ego for them. The concept of Intuition remains more or less unchanged.

Coleridge admits in his *Biographia Literaria* that he found a support for his ideas about ‘intuitive Reason’ (inspired by Milton’s Archangel Raphael) in Shelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) and in his *Naturphilosophie* (1806) (Keane 27).

Keane also suggests that Coleridge may have drawn on the German idealist philosopher Jacobi saying that “The Light is in my heart: as soon as I try to carry it to my intellect, it goes out” (77).

Here we can see another slight shift in that the intuition resides in our hearts and analytical reason is to be found in our minds, in our heads. This shift probably has to do with the fact that the place our feelings come from was thought to be located in our hearts. Therefore, Jacobi identifies intuition with the heart. Surprisingly, New Agers do not see the heart to be the source our feelings. Instead, they locate them to the area of our solar plexus, third chakra or simply to the place where our stomach can be found. There is a powerful energetic center which gets activated every time we feel something extremely positive or extremely negative. We can feel this rush of energy spreading through our body and it does not come from our heart.

Coleridge saw the intuitive Reason to be a faculty of highest importance through which “the men of genius” can step outside the box of what was called the Enlightenment thinking, with its analytical reasoning and empirical gathering of information, and look at things from a higher perspective (Keane 77).

The Accusations of Plagiarism. The Concept of Consciousness Field and the Nonexistence of Time and Matter

Keane speculates in a kind of “postmodern fashion”, as he calls it, that we should look more closely at what is missing in Emerson’s work and he suggests that the missing thing is a critical analysis of the thinking of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (32).

Keane actually implies that Emerson somewhat absorbed everything Coleridge wrote or said because it fitted into his perception of the world. Well, it is a natural process. If we discover something that supports our ideas, we tend to stick to it and look for further evidence of our assumptions. That is a process of creating beliefs.

Emerson was also criticized for bringing out ideas without acknowledging that somebody else had already expressed them. The critics meant not only Coleridge but also other authors and referred to Emerson’s address *The American Scholar* (1837) where Emerson says:

Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather each generation for the next generation. The books of an older period will not fit this. Books are written by

thinkers, by men of talent, that is, who start strong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles...young men grow up in libraries, believing in their duty to accept the views which Cicero, Locke, Bacon have given. Books are for nothing but to inspire...If he receives his truth from another mind fatal disservice is done. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their reading (Porte 57, 58).

The same criticism of plagiarism applied to his *Self-Reliance* where he states "man must be a nonconformist." He says "insist on yourself, never imitate" (Keane 34). If one should research the works of every individual who has already expressed themselves with regards to the matter before opening his or her mouth in order to be able to mention their names, the speech would take five hours instead of two. What is more, the speaker would inevitably give an impression that s/he did not come up with anything new, if s/he is just quoting.

Emerson might have felt rather paranoid under such accusations of plagiarism. If we consider the fact that he himself believed everyone has an access to universal knowledge as we can see from the above quotation "when he can read God directly" and if we assume that God is all knowing; it is no wonder that we can easily tap into some ideas that have already been expressed. If we are all one consciousness, the projections of God, then we should have access to everything that somebody else has written, said or done and moreover, at any point in time. It implies the existence of a sort of unified consciousness field, a place where all the thoughts that have ever been thought are stored. Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813-1892), one of the Transcendentalists, says the following:

It is indeed a remarkable fact, though it seems never to have been sufficiently noticed, that at certain periods, men are penetrated with the same great thoughts, or verge to the same great discoveries; and this without any sufficient cause for such unanimity presenting itself from the circle of known facts which surround us. We cannot find the source of this agreement in the events of past progress or of present excitement (Miller 302).

As time is concerned, Emerson says in his *Self-Reliance* the following: "Time and space are but psychological colors which the eye makes, but the soul is light, where it is, is

day; where it was, is night; and history is an impertinence and an injury, if it be anything more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming” (Porte 270).

At this point, I need to make a reference to the New Age concept of a human existence. Generally speaking, most New Agers accept the idea that we are not only flesh and blood beings, the physical form, that we are much more. There is a widespread belief that we are spiritual beings having a physical experience which is not one and only. There is a belief in reincarnation. Moreover, we are in a constant state of becoming through our everyday experiences but also through experiences that we have had in previous lives, all that is contributing to our expansion, to expansion of our consciousness. Interestingly enough, let us explore Emerson’s line where he talks about history as of parable of his being and becoming. Does that actually indicate that he admits the existence of reincarnation? Well, that is a question.

Another interesting aspect of this particular line of his, which I quoted, can be found in the first part where Emerson talks about time and space being just “psychological colors”. At this point, it is absolutely vital for me to refer to another idea within the New Age community that has been spreading through it in the recent years. Since the New Age ideas do not only come from worldwide religious beliefs but also science is very much a part of them, the New Agers often occupy themselves with the study of Quantum Physics. The physicists have recently come with a proposition that the linear time (meaning the distinguishing between past, present and future) is actually a concept which is exclusive to 3D reality, the one we perceive as living on the Earth. According to some groups within the New Age community, there are also other forms of realities, existence if you will, such as 4D, 5D and up to some 9D where the linear time simply does not apply. Those groups also claim that even in our 3D reality the time concept is delusive, in other words that there is no time. Therefore, very many New Age teachings stress the importance of ‘now’, believing that we as creators have the absolute power in the now and every time we dwell too long in the past or looking to the future we strip ourselves of some of that power.

By the above statement, concerning time, space, soul and history Emerson reveals that history is in fact irrelevant; the only relevance of the past is in the fact that it had contributed to our becoming of who we are in the now. The most important is the soul –“where it is, is day, where it was, is night”, he says. Our day is in the now our history is the night.

Keane also mentions Emerson’s speculation about nature’s external substance. Emerson wondered whether nature has any external substance or whether “it is only in the

apocalypse of the mind” (Keane 78). Well, this question reminds us of Plato and his ideas existing as the primary forms which constitute the secondary reality objects, so to speak. From the point of view of the New Age movement and as always I do not claim that this particular opinion I am going to explain is shared through out the whole community, as there are many streams of thought, the question of the nature of matter is problematic.

The view I am familiar with has again very much to do with the Quantum Physics. There is a theory presented in a popular form in the New Age movie *What the Bleep Do We Know* (2004) or *What the Bleep Do We Know- Down the Rabbit Hole* (2006).

There has been an ongoing debate whether the matter is composed of particles or of energy waves. Are there any solid particles at all, such as atoms, photons or quarks? The current consensus of the scientific community seems to be that everything is comprised of energy. Even though we think that what we see, when looking for example on a solid table, is an object composed of tiny solid particles, therefore it is solid as a whole, is not the actual reality. The illusion of solidity is created by energy waves oscillating at a certain frequency at which point human eye perceives the object as solid, stable and not moving.

In this sense, it seems that Emerson was already in the nineteenth century on the right track when he doubted the “external substance of nature”. Moreover, even his second premise concerning the illusory make-up of nature seems vindicated by modern science. Is the external world really only in “the apocalypse of the mind”? Well, it has to do with the concept of our reality being described in terms of a certain density. I have already explained the theory of vibrational nature of our Universe. If we admit that everything is a vibration, we also have to start to think about various vibrational frequencies. It is similar to our radio broadcasting, there are various frequencies and it depends to which you are tuned. The match has to be precise otherwise, what you get is the interference when you hear two stations at the same time and none of them clearly enough.

Now, it has been suggested by authors such as Laura Knight Jadczyk⁴ or Esther Hicks⁵ that we as human beings, due to our vibrational frequency which is different than that of the animals living on the planet Earth, perceive the world, the objects around us differently. We find ourselves on a different density level than our animal companions which is the reason for the different perception. We then could go on and speculate what would be the perception of our world by entities that are of higher densities than we and our animals are, but this goes

⁴ Laura Knight Jadczyk is an amateur historian and a writer in the New Age field communicating and getting information through a group known as The Cassiopaeans.

⁵ Esther Hicks channels the entity called Abraham, for further reference see the chapter on Channeling in the New Age section.

behind the scope of this particular thesis and it is a subject of much controversy, therefore I will leave this topic unresolved.

The American Scholar Address and Emerson's view on History

Emerson was consciously Wordsworthian in celebrating direct experience, an original relation to the universe, unmediated by reading.

Patrick J. Keane (Keane 186).

To read a book early in the morning, at daybreak, in the vigor and dawn of one's strength – that I call viciousness.

Nietzsche (Keane 196).

In 1885 Oliver Wendell Holmes, Emerson's first biographer, labeled *The American Scholar* address as "our intellectual Declaration of Independence" (Keane 187).

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter where I quoted Emerson's view on the abuse of books, he was convinced that by reading a book we could be and should be merely inspired. In fact, he proposes to cut ourselves from the society, from the "accepted dogmas" in order to be able to create something new, of a value for the contemporary society we are living in right now. If such a demand is taken to the extreme, we might conclude that it would be better for us not to read at all. According to Emerson, we just cannot guide ourselves by anything that was written in the past. Every book written in the past is outdated. Society is constantly evolving. That which applied fifty years ago loses most of its value in the here and now. It seems that by this address, which took place in 1837, he sort of pre-paved a way for his controversial *Harvard Divinity School Address* in 1838.

However, by looking at the implications of what he might have had in mind when talking about the abuse of books, it is difficult to judge which address was more scandalous.

If we look at the quotation once again and more closely, especially on the last part, it is possible that Emerson, in a way, actually disputes the authority of the Bible.

He says: "If he (a young man) receives his truth from another mind fatal disservice is done. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their reading" (Porte 57, 58).

The Bible is indeed a transcript of various people readings of, let us say, 'The original text'. Do not let it serve to be your guidance when you can read God directly you do not need any

books, says Emerson. It seems to be a miracle that after *The American Scholar* address he was welcomed at Harvard to give another speech in a year.

The Brook Farm Project – Transcendentalists' View on Society, the Role of an Individual and its Parallels in the New Age Movement

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint – stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion.

R.W. Emerson (Porte 261).

There is an interesting tendency within society when ideas presented in a form of theories and cherished by certain individuals no longer satisfy their intellectual needs. Those individuals then want them to be manifested in reality.

The transcendental ideas were put to trial on the Brook Farm, a kind of utopian venture in West Roxbury that was in operation between the years 1840-1846. The major proponent of this venture was George Ripley (1802-1880). He invited Emerson to join the community but he refused. The idea behind the project, as Ripley was trying to explain to Emerson, was to unite the intellectual and manual labor, in other words to cultivate the people working on the fields by presenting them with transcendental ideas and thus enable them live their lives more fully and to find their bearings in the competitive society. Moreover, everyone was to do what best suited their talents, so that neither manual nor intellectual work was to be scorned.

Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (1804-1894), another Transcendentalist, describes in her essay *Plan of the West Roxbury Community* the details of this peculiar enterprise. She starts by saying that Emerson's refusal to participate caused a split within the transcendental movement. All of a sudden, there were two parties; the associationists, who were in favor of the Brook Farm community, and the others, called Emersonian individualists. All labor in the community, whether bodily or intellectual, was to be paid equally. However, she remarks that bodily work is more demanding because it requires the laborer's time, which is precious since it needs to be devoted to cultivation of one's intellect. The hours of bodily labor for the community were to be limited by law and an individual could decide to quit the work at will. At the same time, he was supposed to be provided with enough time for intellectual activities.

Peabody says that the community aspired to embody the idea of “leisure to live in all the faculties of the soul”. The community was meant to be self-sufficient in terms of agriculture and trade their products with the world but more importantly, the intent was also to produce books, collections for science and works of art. The focus was placed on cooperation instead of competition, although the individuals were to face the competing reality once they left the community (Miller 464-465).

The reason why Emerson refused to participate seems to be obvious. This was not what he had in mind when he presented the concept of Self-reliance. Although it may appear the community had the individual’s best interest in mind, trying to prepare him for ‘real’ life, supplying him with the working skills as well as providing training in aesthetics and contemplation; it was still a small version of society. It was a group very much like school. Although it is true that one has to be exposed to certain ideas first, in order to choose for himself what suits his attitudes and what does not, the lecturing then is a valuable source of information when one needs to sift through them to find his truths. It is also true that Emerson was not much of a ‘bodily worker’, to use Peabody’s terminology. He apparently preferred to remain in seclusion where it was easier for him to suppress his logical reasoning in favor of intuition, the faculty that connected him directly with God. Community life would probably be too much of a distraction for him.

While working in the garden with a spade his son reportedly used to tell him: “Watch out dad, don’t hurt yourself!”(Ruland, Bradbury 126).

Whether it was Emerson’s intuition that prevented him from joining the Brook Farm or other circumstances about which I have speculated above, the community failed to fulfill its purpose and George Ripley ended up in debt. In 1845, the Brook Farm started to issue its own magazine called *The Harbinger*. In its very first issue, Ripley described the direction the magazine was meant to take. Thrilled by the Charles Fourier’s⁶ ideas of social equality, Ripley sort of transcended the Transcendentalism, which appears to be one of the reasons for the Brook Farm’s fall. According to Miller, the community was heading toward totalitarianism. He quotes Lindsay Swift saying that: “It must have been that he (Ripley) came to lay more stress on the method by which the individual freedom was to become assured, than on the fact of personal liberty in itself” (Miller 469).

Frederic Henry Hedge in his essay *The Art of Life* explains the concept of self-culture, which has many things in common with Emerson’s concept of self-reliance.

⁶ Charles Fourier was a French Socialist.

Through comparison of these two concepts we will understand better why Emerson refused to participate in the Brook Farm project.

Hedge explains the term ‘self-culture’ as “the perfect unfolding of our individual nature.” The way to achieve such an objective is to live now, to live in the present moment or as Hedge says “to live in the highest” (Miller 473).

Let me now diverge a little bit, just for the sake of stressing the importance this statement of Hedge’s amounts to in terms of New Age. One of the New Age tenets that can be found within certain teachings, especially those drawing on the New Thought theories, that which talks about our power as the ultimate creators of our reality, elaborates on the idea of the power of now. It discusses the matter, which most people are not aware of while thinking, how does our reality (or better to say the individual’s reality) come about.

This tenet emphasizes the importance of staying more in the present moment, being able to perceive the now and not turning our attention too much to the past or to the future. Since we attract that which we turn our attention to, it may not be a very good idea to dwell too long in the past thinking about all the things we have done wrong and which could have possibly been done differently. By doing so, we attract those same unwanted experiences to our lives again. On the other hand, if we turn our attention to the future where we hope to be ‘better off’, by doing so we acknowledge that our present situation is not so brilliant, not wanted or even hopeless. What we send out is, due to law of attraction⁷, what we get back. So, if we now send out the notion that our situation is not particularly pleasant, that we suffer and are anxious to get out of it; well, let us guess what we will get in the future. We will get more of that, more of those negative things that we are so painfully aware of now. That is why our ultimate power is in the now and we should strive, right now, at all cost to appreciate as much of positive things that we can find in our lives in order to get more of that in the future. That is how we create our reality according to this New Thought inspired teachings.

⁷ Law of Attraction is a common New Age belief largely popularized by Esther and Jerry Hicks and the teachings of Abraham. It has been transformed into a more user-friendly format and presented in the movie *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne.

Abraham, a group of non-physical entities channeled through Esther Hicks, explain its essence in the following way:” Everything in your life and the lives around you is affected by the Law of Attraction. It is a basis of everything that comes into your experience. The Law of Attraction says: *That which is like unto itself, is drawn*. Nothing merely shows up in your experience. You attract it- all of it. No exceptions. Because the Law of Attraction is responding to the thoughts that you hold at all times, it is accurate to say that you are creating your own reality. Whether you are remembering something from the past, observing something in your present, or imaging something about your future, the thought that you are focused upon in your powerful now has activated a vibration within you – and the Law of Attraction is responding to it now.

To better understand the Law of Attraction, see yourself as a magnet attracting unto you the essence of that which you are thinking and feeling. And so, if you are feeling fat, you cannot attract thin. If you feel poor, you cannot attract prosperity. It defies Law.” (Hicks 29-31).

Interestingly enough, here is what Emerson says concerning this concept:

...each phenomenon has its roots in the faculties and affections of the mind. Whilst the abstract question occupies your intellect, nature brings it in the concrete to be solved by your hands. It were a wise inquiry for the closet, to compare, point by point, especially at remarkable crises in life, our daily history, with the rise and progress of ideas in the mind. (Porte 48)

Is not it interesting? It seems as though Emerson discovered the secret of the Law of Attraction a way back in the nineteenth century.

Hedge proposes to care more about ourselves since our top priority should be to cultivate ourselves in order to help others. Here is what he says:

In self-culture lies the ground and condition of all culture. Not those, who seem most earnest in promoting the culture of Society, do most effectually promote it. The silent influence of example, where no influence is intended, is the true reformer. The only efficient power, in the moral world, is attraction. Society are more benefited by one sincere life, by seeing how one man has helped himself, than by all the projects that human policy has devised for their salvation (Miller 474).

In other words, do not expect society or other outer powers to help you. What you need to do is to find the power inside of you. Do not rely upon anybody else, all you need is inside of you, says Emerson. More or less the concept of self-reliance has become typical of American nature, though it took more of a form of self-sufficiency where the spiritual aspect conveyed by Emerson has been sort of transformed.

Let me quote an example of a New Age teaching, particularly Esther Hicks' channeling of Abraham from the book *The Law of Attraction*. She says:

You will not uplift others through your words of sorrow. You will not uplift others through your recognition that what they have is not what they want. You will uplift them through the power and clarity of your own personal example. As you are healthy, you may stimulate their desire for health. As you are prosperous, you may stimulate their desire for prosperity. Let your example uplift them (Hicks 128).

As we can see from Hedge's principle of self-culture and Emerson's idea of self-reliance no wonder that Emerson was not particularly happy with the Brook Farm project.

In his essay *Self-Reliance* where Emerson talks about charity he says: "...do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they my poor?" (Porte 262). He then continues by saying: "What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think" (Porte 263).

He indicates that he will not participate in any of those businesses imposed by society, which are regarded to be desirable on the basis of some artificial rules established within society. There is another part in his *Self-Reliance* essay that might shed some light on the issue of the Brook Farm project. Emerson says: "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion. It is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude" (Porte 263). What he is saying, by this, is the fact that he probably considered the Brook Farm to be a kind of seclusion, similar to Thoreau's Walden seclusion. Although the transcendental ideas were supposedly being put into practice there, by secluding itself from the rest of the world the group denied the possibility for the participants to become the 'great men' who walk among the others but live after their own.

However, in his essay *The Transcendentalist* he defended those who withdrew from society to seek within and therefore become "benefit to mankind" (Miller 471). Having mentioned the principles of the Law of Attraction, which is well spread among the New Agers, let us have a look at one particular sentence from Emerson's essay *The Transcendentalist*. He says:

All that you call the world is the shadow of that substance which you are, the perpetual creation of the powers of thought. You think me the child of my circumstances. I make my circumstances. I – this thought which is called I – is the mould into which the world is poured into like melted wax. As I am, so shall I associate, and so shall I act (Porte 195).

Well, what we have here is a (rather accurate) nineteenth century description of the Law of Attraction, which is now being embraced by the New Age movement.

Speaking of the tendencies to create communities inspired by some strong central idea such as The Brook Farm, Transcendentalist community in the first half of the nineteenth

century; let me now compare this idea with one particularly important New Age community, that came into being in the United Kingdom in the 1960's.

Findhorn community in Scotland was inspired by Theosophy and Anthroposophy (Hanegraaff 97).

In the New Age section chapter '*New Thought Ideas Giving Rise to New Age – From the 1920's until 1970's*' I quote Findhornian Carol Riddell explaining her views of such concepts as the Divine and the Self. To sum it up, she basically says that the Divine can be experienced through contemplation, turning one's attention inwards and that what is discovered through these processes should be regarded as the only source of morality of action. When we discover who we really are that we are Love, there cannot be immoral action carried out when the basis we act from is that of love, according to Carol Riddell (Heelas 24).

This concept is very similar to the transcendental one. It also calls for the transcendence of the outer world 'reality' and the rules and regulations imposed by society. It directs those interested in such teachings to awareness of the fact that the only true reality can be accessed from inside and what is found there is the only rule worth following. In this regard, the Findhorn community was very much transcendental.

Here is what Emerson pondered in his essay *The Self-Reliance*: "What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions if I live wholly from within? But these impulses may be from below, not from above. They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil. No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature" (Porte 261).

Another similarity between the Brook Farm project and Findhorn community is the fact that both were secluded from the outside world. Both of them were interested in putting spiritual ideas into practice and it is best to regard them as alternatives to the mainstream ideas of how community should work. Also it is necessary to say that although they were spiritual communities, which is very close to be regarded as religious, in neither case were there the aspect of redemption present. There were no such a thing as 'you will be redeemed only if you join our community', which is unfortunately what happened very often through out the centuries in similar projects. They were just proponents of new ways of thinking and living and putting those into practice.

Peter and Eileen Caddy and Dorothy Maclean started the Findhorn community in 1962. They started to grow vegetables in Findhorn, although the sandy soil was far from perfect for it. Dorothy, however, discovered her ability to contact the spirits of plants. They told her what was needed for their optimal growth. They proved to be amazingly successful in spite of the not so good conditions. The word spread quickly and the

horticultural experts made the community famous. The goal of the then small community of six people was to live in harmony with nature. David Spangler and Myrtle Glines established the 'University of Light' in 1970. In 1980, Ecovillage Project was begun. Nowadays the community can be characterized in their own words like this:" The Findhorn Foundation is a spiritual community, ecovillage and an international centre for holistic education, helping to unfold a new human consciousness and create a positive and sustainable future." There are also three basic principles that are at the centre of all activities and these are:" deeper inner listening and acting from that source of wisdom, co-creation with the intelligence of nature and service to the world" ("The Findhorn Community").

Although the Transcendentalists' community failed to achieve its purpose, the Findhorn community with similar aspirations managed to succeed a century later. The reasons for it could probably be attributed among many things to certain spirit of the time.

Transcendental ideas back in the nineteenth century might be too much innovative, it seems as if there were stronger ties within the society and every attempt at individualistic behavior presumably presented a bigger threat than a century later with the emergence of the counter-culture movement, hippies and the New Agers.

Even in the first half of the twentieth century, in 1923, D.H. Lawrence responds to Emerson's ideas with fear, implying that people are essentially a dangerous crowd that is better to be put under some sort of control otherwise we face the risk of harm. He says:" Emerson believed in having the courage to treat all men as equals. If you like, Waldo, but we've got to pay for it, when you've made them feel they're gods. A hundred million American godlets is rather much for the world to deal with" (Keane 321).

Well, it is similar to democracy and the anxiety of some people that the rest will understand its concept to mean 'anarchy'. However, it is interesting, as Keane points out, that "Emerson, like his disciple Nietzsche, was not a philosopher of democracy but of private self-creation" (322).

New Age

The World of New Age

Defining New Age

There are as many 'New Age' definitions as there are authors giving them. Although many of them present similar or identical concepts in the explanation, it depends on the scope of each particular thesis, study or treatise and on what the author chooses as his point of focus and what he perceives to be important to include. In this respect, the definition I am going to provide here is a mixture of views. Heelas approaches the subject matter from the sociological point of view, Faber provides psychoanalytical critique of New Age thinking and Hanegraaff explores the topic from the vantage point of religious studies.

'New Age', the literal meaning of the word implies some kind of a change that either will happen or has already happened. Throughout the history there were various millenarian or chiliastic movements appearing quite often around the turn of the centuries, although this was not a rule, hoping for an imminent coming of a new era, a new age.

Hanegraaff distinguishes between two terms, namely between New Age *sensu stricto* (in a narrow sense) and New Age *sensu lato* (in a broader sense). In terms of the New Age *sensu stricto*, there is an expectation of a coming new era; this approach is described as having chiliastic aspects to it (Hanegraaff 97-103). However, there is a difference between the historical chiliastic movements, such as for example the Anabaptist protestant community of Munich in the first half of the sixteenth century, and the present day New Age movement *sensu stricto*. The former expected an imminent coming of this new age, with the Christ figure reappearing on the scene, and the latter may think that the new age is already here. There are differences between various New Age believers so it is not possible to claim that they all think that they are already living in this new age. As with everything connected with the New Age phenomenon it is almost impossible to draw any firm conclusions about shared beliefs, the movement is extremely heterogeneous and every New Ager is free to choose whatever spiritual way they are most comfortable with.

The term 'New Age' is being described as an umbrella term of more and more general character for an amalgam of spiritually focused beliefs that incorporate ideas from various

denominations creating a specific mixture of tailor made philosophy that suits a particular individual.

Therefore, it is often criticized and called a superficial religious supermarket (Hanegraaff 378).

From a linguistic point of view, the term ‘new-agey’ might even have negative connotations. It is becoming synonymous with the words such as ‘weird’, ‘untrustworthy’ or ‘unreliable’ and ‘not scientific’ since our present age sees the science as the source of the reliable, real and therefore true observations about the world.

In his definition of New Age, Heelas focuses on its sociological aspects. He observes that this term designates such individuals concerned with the inner spirituality “embedded within the self” and the natural order of things that provides the key to a better way of living. He adds that the word ‘New’ does not indicate a novelty in terms of spiritual beliefs. These can be found in many religions throughout the world. In addition, the word ‘movement’ being usually attached to the term does not mean an organized effort but simply progression into a new era. Sometimes, the term ‘New Age’ is also used for those seeking alternative ways of living without the need to be committed to the quest within (16-17).

Although there are communities, networks, retreats, seminars, schools and similar organized social events, it is up to an individual to choose from a wide variety of offered topics those that suit their beliefs and are of interest for them. By not being organized, it is implied as following no official dogma or creed. Therefore, unlike Christians who can expect variations of the same thing while attending the Christian service (certain procedures, speaking along particular lines, certain highlighted topics, biblical quotes) two New Agers can find themselves in a situation when one is into Neopaganism and the other is into Angels, Saints and Ascended masters. These two may have difficulty to find a common topic to talk about. However, there is a high degree of blending which is sometimes kind of a paradox, as those following Neopaganism usually start to do so in order to distance themselves from Christianity, or at least in the western world but after some time they start to incorporate archangels into their practice and thus creating a merger between these two traditions.⁸

Faber describes New Age as the occult and spiritual practices on the rise or a certain resurrection of the ancient, metaphysical beliefs. It is similar to Romanticism which is often described as an effort for re-enchantment of the world after the period of Enlightenment.

⁸ Let us assume here that the concept of ‘archangels’ is typically associated with Christianity. The fact is that Archangel Gabriel, for instance, was the one who came to Prophet Muhammad and revealed to him the sacred teachings later on included in Koran and he (or she – as having rather feminine energy) is acknowledged for that.

Faber sees in New Age the same attempt calling for the rediscovering of magic in the midst of the scientific age. Faber quotes Llewellyn's⁹ note in a Catherine Bowman's book called *Crystal Awareness* (1992), the publisher says:

The 'New Age' – it's a phrase we use, but what does it mean? Optimists, dreamers, scientists...nearly all of us believe in a 'better tomorrow' and that somehow we can do things now that will make for a better future life for ourselves and for coming generations. In one sense, we all know there's nothing new under the Heavens, and in another sense that every day makes a new world. The difference is in our consciousness. And this is what the New Age is all about: it's a major change in consciousness found within each of us as we learn to bring forth and manifest powers that Humanity has always potentially had.

Evolution moves in 'leaps'. Individuals struggle to develop talents and powers, and their efforts build a 'power bank' in the Collective Unconscious, the 'soul' of Humanity that suddenly makes these same talents and powers easier access for the majority.

You still have to learn the 'rules' for developing and applying these powers, but it is more like a 'relearning' than a *new* learning, because with the New Age it is as if the basis for these had become genetic (Faber 2-3).

Llewellyn's note precisely demonstrates the basic concepts of New Age and even provides the key words that reoccur throughout the New Age literature. The first thing mentioned is a belief in a better tomorrow. It may look superficial, but its proponents claim it reflects an important aspect of a human psyche or a soul. Movements such as this always struggle for a better future. This feature links them together throughout history. Even if there is an apocalyptic vision present, as in the case of some religious sects, or a doomsday after this transitory purgatory phase, there is always a hope for improved conditions. In this respect the word 'New' in the term New Age has an intrinsic meaning signifying the amelioration of conditions. Among those who do not know much about New Age, let us say in ordinary population, if they have ever heard about it they usually associate it with positive thinking which indicates how strong and important this aspect is.

⁹ Llewellyn is a publisher of a New Age literature presently focusing predominantly on Neopaganism-Witchcraft or Wicca.

This was a note introducing Llewellyn's fresh New Age Series (Faber 3).

Another aspect I would like to draw attention to is the phrase ‘a better future for ourselves and for the coming generations’. The word ‘ourselves’ is important here. New Age, or at least its New Thought variety, I will describe in detail later on, may be appealing for many because it proposes a possibility of almost immediate improvement in one’s life conditions, if one is willing to change their thoughts. According to the New Thought based theories, our thoughts have creative power. In this respect, New Age/New Thought diverges from other philosophies, which propose the importance of positive thinking, but at the same time stating that suffering and a long way of struggle ahead is a price to pay for improvement. The difference is even greater between New Age community and non-spiritually focused communities, more or less atheistically oriented, where the improvement is nowhere near and better life conditions are seen possible only for future generation. However, this belief varies as well inside the New Age community. Those who follow the idea of ‘Self as the ultimate creator of one’s reality’ would claim that we cannot create for future generations; we can create only for ourselves. The phrase ‘every day makes a new world’ would be understood in these terms as well.

Then there is a New Age key word ‘consciousness’. If meticulously analyzed, the New Age literature would definitely top the frequency of occurrence list tracing the word ‘consciousness’. Consciousness is not understood to be the same as mind, these are two different concepts. Emerson would see them in terms of his two concepts adopted from Coleridge, those of Reason and Understanding. Reason being associated with consciousness and perceived as higher and mind with understanding; the logical property seen as a lower faculty.

Consciousness is a concept that makes it possible for New Agers to stress the importance of ‘All being One’ which is another key feature of New Age. Certain New Agers believe that everything has consciousness, even inorganic things such as rocks for instance. The concept of ‘All being One’ can be illustrated on the example of sun. Sun as a source emits rays of light so there is this super-consciousness, the prime creator, the Source or God that in the same manner emits rays of his/hers/its consciousness to every thing organic or inorganic on this planet and in the Universe. In this sense, we are then all one. The super-consciousness of which we are part holds all information, all knowledge so it is possible for us to find out everything we want. This is meant by the phrase ‘to bring forth and manifest powers that Humanity has always potentially had.’

Now, let us have a look at the statement about evolution. Evolution moving in leaps is also a New Age concept.

This has to do with a widely spread acceptance of ‘The Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon’¹⁰ described by Lyall Watson in 1979. Watson’s theory describes an unusual behavior of Japanese macaques on several islands in Japan. Local primatologists carried out an experiment during 1952 and 1953. They started to offer the monkeys new foods such as sweet potatoes. One member of the troop, female called Imo, discovered that washing the potatoes could rid them of grit and sand. She taught the other members of the troop. A young teaching the adults is not a standard process in terms of food customs acquisition, according to Watson. This habit of potato washing reportedly spread gradually up until 1958.

Amundson says that according to Watson “all of the juveniles were washing their potatoes by early 1958, but the only adult washers were those who had learned from the children.”

Watson continues by saying that in the autumn of that year an unspecified number of monkeys adopted the habit of washing their potatoes and he then, for the sake of argument, makes up a number ninety-nine. Then a hundredth monkey joined in the habit. Suddenly something happened as if some kind of a critical mass was achieved and “by that evening everyone was doing it”, says Watson. What is more, this habit apparently crossed natural barriers since reports appeared of the same behavior detected on other island and in mainland of Japan.

Watson ascribes this phenomenon to some kind of “a group consciousness’ that must have developed among the monkeys. The others from different islands then managed to tap into this newly created group consciousness and thus developed the same behavior (Amundson).

Therefore, there is this allusion to ‘a power bank in the Collective Unconscious, the soul of Humanity’ in the Llewellyn’s note quoted above that supposedly makes the newly developed talents and powers accessible for others. It also applies to the remark of ‘relearning these powers’ which are genetically encoded. In other words, they can be found in the super-consciousness (God) of which we are part of.

¹⁰ In his treatise, *The Hundredth Monkey Phenomenon* (1985) Ron Amundson refuted Watson’s theory on grounds of critical analysis of sources cited by Watson showing that he adjusted what suited his theory and disregarded the rest. Amundson claims that the behavior of monkeys described in Watson’s theory was a simply result of an independent invention or a natural diffusion. Ron Amundson teaches college courses in epistemology, in the philosophy of science, and in pseudoscience and the occult. His treatise was first published in *Skeptical Inquirer* vol.9, 1985, 348-356.

Demarcation of the Field - New Age *Sensu Stricto* versus New Age *Sensu Lato*

Hanegraaff and Hammer, adopting his terminology, distinguish between New Age *sensu stricto* (narrow perspective) and New Age *sensu lato* (broader perspective).

New Age *sensu stricto*, which is the subject of Hammer's study, is concerned with theosophical and anthroposophical influences namely with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Alice Bailey, Rudolph Steiner and Edgar Cayce. New Age *sensu lato*, a subject of Hanegraaff's study, also encompasses "the American lineage of post-Enlightenment esotericism", namely the various metaphysical movements, New Thought movement and American harmonial religions (Hanegraaff 97, Hammer 100).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore parallels between Emerson's American Transcendentalism and the contemporary New Age movement. Therefore, I will focus mainly on the metaphysics and the New Thought movement while drawing parallels between Transcendentalism and New Age; with only restricted references to Theosophy and New Age *sensu stricto* in general. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was an extremely prolific author and a more detailed analysis of her work, for the sake of drawing parallels, would be required. It would be outside the scope of this thesis. At the same time Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is of primary concern here, is a direct predecessor of the New Thought movement and of the American lineage of metaphysical movements. Therefore, the focus will be placed on the New Age *sensu lato* in Hanegraaff's terminology.

In addition, I will leave aside Neopaganism the explanation for this decision is given in the chapter '*The Elements Composing Western Esotericism*'.

Having the New Age Label – Practices From Around the World, Authors and the New Age Classics

A present day New Age movement would be best described as a free spiritual movement with no holy text or central organization. There is no dogma or creed, no formal clergy and no membership and no sermons or religious services. Instead, there are books for individual study and seminars of various kinds for those interested in New Age beliefs. The term 'New Age' is an umbrella term, devised more or less out of necessity to label certain philosophies, beliefs and practices shared by an increasing number of people who usually followed some formal religion and added these new elements to their practice. Later some of them chose to

abandon their original church and follow a more individualistic way in their spiritual practices (Robinson).

Under the label 'New Age' one is sure to encounter these terms and practices: Astrology, Tarot, Oracle cards, Reincarnation, Karma, Aura, Angels, Ascended Masters, Gods and Goddesses, Spirit guides, Fairies, Self-help books, Aroma therapy, Shamanism, Reiki, Neopaganism, Personal transformation, Positive thinking, Law of Attraction, Yoga, Vegans, Vegetarians, Ecology, Channeling, Meditation, Holistic healing, Numerology, Crystals, and many more.

Here are some respected New Age authors with their masterpieces, which are regarded to be New Age classics:

Marilyn Ferguson *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980), James Redfield *The Celestine Prophecy* (1995), Neale Donald Walsch *Conversations with God* (1996), Shirley MacLaine *Out on a Limb* (1983), Aldous Huxley *The Perennial Philosophy* (1945), Eckhart Tolle *The Power of Now* (1999), Marianne Williamson *A Return to Love* (1994), Fritjof Capra *The Tao of Physics* (1975), Rhonda Byrne *The Secret* (2006), Deepak Chopra *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams* (1994), Wayne W. Dyer *You'll See It When You Believe It: The Way to Your Personal Transformation* (1995), Shakti Gawain *Creative Visualization* (1978), Louise L. Hay *You Can Heal Your Life* (1984), Caroline Myss *Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential* (2003), Don Miguel Ruiz *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Wisdom (A Toltec Wisdom Book)* (1997), Doreen Virtue *Angel Therapy* (1997), Esther and Jerry Hicks *The Law of Attraction* (2006).

These are just examples and do not cover the whole spectrum of all areas of interest. The selected pieces are either very often referred to or are successful best-sellers in the New Age field. Doreen Virtue is for instance one of the best selling New Age authors in the Czech Republic. Rhonda Byrne is included although her authorship of the best-seller *The Secret* is controversial. The whole book is based on the teachings of Abraham, the channeled material of Esther Hicks who is also included with the book *The Law of Attraction* that is the primary source for Byrne's book. *The Secret* is written in a way that is more user-friendly; it is accessible to wider public and therefore it became a commercial success.

Louise L. Hay established in 1984 Hay House publishing company, which is now "an international leader in self-help and transformational publishing, with sales of books, audios, and videos to 33 countries around the world", according to her own words (Hay).

New Age Science – Basic Terminology

Hammer quotes Fritjof Capra as explaining his view on scientism. Capra says:

Our culture takes pride in being scientific. Our time is referred to as the Scientific Age. It is dominated by rational thought, and scientific knowledge is often considered the only acceptable kind of knowledge. That there can be intuitive knowledge, or awareness, which is just as reliable and valid, is generally not recognized. This attitude is known as Scientism. (Hammer 233-235)

According to Capra, Descartes is the one to be blamed. He is convinced that Descartes' mechanistic conception of science is still very much alive in our culture. Capra, along with many New Agers, sees this present time as a time of transformation, where there will be new version of science created. This science will rediscover the "wisdom of the ancients" especially our intuitive side. (Hammer 233-235)

It is important at this point to introduce few key terms that largely pervade New Age literature. These terms are dimensions, vibration, frequency, light and ascension.

Dimension, as Hammer speculates, is probably a direct loan from Alice Bailey's¹¹ writings. Various New Age sources agree that we, as human beings on the planet Earth, currently find ourselves in the third dimension¹².

According to Bailey, "the fourth dimension is the ability to see through and around things. The fifth dimension is the ability to take an eye and put oneself en rapport with all other eyes in the solar system. To see in the sixth dimension might be defined as the power to take a pebble off the beach, and by means of it to put oneself in accord with the entire planet" (Hammer 238).

Vibration is another key term. Theosophy describes vibrations as electromagnetic waves that compose light. Those electromagnetic waves have various frequencies from which we are able to see only a narrow spectrum, infrared and ultraviolet rays are not visible for a human eye. The problem is that Theosophy confuses vibrations and frequencies and the result is that contemporary New Age literature, influenced by Theosophy, uses these two concepts interchangeably (Hammer 238).

¹¹ Alice Bailey supposedly got her information from Mr. Kuthumi, as she called him, which is now being considered an Ascended Master within the community.

¹² In the Transcendentalism section, I use an abbreviation 'D' for the word dimension. Thus, third dimension becomes 3D and so on.

Frequency is another term. Hammer remarks that according to New Agers our spiritual evolution implies change in vibrations, which could become higher. In this case, the term frequency would be more appropriate as vibration of a particle creates a frequency. Hammer then sums up the core of esoteric teachings by saying that: “spiritual evolution is a change of dimension (also known as Ascension), an increase of frequency, and a heightened rate of vibration (Hammer 239).

Also, I need to clarify here the concept I am referring to in the chapter “*The Accusations of Plagiarism - The Concept of Consciousness Field and the Nonexistence of Time and Matter*” in the Transcendentalism section. I am using two concepts there, namely dimension and density. Although due to various interpretations of these two concepts we are once again facing the problem of them being used interchangeably, Laura Knight Jadczyk¹³ comes with a distinction between them. She claims that the term dimension is to be understood as a reality, which is located horizontally, next to the one we are aware of, which enables the existence of parallel realities. While density is a state of being, which is located vertically and it is achieved by means of ascension (Knight Jadczyk).

The Quantum World – Metaphysics in New Age Teachings

How could quantum physics possibly be appealing to New Age believers? Olav Hammer explains the principles of Quantum mechanics that are hugely popular in the New Age community. He says:

Quantum mechanics asserts that a measurement does not simply yield information about a preexisting state, but forces an indeterminate state to take on certain values. A property called spin can thus be given a precise value through measurement. However, contrary to the behavior of macroscopic objects (in which an object will have e.g. a specific length, regardless of whether this length is being measured), spin is indeterminate until measurement. In a sense, it is meaningless to ask what spin the particle had before being measured. By deciding which properties one wishes to measure, one thus forces particles to exhibit certain properties. (271-273)

¹³ see *The Accusations of Plagiarism - The Concept of Consciousness Field and the Nonexistence of Time and Matter* chapter for a reference about Laura Knight Jadczyk.

This theory describing indeterminacy of systems was formulated in the 1930s by Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and Max Born and is known as the Copenhagen interpretation. In a direct opposition to this theory is a classical view of “an independent reality that had specific properties regardless of any measurements” (Hammer 273-275).

In 1924, Louise de Broglie came up with a theory, later on known as Complementarity. This theory describes the peculiar dual nature of particles (such as neutrons or electrons) which behave either like particles (meaning more or less solid things) or waves, depending on what properties are measured (Hammer 271-273).

His theory was used in the New Age movie *What the Bleep Do We Know- Down the Rabbit Hole* (2006). Where the authors showed an experiment with marbles and electrons being shot at the screen; first with one and then with a double slit in the middle of it, hitting the wall behind. On condition that we assume that these particles, marbles as well as electrons are pieces of matter, the result of this experiment, if they are shot through a double slit screen, should be in both cases two clear bands of electrons or marbles. However, here comes a really odd part, the marbles create indeed two bands of marbles at the wall behind the screen with two slits but in case of electrons we get an interference pattern (pattern of many light and dark bands one next to the other), which is a wave like behavior. Waves create an interference pattern when they hit a double slit object, which was precisely the point of Louise de Broglie’s theory. It gets even weirder if there is somebody or something measuring the experiment trying to find out which slit did the electron go through. The act of measuring or observing cancels the wave like behavior of the electron and we get two bands of light on the wall behind the screen. Not the interference pattern (“What the Bleep”).

It seems as if the focus of the mind present chose one possibility (two bands) out of many (the interference pattern). Is then our reality composed of infinite possibilities where we choose whatever experience we want to have simply through our focus to that particular thing? This theory is very similar to the one called “Law of Attraction” I explain in the Transcendentalism section. Basically, this Quantum Physics experiment supports the Law of Attraction ‘theory’ saying that thoughts have power to influence outside circumstances.

There are other Quantum physics theories that are popular among New Agers such as Karl Pribram’s or David Bohm’s theory which is explained in the chapter “*Basic Tenets of Transcendentalism and the New Age Teachings*”.

Amit Goswami, professor at the Institute of Theoretical Science at the University of Oregon, thinks that “the underlying stuff” of the universe is consciousness. Gary Zukav’s physics is called ‘idealistic’ because he is convinced that “space and time do not really exist

but are mental constructs; we create the particles that we experiment with, indeed the reality we live in” (Hammer 293, 299).

Channeling

Channeling is a process in which a person is able, usually by means of adjusting their vibrations or frequency, to receive information from a source that is different from their normal self.

According to Hanegraaff, the source of the information can be “entities such as ascended masters¹⁴, spirit guides, angels, extraterrestrials, historical personalities, the Ultimate Source/God, gods and goddesses but also group entities, nature spirits, fairies, plants and the higher self” (23). The actual process of channeling has various forms, it can be done through automatic writing, the person can be in a sort of trance, or the channel just takes a few deep breaths and a moment to tune in. Either the channel is fully, partially or not at all aware of what is being said which indicates a certain degree of their conscious mind suppression.

Hanegraaff adds that the source of information is perceived to be coming from some place other than the person’s normal consciousness and it brings wisdom and insight. The important distinction between channeling and Spiritualism is that the former is done for the purpose of gaining higher knowledge and the latter is usually sought in order to connect with the departed loved ones (24). Channeling requires rising of one’s vibrations which can be achieved through meditation. The communication or contact is possible only when the two frequencies of the participating sides match.

¹⁴ Ascended masters, such as Jesus or Buddha, are spiritual teachers that were incarnated on this planet as oppose to other entities that did not have the experience of an Earth incarnation, such as some angels for example.

The Origins of New Age

The Definition of Western Esotericism and the Concept of Spirituality and Religion

According to Hanegraaff, the adjective ‘esoteric’ was first used by Lucian of Samosata, around 166 C.E.¹⁵, yet the term ‘Esotericism’ only became popular much later due to Eliphas Lévi¹⁶ in 1856 and appeared in English thanks to the theosophist A.D. Sinnet in 1883.

Hanegraaff speculates about the possibility that Lévi might have derived the term ‘*l’ésotérisme*’ from Jacques Matter’s *Histoire du gnosticisme* (384).

In order to define the term ‘esotericism’ Hanegraaff for this purpose takes side with Antoine Faivre, a chair for ‘History of Esoteric and Mystical Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe’ (Sorbonne, Paris). Unfortunately, the task of defining the very phenomenon presents an insurmountable obstacle at the very beginning of the analysis. Although Hanegraaff pronounces to be adhering to Faivre’s definition of the term ‘esotericism’, when describing his words devoted to this particular topic, it seems that Hanegraaff actually does not have much to follow. Instead of saying what ‘esotericism’ is for him, Faivre states what it is NOT. The only thing the reader can adhere to is the fact that Hanegraaff does not refer to ‘esotericism’ as described by Christoph Bochinger, who says that in current New Age the concept of ‘esotericism’ is:

...first and foremost a concept referring to *Individualkultur* according to the motto: “You have it all inside yourself, check it out!” Thus, Esotericism changed from a special tradition of knowledge into a special type of “religion”, the “journey within”. ...Similar to the word “spirituality”, “Esotericism” thus became a surrogate word for “religion”, which accentuates its subjective element focused on inner experience (Hanegraaff 385-386).

¹⁵ Hanegraaff uses the abbreviation C.E. (*Common Era* or for some people *Christian Era*) instead of AD (*anno domini*). The term ‘*Christian Era*’ refers to the calendar adopted first by Christians and now by most of the World.

The term ‘AD’ standing for *anno domini* (‘years of our Lord’, or ‘léta páně’ in Czech) is not suitable any longer for other religious or even non-religious traditions who do not accept Jesus as their Lord.

Therefore, nowadays it is preferred to use C.E. or CE, meaning *Common Era* (‘našeho letopočtu’ in Czech)

¹⁶ Pseudonym of Alphonse-Louis Constant (1810-1875) (Hanegraaff 384).

Here we need to point out the difference between spirituality and religion. The safe thing to claim, without finding yourself at the risk of being mistaken, is to say that these two phenomena are interconnected. I have discovered that it is not to be taken for granted that these two phenomena are necessarily seen as different from each other.

Most people in western world would probably describe the difference somewhere along the lines of saying that ‘religion’ is something with a long history, particular dogmas, a pantheon of various deities, or saints that one is expected to accept; it is something organized with more or less hierarchical structure within. Their definition would likely be influenced by Christianity or pagan traditions. That could very well be the first thing that comes to mind when being asked for definition. Such definition is very general and does not apply for every phenomenon that has been officially labeled by the term ‘religion’.

In his essay *A Scientific Definition of Religion*, James W. Dow¹⁷ describes the term ‘religion’ as follows:

A definition of religion is difficult to make....religion involves gathering in groups. It involves communal eating. It involves theoretical discourse about the nature of the Universe, and so forth. The most interesting thing is that the average person can tell when others are engaging in religious behavior while many scholars have problems defining it (4).

Dow also mentions Émile Durkheim’s definition of religion; he says, “Religion is a collective representation that makes things sacred.” Durkheim explains religion in terms of a worldview that created the sacred, therefore he believes that society had to create religion and that religion was the foundation of society. To this claim, Dow observes that people freely practice religious activities by themselves, with no need of society.

The anthropologist Anthony Wallace is trying to prove that religion can be defined by observable behavior. This behavior includes: prayer, music, psychological exercise (drugs, sensory deprivation, pain, fatigue), exhortation (addressing another human being – preacher, shaman), reciting the code (mythology, morality), simulation (imitating things – rituals, similar to sympathetic magic¹⁸), mana (transfer of supernatural powers through contact),

¹⁷ James W. Dow, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the Department for Sociology and Anthropology at Oakland University (Dow).

¹⁸ Voodoo doll would be a perfect example of sympathetic magic. The person involved in such an activity uses a doll imitating the actual human being who is a target of the spell.

taboo (things not allowed to do), feasts, sacrifice, congregation (processions, convocations) and inspiration (experiences that are recognized to be the result of divine intervention) (5-11). Spirituality, on the other hand may be defined in the following way:

Spirituality may include belief in supernatural powers, as in religion, but the emphasis is on experience. What is referred to as “religion” and what is referred to as “spirituality” are often the same. In recent years, “spirituality” has often carried connotations of the believer’s faith being more personal, less dogmatic, more open to new ideas and myriad influences, and more pluralistic than the faiths of established religions. Those given to speaking of “spirituality” *rather than* “religion” are apt to believe that there are many “spiritual paths” and no objective truth about which is the best path to follow. Others of a more New Age disposition hold that spirituality is not religion, *per se*, but the active and vital connection to a force, power, or sense of the deep self (“Spirituality - Definition”).

The aspect of the individual perception of spiritual matters, which may or may not be connected to a particular religion, is heightened under the term ‘spirituality’. It may be suggested that this term describes the awareness of the Divine within an individual. It also seems that the difference between religion and spirituality can be conceived as a matter of outer operations, in case of the former, and inner operations in the latter. Moreover, as stated in the definition above, spirituality may (or may not) include belief in supernatural powers. A person can see the spiritual dimension of their lives while walking in nature. Nature for them serves as a mirror of this divine spark inside of them, they would probably describe certain feelings of connection to something higher, feelings of being part of the whole or a sense of harmony. From their perspective, what they perceive as a spiritual dimension to their lives does not necessarily need to be anything ‘supernatural’.

Also, there is more freedom in calling oneself a spiritual being rather than a religious being. The advantage of the term ‘spiritual’ brings about the possibility of being eclectic.

In other words, it means being able to choose from various religious and philosophical systems those parts which resonate with the inner Self and doing so by incorporating various teachings into one that is described as a personal spiritual path. This approach is often criticized by mainstream religions. According to them, it represents consumer-like approach when people pick what they want and either disregard or discard the rest. They disregard the deeper understanding and prefer only the superficial nice looking aspects.

On the other hand, by this claim the mainstream religions seemingly insinuate that a person needs to have ‘the deeper knowledge’ explained by somebody firmly rooted within a particular religious structure who knows ‘the truth’ and will explain it so that the spiritual seeker is not misled. This imposes the need of authority without which the person might be lost. From the point of view of many New Ager this perception is based on a flawed premise that individuals are unable to judge for themselves. New Ager believe that we as human beings have a guidance system within us that will help us to recognize the truth (a personal truth) that is most appropriate for our spiritual growth. This guidance system is our intuition, our gut feelings, or feelings emanating from our solar plexus area.

This is virtually the same kind of argument which Emerson repeatedly voices in his essays, perhaps most famously in “*The Self-Reliance*”, where he dismisses the relevance of “dear old doctrines of the church” by claiming that the “sacredness of traditions” does not really concern a person who lives “wholly from within” (Porte 261-262). In fact, this view can be seen as the inevitable end product of the process of a gradual loosening of the interpretive authority of the Christian church, significantly fomented by the vernacular Bible-study ethos of early Protestantism which staunchly defied Catholic insistence on its monopoly over biblical interpretation.

Emerson again: “A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet, he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his” (Porte 259).

The Origins of Western Esotericism

Faivre mentions Neo-Pythagoreanism, Stoicism, Hermetism, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism and Christianity as those who contributed to the development of western esotericism. As a proper beginning of it he sees mainly the reconstitution of a traditional cosmology under the impact of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism of the later 15th century.

He describes modern¹⁹ western esotericism to be a product of the discovery of nature and to be connected to nature philosophy. According to Faivre, esotericism presented an alternative to a mechanistic worldview and secular assumptions of science. It favored organic worldview and religiously based science. Esotericism thus almost certainly contributed to the emergence of New Age religion in the later 20th century (Hanegraaff 386-388).

¹⁹ modern; according to Faivre meaning since Renaissance

The Elements Composing Western Esotericism

Hanegraaff distinguishes three branches western esotericism is composed of. These are:

- two philosophical traditions (Neoplatonism and Hermeticism)
- traditional/occult sciences (astrology, magic and alchemy)
- theosophical speculation (Kabbalah)

Neoplatonism and Hermeticism

The origins of modern esotericism can be found in Cosimo de' Medici's Florentine Platonic Academy run by Marsilio Ficino in the second half of the 15th century.

Around the year 1460, Leonardo da Pistoia brought a Greek manuscript of the *Corpus Hermeticum* from Macedonia to Florence. In the 16th century this text was regarded a 'classic' of the period thanks to shared belief that its author Hermes Trismegistus²⁰ had been Moses' contemporary and a principal source of wisdom (so called divinely inspired philosopher-sage). This belief was upheld by 19th century occultists. Later on, the New Age movement embraced it. It is believed that *Corpus Hermeticum* was written somewhere between first and third century C.E. and there is a chance that it contains the old Egyptian traditions. The contemporary New Age authors draw largely on this source (Hanegraaff 388-392).

The Occult Sciences

Renaissance hermeticists faced a clash of philosophies, so to speak. On the one hand, they lived in an era of Christian values, with its divine order of things, and on the other hand, they relied upon a source which contained presumably Egyptian pagan gnosis promoting magic. It might look as if they desired to go back to the times of Julian the Apostate²¹. Among the best-known Renaissance magi are certainly men like Cornelius Agrippa, Giordano Bruno and John Dee. The important thing to highlight here is the fact that Renaissance magic together with Kabbala was fundamental to 19th century ceremonial magic, which later on gave rise to contemporary Neopaganism (Hanegraaff 392-394).

Because of the common roots of New Age and Neopaganism mentioned above, Hanegraaff classifies Neopaganism as part of the New Age. It depends on the definition of

²⁰ a mythical author, representing combination of Greek God Hermes and Egyptian God Thoth (Merkur).

²¹ Julian the Apostate (360-363 C.E.); in his own name Flavius Claudius Iulianus (Constantinian dynasty), he was the last of the non-Christian rulers and wanted to reinstate the old Roman pagan practices to their full force once again. 'Apostate' means a renegade. Christianity was granted equal status with other religious practices under the rule of Constantine the Great by Edict of Milan 313 C.E. (Roberts and DiMaio).

New Age. Various authors provide various definitions. I understand the reason for this particular classification; however, I find it hard to subsume Neopaganism within the New Age fold.

The most important tenet to be found inside the large majority of New Age teachings is the fact that ‘we are all God’. In other words, there is this hugely prevailing sensation that an individual is part, an extension of what we call God. As such, we are the creators of our own reality. Therefore, there is a substantial difference between New Age teachings and those of the Neopagan variety, characteristic for its polytheism or pantheism where the desired changes of our reality are not done from within but from without, due to the influence of some deities. However, it needs to be clarified that some New Agers also rely upon help from other dimensions, particularly angels or spirit guides and these do not constitute a fringe minority. The term ‘Neopaganism’ embraces practices such as: Witchcraft, Wicca, Druidism, Shamanism or Asatru²² those being the most prominent examples.

Christian kabbalism in its 19th century occultist form also influenced contemporary Neopaganism (Hanegraaff 396).

Another crucial text that was found and ascribed to Hermes Trismestus is *Tabula smaragdina*, a foundational text essential for alchemy (Hanegraaff 394).

The Emerald Tablet or *Tabula smaragdina* is quoted in nearly all books on esotericism. Even the most recent New Age movie *The Secret* has a scene at its beginning of a man struggling to copy the text from the Emerald Tablet in a hurry with soldiers behind his back.

The most famous line from the tablet goes like this, “ That which is below is like that which is above and that which is above is like that which is below, to do the miracles of the only thing” (Vurm 46).

It basically says that which is already (or finally?) being debated and considered in contemporary philosophy as well as physics. If illustrated on our DNA it is described as a phenomenon when even the smallest part of our DNA reflects the whole. In other words, the smallest particle of a structure already encompasses the idea of the whole structure. This idea was favored by Emerson as well as by New Age teachings drawing on Pribram’s and Bohm’s theory of holographic universe.²³

²² The members worship Gods of Germanic pantheon.

²³ See the chapter *Comparison of Basic New Age and Transcendentalism Tenets* for a description of Bohm’s and Pribram’s theory.

In his essay *Compensation*, Emerson says:

The entire system of things gets represented in every particle. There is somewhat that resembles the ebb and flow of the sea, day and night, man and woman, in single needle of the pine, in a kernel of corn, in each individual of every animal tribe. These appearances indicate the fact that the universe is represented in every one of its particles. Every thing in nature contains all the details, all the aims, hindrances, energies, and whole system of every other. The true doctrine of omnipresence is, that God reappears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb (Porte 287,289).

Emerson is clearly using metaphorical, not scientific language, yet the analogy between the two notions can easily be drawn.

The alchemical idea of transmutation was even at the golden age of Alchemy (Renaissance) interpreted not only as transformation of various metals into different metals, primarily chemical change but also as a spiritual change and purification, which became relevant for 19th century occultists (Hanegraaff 394-395).

As to the concept of *Western Esotericism*, the trouble of a clear straightforward definition can be overcome by stating the common principles more or less characteristic for it, as defined by Faivre:

- *Correspondences*: some kind of symbols, or hieroglyphs intended to be deciphered, existing between all parts of the visible and invisible universe. Objects hide secrets. (Astrology: Mercury symbolizes communication, Venus stands for love, Mars indicates personal strength etc.)²⁴
- *Living nature*: spiritual forces permeating the universe or cosmos. These forces give life to nature.
- *Mediations*: Angels, various spirits are seen to be intermediaries between visible and invisible (lower and higher) world as well as symbols and rituals. Such relationship is regarded as means of attaining knowledge (gnosis) of the world and of the self.
- *Transmutation*: meaning- inner regeneration, purification achieved by following certain spiritual path (Hanegraaff 397-399).

²⁴ personal commentary

Traditions Influenced By Western Esotericism

Eighteen and Nineteen Century Movements influenced by Esoteric Tradition: Romanticism and Occultism

Romanticism and Occultism represented another shaping factor in the process of New Age formation. Both movements can be seen as “the products of a clash of worldviews”.

Occultism became popular during the nineteenth century, not due to some regressive tendencies to deny reason and science, but for its attempt to reformulate traditional beliefs by means of modern terminology. Occultists did not reject modernity. At that time, Christianity as well as esotericism were profoundly influenced by secularization and needed to update some of their views and ideas in order to conform to the changing world (Hanegraaff 406-408).

Nineteenth century Occultism can be understood as traditional western esotericism, which underwent significant changes under the process of secularization. The following historical processes presented important factors, which have led to “a decline of Christian authority since the eighteenth century”. These were the emergence of Occultism, modern study of religions (oriental Renaissance, Comparative Religion), the rise of popular evolutionism and the impact of religious types of psychology. Then there was the Romantic stream, which mainly defended the world of correspondences (as mentioned in the previous chapter) against causality (Hanegraaff 409).

Romanticism is being associated with ‘Counter-Enlightenment’, which has its roots in sixteenth century skepticism and relativism with thinkers such as Agrippa, Montaigne, Herder and Schelling. Romanticism and German Idealism reject principles such as rationality, objectivity or universality and substitute them for intuition, subjectivity and unicity. Occultists as well as New Agers are interested in theories about evolution of humanity and consciousness especially those presented by German Idealists such as Herder, Schelling and Hegel (Hanegraaff 412-413). German Idealism also played an important role in the emergence of Transcendentalism.

Romanticism and its Influence on the Emergence of New Age

Hanegraaff quotes Schelling saying that:

This faith in a peculiar, intuitive, spiritual faculty which goes by various names – reason, understanding, primary imagination– but is always differentiated from the critical analytic intellect favoured by Enlightenment, the contrast between it becomes a commonplace used thereafter by Fichte, Hegel, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Goethe, Carlyle, Schopenhauer and other anti-rationalist thinkers of the nineteenth century, culminating in Bergson and later anti-positivist schools (415).

Here we can see that Schelling identifies intuitive, spiritual faculty with the terms reason and understanding which could be misleading at the first sight, implying that that which would be normally associated with Enlightenment – logical thinking, thus use of reasoning, is here understood differently here. For further explanation, see chapter *The Issue of Discursive Versus Intuitive Reason – Reason Versus Understanding* in the Transcendentalism section. The above-mentioned thinkers that contributed to the shaping of Romanticism also inspired the Transcendentalists, most importantly Wordsworth, Coleridge, Goethe, and Carlyle.

German Idealism can be understood as a philosophical wing of Romanticism (Hanegraaff 416). Hanegraaff then describes essential elements in the nature of Romanticism, which stand in contrast to Enlightenment. One of them is “the value of diversity in human opinions, characters, tastes, arts and cultures”, where the Enlightenment claims, “what is rational is uniform and what is not uniform is not rational, therefore easily recognizable mark of error”. In other words, diversity is undesirable within the Enlightenment perception of the world (417). According to Lovejoy, Romantic ‘diversitarianism’ was meant to be a contrast to Enlightenment ‘uniformitarianism’, he then defines this aspect of Romanticism more precisely and calls it ‘diversitarian holism’ (Hanegraaff 417). This idea of diversitarian holism is in fact vital not only for Romanticism but also for New Age. What does it mean exactly? The term ‘holistic’ means to approach the matter from various points of view, to draw on various teachings, systems or styles in order to achieve a specific goal. In this respect, the word ‘diversitarian’ represents the inner essence of the word ‘holistic’ which means to absorb different things and eventually create one.

In terms of New Age, this romantic aspect is slightly modified. Heelas describes New Agers as perennialists (27). Perennialism can be described as a worldview claiming that the

same wisdom can be found at the heart of all religious traditions. If this is so, why then New Age draws on various traditions, taking bits and pieces and disregarding the rest when all of them should essentially be the same? The explanation could probably be found in the fact that you cannot just simply put together diverse, seemingly contradictory views and then present this conglomerate as one internally stable view. There has to be similarities on the basis of which unity can be achieved.

New Agers prefer “unity over diversity” (Heelas 27). It can be best illustrated on the example of their popular statement “We are all One” and although they acknowledge our diversities, in the end we all have that divine spark inside which makes us part of God. Therefore, this perennial view of New Agers does not contradict the idea of diversitarian holism as a property of Romanticism described by Lovejoy.

Another important aspect of Romanticism that can be found within the New Age teachings is the aspect of imagination. Imagination is described as a necessary quality for the understanding of symbols (Hanegraaff 418). Also, Transcendentalism sees this romantic concept of imagination as important for the deciphering of nature because nature is full of symbols.

Another aspect found within Romanticism is the concept of temporalism. The Platonic Chain of Being that depicts “fullness of creation ordered in graded hierarchy which had traditionally been considered as the perfect and complete unfoldment of divine creativity” essentially denies a “possibility of change, progress and the emergence of novelty” (Hanegraaff 418). In this sense, Romanticism acknowledges evolution. This concept can be also found within New Age and, more importantly, within Transcendentalism: nothing is seen as fixed but everything is constantly evolving.²⁵

A typical romantic hero, as described by Peckham, needs to go through an experience of spiritual death in order to be reborn. He moves from a period of believing in the certain principles working in the universe to experience disillusionment and doubt the rightfulness of one’s values to rediscover his faith and certain meaning or goodness in the universe. New Age, as well as Romanticism, sees this pattern being replicated in the universe (Hanegraaff 418-419). The universe evolves in a similar way. In order to evolve, it must experience alienation from unity and subsequent return back to a higher unity. It achieves this through humans and their experiences, through overcoming obstacles in our lives, through our

²⁵ see the chapter *Basic Tenets of Transcendentalism and the New Age Teachings* and the remark about Transcendentalists’ view on consistency of behavior.

thoughts and wishes and of course, if you allow the existence of other forms of life in the universe, they are not excluded from this process, they too add to this evolution or expansion of the universe. Esther Hicks²⁶ for example claims that this is precisely the reason for the expansion of the universe.

To conclude this chapter, Hanegraaff observes that “esoteric, Neoplatonist-Hermetic worldview constitutes the traditional background of Romanticism; but it is the temporalist framework which constitutes the truly innovative element” (420).

Occultism, Swedenborgianism and Mesmerism and Their Influence on the Emergence of New Age

Antoine Faivre describes Occultism as predominantly French nineteenth century phenomenon. The difference between Occultism and Romanticism, according to Hanegraaff, lies in the fact that Occultism “is essentially an attempt to adapt esotericism to a disenchanted world”, in which mystery such as an experience of the sacred has no longer its firm place; whereas Romanticism is an attempt “to re-enchant the world, to bring back the mystery”, which was lost due to the new science (423). Occultism emerges in its fully-fledged form in what is called nineteenth century Spiritualism with the most prominent examples of Swedenborgianism and Mesmerism.

Emanuel Swedenborg

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was originally known as a scientist of the modern post-Cartesian school whose reputation was severely damaged by young Immanuel Kant’s letter *Träume eines Geistersehers* in which he labeled Swedenborg with the mark of “somewhat obscure clairvoyant”. He went through a spiritual crisis in 1745 after which he began to have visionary experiences and started to apply his former scientific and philosophical theories to the spiritual domain, to spirits and angels (Hanegraaff 424).

Swedenborg’s contribution to New Age is manifold. Let me illustrate it then on two specific examples. He believed that “the angels are actually highly-developed human

²⁶ see the chapter *The Brook Farm Project – Transcendentalists’ View on Society, the Role of an Individual and Parallels in the New Age Movement* for information about Esther Hicks.

souls” (Hanegraaff 426). Well, this is interesting because within certain New Age circles there is this assumption about various vibrational frequencies of various beings. To elaborate on this idea further, let us assume just for the sake of explanation of this example that we are not alone in the universe. Now, some New Agers believe that the reason why we cannot see the other beings that cohabit our universe is because of the difference in vibrational frequencies. If we assume that there is this life force, energy that permeates all things everywhere in the universe, which is actually the source of life, this energy emits certain vibrations. It can be compared to a notion of sound, which can be measured in terms of vibrational frequencies. Similarly to sound, at a certain pitch we cannot hear anything but our dogs can, for example. The same thing can be then applied to our translation of vibrations emitted by everything what we are able to perceive around us. According to recent findings in Quantum physics everything is energy, there is nothing solid. If the vibrational frequency is out of range of certain boundaries, within which the human eye is able to decipher, then we just cannot see a thing. The quicker the frequency the more light the object or being emits thus people who are able to see this higher vibrational beings, usually see them surrounded by light and under the influence of various teachings such as Christianity, may call them angels. Those beings are usually reported to provide messages or other forms of help and are then perceived as more advanced.

This kind of information is very often acquired by means of channeling within the New Age community²⁷. Swedenborg’s assumption is thus not very far from the New Age point of view concerning the idea of angels being more developed human souls. The more developed the ‘human’ soul is, the higher vibration, the more light and therefore possible ‘angelic features’ in terms of light. The word ‘human’ was intentionally put into inverted commas assuming, for the sake of this example, that this concept can be possibly applied also to entities on non-human appearance. Brad Johnson, channeling the entity Adronis, provides an interesting example. He says that if a Neanderthal man could have the possibility of meeting one of us, present day Homo sapiens, due to a difference in the vibrational frequencies between these two forms it would be very likely that the Neanderthal man would perceive us as a kind of shining beings. In other words, because we are now more advanced, so to speak, he would perceive light coming out of us.

²⁷ This information was acquired through quite an extensive study of Esther Hicks channeling Abraham (www.abraham-hicks.com), Laura Knight Jadczyk channeling the Cassiopaeans (www.cassiopaea.org), Brad Johnson channeling Adronis (www.adronis.org) and Darryl Anka channeling Bashar (www.bashar.org) for further explanation of the process of channeling see the chapter *Channeling*.

Swedenborg also claimed that “the after-life environment is essentially self-created” (Hanegraaff 426). New Agers would likely see in this statement the concept of Law of Attraction working.²⁸ If you believe in heaven and hell, that is what you manifest for yourself as a reality you will experience once you die. If you believe in karmic retribution, again it will be your reality. In this sense, New Agers believing in the Law of Attraction are convinced that everything in your experience is self-imposed.

From what Hanegraaff mentions about Swedenborg there are certain insinuations, although he does not say anything directly, that Swedenborg might have been able to do something very similar to channeling through which he obtained his information. Judging from the striking resemblance of what he acquired through his spirit guides or angels and what can be found in the contemporary channeled material; this definitely is a probability worth of further consideration.

Emerson devoted one essay to Swedenborg. It is called *Swedenborg; or, the Mystic* and it is from his series of essays called *Representative Men*.

In this essay, Emerson points out the very aspects of Swedenborg’s teachings at which would the Law of Attraction driven New Agers rejoice in exultation, saying: “That’s it, that’s it he knew it, he knew it”.

Here is what Emerson says:

The thoughts in which he lived were the fine secret that little explains large, and large, little; the centrality of man in nature, and the connection that subsists throughout all things. He was an abnormal person, to whom was granted the privilege of conversing with angels and spirits. In Swedenborg’s mind, all things in the universe arrange themselves to each person anew, according to his ruling love. Man is such as his affection and thought are. Man is man by virtue of willing, not by virtue of knowing and understanding. As he is, so he sees.

Nothing can resist states: every thing gravitates: like will to like. Every thing is as I am. Bird and beast is not bird and beast, but emanation and effluvia of the minds and wills of men there present (Porte 668, 675, 678).

At the beginning of this quotation we can see a reference to Hermes Trismegistus’ *Tabula smaragdina* with its idea “As above so below”. Then again, there is a parallel with the Law of

²⁸ See the chapter *The Brook Farm Project – Transcendentalists’ View on Society, the Role of an Individual and Parallels in the New Age Movement* for a detailed description of the Law of Attraction.

Attraction. The expression 'ruling love' is of great importance. When we look at the definition of the Law of Attraction formulated by Esther Hicks, the crucial part is this: "... [you are] attracting unto you the essence of that which you are thinking and feeling" (Hicks 31). And Emerson continues by saying: "Man is such as his affection and thought are". Therefore, what you think and what you feel is what you attract. In other words, the universe delivers that to you, it forms itself in a way to deliver you things, circumstances or people to match your affection and your thoughts, precisely as the idea of Swedenborg's which Emerson explains.

What you are thinking and feeling, in Emerson's words "As he is,- meaning that your thoughts and feelings are sort of defining properties of you, so he sees - that is what one attracts, therefore sees around himself in a physical reality.

"Man is man by virtue of willing, not by virtue of knowing and understanding", says Emerson explaining Swedenborg. In other words, human beings can be defined by their willing which is the primary driving force of our expansion, growth and advancement, according to Esther Hicks. Esther Hicks says that we do not grow due to understanding, and therefore knowing, but due to willing, because we want to do something when we feel passion and desire, which are powerful forces that bring experiences to our lives.

"Every thing is as I am", says Emerson. What I can see around myself resonates with the vibration I radiate so to speak. When I am in a state of joy or bliss then I perceive the things and people around me being of the same state, the same vibration due to Law of Attraction. They are happy and joyful as well, all is well, the circumstances and situations I get into throughout my day are favorable on condition that I still feel happy and blissful. Once I change my mood and thoughts, the environment changes accordingly.

The last part of the quotation is no less interesting. "Bird and beast is not bird and beast, but emanation and effluvia of the minds and wills of men there present", says Emerson. This statement is quite akin to some contemporary Quantum physics theories, particularly the one that was explained and illustrated in the New Age movie *What the Bleep Do We Know- Down the Rabbit Hole* (2006). There are two assumptions to be addressed concerning this theory. The first one is that what we see around us is not 'real'; it is just an illusion of our minds. Similarly to the concept presented in the movie *Matrix* where the things were in reality just bunch of codes arranged in a specific manner, the Quantum physics theory says that things are in reality just bunch of vibrations, energy that we decode in a certain manner. To make it more complicated, there is a second theory that says that not only are the things just frequency waves, but they exist only when there is somebody observing them!

In a light of this theories presented, Emerson's last sentence in the quotation given sounds almost like a prophecy. Not only does he mention the supposition that birds and beasts are only ideas, thoughts manifested in reality but also that there has to be somebody present to think these thoughts, thus focus their attention in a particular direction.

Hanegraaff quotes Williams-Hogan's description of Swedenborg's perspectives in which he, according to his own words, "reveals striking similarity to New Age concepts of the Self". William-Hogen says:

Every human being lives in the natural and the spiritual world simultaneously. However, we are conscious of living in only one. Death is the common doorway from one world to the other; or from one form of consciousness to another. Prior to death, we live consciously in this world, and inwardly or unconsciously in the spiritual world. After death, we live consciously in the spiritual world, while remaining in unconscious connection with this one (428).

The similarity Hanegraaff talks about can be found in the New Age idea that the Self has a dualistic nature. We have a certain personality, according to which we tend to define ourselves. It is the definition we would probably give when somebody asks who we are. Then we have a higher self, inner self, or a soul which can be accessed through various processes most often via meditation and if accessed our perception is enriched. In this sense, we can experience the spiritual world without the need of dying.

Franz Anton Mesmer

Mesmer's philosophy was more esoteric resembling Romantic *Naturphilosophie* than the one of Swedenborg. He believed that nature is permeated by some kind of invisible fluid that connects spirit and matter. Being a physician originally, he invented a method of treatment called 'animal magnetism'. This method was based on two basic principles described by Henri Ellenberger. The first was the idea that there is a "subtle physical fluid, a connecting medium between man, the earth, and the heavenly bodies, and also between man and man." The second one explained the origin of disease, saying that "disease originates from the unequal distribution of this fluid in the human body; recovery is achieved when the equilibrium is restored". This theory implied that "there is only one illness and one healing."

His “fluidic theory” became very popular among occultists trying to find a common ground between science and religion, especially among spiritualists of 19th century. Mesmer’s theory laid the foundations for the concept of oneness or wholeness, which is found later on in the New Age (Hanegraaff 430-431, 434-435). The word ‘mesmerizing’ has its origin in Mesmer’s methods that were apparently astonishing for the audience (Mosley 45).

Spiritualism of the 19th century

This topic will be mentioned very briefly as its significance for this thesis can be found in its similarity to New Age channelings. Only the target group of beings that were invited to join in the communication was different from the one in channeling sessions. These were usually deceased relatives.

Robert S. Ellwood says that “Spiritualism is Swedenborgian ideology mixed with experimentation with transic states inspired by Mesmerism” (Hanegraaff 437). In other words, Swedenborg provided a theoretical framework and description of the spirit world and Mesmer’s practical methods such as trance or ‘induced somnambulism’ - hypnosis were used to bring about the communication. Spiritualism tried to portray its activities in a scientific manner in order to distance itself from “institutionalized Christianity” which is very much the same what present-day New Age movement strives to achieve. They accepted the Transcendentalist concept of divinity within the human soul and everywhere in nature. There are few significant points of concurrence between the New Age movement and Spiritualism, namely the belief that someone else’s sacrifice does not guarantee a man’s salvation and that the individual’s spiritual progress is based on their own efforts and also the notion that “whatever is, is right” (Hanegraaff 438-440).

Convergence –The Influence of Transcendentalism on the Predecessors of New Age

Quimby's New Thought Movement and its Offshoots - Mental and Religious Science

In 1836, Mesmerism reached America. Charles Poyen was the first to establish a mesmerist practice in New England. In the 1840s Andrew Jackson Davies underwent a mesmeric trance during which he received spirit messages (very much a Swedenborgian concept) to be later on regarded the starting point of American Spiritualism. Mesmerism developed into other forms as well. The most important figure of “modern American religiosity” surely was Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1846), Poyen's disciple. Quimby transformed Mesmerism into “practical recipe for health, happiness and prosperity” which came to be known as ‘the New Thought’ (Hammer 58). He realized that the beliefs and expectations of the patients had an impact on their health. Although he still believed in mesmeric magnetic fluid to be the source of health and prosperity, he added that the beliefs could function as a blockage of this flow. His overall conclusion was “We create our own reality”. Thus, Quimby became sort of connecting element between “romantic religiosity of Emersonian Transcendentalism and a world view of Occultism” (aka Mesmer influences) (Hanegraaff 485-487). Hanegraaff remarks that he changed the poetical world of Emerson into pseudo-scientific world with utilitarian features (487).

The nineteenth century was imbued with the positivistic/materialistic ideology which served as a basis for scientific thinking and practice (Hanegraaff 442). At the same time, Hammer talks about “the particular individualism of early nineteenth century American society” (58). Transcendentalism can be also seen as a form of individualism trying to break loose from the established church and turn the attention inwards. There is a strong focus on the individual self, which is capable of being in a direct contact with the Divine.

Hammer continues by saying that American Protestantism was, due to this influence of individualism and philosophies such as Quimby's New Thought, transmuted into prosperity thinking, while Oriental philosophies were changed into Transcendentalism (58).

In relation to New Thought, Heelas uses the term ‘utilitarian individualism’ and says that it has to do with more general tendency in the religious life of a certain ‘turn within’. He continues by saying that it first appeared in the USA in the nineteenth century under the label

of 'New Thought', which he describes as a "hybrid of Transcendentalism and optimism about the possibilities of self-improvement" (166-167).

There are the basic tenets of New Thought as described in Heelas' study. New Thought supposedly acknowledges "a) the omnipotence of God, not as remote sovereign, but as omnipresent source of power or energy, b) Divinity of man and thus his God-given right to tap the divine power, c) the unreality of matter (only idea is real), d) the unlimited capacity of the human mind when correctly attuned to God's power." (167).

Swedenborg, Mesmer, Emerson and Quimby gave rise not only to the New Thought but also to 'mind cure', associated with Mary Baker Eddy (First Church of Christ Scientist)²⁹ (Mosley 140-141). Quimby's original New Thought was characterized by its happiness and prosperity focus; therefore, Heelas labels it as utilitarian. However, there were also prosperity-focused versions of Transcendentalism (167).

Heelas quotes Emerson as saying: "Hidden away in the inner nature of the real man is the law of his life and some day he will discover it and consciously make use of it. He will heal himself, make himself happy and prosperous, and will live in an entirely different world for he will have discovered that life is from within and not from without" (167).

Again, what we can see here is the assertion of Emerson that all man needs is already inside of him.³⁰ All that is needed is to connect to the Divine inside and we will be granted everything that we are longing for, we will be provided for, supplied and nurtured. We need to discover our divine nature, the thing that we are part of God, that we are Gods. Once we realize that we will no longer need to compare ourselves with others or strive for something we do not have now. We will know that we can have whatever we need because it is our divine right. This would probably be an explanation of Emerson's words given from the inside of New Thought movement.

Originally, the focus of New Thought was placed on metaphysical healing. Phineas Parkhurst Quimby was the intellectual father of the movement, and the name 'New Thought' comes from Warren Felt Evans, Annetta Seabury Dresser and Julius Dresser. Quimby started to study Mesmer and soon realized the potential of the mind and placebo effect on healing. The next step, made by Evans, was incorporating Swedenborg's teachings into the

²⁹ see the table *The Evolution of the New Thought Movement* in the appendix.

³⁰ I am using the word 'man' in a generic reference, meaning both men and women in order to maintain the spirit of Emerson's words. Although he uses 'man', there were also women among Transcendentalists such as Elizabeth Palmer Peabody or Margaret Fuller.

To what extent Emerson acknowledged the intellectual efforts of women, is difficult to judge, however, Miller says, "Emerson looked with benignity upon agitation for women's rights, but shrank from the prospect of their actually going to the polls" (457).

philosophy. Ernest Holmes, who dedicated his whole life to the idea of independent thinking after neglecting formal education, discovered the writings of R.W. Emerson and was enchanted by him. He was inclined towards the teachings of Christian Science and in 1914 discovered Thomas Troward, an early teacher of Mental Science, who was further developing Emerson's thoughts (Mosley 47). "Emerson's eloquent essays that particularly reflect Science of Mind thinking are Self-Reliance, Spiritual Laws, Compensation and The Over-soul" ("History of New Thought").

Ernest Holmes wrote *The Science of Mind* (1926), which later on became a basic source for the Religious Science philosophy. The Religious Science movement gained a significant momentum in the 1940's and 1950's (Mosley 48). There are interesting parallels between Emerson and Holmes, especially in their life-long devotion to pursue the inner guidance and show its importance to the world. Interestingly enough, Holmes life story brings us back to Emerson's line saying that a pure idea in your mind will set into motion a correspondent revolution in things (the full quotation can be found in the next chapter). In contrast to Emerson, Holmes lacked proper formal education.

In spite of that, by virtue of his desire, he established a church of Religious Science, attended by thousands, and inspired 'positive thinking' of Norman Vincent Peale (Mosley 48).

It seems that his desire to read about metaphysics brought "the influx of spirit, the creative force" (see Emerson's quotation in the chapter below) thanks to which he was able to manifest such life without a need of higher education.

Another parallel can be found between Holmes' teachings and The Law of Attraction presented by Esther Hicks, a contemporary New Age author channeling the entity Abraham. Mosley quotes Holmes as saying:

The things we need, we are to ask for – and we are to believe that we receive them! When we pray we are to believe that we have. We are surrounded by a universal law which is creative. It moves from the thought to the thing. Unless there is first an image, it cannot move, for there would be nothing for it to move toward (49).

Esther Hicks talks about the Law of Attraction and describes it as a three-step process. First, we need to ask. Asking is done through thinking and feeling, the second step is not our business the universe is bringing together all cooperative components to meet our desire. The

third step is vital; we need to allow ourselves to receive what we have asked for. This is done by believing that it is there, visualizing the situation or the thing and feeling what it is like to have it. Esther Hicks calls this last phase ‘The Art of Allowing’. She explains that we need to allow the desired thing to come to us, literally to set our vibrations in such a way that they match the vibrations of the desired outcome. She also adds that there is only a stream of well-being permeating the universe, which we are either allowing or resisting. Thus we either feel good, prosperous, healthy and so on, when we allow ourselves the full connection to this stream, or we feel not so good, not so healthy and in the extreme miserable and depressed (“The Secret-movie”).

Emerson says:” We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams” (Porte 269).

There is a similar concept of ‘allowing’. In both cases, the authors are trying to convey the suggestion that we do not need to struggle. All is there for us, we just happen to be blindfolded from time to time by thinking that some hard work is required in order to deserve whatever we search for. ‘Allow a passage to its beams’ says Emerson. Think positive thoughts and imagine yourself as having what you want and feel it, says Esther Hicks. This is a way to achieve everything.

Now, let us have a look on what Emerson has to say to the concept of the Law of Attraction itself. He says:

Has the naturalist or chemist learned his craft, who has explored the gravity of atoms and the elective affinities, who has not yet discerned the deeper law whereof this is only partial or approximate statement, namely, that like draws to like; and that the goods which belong to you gravitate to you, and need not be pursued with pains and costs? ...these things proceed from the eternal generation of the soul.

Geoffrey draws on his boots to go through the woods, that his feet may be safer from the bite of snakes. Aaron never thinks of such a peril. In many years, neither is harmed by such an accident. Yet it seems to me, that, with every precaution you take against such an evil, you put yourself into the power of the evil (Porte 410).

In Esther Hicks’s words, the more you are focused on a particular thing the more you attract it to your experience whether it is something positive or negative. Your focus is the deciding factor.

Ralph Waldo Emerson and the New Thought Movement

We live in an intelligent universe, which responds to our mental states. To the extent that we learn to control these mental states, we shall automatically control our environment. This is why we study the power of thought as we approach the subject of spiritual mind healing.

Ernest Holmes, the founder of Science of Mind (Mosley 43).

And here is what Emerson says to this topic:

...each phenomenon has its roots in the faculties and affections of the mind. Whilst the abstract question occupies your intellect, nature brings it in the concrete to be solved by your hands. It were a wise inquiry for the closet, to compare, point by point, especially at remarkable crises in life, our daily history, with the rise and progress of ideas in the mind. (Porte 48)

I am using this quotation again in the Transcendentalism section where I explain the New Age concept of Law of Attraction. It is an important concept, therefore I see some merit in the direct comparison when one can see the definitions one next to the other. From what we can see here, it is no wonder that the New Thought adherents rightly claimed Emerson to be an immediate predecessor of this movement or at least a great source of inspiration. Here is Emerson again:

Nature is not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house a world; and beyond its world, a heaven. Know then, that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. **What we are, that only can we see.** All that Adam had, all that Caesar could, you have and can do. Build, therefore, your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions. A correspondent revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit. So fast will disagreeable appearances, spiders, snakes, enemies vanish; they are temporary and shall be no more seen. (Porte 48)

The crucial part in this paragraph is definitely the sentence “What we are, that only can we see”. From the New Age/New Thought point of view you need to alter your thinking and the way go about your daily routines if you want to see a change. As Emerson puts it, when you

have a vision of the ideal state you prefer to see you need to act accordingly, to conform your life to this idea. Once you get started, you will experience a ‘revolution in things’.

What does it mean that every spirit builds itself a world? It means that we are the creators of our reality. It also means that we cannot create that which we are not a vibrational match to (in the New Age terminology). Therefore, if we want better relationship, for instance, we want to visualize one first and feel what it is like to have one. If we do that, we are then a vibrational match to the thing we want, we send out a frequency saying ‘I am happy with my partner’ and due to Law of Attraction (saying the similar attracts similar) we will have that relationship. This is the explanation of Emerson’s “What we are, that only can we see”.

In a letter to Carlyle, Emerson expressed his conviction that the ideas of Swedenborg would contribute to the rise of a new tradition “which must arise out of all”. He thus successfully predicted the rise of the New Thought (Hanegraaff 459).

Self-Reliance versus Self-Responsibility – Transcendentalism versus New Thought

Prayer supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not beg.

R.W. Emerson (Porte 276).

Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius, that he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man..., and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.

R.W. Emerson (Porte 267).

The message of Emerson’s *Self-Reliance* essay is to become independent in our thinking as well as in our actions. He favors nonconformity above all. To achieve independence means to consciously acknowledge that we are part of God. We are thus in a direct connection with God or the Divine. It is not possible for us not to be because we would not exist. Everything that exists comes from this source. Being parts of ‘All That Is’ or the Creator means we are the supreme governing power influencing our lives. Therefore, the only thing we should rely upon is not a prayer (we pray to ourselves) or some intermediaries, it is us.

It was not the Will of God putting on us something seemingly negative. It is us who cause it. If it is so, we are responsible for our lives. We are the creators.

The New Thought puts all responsibility for life events and circumstances on the individual. It says, “the only reason why external circumstances seem to have any power over the individuals is because they believe that to be the case”. As we can see, the New Age tenet of “Creating our own reality” has its roots in New Thought and indirectly in Emerson’s Transcendentalism (Hanegraaff 489).

Hanegraff quotes Ralph Waldo Trine, another New Thought author who adapted Emerson for the ‘masses’, as saying: “It is just the degree in which you realize your oneness with the Infinite Spirit, you will exchange disease for ease, inharmony for harmony, suffering and pain for abounding health and strength” (490).

In this line of Trine, we can recognize two concepts put together. It is Emerson’s idea of ‘oneness with the Infinite Soul’ and New Thought focus on prosperity, health and well-being.

A Parallel between Emerson’s and the New Age View of Evolutionism

In terms of evolution, Emerson, quite like New Age, does not see science as a source of the ultimate truth. Neither of the two disregards science completely, but both have reservations saying that we are not provided with the whole picture. Emerson saw the problem in the fact that science is immersed in the scrutiny of parts and cannot see the wood for the trees. In this respect poet and philosopher has an advantage. “Emerson saw only the phenomenal manifestation of a Creative Mind” (Hanegraaff 469).

To develop his theory further, it means that he regarded his Over-Soul as the source of all diversity. Presumably, according to Emerson, there are so many species because the Over-Soul’s creative potential seeks to express itself and it is not random (as Darwin states) (Hanegraaff 469).

New Age belief in this matter is very close to Emerson. For instance, Esther Hicks, while channeling Abraham, answered the question during one of their seminars whether we have developed from the apes. She said ‘No’, apes were a different intention. How you would explain the fact then, that there are still some apes left, she said. Do you really think that one group was miraculously transformed and upgraded leaving the others to themselves mourning, “What the heck did we do wrong?” No, it does not work that way, it is always a different intention.

According to Hanegraaff, both New Age and Emersonian Transcendentalism share the vision of romantic evolutionism in this respect. He says that it was thanks to Emerson that

American cultural tradition became eclectic and pragmatic with respect to scientific theories of evolution (470).

Oriental Influences in Transcendentalism and the Scope of Influence of Eastern Traditions in New Age

If modern Theosophy was one major factor in the western occultist reception of Oriental religions, Transcendentalism was the other.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Hanegraaff 456).

An important parallel between New Age and Transcendentalism can be observed in their millenarianism. Both traditions believed in the identical essence of all the world's religions. In addition, they believed in the imminent change in religious understanding, which will make it possible to find a common language between them. New Agers, as well as some of the Transcendentalists did, expect a "golden age of spirit". It was to come about through the discovery of one's intuitive abilities and personal connection with the Divine. Moreover, Transcendentalists as well as New Agers tried, and the latter are still trying, to free themselves from materialism and Christianity. Both traditions have an eclectic approach towards the world religions, which was often criticized as superficial. Both use what is fitting and disregard the rest. "Emerson can be regarded as a *pars pro toto* in estimating the importance of Transcendentalism for the metaphysical movements" (Hanegraaff 456-457).

With respect to Oriental religions, Emerson appreciated the teachings of Hinduism, not so much of Buddhism and Taoism, but he held Confucianism in respect for its "ethical concerns and common sense". Hinduism was of interest even for Unitarians. However, he ignored all its rituals and cultural context and focused only on the universal aspects. He took what suited him and kept his ideas strictly western. He sought to prove the theory that all religions were the same at its core and that this understanding would lead to the new world (Hanegraaff 460). Here we can see the concept of 'new world', which New Age reflects in its very name.

What made him so strictly west oriented? One of the reasons might probably be the fact that Transcendentalists were trying to free themselves of the 'foreign' British influence. They wanted to create something specifically American, therefore open adoration of the East was not desirable.

New Agers are mostly interested in the eastern concepts of karma, reincarnation and yoga. Arthur Versluis shows his aversion toward this eclecticism of New Thought/New Age and Transcendentalism respectively:

...diluted Asian religion – much in the manner of twentieth-century “New Age” dilettantism – did permeate American society in the late nineteenth century via an amalgam of diluted Buddhism and Swedenborgianism, Spiritualism, and Emersonian Transcendentalism that came to be called “New Thought” or “mind-cure”. New Thought preceded Theosophy – the other bastard from which Asian religious traditions came to be known in America – but coincided with it principally in that both presented elements of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism in popularized and distorted form. The pseudoreligious potpourri found in Boston and across much of America during the late nineteenth century is clearly a predecessor of the “New Age” movement during the late twentieth century. Just as the New Thought movement represented diluted Emersonian Transcendentalism for the masses, the New Age movement pandered to a materialist interpretation of what originally were authentic traditional teachings (Hanegraaff 462).

Although Versluis’s annoyance is definitely understandable it would be an arduous task trying to keep a tradition unchanged if it is to stay alive. Even such a strong tradition as Christianity was not able to stay unchanged over the course of history. Just as diversity perpetuates the continuation of the species, similarly it is diversity which sustains traditions enriching them by elements that are of common interest. One thing is simplification, which may lead to distortion of facts, but quite another thing is reintroduction of something valuable, which would otherwise be lost. For instance, to grasp the full significance of Emerson’s thoughts may not be an easy task for unprepared readers or mass audience. It depends whether we perceive as essential to maintain his flowery poetic style or whether we prioritize the message behind it, short and reworded, at the risk of losing the spirit of the piece. In the most successful New Age movie so far, *The Secret* (2006) Emerson’s ideas are mentioned. His philosophy is of course not explained. He is just referenced as a predecessor of a New Thought variety of New Age beliefs (and yes, the whole movie has a slightly materialistic overtone, which was criticized). The point is that it makes it easier, for the twenty-first century spiritually minded person, to embrace what Emerson was trying to say, however simplified it may be. There are actually many ideas in the movie, expressed by Esther Hicks

and others that are, with a little bit of scrutiny devoted to Emerson's work, precisely the same as his views on the realm of the spirit.

American Harmonial Religions and the Psychologization of Religion

Harmonial religions are "those forms of piety and belief in which spiritual composure, physical health, and even economic well-being are understood to flow from a person's rapport with the cosmos" (Hanegraaff 494).

Out of the New Thought movement sprang other religious movements founded by Quimby's followers. They came to be known as 'harmonial religions'. These were basically two groups: Christian Science (Mary Baker Eddy) and various New Thought denominations. As oppose to Quimby's teachings, harmonial religions are inspired by Scripture (Hammer 58-59). This brings them closer to Christianity.

Also, J. Stillson Judah refers to various New Thought groups as to 'metaphysical movements'. Some authors may classify Theosophy and Spiritualism as members of this group as well. Metaphysical movements are indebted to American Transcendentalism and are typically concerned with psychological healing, which is of no interest either for Theosophy or for Spiritualism, therefore Hanegraaff chooses not to include them in this group (455).

Considering the history of Modern Esoteric Tradition, we need to look back to the mid-nineteenth century where two important traditions came into being. The first one was Theosophy and its heirs (Theosophy is outside the scope of this thesis, so I will not go into details about it) and the harmonial religions. Both of these traditions have a common pedigree which also includes Mesmerism. Theosophy immersed itself in depths of mysticism whereas harmonial religions cultivated much more worldly concepts of well-being and prosperity. As I have mentioned earlier, Hammer emphasizes individualistic tendencies of the nineteenth century religious culture, which was at the same time eclectic. Mesmerism was thus not the only source of inspiration. Nineteenth century religious culture was influenced by Transcendentalism, Swedenborgianism and Hindu doctrines. Eventually, Theosophy and harmonial religions merged and created a single group (Hammer 67-68).

In the twentieth century, New Thought was regarded as "a distinctly American form of pop psychology". The New Thought authors were using ideals and terminology of at that time popular Jungianism, humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology. These forms of

psychology then favored self-realization in the sense of entrepreneurial success. Since then New Thought was labeled “a religion of prosperity and success” (Hammer 67-68).

New Thought Ideas Giving Rise to New Age – From the 1920’s until 1970’s

After 1920, the New Thought’s ideas permeated self-help and positive thinking literature. A significant period came with the development of counter-culture and self-spirituality in the 1960’s. The various movements and traditions slowly began to converge. It was New Thought, Theosophy, harmonial and positive thinking, transpersonal psychology, Jungianism and Eastern teachings. The reason for that was the effort to detach oneself from restrictions of Christianity and explore the individual self (Hammer 68, 73).

The counter-cultural hippie movement of the 1960’s was an important factor. The modern-day New Age movement is generally traced back to this movement of the 1960’s, which seemed to embody the desire to be free to express one’s authentic nature. Naturally, everything that could possibly threaten the individual’s freedom was attacked. People sought alternatives to the mainstream lifestyle and inclined to hedonistic way of life. ‘Sex, drugs and rock-and-roll’ were ways to discover, uncover and unleash their authentic selves. People participated in ‘happenings’, ‘be-ins’ or ‘love-ins’. Self-spirituality during the 1960s found itself in incipient stages. Heelas mentions two most important ‘New Age’ centers dating from 1962, namely the Esalen Institute in USA and Findhorn Community in Scotland (Heelas 50-51).

Sebald claims that the New Age movement was actually the outgrowth of the counter-culture of the 1960s. However, a certain transformation has taken place and therefore it would be inaccurate to see the New Age movement as a simple continuation of the counter-culture (Hanegraaff 370).

By the 1970’s the term New Age had become established. Findhorn, founded by Eileen and Peter Caddy and Dorothy Maclean, in its beginnings reflected the counter-culture of the 1960s with emphasis on Self-actualization, however, over time greater focus on prosperity started to develop (Heelas 52, 65).

Heelas quotes Carol Riddell explaining Findhornian ethics:

The experience of the nature of the Divine is sought through contemplation, or through practices, which turn one inward. What is discovered becomes the source of the morality of action. The more you know who you really are, the more your actions will be righteous, for you are expressing Love in the outer world of sense perception (24).

Here we can see that the Divine can actually be tapped into. It is not something that is transcending us, something we could not comprehend that is somewhere above and beyond our understanding. Moreover, that which is discovered should be used as a source of guidance. It implies that all we need to know and follow is already within us, that divine essence is part of ourselves. It also indicates that once we realize that we are all God (we are the projection of that which is called God, which is meant by the phrase ‘to discover who you really are’) our actions simply have to be righteous, predicated on a presumption that God’s actions are righteous. If we find this divine essence within ourselves, we will then act from Love, since Love is seen as a supreme governing power in the Universe.

Emerson thoughts are clearly reflected here and his legacy thus has not been forgotten. While studying present day New Age, Hanegraaff remarks how surprised he was when he found out how very little has changed in terms of the belief “our thoughts have creative power and we are all part of God” proposed by the nineteenth century New Thought, which was significantly influenced by Emerson.

The influence is actually huge, since Louise L. Hay, a proponent of the New Thought ideas, established and successfully runs the biggest New Age publishing company called ‘The Hay House’. Hay, sometimes called ‘The Queen of the New Age’, has a background in Religious Science.³¹ The publishing company, founded in 1987, today produces books, CD, DVDs, card decks or calendars with affirmations falling into the category of ‘Mind/Body/Spirit’ or Self-help literature. In other words, it is literature of psychic/intuitives, positive thinking, angel therapy, New Thought and motivational speaking. The most prominent authors, apart from Louise Hay herself, are Doreen Virtue, Wayne W. Dyer, Sylvia Brown, Colette Baron-Reid, Sonia Choquette, Marianne Williamson, Cheryl Richardson,

³¹ As I have mentioned, Religious Science, founded by Ernest Holmes was a New Thought denomination that drew on Emerson’s ideas significantly. Emerson’s Transcendentalism represented an early influence for young Holmes.

Denise Linn, Caroline Myss or Gregg Braden. In 2007, Hay House sold 6.3 million products worth \$ 100 million (Oppenheimer).

The Hay House's idea that "traditional Western learning as codified by universities"³² presents an incomplete picture and other ways need to be sought to put the pieces of puzzle together (Oppenheimer) correlates with Emerson's view expressed for instance on the example of evolutionism. Hay House, representing New Age, sees science much like Emerson did as a one sided point of view, which calls for supplying with other perspectives.

Conclusion

Comparison of Basic New Age and Transcendentalism Tenets

The kingdom of God is within you. Not to be found in the sky or in the sea, the Kingdom of God is inside you. Luke (17:21)

The Bible (Keane 333).

As I have already mentioned the Transcendentalists liked to view themselves as individualistic thinkers rather than members of some group. Therefore, as far as the basic tenets of Transcendentalism are concerned it is better to talk about prevailing tendencies instead of fixed beliefs and attitudes. However, according to Reuben there are certain points of general agreement. He mentions the following ones:

- Transcendentalists do not reject God. Instead, they prefer to explain the world in terms of an individual. There is a shift of focus. An individual is seen as a center of the universe. History, nature and the whole universe can be understood through an individual, he represents the key.
- If we know ourselves then we can understand the universe, because the structure of the universe matches that of the individual. Even Aristotle advised us to "Know thyself".

Also, Hermes Trismegistus' *Emerald Tablet* tells us "As below so above"

- Nature is full of signs; it is symbolic.

³² meaning based on science

- The self-transcending tendency, the desire to become one with the world.
- The self-asserting tendency, the desire to remain separate and unique, the existence of an ego. (Reuben)

The tendency of Transcendentalism is to overcome our uniqueness, the ego and to become one with the whole, which is at the same time the tendency of nearly all New Age teachings. As far as New Age is concerned the views on the concept of ego range from total suppressing to acknowledgement of its vital function in terms of self-preservation and other beneficial aspects which result from our perception of uniqueness. However, the overall tendency within New Age is to suppress the ego. The Transcendentalists do not talk openly about such a need. Instead, they stress the importance of a higher perspective, which can be accessed via our connection with the Self.

Reuben also observes that Transcendentalists see nature as neutral. Its beauty is in the eye of the beholder. What matters is everyone's thoughts and feelings at any given moment. Through these, we impose a certain quality on nature. In other words, our emotional set-up affects the way we perceive the environment. Reuben thus concludes that for the Transcendentalists "knowing yourself" and "studying nature" was the same activity (Reuben).

New Agers and possibly even Emerson could expand on this idea by saying that we create our reality through our thoughts and feelings, which we can control in any given moment, and of course, the same environment at the same time can be amazingly beautiful for one and terribly full of allergens for the other, to give an example. It depends on what we focus our attention.

Let us now have a look at the transcendental idea that the structure of the universe matches the structure of the individual or the other way around. Within New Age Science there is a theory developed by physicist David Bohm and neurologist Karl Pribram, which is known as 'holographic paradigm'. A basic characteristic of a hologram is the fact that "each fragment of intermediate frequency pattern contains the information of the whole object" (Hanegraaff 67). This theory suggests that every atom of our body contains information about the complete structure of our whole body. In other words in the tiniest part is a reflection of the whole. So, if our bodies would be taken as those tiny parts of the universe, because we are part of the universe, we can assume that within each and every cell of our body we carry the information about the structure of the universe, according to Bohm's and Pribram's theory and presumably according to the Transcendentalists as well. Judging by Emerson's remark in his essay *Compensation* where he mentions that "the entire system of things gets represented

in every particle” we can see that he described the same idea which was later on formulated in scientific terms by Pribram and Bohm.

Then there is a group of ideas, according to Reuben, which are not generally agreed upon, but are shared by many Transcendentalists and these are:

- 1) Transcendentalism is a form of idealism.
- 2) The transcendentalist transcends the rational and focuses on the spiritual.
- 3) The human soul is part of the Oversoul (a special term used by Emerson), source or God to which it goes after death. Everyone is thus part of God.
- 4) God, Oversoul or source is everywhere, permeates everything. Therefore, it is not necessary to travel to sacred places.
- 5) Jesus was as divine as everyone else is. He was only exceptionally capable of living transcendental life, using powers that reside in every individual.
- 6) The biblical miracles are seen as dubious. All that we can see around us are miracles.
- 7) Our present life is more important than the afterlife.
- 8) Death is not to be feared. Our soul only goes back where it came from.
- 9) Evil, negative or dark side is only seen as a counterpart to the positive one. They do not believe in the existence of Satan as an active force. Positive side is more powerful because light penetrates dark.
- 10) Power is obtained through self-reliance. They defy fate and predestination.
- 11) They propose to disregard consistency in one’s behavior. People are constantly changing as they are evolving so what they believed yesterday does not need to apply today. The only imperative is to trust oneself.
- 12) There is unity between life and universe; there is a relationship between all things.
- 13) The truth can be accessed only through our intuition, no church or creed can convey it.
- 14) Reform can be achieved only when we start to act from within (Reuben).

For the purpose of a direct comparison, let us now have a look at the basic tenets of New Age teachings that are commonly agreed upon. Heelas quotes William Bloom’s formulation of these ideas:

- 1) All life is the manifestation of Spirit (the supreme consciousness).
- 2) The purpose of life is to develop Love, Wisdom and Enlightenment.
- 3) All religions express at their core the same reality.
- 4) The life as we perceive it is only “the outer veil of an invisible inner reality”
- 5) Human beings are two folded. They have an outer temporary personality (nature) and then the higher self (soul or “multi-dimensional inner being”). The higher self is love. Our task is to bring these two parts of ourselves into harmony, to become love.
- 6) All souls have free will to choose whatever path they want.
- 7) All life is “interconnected energy”. Our thoughts, feelings and actions are also forms of energy. By producing energy in this way, we are adding to this life force that permeates everything. In this sense, we are co-creating our reality.
- 8) We are undergoing a change of mass consciousness. Therefore, we talk about a New Age.

Heelas then adds few more ideas formulated by Jeremy Tarcher:

- 9) Our higher self can be awakened, if it is achieved, it becomes central to our everyday life.
- 10) Awakening of the higher self is the purpose of our life (Heelas 225-226).

Hammer proposes the following characteristics of the New Age *sensu lato*:

- 1) The cosmos is “an unbroken whole”. (The idea of holism)
- 2) Idealism presented in a form of holism. Our inner set-up influences our circumstances.
- 3) Prima materia of the cosmos is energy.
- 4) We are body, mind and spirit. All problems need to be addressed with respect to all these parts.
- 5) Environmental issues are not separate from the spiritual ones. By healing ourselves, we heal the Earth.
- 6) Although we are all One and everything is interconnected, we have an individual mission, a purpose to life, which can be discovered through meditation or divination.
- 7) We evolve as beings due to successive incarnations.
- 8) Rational thinking does not provide all the answers.

9) We can gain insight by following different paths. All of them are valid. A wide diversity of opinions is thus acknowledged (Hammer 73-77).

Final Word

The main idea of this thesis was to draw parallels between Emerson's American Transcendentalism of the 19th century and the New Age movement whose roots can be traced back to the late 18th and the first decades of the 19th century with its maturity (a completed process of secularization) achieved in the 1970's. Transcendentalism was certainly much more homogenous than New Age. However, Transcendentalists stressed the importance of individuality and were not happy being referred to just as 'Transcendentalists' because every label implies unification which was not desirable. I have studied mainly the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson; therefore, while drawing parallels I refer almost exclusively to his work which is reflected in the title of the thesis.

Looking at the basic principles of both philosophies expounded not only in this final overview but throughout the whole thesis, as I was gradually presenting them, we could single out several easily identifiable parallels. These confluences are simply inevitable, as Transcendentalism represented one of the forming philosophies that in the nineteenth century contributed to the emergence of New Thought, which was in turn a shaping philosophy for New Age in the 1960's and 1970's.

This process was of course gradual. There is a tendency to draw parallels between Transcendentalism and New Age based on the influence of Romanticism, which goes hand in hand with Idealism. I have also come across a synonym for Transcendentalism; it is sometimes called 'American Romanticism'. As such, it connotes the tendency to detach, to escape, to go to the basics, to be free spirited, to live in harmony with nature, to rebel. All of that is true for Transcendentalism, even if the meaning could be slightly shifted. Romantics perceived the nature more in the physical sense, the feelings and thoughts to which they were inspired came from their interaction with the real physical environment. However, Transcendentalists thought of nature more in a theoretical sense in the context of the universe, as they were trying to transcend the ordinary perceptions and to go beyond.

Emerson says: "... parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole nature is a metaphor of the human mind" (Porte 24).

Philosophy of Idealism is important factor linking these two philosophies together. I have mentioned Schelling, Hegel and especially focused on the influence of Immanuel Kant and his idea of Copernican revolution. Another shaping factor for both was Emanuel Swedenborg. Emerson even included him among the six men having their own essays written about them in his series *Representative Men*.

With respect to the concrete common concepts, I would highlight the following:

The idea of Holism: With regard to New Age, holism is its core belief. The phrase Body-Mind-Spirit, being used even as a label for a literature genre, is well-known. For Transcendentalists was no less important. Transcendentalists did not honor the dualistic nature of a human being where the body is taken care of by the secular representatives and the spirit is in the hands of the church. Their idea was therefore a holistic interconnection of both through our faculty of intuition, which is a manifestation of the spirit, as our best source of knowledge and guidance. Moreover, Emerson, in his essay *Compensation*, mentions the same idea I have described by Bohm's and Pribram's theory of holographic universe adopted by New Age.

The idea of Higher Self: Emerson calls it the Over-Soul. Again, it implies that we do not only have a soul but that this soul is part of something greater, a source or God.

The Creator-creation relationship: Emerson as well as New Age sees the man as the ultimate source of creation due to the belief that we are all parts of God and thus we are the creators. All that is, is therefore a joined manifestation of all forms of life, not the sole person called God. We constitute that which is called God and 's/he' is in the constant process of evolving through our creation.

The Adoption of Oriental Ideas: Both traditions incorporated only those parts that could easily fit into the western framework.

The Idea of Gnosis: Hanegraaff describes gnosis as "the truth [which] can only be found by personal inner revelation, insight or enlightenment. Truth can only be personally experienced. [There is] no other authority than personal inner experience". He says that the concept comes from Western Esotericism and was transferred to New Age (519). Therefore, there are various seminars and retreats that seek to enable the participants to re-connect with their inner (wiser) self. Hanegraaff's gnosis is precisely what Emerson explains in his essay *Self-Reliance*. Self-reliance means to guide oneself with the help of one's spirit or the higher self.

It would be certainly interesting to explore more deeply the connection Swedenborg – Emerson – New Age. It seems to me, from what I have researched, that Swedenborg probably

had the ability to channel, which is nowadays a common technique of acquiring the information in the New Age movement. Further research of Emerson's views on Swedenborg's work, especially in terms of map of the spirit world; angelic realm for instance, could provide more information about possible parallels between Emerson's ideas about angels or spirit guides, which are now, as far as New Age is concerned, taken for granted.

I have not explored Theosophy more thoroughly, mainly because I found it not directly relevant to the depiction of Transcendentalism – New Age link. The connective element in question represents the New Thought movement were I placed my attention.

To conclude, let me quote Emerson once more.

Each man has his own vocation. The talent is the call... What attracts my attention shall have it, as I will go to the man who knocks at my door, whilst a thousand persons, as worthy, go by it, to whom I give no regard. A few traits of character, manners, face, a few incidents, have an emphasis in your memory out of all proportion to their apparent significance, if you measure them by the ordinary standards. They relate to your gift. What your heart thinks great is great. The soul's emphasis is always right (Porte 310,312).

Joseph Campbell, whose phrase 'Follow Your Bliss' was quoted in the New Age movie *The Secret*, explains what Emerson contemplated in the quotation above.

Bliss is the driving force and motivation for all our desires. It is something that stems from the core of our being. It is our passion, the thing we enjoy doing the most and if we discover it and decide to follow it, our life would be, due to an influx of favorable circumstances, truly miraculous. We need to search within to find our true self and then to do only that which resonates with what we have found.

Rely upon yourself, the only authority you will ever need is you. When you follow your bliss, the universe cannot not help itself but to deliver everything that matches your bliss. It is how it works. Joseph Campbell says:

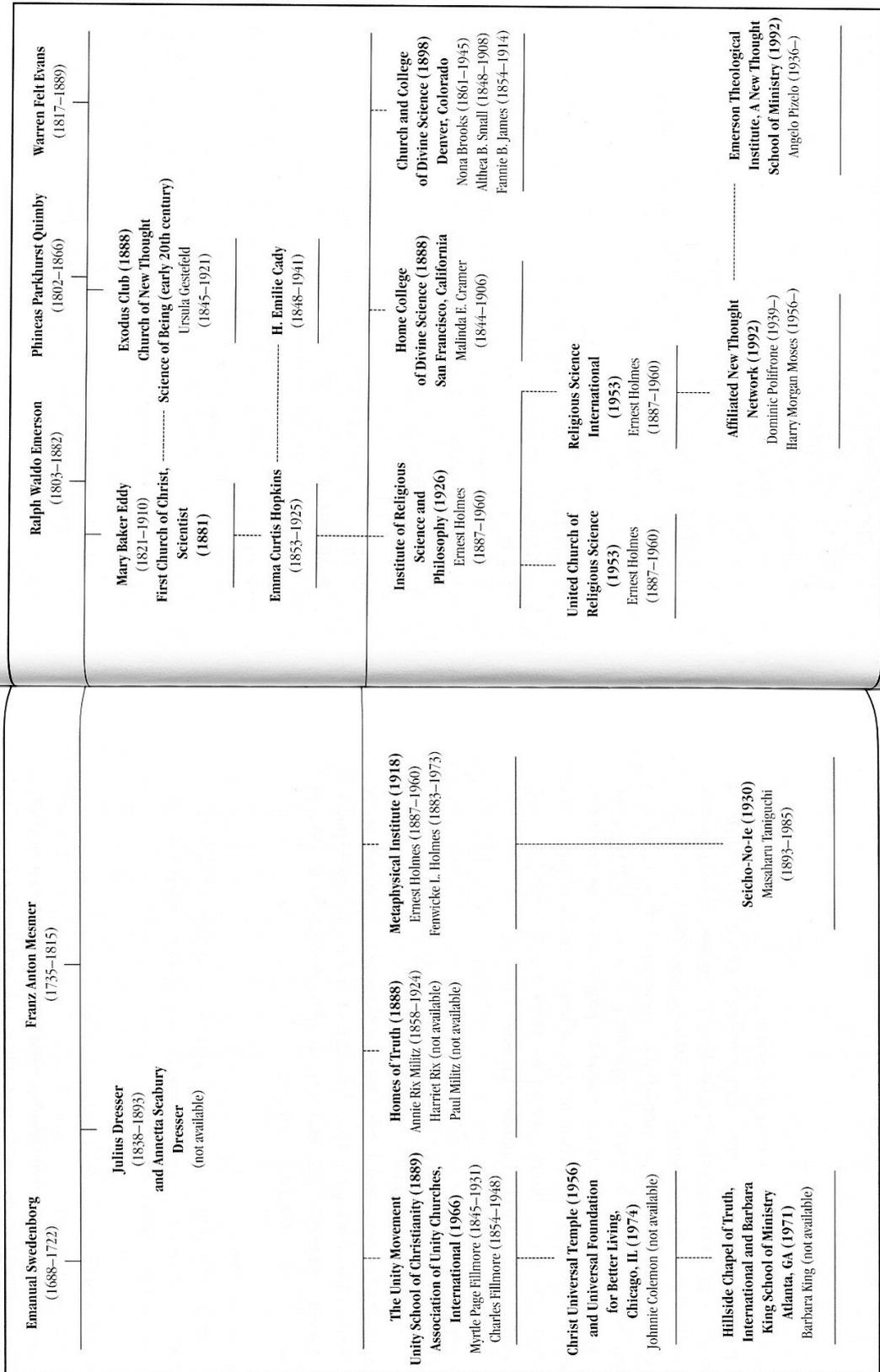
We are having experiences all the time which may on occasion render some sense of this, a little intuition of where your bliss is. Grab it. No one can tell you what it is going to be. You have to learn to recognize your own depth. All the time. It is miraculous. I even have a superstition that has grown on me as the result of invisible

hands coming all the time – namely, that if you do follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in the field of your bliss, as they open the doors to you. I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be (Connell).

Emerson knew that back in the nineteenth century, Campbell repeated and stressed its importance in the twentieth century and the contemporary channeled messages within the New Age community verify its significance. The message is still the same 'Follow your Bliss'. It is the only way to live.

Appendix

APPENDIX E The Evolution of the New Thought Movement



source: Mosley, Glenn R. *New Thought, Ancient Wisdom: The History and the Future of the New Thought Movement*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006. Print

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