

Worldview Apologetics

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Week 5: New Age Spirituality

New Age: The Basic Idea

Eastern religion for Western consumption.



New Age: Theology

- *Pantheism*: all is God and all is One
 - The pantheist equation: Universe = Nature = God
- There is no transcendent personal God
- The universe is eternal and evolving
- The universe has a spiritual dimension
 - This spiritual realm lies beyond the visible
 - Spirituality involves accessing this dimension
- What is 'real' is relative to the individual (?)

New Age: Anthropology

- Each individual is God: "Atman is Brahman"
 - I am the center of my universe/reality
- Each individual is eternal and immortal
 - Westernized doctrines of reincarnation and karma
 - We are all involved in a cyclical process of rebirths
- We are the products of cosmic evolution
 - Cosmological, biological, and spiritual evolution
 - We are on the brink of the next "quantum leap"

New Age: Knowledge

- Mainstream science doesn't tell us everything
- Spiritual knowledge goes beyond science
 - We can attain a level of "higher consciousness"
 - Various routes: meditation, drugs, occult practices
- We needn't be bound to "Western logic"
- Experience is a better guide than reason
- Truth is ultimately relative to the individual
 - If I am God then I am the creator of my reality!

New Age: Ethics

- There is no ultimate good/evil distinction
 - If everything is God then everything is good!
- There are no absolute moral standards
 - Moral truths are relative to the individual
 - We cannot make moral judgments of others
- An ecological political agenda
 - We must save the planet (nature worship)
 - Animals have no less rights than humans

New Age: Salvation

- No concept of sin or divine judgment
- Our most serious problem is...
 - *Ignorance* – we don't realize our divine nature
 - *Immaturity* – we haven't reached our potential
- The solution to the problem...
 - Individual enlightenment (by various means)
 - Individual transformation (by various means)
- There are many paths up the mountain!

Tool #1: Consistency

- Are there really no objective truths?
 - What about “There are no objective truths”?
- Is it wrong to insist on “Western logic”?
 - You have to assume logic to argue against logic

“If people insist upon remaining within their ‘logical’ belief systems they are safe within their own perceived reality, and thus are safe within the position of power they hold, whatever that power might be. They will not change themselves or grow into an expanded awareness of themselves.”

Shirley MacLaine

Tool #3: Experience

- How has Eastern religion treated the East?
 - Caste system is based on karma/reincarnation



Tool #4: Coherence

- Does idea of karma fit with moral relativism?
 - The law of karma assumes absolute standards
- Does pantheism fit with karma/reincarnation?
 - If I am God, how could I do anything bad or evil?
 - If I am God, why do I need to die and be reborn?

Tool #6: 'Livability'

- Can pantheism be lived out in practice?
 - Pantheism undermines all moral constraints



"If all is one, then nothing is wrong."

Charles Manson

Tool #8: Hope

- What hope does karma/reincarnation offer?
 - Why think our lives will get better and not worse?
- New Age worldview:
 - An eternal cycle of life: no final escape from evil
 - No guarantee of progress – it's all down to me!
- Christian worldview:
 - A one-time resurrection: a final escape from evil
 - Guaranteed by the historical resurrection of Jesus
