

Chapter 1 : Wouter J. Hanegraaff (Author of Western Esotericism)

New Age Religion and Western Culture is a gold mine of well-argued research by religious studies scholar Wouter J. Hanegraaff. The pages in this academic volume are packed with insights and information for religious scholars, meditators, and research-minded spiritual seekers who desire in-depth knowledge about the origins of esoteric and occult practices in Western societies.

Most New Age practices and beliefs may be characterized as a form of alternative spirituality or alternative religion. Even apparent exceptions, such as alternative medicine or traditional medicine practices, often have some spiritual dimension — such as a conceptual integration of mind, body, and spirit. Because the New Age term is generally limited to a Western context wherein the Judeo-Christian tradition and Positivism are dominant, the use of "alternative" rel. Hence, many New Age ideas and practices contain either explicit or implied critiques of organized mainstream Christianity — emphasis on meditation suggests that simple prayer and faith is insufficient. Belief in reincarnation which not all New Age followers accept challenges familiar Christian doctrines of the afterlife. Typical activities of this subculture include participation in study or meditation groups, attendance at lectures and fairs; the purchase of books, music, and other products such as crystals or incense; patronage of fortune-tellers, healers and spiritual counselors. Quartz crystals are believed to have mystical properties by some New Age followers The New Age subculture already existed in the s, and arguably continued themes from the s counterculture. These movements in turn have roots in Transcendentalism, Mesmerism, Swedenborgianism, and various earlier Western esoteric or occult traditions, such as the Hermetic arts of astrology, magic, alchemy, and cabbala. The Findhorn Foundation, an early New Age intentional community in northern Scotland founded in played a significant role. The movement in Russia has been heavily influenced by the legacy of Nicholas Roerich and Helena Roerich, who taught in the Theosophical tradition. Another former Theosophist, Rudolf Steiner and his anthroposophical movement, is a major influence, especially upon German-speaking New Agers. This was an autobiographical account of her mid-life spiritual exploration. Also influential are the claims of channelers such as Jane Roberts Seth and J. The question of which contemporary cultural elements ought to be included under the name of "New Age" is quite vexed. New Age channelers have many points of similarity with Spiritualist mediums. Many spiritual movements, such as neo-paganism and transpersonal psychology partially overlap with it. Many groups prefer to distance themselves from the possible negative connotations of the "New Age" name such as the media hoopla, commercialism, and perhaps hucksterism. For example, key individuals in the New Thought movement, such as Ernest Holmes, have focused on a more scientific approach and do not share New Age beliefs in reincarnation, magic, or channeling. The New Age is a wide menu of ideas and activities, from which participants in the subculture select their own preferred streams to patronize or identify with. Beliefs The following are some common — though by no means universal — beliefs found among New Agers: All humanity — indeed all life, everything in the universe — is spiritually interconnected, participating in the same energy. The human mind has deep levels and vast powers, which are capable even of overriding physical reality. The individual has a purpose here on earth, in the present surroundings, because there is a lesson to learn. The most important lesson is love. Death is not the end. There is only life in different forms. What some refer to as an afterlife does not punish us but teaches us, perhaps through the mechanisms of reincarnation or near-death experiences. Science and spirituality are ultimately harmonious. New discoveries in science evolution, quantum mechanics , rightly understood, point to spiritual principles. It shares with many major world religions the idea that Intuition or "divine guidance" is a more appropriate guide than rationalism, skepticism, or the scientific method. Western science wrongly neglects such things as parapsychology, meditation, and holistic health. There exists a mystical core within all religions, Eastern and Western. Dogma and religious identity are not so important. The Bible is considered by some, but not all, to be a wise and holy book. Many important truths are found in the Bible, or are referred to only very obliquely. Some say that Jesus was an Essene, or that he traveled to India in his youth to study Eastern religions. Others say that Jesus was a later avatar of Buddha. Feminine forms of spirituality, including feminine images of the divine, such as the

female Aeon Sophia in Gnosticism, are viewed as having been subordinated, masked, or obliterated by patriarchal movements that were widely practiced when sacred teachings were first committed to writing. A renaissance of the feminine is particularly appropriate at this time. Ancient civilizations such as Atlantis may truly have existed, leaving behind certain relics and monuments the Great Pyramid, Stonehenge whose true nature has not been discovered by mainstream historians. There are no coincidences see Synchronicity. Everything around you has spiritual meaning, and spiritual lessons to teach you. You are meant to be here, and are always exactly where you need to be to learn from what confronts you. The mind has hidden powers and abilities, which have a spiritual significance. Dreams and psychic experiences are ways in which our souls express themselves. The food you eat has an effect on your mind as well as your body. It is generally preferable to eat fresh organic vegetarian food. Ultimately every interpersonal relationship has the potential to be a helpful experience in terms of our own growth. We learn about ourselves through our relationships with other people by getting to see what we need to work on ourselves and what strengths we bring to the other party in order to help them in their life. All our relationships are destined to be repeated until they are healed, if necessary over many lifetimes. As Souls seeking wholeness, our goal is eventually to learn to love everyone we come in contact with. An appeal to the language of nature, mathematics, as evidenced by numerology in Kabbala, gnosticism etc. Naturally occurring irrational numbers such as Phi, Pi, and e might indicate a fundamental inability of nature to account for the extant universe and therefore imposes a limit to our corporeal understanding of god, or conversely, may be important clues to the attainment of said understanding.

Lifestyle The following subjective description of a New Age lifestyle illuminates the sociological dimension of the New Age movement. Note the references to the "inter-connectedness" of all things: Rather than reliance on social forms such as regular church attendance, New Agers "recognize" each other through their mutual perception of shared values, and the shibboleths of New Age terms and usages: New Age lifestyles can be observed anywhere that people meet, congregate, and visit. To an outside observer, the eventful outcome of this meeting differs from other similar meetings she may have seen before, because something changes. This often happens in New Age lifestyles, becoming so common one would think the new age has already left a mark on the mainstream! At one time before the New Age lifestyle silently, without any fanfare, changed western society, the outcome of interaction was: Although this is an overly simplistic view of social intercourse, it did exist in general, at large. New Age introduced a think tank style of social interaction, which results in a synergy--all involved in a meaningful event are left with more clarity, higher and more focused than before. Again, this is an overly simplistic view. People may not even believe they are New Agers, though they fit the general pattern. A typical conversation may begin in groups or in pairs, where the subject involves insights, deeply held truths, or even revelations, from a known or unknown origin. The result of this interaction may bond the people involved who share similar visions or outlooks. Shopping at a store dealing in herbal supplements, two people meet and sense there may be a hidden meaning, or reason why they just happened to be purchasing ginseng tea at that particular moment, in that particular place, at the same time. Rather than overlooking the event, tucking it away as a mere coincidence, they talk, more often about themselves to each other, and interact, a key component of this lifestyle. Back to Contents

Underlying assumptions Judging by its name, the New Age movement ought to involve millenarian claims, perhaps of a glorious future age which is about to begin. As such it could theoretically be traced back to the time of Zoroaster, or to biblical apocalypticism. While such expectations are encountered often enoughâ€”e. Globalization was and still is an important social phenomenon of the 20th and early 21st centuries, with religious syncretism inevitably being one consequence. New Age religious developments are eclectic, hence multifarious. Some synthesize Christian ideas with beliefs involving many gods or goddesses, pantheism, include aliens, reincarnation, or the use of drugs, together with other spiritual beliefs from different parts of the world. Likewise, the movement may incorporate differing beliefs about, or attempts to practice, magic. Though many New Age terms are associated with Eastern religions, they should not be considered as being identical with the concepts and practices of those religions. Ancient traditions such as Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism can hardly be referred to as New Age religions. The gnostic approach of experiential insight and revelation of truth may be closest to the New Age methodology of prayers and spirituality. In keeping with a

relativist stance, New Agers believe they do not contradict traditional belief systems, but rather some of them say that they are concerned with the ultimate truths contained within those systems, separating these truths from false tradition and dogma. On the other hand, adherents of other religions often claim that the New Age movement has a vague or superficial understanding of these religious concepts, leaving out that which may seem "negative" or contradict contemporary Western values and that New Age attempts at religious syncretism are vague and self-contradictory. New Age is syncretic in nature and has roots as a counter-cultural phenomenon. Thus New Age adherents tend to emphasize a relativist approach to truth, often referring to the Vedic statement of "one truth, but many paths," the mainstay of Hinduism, which idea is also found in the later Zen Buddhist spiritual dictum of "many paths, one mountain". This belief is not only an assertion of personal choice in spiritual matters, but also an assertion that truth itself is defined by the individual and his or her experience of it. This relativism is not merely a spiritual relativism, but also extends to physical theories. Reality is considered largely from an experiential and subjective mode. Many New Age phenomena are not expected to be repeatable in the scientific sense, since they are presumed to be apparent only to the receptive mind; for example, telepathy may not be achievable by a skeptical mind, since a skeptical mind is not pre-conditioned to expect the phenomenon to exist. The New Age worldview typically involves a mysticism-based rather than experiment-and-theory-based view of describing and controlling the external world; for example, one might believe that tarot card reading works because of the "interconnectedness principle", rather than regarding the success or failure of tarot card reading as evidence of the interconnectedness principle. The various New Age vitalist theories of health and disease provide further examples. Common examples are the principle that objects once in contact maintain a practical link, or that objects that have similar properties exert an effect on each other. In contrast to the scientific method, the failure of some practice to achieve expected results is not considered as a failure of the underlying theory, but as a lack of knowledge about hidden extenuating circumstances. This stance has led some skeptics to pronounce the New Age movement to be primarily anti-intellectual in nature. The emphasis on subjective knowledge and experience is a connection between New Age beliefs and postmodernism. Its populist origins help characterize the New Age approach. Back to Contents Language Many adherents of belief systems characterised as New Age rely heavily on the use of metaphors to describe experiences deemed to be beyond the empirical. Consciously or unconsciously, New Agers tend to redefine vocabulary borrowed from various belief systems, which can cause some confusion as well as increase opposition from skeptics and the traditional religions. In particular, the adoption of terms from the language of science such as "energy", "energy fields", and various terms borrowed from quantum physics and psychology but not then applied to any of their subject matter, have served to confuse the dialog between science and spirituality, leading to derisive labels such as pseudoscience and psychobabble. This phenomenon is additionally compounded by the propensity of some New Agers to pretend to esoteric meanings for familiar terms; the New Age meaning of the esoteric term is typically quite different from the common use, and is often described as intentionally inaccessible to those not sufficiently trained in the area of their use. See the following list: It is commonly held that there exist certain forces, independent of spiritual beings or agencies, and also distinct from forces as defined by science e.

Chapter 2 : New Age Religion And Western Culture

Presents the first systematic analysis of the structure and beliefs of the New Age movement, and the historical emergence of "New Age" as a secularized version of Western esoteric traditions.

Definitions[edit] "One of the few things on which all scholars agree concerning New Age is that it is difficult to define. Often, the definition given actually reflects the background of the scholar giving the definition. Thus, the New Ager views New Age as a revolutionary period of history dictated by the stars; the Christian apologist has often defined new age as a cult; the historian of ideas understands it as a manifestation of the perennial tradition; the philosopher sees New Age as a monistic or holistic worldview; the sociologist describes New Age as a new religious movement NRM ; while the psychologist describes it as a form of narcissism. Chrissydes suggested that it could be understood as "a counter-cultural Zeitgeist". Lewis stated that it remained a useful etic category for scholars to use because, "There exists no comparable term which covers all aspects of the movement. All manifestations of this movement are characterized by a popular western culture criticism expressed in terms of a secularized esotericism. Through their shared marginalisation within a given society, these disparate ideas interact and create new syntheses. The first, the social camp, represents groups that primarily seek to bring about social change, while the second, the occult camp, instead focus on contact with spirit entities and channeling. Scholars call this new esoteric trend occultism , and this occultism was a key factor in the development of the worldview from which the New Age emerged. In her books *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* , Blavatsky claimed that her Society was conveying the essence of all world religions, and it thus emphasized a focus on comparative religion. Gordon Melton point out, the New Age phenomenon represents "a synthesis of many different preexisting movements and strands of thought". A variety of small movements arose, revolving around revealed messages from beings in space and presenting a synthesis of post-Theosophical and other esoteric doctrines. These movements might have remained marginal, had it not been for the explosion of the counterculture in the s and early s. The reason for the ready incorporation of such disparate sources was a similar goal of exploring an individualized and largely non-Christian religiosity. He noted that as this happened, the meaning of the term "New Age" changed; whereas it had once referred specifically to a coming era, at this point it came to be used in a wider sense to refer to a variety of spiritual activities and practices. *Healing Self and Society*. Erhard , a transformational training course that became a prominent part of the early movement. The *Convergence* attracted more people to the movement than any other single event. Melton presented a conference paper in which he argued that, given that he knew of nobody describing their practices as "New Age" anymore, the New Age had died. *Spiritual but not religious* and *List of New Age topics* *Eclecticism and self-spirituality*[edit] The New Age places strong emphasis on the idea that the individual and their own experiences are the primary source of authority on spiritual matters. Hess noted that in his experience, a common attitude among New Agers was that "any alternative spiritual path is good because it is spiritual and alternative". The authors of much of this material make claims that, while not necessarily untrue or fraudulent, are difficult or impossible for the reader to verify. A number of other channeled documents address issues more immediately relevant to the human condition. The best of these writings are not only coherent and plausible, but eloquently persuasive and sometimes disarmingly moving.

Chapter 3 : New Age Religion and Western Culture

New Age Religion and Western Culture has 49 ratings and 4 reviews. Roger said: This is a thoroughly researched and well-written description of a vast sub.

The subject of religion can induce a range of responses from love, compassion and goodwill, to fear, loathing, and xenophobia. Some musicians began by associating themselves with New-age music. Covering the ancient world through the age of technology, this illustrated lecture by Eugen Weber presents a tapestry of political and social events woven with many strands – religion, industry, agriculture, demography, government, economics, and art. It was during the 18th century that the educated classes in Western society became secular in outlook. After centuries of religious. Reporting news connected to Christianity and Catholicism. Promoting signs, wonders, and miracles of faith. Designed as a public ministry of Catholic prayers, faith and hope with spiritual news for the community. Christian Books, Music, Bibles, Western culture, sometimes equated with Western civilization, Western lifestyle or European civilization, is a term used very broadly to refer to a heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, belief systems, political systems, and specific artifacts and technologies that have some origin or association with Europe. Spiritual Speakers Youtube A pilgrim from the Latin peregrinus is a traveler literally one who has come from afar who is on a journey to a holy place. Typically, this is a physical journey often on foot to some place of special significance to the adherent of a particular religious belief system. Hanegraaff regarded the New Age as a form of "popular culture criticism", in that it represented a reaction against the dominant Western values of Judeo-Christian religion and rationalism, adding that "New Age religion formulates such criticism not at random, but falls back on" the ideas of. Religion and other belief systems are integral to a culture. Religion often codifies behavior, such as with the 10 Commandments of Judaism and Christianity or the five precepts of Buddhism. If groups like these are the intended audiences [of New Atheism], the effort is not very promising, to say the least. Is it people with no particular. Your new president is being sworn into office. As absurd as it sounds when we. The show will also include a new video work. The show spans more than 2, BYU was a religious flagship. There was the unique aloha culture of Hawaii. Wyoming was the true West. It was a league that had to account for the. The term religion from Latin: The New Age is also a form of Western esotericism. Thus was the age of public relations born, and it was from there that Bernays and his ilk never looked back. New-age music is a genre of music intended to create artistic inspiration, relaxation, and optimism. It is used by listeners for yoga, massage, meditation, reading as a method of stress management to bring about a state of ecstasy rather than trance, or to create a peaceful atmosphere in their home or other environments, and is associated with. Western Europe and Oceania were the only regions where about half of those surveyed said they were either not religious or were convinced atheists. The five least-religious places can be seen on this map. The findings also showed that. Western culture, sometimes equated with Western civilization, Western lifestyle or European civilization, is a term used very broadly to refer to a heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, belief systems, political systems, and specific artifacts and technologies that have some origin or association with Europe. But this is not the first time that religious communities are having. Gallab, PhD, professor of international communication, Hiram College in Ohio Parents who arrived at the scene described a horrific scene in which the doors of the school were locked from the outside, and the Saudi religious police. New York – Professor Wael Hallaq. Whereas in the age of traditional religion, the. Mormon marriage crisis have little to do with culture or religion. The true culprit in both cases is demographics. The fact is that there are more marriage-age women than men both in the. The fear triggers related to things like hosting someone from a different culture, religion, and age. This is a Sermon given by Catholic priest Fr. Chad Ripberger on evolution. It might seem easy to predict that plain-dressing Anabaptists—who follow a faith related to the Amish—would become irrelevant in the age. The United Kingdom and Australia will soon lose Christian majorities. The prestigious national Blake Prize for religious. Mahdia Lynn On This New. Does religious affiliation contribute to happiness? A recent study by the Austin Institute for the Study of Family and.

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Get this from a library! New Age religion and Western culture: esotericism in the mirror of secular thought. [Wouter J Hanegraaff] -- Recent years have seen a spectacular rise of the New Age movement and an ever-increasing interest in its beliefs and manifestations.

Life[edit] Hanegraaff was raised as the son of a theologian. From to Hanegraaff held a postdoctoral fellowship from the Dutch Association for Scientific Research NWO , during which time he spent a period working in Paris. *Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* was published by Brill in This work constitutes one of the first non-polemical academic reviews of the New Age movement, presenting an analysis on the basis of its important texts. It covers important authors, themes, aspects of New Age belief, and finally looks at the New Age in the context of traditional Western esotericism. It has helped pave the way for a number of further studies that have appeared in various journals, concerning the New Age phenomenon. Lazzarelli was treated by Frances A. Oetinger originally saw Swedenborg as an ally but eventually criticized his idealist philosophy as the antithesis of his own incarnational theosophy. Kant took Swedenborg much more seriously than is commonly assumed, and their basic ontological and epistemological perspectives are remarkably compatible. He argues that our common perspectives on Western intellectual and cultural history are based upon a highly selective "eclecticist" historiography grounded in Enlightenment ideologies. One year later, Hanegraaff published an introductory textbook, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* Bloomsbury It gives a systematic overview of Western esotericism as a field of academic research, focusing on questions of definition and demarcation, main historical currents, polemical and apologetic discourse, worldviews, ideas about knowledge, and practices, as well as the impact of modernization and the interdisciplinarity of the field. The book ends with an annotated bibliography. Apart from these books, Hanegraaff has published numerous articles in academic journals and collective volumes. He is the co- editor of seven volumes in the study of religion and Western esotericism, including the two-volume *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* Brill: Leiden , and "Hidden Intercourse: He is a former and founding editor of *Aries: He is member of the editorial board of the journals Religion , Numen , Religion Compass and Esoterica , and is on the advisory board of Journal of Contemporary Religion and Nova Religio.* Bouthoorn Lodovico Lazzarelli

Chapter 5 : New Age Religion and Western Culture : Wouter J. Hanegraaff :

New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought by Wouter J. Hanegraaff Presents the first systematic analysis of the structure and beliefs of the New Age movement, and the historical emergence of "New Age" as a secularized version of Western esoteric traditions.

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Description New Age Religion and Western Culture | Wouter J. Hanegraaff. Esotericism In the Mirror of Secular Thought Recent years have seen a spectacular rise of the New Age movement and an ever-increasing interest in its beliefs and manifestations.

Chapter 7 : The New Age Movement

Recent years have seen a spectacular rise of the New Age movement and an ever-increasing interest in its beliefs and manifestations. This fascinating work presents the first comprehensive analysis of New Age Religion and its historical backgrounds, thus providing a means of orientation in the bewildering variety of the movement.

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