

Chapter 13

Avoiding the New Age “Spiritual Counterfeit” Movement

Self-as-god because Self-is-god

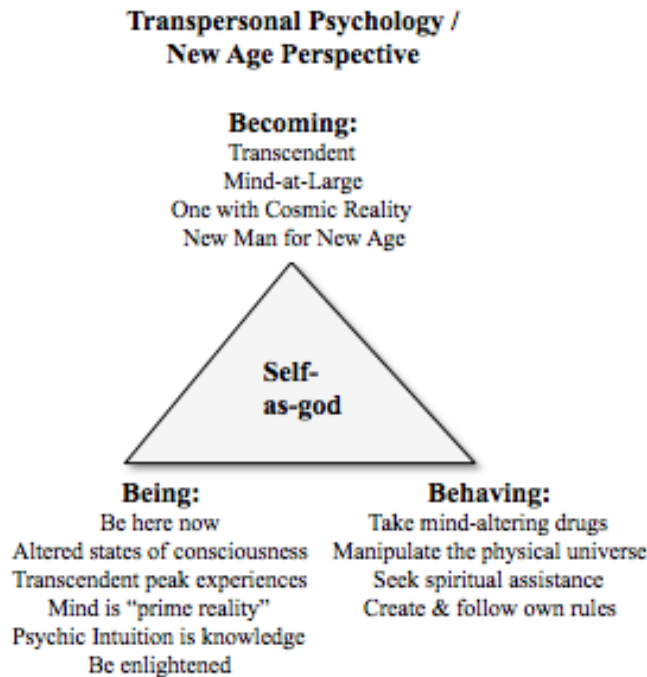
The concepts of **Transpersonal Psychology**, which Abraham Maslow promoted, gave rise to the **New Age Movement**, so I’m going to discuss them interchangeably as though they are the same. For example, both emphasize Self “transcending” objective reality, which Maslow added as the highest level in his Hierarchy of Human Needs.

If you are not attracted now, or were not attracted, to the New Age Movement, you might skip this chapter – unless you have friends or family who are attracted.

New Age claims anyone can Become “Self-as-god” in your own privately imagined and created *subjective reality*, by realizing “Self-is-god” already. This is the central focus of my **Being, Behaving, Becoming Model** for the New Age/Transpersonal Psychology perspective I’m going to discuss in this chapter, along with associated “spiritual counterfeit” concepts illustrated in my BBB Model.

New Age’s promise of “transcendence” and “Self-is-god” is actually extremely old, traceable back to God’s Creation of humans recorded in Genesis. After creating Adam, God forbid him to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. Later, the serpent (Satan) tempted Eve to be like God, by twisting what God said to Adam: “God said, ‘You must not eat fruit

from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ‘You will not certainly die,’ the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”¹



Exercising God-endowed free will, both Adam and Eve decided to be like God, and disobeyed His command. Since then, human beings have chosen not to obey God’s absolute standard of good and evil, but to think and act like Self-is-god who creates personal standards and acts according to them.

So, New Age beliefs are ac-

tually Old Age beliefs, promises and practices, with an emphasis on the occult and mysticism. The means of "transpersonal transcendence" being touted today must be seen for what they are: the ancient techniques of mysticism and the occult, which were strictly forbidden by the inspired Word of God recorded in the Bible more than 4,000 years ago:

“When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you [the Promised Land in Canaan], do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God.”²

Why would any non-psychotic person imagine he/she could Become “Self-as-god.” Any “god” a human being could become would not be much of a “god.” As Groucho Marx once said: “Please accept my resignation. I don’t want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member.”

By God’s Grace, I never sought to Become a member of the “Self-is-god” club. So, I didn’t have to send in a resignation. I thank God because this spiritual counterfeit’s emphasis on “Self-as-god” in one’s own imagined *subjective reality* is much more dangerous than humanistic psychology’s more down-to-earth goal of Becoming Self-actualizing in our agreed-upon *objective reality*.

Below are comments about *my* list of Transpersonal Psychology/New Age qualities and characteristics:

- 1) *My* list is short because of non-involvement in New Age.
- 2) *My* comments on this list are based on what I’ve read, without experiential understanding.
- 3) Because Transpersonal Psychology and New Age are so closely linked, I discuss them interchangeably.
- 4) *My* comments are criticisms to help you avoid this spiritual counterfeit, not a “Self Help Guide.”
- 5) I make no attempt to align Being-Behaving-Becoming qualities or characteristics. Proponents of New Age can’t do this, and I haven’t tried.

Transpersonal Psychology Adds a Spiritual Counterfeit

Abraham Maslow became the “Father of Humanistic Psychology” primarily as a reaction against Behavioral Psychology, which confined its studies only to observable and measurable animal behaviors. Maslow objected to behaviorists extrapolating their animal findings to explain how humans learn and function, so he studied human beings who function normally and especially at higher levels of well-being (not neurotics, like Freud studied).

What motivated Maslow to become the “Father of Transpersonal Psychology”? He likely became aware of shortcomings in his humanistic concepts, such as:

- The few Self-actualizing human role models Maslow identified did not have enough influence to motivate others to Become Self-actualizing like them. [Except for Jesus Christ.]
- Few individuals Become Self-actualizing by meeting all 15 criteria Maslow specified, no matter how hard they try. So, there are few role models to emulate.
- Humanistic rejection of anything supernatural or spiritual meant there is no “higher pow-

er” to provide assistance to Self-fulfillment seekers.

Maslow added a “spiritual” level – **Transcendence** – at the top of his Hierarchy of Human Needs to provide the missing “higher power.” He also eliminated all criteria for reaching his new highest level. As before, Maslow alone proposed everything, without any validation from peers. No wonder his new journal, launched in 1969, is concerned with a smorgasbord of psychobabble he alone imagined:

“The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology is concerned with ... metaneeds, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, ecstasy, mystical experience, B-values, essence, bliss, awe, wonder, self-actualization, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, sacralization of everyday life, oneness, cosmic awareness, cosmic play, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, transcendental phenomena, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression; and related concepts, experiences and activities.”

If you guessed that Transpersonal Psychology borrows concepts from most everywhere (except from the Bible), you’d be correct. My computer’s spellchecker could not recognize four words – *unitive, metaneeds, sacralization, B-values* – because these are Maslow’s personal creations, imagined by him, to be perpetrated on others. I imagine he hoped his “subjectively created universe” would be imagined and embraced by other adherents.

The New Age worldview makes transcendence the highest level of human attainment, where “Self-as-god” can imagine and create one’s own private *subjective reality* via altered states of consciousness to experience you are “Self-is-god” already. The objective reality that most sane people sense and know is just an “illusion” that can be transcended, with the assistance of “altered states of consciousness” induced by mind-altering drugs or meditation or spiritual guides or whatever works. Are you wondering why “Self-is-god” would need any external assistance?

When I looked at Maslow’s smorgasbord of New Age concepts and promises, I knew there was no way to Be, Behave, Become all that each concept implies – not in this one-time lifetime. Perhaps, this is why reincarnation is included in the New Age Movement. But, how can reincarnation re-occur after each death – into perpetuity – when New Age claims that the future does not exist on a linear time continuum of past-present-future? If reincarnation does occur, who or what one “Becomes” must be unpredictable on a “road to anywhere” in a future that is illusory and doesn’t exist.

According to the New Age worldview, no longer is there any need for Self-actualizing role models and years of continuous striving to Be-Behave-Become like the few Self-actualizers whom Maslow identified from human history. Without objective criteria, the shortcomings mentioned above for Self-actualization are instantly overcome by a new emphasis on the *transpersonal* (going beyond one’s normal state of mind to *transcend* objective reality) so that anyone can:

- imagine and create “Self-as-god” who can...
- imagine and create one’s own private *subjective reality*...
- to reign over this private universe as “Self-is-god” and ...
- Become One with this Ultimate Reality ...
- so that the universe-maker is the universe.

Let me try to explain New Age's circular thinking again:

- A New Ager can reach his or her own personal higher state of "true awareness" and access "ultimate reality" with different kinds of "spiritual assistance" (shamans, Ouija boards, tarot cards, dead people, deep meditation, yoga, sleep deprivation, mind-altering drugs – anything from the occult and eastern mysticism).
- This "happens" for each person in its own way, without any comparisons to successful role models or to any criteria or standards whatsoever. Each person imagines and creates Self-as-god in his or her own "private world" because each person is "Self-is-god" already.
- Self-as-god creates one's own private universe and "becomes one" with this. This is possible because Self-is-god and thus is Mind-at-Large, or One with Ultimate Reality, or something like this. Who really knows since everything is an "illusion" except what one imagines and creates.
- The Creator (universe-maker) is the Creation (universe) that is created in one's mind.

While I'm not sure I totally understand New Age concepts, I am sure about this: There is more psychobabble associated with New Age than there was with the more down-to-earth Human Potential Movement that occurred in objective reality, and thus did not have to be *imagined* but only Self-developed. The New Age worldview also embraces more illogic because it attempts to synthesize two completely opposing worldviews: **Western Naturalism** (the foundation for Humanistic Psychology) and **Eastern Pantheism** (the foundation for Transpersonal Psychology or New Age).

Mark Cosgrove, in *Psychology Gone Awry: An Analysis of Psychological World Views* (page 95), describes this attempted synthesis: "To the transpersonal psychologist reality is 'two-headed,' one head represented by the western view of a physical, orderly world, and the other, eastern view of the spiritual oneness of reality. On the western side we have stars, planets, people, and atoms; all ruled by principles of cause and effect. On the eastern side we have universal mind and spiritual substance, which operate by non-causal principles, infusing all matter. The non-causal principles of this spiritual side of the universe give rise to magical, coincidental, and illogical effects. Actually, the transpersonal psychologist does not see two separate realities in the universe but only a continuum, with the two realities merging into one another in the middle."

Below is Cosgrove's list of eight tenets or presuppositions espoused by each worldview (pages 103-104). As you read each pair, think of them as "thesis" and "antithesis." Can you "synthesize" each thesis/antithesis pair so this makes logical sense? If you can, you *might* be a New Ager. Would others agree with each "synthesis" you made? If they cannot, you *likely are* a New Ager living in your own personally imagined *subjective reality*.

Naturalistic Psychology: Reality is the physical world everyone can observe and measure.

Transpersonal Psychology: Reality is the psychical world of unique personal experience.

Naturalistic Psychology: The present moment is all that exists.

Transpersonal Psychology: Time is not a linear construct.