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The New Thought movement and The Law of Attraction

This article is a critical examination of the New Thought movement and the Law of Attraction.

I will begin the article with a description of the roots of New Thought, and hereafter investigate how the movement is based on a problematic redefinition of concepts such as karma, suffering, negativity. This shows how New Thought is the creator of the modern term: positive psychology.

Hereafter I will examine a New Thought product of today: the movie/book called *The Secret*.

After this I will show how The Law of Attraction is a kind of black magic, and the following ethical problems involved.

Finally I will investigate the widespread use of testimonials within the movement, and show the many paradoxes involved.

The article is in that way divided into 6 parts:

- 1) New Thought
- 2) The redefinition of karma and suffering
- 3) The Secret
- 4) The Law of Attraction is the law of black magic
- 5) Ethical problems connected with the Law of Attraction movement
- 6) The use of testimonials

1) New Thought

The Law of Attraction is a metaphysical New Thought belief that “like attracts like”, that positive and negative thinking bring about positive and negative physical results, respectively. According to the Law of Attraction, the phrase “I need more money” allows the subject to continue to “need more money”. If the subject wants to change this they would focus their thoughts on the goal (having more money) rather than the problem (needing more money). This might take the form of phrases such as “I have as much money as I need” or “I have a job that pays very well”.

The question is of course whether all this is positive, and that question is the foundation for this article.

The New Thought movement or New Thought is a spiritual movement, which developed in the United States during the late 19th century and emphasizes metaphysical beliefs. It consists of a loosely allied group of religious denominations, secular membership organizations, authors, philosophers, and individuals who share a set of metaphysical beliefs concerning the effects of positive thinking, the Law of Attraction, healing, life force, creative visualization, and personal power.

It promotes the ideas that “Infinite Intelligence” or “God” is ubiquitous, spirit is the totality of real things, true human selfhood is divine, divine thought is a force for good, all sickness originates in the mind, and “right thinking” has a healing effect.

Although New Thought is neither monolithic nor doctrinaire, in general modern day adherents of New Thought believe that their interpretation of “God” or “Infinite Intelligence” is “supreme, universal, and everlasting”, that divinity dwells within each person and that all people are spiritual beings, that “the highest spiritual principle is loving one another unconditionally...and teaching and healing one another”, and that “our mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become our experience in daily living”.

The three major religious denominations within the New Thought movement are Religious Science, Unity Church and the Church of Divine Science. There are many smaller sects under the New Thought umbrella as well.

Thomas Troward, who was a strong influence in the New Thought movement, claimed that thought precedes physical form and that “the action of Mind plants that nucleus which, if allowed to grow undisturbed, will eventually attract to itself all the conditions necessary for its manifestation in outward visible form.”

In 1906, William Walker Atkinson (1862-1932) used the phrase in his New Thought Movement book *Thought Vibration or the Law of Attraction in the Thought World*, stating that “like attracts like.” The following year, Elizabeth Towne, the editor of *The Nautilus Magazine*, a *Journal of New Thought*, published Bruce Maclelland’s book *Prosperity Through Thought Force*, in which he summarized the principle, stating: “You are what you think, not what you think you are.”

The book “*The Science of Getting Rich*” by Wallace D. Wattles espouses similar principles – that truly believing in the object of your desire and focusing onto it will lead to that object or goal being realized on the material plane (Wattles indicates in the Preface and later chapters of this book that his premise stems from the monistic Hindu view that God pervades everything and can deliver that which we focus on). In addition, the book also indicates that negative thinking will manifest negative results.

In 1937, author Napoleon Hill published his book *Think and Grow Rich* which went on to become one of the best selling books of all time, selling over 60 million copies. In this book, he discusses the importance of controlling your own thoughts in order to achieve success, as well as the energy that thoughts have and their ability to attract other thoughts. In the beginning of the book, Napoleon Hill mentions a “secret” to success, and promises to indirectly describe it at least once in every chapter of the book. It is never named directly for he says that discovering it on one’s own is far more beneficial. Many people have argued over what the secret actually is, with some arguing that it was the Law of Attraction. Hill states the “secret” to which he refers is mentioned no fewer than a hundred times, yet reference to “attract” is used less than 30 times in the text. Most students of the book claim the secret is hidden in its title: THINK (i.e., thoughts).

By the mid 1900s, various authors addressed the topic and related ideas under a range of religious and secular terms, such as “positive thinking”, “mental science”, “Pragmatic Christianity”, “New Thought”, “Practical Metaphysics”, “Science of Mind”, “Religious Science”, and “Divine Science”.

Author Louise Hay in 1976 released a pamphlet in which she links various diseases and disorders to certain thoughts and states of mind. This list was included in her 1984 best-seller book *You Can Heal Your Life*, in which she promotes positive thinking as a healing method.

In 2006, a film entitled *The Secret* based on the “Law of Attraction” was released and then developed into a book of the same title in 2007. The film and book gained widespread attention in the media from *Saturday Night Live* to *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in the United States. The same year Esther and Jerry Hicks (who provided

much of the original source material for *The Secret*) released *The Law of Attraction*, which was on the New York Times bestseller list.

The Law of Attraction's modern interpretation, as presented in *The Secret*, is that physical reality is a reflection of inner (subjective) reality, summarized in the quote from *The Secret*, "your thoughts and your feelings create your life." Author and business man Kevin Trudeau produced an audio compact disk called "Your Wish Is Your Command" which deals with the same subject of thoughts manifesting reality.

The success of the film and various books led to increased media coverage, both positive and negative. Oprah Winfrey devoted two episodes of her show to discuss the film and the Law of Attraction. Talk show host Larry King also discussed it on his show with Bob Solis, but criticized it for several reasons. I will return to *The Secret*.

The dominating idea of all forms of New Thought is that thoughts or beliefs have an effect on things and people around us independently of our doing anything. Thinking creates reality. Happiness and health are the direct result of our beliefs and thoughts. We have the power to change our beliefs, and thus our state in life, at will. If we are sick, it is because we are not thinking correctly. If misfortune befalls us, it is because we are not thinking correctly. Health is due to correct thought; the truth will set you free and the truth is that you need only faith to be healthy, rich, saved, whatever.

New Thought is, in the words of American physician, psychologist, philosopher, and investigator in the paranormal William James, "a deliberately optimistic scheme of life." James was one of the first to try to characterize the sources of the New Thought movement, also known as Mind Cure or Mind Science movement:

"One of the doctrinal sources of Mind-cure is the four Gospels; another is Emersonianism or New England transcendentalism; another is Berkeleyan idealism; another is spiritism, with its messages of 'law' and 'progress' and 'development'; another the optimistic popular science evolutionism of which I have recently spoken; and, finally, hinduism has contributed a strain. But the most characteristic feature of the mind-cure movement is an inspiration much more direct. The leaders in this faith have had an intuitive belief in the all-saving power of healthy-minded attitudes as such, in the conquering efficacy of courage, hope, and trust, and a correlative contempt for doubt, fear, worry, and all nervously precautionary states of mind....Mind-cure might be briefly called a reaction against all that religion of chronic anxiety which marked the earlier part of the 19th century in the evangelical circles of England and America."

The number of New Age promoters of the delusion of mind cures is staggeringly high. Television and radio talk shows and the Internet have opened the floodgates for promoters of these alleged panaceas. Many of these New Age mind cures have incorporated references to quantum physics and Eastern mystical notions, such as chi and chakras, into their repertoires. To name just a few: Barbera Brennan, Rosalyn L. Bruyere, David L. Cunningham, Cyndi Dale, Donna Eden, David Feinstein, Guy Finley, Richard Gerber, Burt Goldman (Quantum Jumping), Soleira Greene, Stanislav Grof (Holotropic Breathwork), Stephen Halpern, Louise Hay, Vernon Howard, Dorothea Hover-Kramer, W. Brugh Joy, Byron Katie, Rachel Kohler, Dolores Krieger, Bruce Lipton, Grant McFetridge (Peak States and Whole-Hearted Healing), Mary Morrissey, Carolyn Myss, Peter Occhiogrosso, Judith Orloff, Simon Rose (Reference Point Therapy), Linda Salvin and Marianne Williamson.

In addition to promoting delusions about the ability of people to cure others and themselves of horrible diseases by the power of thought, the New Thought Movement encourages delusions in other areas of life. Outside the healing arena, New Thought beliefs contribute to what might be called the empowerment delusion: the false belief that feeling empowered, or believing you are empowered, is the same as being empowered. The empowerment delusion leads people to believe they can create health or wealth or anything material by willing it or asking God to will it. A corollary is the delusion that poverty or sickness is their own fault: their bad thoughts, stinkin' thinkin', negative ideas, lack of faith, etc., cause all misery.

2) The redefinition of karma and suffering

The empowerment delusion is fed by appeals to distorted (redefined) interpretations of karma, like the Law of Attraction, to nonsensical appeals to quantum physics (Deepak Chopra, Rhonda Byrne, and a host of others), or to faith in faith (like all faith healers and prosperity preachers like Reverend Ike or Joel Osteen). The billion-dollar self-help industry is largely driven by the empowerment delusion (see my articles **Management theory and the self-help industry** and **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity**).

The popularity of Helen Schuman's (1909-1981) *A Course in Miracles* gives testament to the attractiveness of New Thought's revisionist biography of Jesus as wanting more love and forgiveness, and less suffering and sacrifice. Heaven awaits us all and there is no hell (*A Course in Miracles* is an example of pseudohistory created by a postulate of being a channeler - see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**).

And here we have the central spiritual and ethical delusion in New Thought: New Thought tends to dismiss the existence of evil, failure and suffering. Some New

Thought promoters claim that New Thought is a new, more “optimistic and positive” interpretation of karma, that have to replace the old “pessimistic and negative” interpretation. But this is an example of the belief in magical thinking (subjectivism and relativism). Do they really think that the traditional law of karma disappears because they have decided to interpret it in a new way? – But the idea about that thoughts/language create reality like magic, and that for example new definitions of words, removal of certain words from our vocabulary, etc., etc., will create a new reality is actually supported by the postmodern intellectualism on Universities (see my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**).

As an example of how Law of Attraction devotees are trying to redefine karma, read the article [Definition Karma](#) by Kalyn B Raphael. She is an author, spiritual Life Coach, a Channel, and a Coach of Coaches (wonderful title). Note that she already in the beginning claims that the customary definitions of karma don't make sense to her. Instead she wants to give a "deeper" definition that she thinks will resonate as true in others as well (as if the definition will decide what karma is). Also note that when she is talking about love she is talking about that love is about loving yourself, or self-love (I will return to this curious belief later in this article). Finally, read the comment by Jay Steven Levin, where he gives a critique of her article. Kalyn's answer to this critique is an example of the weird conversations you can involve yourself in, when talking to Law of Attraction devotees. Either she simply doesn't understand that his comment is a critique, but instead a confirmation. Or else she is turning the whole thing upside down, which would be an example of the thought distortion *Conversion to the opposite*.

Anyway, if you are in a true, intensive spiritual practice - that is: in a proces of awakening - then it is absolutely necessary, that you have some guidelines that know the dangers and pitfalls, and which will lead you in the correct direction. As a part of this is the original teaching of karma, as formulated, both in original texts, and by the great enlightened masters. If you understood the traditional philosophy of karma you would for example never say that peoples' suffering are their own fault, because they are thinking negative thoughts (or, as other ignorant religious people can claim: have done bad things in their past lifes; are lacking faith, etc.). There are two main reasons:

- 1) The karma philosophy is about understanding the meaning of suffering (which New Thought is ignoring in the same way as it is ignoring everything else it finds negative). But understanding the meaning of suffering is closely connected with the awakening of compassion. Compassion would never allow you to say that a person's suffering is his/her own fault.

2) Furthermore: nobody can actually *tell* about the reasons for other peoples' karma (suffering), because one's karma only can be realized by oneself. Just an example: Jesus was without original sin (negative karma), and yet he died suffering. That was due to that he took on other peoples' original sin. The same we see all enlightened masters do – and all compassionate people. This has nothing to do with bad things in their past, or negative thinking. Only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation serve the true spiritual practice within the religions.

So, when you in this way do your part of the work, then you will discover that the enlightened consciousness (God, Christ, Buddha), already have cleansed the negative karma and taken on, and forgiven, the original sin. All enlightened teachers of this Earth (Rumi, Krishna, Francis of Assisi, Rabia, Meera, Yeshe Tsogyel, Teresa of Avila) are doing the same: they take on the original sin and are purifying it for us.

You can read more about this deep philosophy in my articles **What is karma?** and **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice**

The Law of Attraction seems particularly suited to the modern temperament though, given with karma, you might have to wait a thousand lifetimes to get the good things you deserve (unless you begin a spiritual practice), whereas with the Law of Attraction *everything* is possible in *this* lifetime. No waiting! Better service! The Law of Attraction might be said to be the lazy person's karma, since karma is based on doing (the spiritual practice), whereas the Law of Attraction is based on *thinking* and *feeling* (you don't have to *do* anything, you just have to think it or feel it, then it will magically happen!).

This is also handy for the modern person, who is quite busy enough as it is. In addition, karma is concerned exclusively with morality (specifically good and evil deeds), but the Law of Attraction is concerned only with positive feeling vibrations, which needn't necessarily be connected to pesky morality at all, since moral is reduced to subjectivism and relativism: moral values is what you *feel* is good. There is no objective standard for good and evil.

Another New Age technique is the so-called Nonviolent Communication (giraffe language). Here concepts such as good and evil is directly looked at with contempt (see my article **Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is an instrument of psychic terror**).

Control makes us feel powerful (empowered), which is a good feeling. And feeling that there is a right order in the universe, the Law of Attraction, which you can control via the power of thought, is of course comforting to many people.

Is there any harm in this? What's the harm in obliterating truth and reality in favor of what you want to be true? A great deal of harm can come from deluding yourself that you can control your health, spiritual development, your wealth, etc., via your thoughts.

In my article **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it**, I explain how the painbody, through the inner evaluating ego, is connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history; you might call it original sin or negative karma. This you can't control via your thoughts, and therefore not via your feelings, will or choices.

As mentioned: in my article **The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice** I describe that only an intervention from the source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) can basically help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to be able to receive this help you must do your part of the work: the spiritual practice. Many years. And this means that you need to re-structure the ego's ownership to things, food, personal power, sexuality and emotions. Spiritual practice is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with all this, in order to turn the consciousness in towards its source. First thereafter the mystical process can begin. And here begins what is called progressive karma, which also is good karma. So, good karma is *only* happening after years of spiritual practice.

The magnet of attraction which the ego is controlled by – (the ego's identity with the material world: instincts, sexuality, emotions, desire, collective ideals, ownership, personal power) – will in a true spiritual practice loose its attraction. Investments in the material world's ups and downs, its demands, temptations and dramas, become undramatized, uninteresting, even meaningless, in relation to the consciousness' opening direction in towards its spiritual essence: the now, the wholeness, life itself, and finally: the eternal otherness, from where the good, the true and the beautiful are streaming as grace and forgiveness.

In this movement in towards the source you begin to ask philosophical questions in a meditative-existential way: Who am I? Where do the thoughts come from? What is consciousness and where does it come from? Is there a meaning of life? How does man preserve peace of mind and balance in all the relationships of life? How do we

learn to appreciate the true goods and flout all transient and vain goals? Is the destiny of Man part of a larger plan? In this way the grab, which the material world has in your mind, is automatically reduced (I have explained this in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**).

Very few people will be willing to do this work. On the contrary the New Thought movement has today done an illusory work of trying to redefine this ancient wisdom, so that the magnet of attraction directly is becoming the object of worship.

Another aspect of the true spiritual practice is that you break the automatic process of what is called compensatory karma. Compensatory karma is also what is called negative karma or original sin. Compensatory karma is closely related to the material world, laws of nature, cycles of life, yes actually pure causal regularity of mechanical kind. It would be an illusion to connect such things with a superior intentional divine order (see the thought distortion *Intentionality bias* in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

In accordance with the authentic spiritual traditions the movement of time is a power, an expression of energy, which follows some laws. These laws are also called compensatory karma, or Samsara, the wheel of life and death. They work in all cycles of life. On the plane of the outer forms there are birth and death, creation and destruction, growth and dissolution of apparently separated outer forms. This is reflected everywhere: the life-cycle of a star, a planet, a physical body, a tree or a flower; in the rise and fall of nations, political systems and civilizations; and in the inevitable cycles of gain and loss in the individual person's life.

A cycle can last from some hours to some years. There are big cycles and small cycles within the big ones. The cyclic nature of the Universe is closely connected with the impermanence of all things and all situations. Buddha made this into a central part of his teaching. It is also a central part of the teachings of the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, which you can read about in my article **A critique of Ken Wilber and his integral method**.

There are cycles with success, where things come to you, and you flourish, and cycles with defeat, where they wither away or wear down, and you become obliged to let go of them, in order to make space so that new things can arise, or so that there can happen a transformation. If you cling to them and make resistance at that time, this means, that you deny accompanying the stream of life, and then you will suffer.

The problem with the positive psychology of the New Thought movement, and therefore the ideology of success coaching, is that it one-sided is focusing on that the

up-cycles are positive, while the down-cycles are negative. In this way it induces in people the thought distortion called False dichotomy. False dichotomy is a misleading conception of possible alternatives. A dichotomy is a division in two alternatives. Often seen in the expressions Either/or – If/then, as for example: "Either you are with us, or you are against us" – "if I'm not always a success, then I'm a fiasco". Similarly, someone who says that you must either believe that God exists or else that God doesn't exist is setting up a false dichotomy since there is the well-known third option of the agnostic.

A false dichotomy appears when somebody sets up a dichotomy in such a way, that it looks like, that there only are two possible conclusions, when the facts actual are, that there are many other alternatives which not are being mentioned. Many inappropriate rules of living and life-strategies are based on false dichotomy. False dichotomy is thinking in extremes, and leads to a false and imbalanced way of life.

In connection with inappropriate basic assumptions such as "If I am not always a success, then I am a fiasco", the false dichotomy is closely related to the development of guilt, shame and depression.

Note, that you can't think in extremes such as I am a success, I am perfect, I am beautiful, without the opposite extreme. That is: if you for example follow the teaching of positive psychology, which excludes all negativity, then you induce in yourself a false dichotomy, because an exclusion of the opposite extreme not is possible. On the contrary the opposite extreme is getting stronger; that is: if you fail, the fall will be experienced much stronger.

This is also related to the thought distortion called *Conversion to the opposite*. You can for example convert your insecurity and anxiety for not being good enough to exaggerated self-confidence. Such a conversion is of course a kind of compensation, escape, self-deceit, and will lead to a false and imbalanced way of life.

Sadly enough, it seems like the movement of positive psychology directly is using Conversion to the opposite as a central part of its training. Positive psychology is marked by its attempts, through thinking, to eliminate all negativity by converting it into something positive, or simply by ignoring it, or saying it doesn't exist. But a thought is always defined by its negation; that is: what the thought *not* is. This means that a thought always contains a pair of opposites. So, you can't by the force of thinking (and therefore not by force of will or choice) convert negativity to positivity. If you nonetheless try to do this you will end up in focusing on the one extreme of a pair of opposites, which is an unbalance. The energy-laws within the wholeness will therefore seek to bring the thoughts back to the balance of middle. They do this through a contra-balancing movement; that is: a swing over in the opposite extreme. That is what is meant with compensatory karma. Existentially seen Conversion to the

opposite causes a conflict between what you are and what you want to become, or between being and becoming (I have investigated this conflict in my article **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity**).

Conversion to the opposite, and the above-mentioned problems, also seems to characterize Byron Katie's method The Work, in her so-called Turnaround technique, where you always have to look at your thoughts as false (see my article **A critique of Byron Katie and her therapeutic method The Work**).

In a true spiritual practice the transformation happens, partly through art of life, where you are dancing between the opposites (as in the teaching of Yin and Yang), and through deep meditative-existential inquiry.

As long as your awareness is identified with thinking you will have lost the contact with your deeper being, and only exist in the movement of time. You'll have your identity in your lifestituation and be ignorant about the Source of Life. Therefore you will also suffer by being subject to the energy-laws and life-cycles in the movement of time. But suffering is closely connected with the fact, that you make resistance against impermanence. It is therefore compensatory karma is *negative* karma, even when you are in an up-cycle.

If you however know the energy-laws, you will know, that it is not true, that the up-cycles are positive, and the down-cycles are negative, except in the mind's judgement.

Furthermore you have your free will either to continue to be identified with the area of compensatory karma, or break with it, and move in towards the source, which is the area of progressive karma (where the mystical process begins).

In Taoism and Zen they talk about the concept of Wu Wei, which means non-activity, passive listening presence, non-control, non-interfering, which lead to Tzu-jen, spontaneity and naturalness. In Zen they for example talk about that when practising Wu Wei you are letting the grass grow by itself. Also the Stoic concept of Apátheia (the Stoic calmness) is about this - which you by the way find in all wisdom traditions. So, it is puzzling that they in the New Thought movement often quote these wisdomtraditions as if the New Thought ideology is in perfect harmony with these. The fact is that New thought is an extreme example of the illusion of control, when believing that you via the "power of thought" can attract (control) everything you can dream of.

So if you actually followed Kalyn Raphael's teaching, you would really get in troubles if your spiritual essence was beginning to wake up, because then you

completely unprepared would be faced with your negative karma which you have done a lot of work ignoring.

This is because, that when you practise intensively, then you in a short time have to run through a lot of existential stuff that has to do with your painbody and later your past lives. Therefore true spiritual practice contains three important concepts:

- 1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others – see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**)
- 2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the Ego – see my articles **The emotional painbody and why psychotherapy can't heal it** and **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**)
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images – see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice**).

Spiritual practice is a process of awakening. And though you wake up to greater presence and intensity of life, you also wake up to your own, and others, realized or unrealized, suffering. Actually it is necessary to pass through this process of realization in order not to develop a spiritual crisis. This also means, that it isn't the contents of the suffering you have to run through. The wisdomtraditions consider this stuff as rooted in time, and therefore not only in your personal history, but also in the collective history. To open up for this is the same as opening up for an endless deep of suffering, and this is what happens in a spiritual crisis (see my article **Spiritual crises as the cause of paranormal phenomena**).

Time and its images consist of energy and energyfields, as well as their lawfulness within the wholeness, which forms so-called karmacially structures.

Experiences of the collective aspects of these areas are experiences, which lie outside the Ego's area, or outside the dimension of the ordinary consciousness. Experiences from here are experiences such as kundalini, clairvoyance, astral travels, mythological visions, miracles, channeling, UFOs, memories from past lives, Near-Death Experiences, possession states.

In spiritual respect the task is to inquire into the nature of these dimensions of consciousness. Wherein consists the structure of these experiences? Does there exist a map over these areas, which can lead you on the right path?

Experiences of these areas belong namely to the journey from the sleep of the wholeness, over the dreams of the wholeness, to the awake moments of the

wholeness. And these phenomena are out of the horizon of the ordinary Ego-consciousness.

When your consciousness is identified with your personal time, then this essence will be hidden by thoughts and images, and then the awareness is sleeping, the innermost in you is sleeping. And therewith the wholeness is sleeping. When the contents of the consciousness fall silent, the consciousness itself begins to light and awake.

In the spiritual development there exist some existential conditions - as well as some growing conditions and growth levels common to all mankind - which indicates a map of the inner journey towards awakening, which is known in all wisdomtraditions.

In Zen it is for example said about this process of awakening: "In the beginning mountains are mountains, and woods are woods. Then mountains no longer are mountains and woods are no longer woods. Finally mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods."

This refers to the three forms of states the wholeness can be in: sleep, dream, awake. When the wholeness is sleeping, mountains are mountains and woods are woods. This is the reality of the ordinary consciousness (the Ego-consciousness). The ordinary consciousness can sleep in three ways: 1) the dark sleep which is the Ego's deep nightly sleep; 2) the grey sleep, which is the Ego's nightly dreams and other dreams; 3) the light sleep, where the Ego is awake.

The three forms of states the wholeness can be in can also be described as the personal time, the collective time and the universal time. These three states can further more - when we talk about going through them in a spiritual development process - be said to reflect the structure of the education novel. The education novel is especially known from Romanticism. With concepts collected from Goldschmidt's "The Homeless" (1853-57) the development process of the education novel can be characterized in this way: *at home – the homeless – home*. Although great parts of the course of the education novel, are about *the homeless* phase, we know, that the person very probably shall arrive "*home*" again. A more or less pronounced model for all the education novels of Romanticism is Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister" (1795-1829) – and which actually, in very symbol satiated form, describes a spiritual development process. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is another example on a description of the spiritual development process.

When the wholeness begins to dream – and this happens only if you set yourself existentially into the process of awakening – then the Ego, or the inner thinker,

experiences himself as a flower which begins to open itself towards the collective time: the thoughts will be lit through, whereby their collective components – sound, symbol, color, structure – will be visible and make themselves current in the image of reality. The clearness from your dissolved and evaporated thoughts and content will expand the consciousness out towards the borders, behind which the collective common human structures exist.

The thoughts become in other words less personal, more common, more collective, deeper, more philosophical. And these, common deep thoughts of mankind, your consciousness can *see*, by force of its increased clarity, as visions (primordial images, religious images, symbols, teachers, higher worlds, other dimensions etc.). Your consciousness then observes a worldaspect of vibrant, soundfilled energyfields, which shimmer in symbols and colours. It observes a world of auric colours, archetypical symbols and yantric or other energetical structures. It begins to sense karmacially phenomena.

Reality expands itself, all things seem different than before, people shine as transparent onions; plants and animals vibrates, cosmos is alive: mountains are no longer mountains, woods are no longer woods. This is the opening of the collective time which lies on a so-called astral plane.

But in a spiritual practice it is the form of the dreamconsciousness it is about, not its content as New Thought promotes.

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

But the collective time is a very dangerous intermediate area. The temptation to here, either to become afraid, or to experiment with various possibilities (astral travels, clairvoyance, telepathy etc. etc.) is great. It is a very forceful state. Goethe and Dante write about the collective time in "Faust" and in "The Divine Comedy". Tolkien about it in "The Lord of the Rings", Ursula Le Guin in "The Wizard Ged". The shamans had to dare the journey to the underground kingdoms with their shadow-inhabitants, demons and dead. And they had to handle the journey to the heavenly regions, where gods and goddesses, heros and heroines, accomodated. The mystics had to experience the descent to hell with its belonging devils, fire and sulphur and torment and suffering. And they had to handle get off to heavenly hosts of angels and

light-creatures, if the temptation was as difficult to resist as the sexual impact of the devil.

The creativity, and the reality-creating ability, is in the collective time set free in fascinating degree. However you are, in this astral state, still on the plane of the collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and you are in danger ending up in a spiritual crisis. A spiritual crisis is an expression of, that you have gone out in the collective time with your Ego, without having done the philosophical preliminary work; that is to say: the realization-work and the ethical training. The Ego will then make you lose your way in the collective time.

A spiritual crisis can be expressed in two ways:

1) as suffering, often called The Dark Night of the Soul.

2) as Ego-inflation (inflammatio).

1) If the borders to the collective time is broken down or being exceeded out of hand, for example through LSD or through one-sided development techniques, or in shock, the consciousness and the personality will slide crucial out of balance and therefore suffer. The Ego will sideways with its personal identity and lifesituation, suddenly experience break in of tremendous astral energies, clairvoyant abilities, visions of mythological beings, good and evil forces, various demons and angels, death and themes of rebirth, unusual light phenomena, messages from supernatural beings, memories from past lifes. These experiences will, because that the Ego's nature has not been realized, be characterized by unreality and division, anxiety of going mad and anxiety of death, or the experience of a total meaningless and dark extinct world.

2) The personality can receive informations through the break in of astral and collective energies, images and symbols: information about, what approaches human beings from outside (from other people, from chance, destiny, life etc.). However informations through collective images are contradictional and split. Many have therefore been seduced by these colourful experiences and have remained there, with the ability to see the aura, with the ability to create images, to create in reality.

When the collective time is used spiritual in genuine sense, then the Ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside. However the same forces can be used for other intensions. It can be creative, Ego-affirmative, political, demonical and so on. The forces which in spirituality are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same forces can

themselves be turned in through the Ego-structures and open creative channels, create super Egos, create political leaders and popular seducers.

The problem, or the danger, does not consist in using creativity or auric abilities. It is actually a good idea to formulate the experiences creatively; the danger is, whether the Ego grows and becomes swollen on the world's positive responses. And if the Ego gains strength, takes the honour, or blows itself up, the transformation process of consciousness stops, the growth forward towards the goal: illumination and later enlightenment.

The most appropriate in spiritual practice is in other words to use the dreaming state of the wholeness, to begin to practice the supporting exercises (which I have described in my book **Meditation as an Art of Life – a basic reader**).

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

It is in other words very important that you do not move accent from awake everyday life (for example a good earth-bound job, ordinary people and family) to dreams and sleep, not use drugs or one-sided development techniques which promise you great experiences and abilities.

You have to have patience. Even for people with a regular and well ordered practice (2-3 hours every day) there can pass weeks, months or years between the reflections into the awake state of the wholeness. However if practice is appropriate, the spiritual consciousness will with time automatically penetrate the dreaming wholeness.

And if moments of actual awakeness are coming, then everything is simple, intensive, present, in the right place: mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods, but without longings, without wishes and desires, without the past, without the future. The mountains are. The woods are. The consciousness is. The Now is. You are at home again, at home in genuine sense.

So what you have to confront is the *nature* of suffering. And the *nature* of suffering is in short the ignorance about the Source of Life; therefore both self-enquiry and enquiry into society and nature: critical thinking.

Contrary to all this New Thought is about loving yourself. Loving yourself is based on positive psychology, which means that loving yourself, loving your karma, loving your desires, loving everything negative in you - is the same as seeing everything in yourself as positive, and therefore as something good. You can't be wrong. The same

surrealistic approach is seen in NLP, which claims, that there isn't such a thing as failure, only feedback (see my article **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)**).

Read more about the stages of awakening in my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice**.

See Martin Gardner 1993 for an account of how the New Thought Movement stripped Christianity of such things as sin, hell, demons, and other nasty things, and replaced them with beliefs in a hodge-podge of beliefs from Eastern mysticism and Western paranormalism and spiritualism. Gardner focuses on a minor poet and writer who was a major player in expressing the beliefs of New Thought, Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919). She penned some memorable lines, e.g., "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone."

New Thought gives the illusion of control over things that can't be controlled but which are inexorably linked to our well-being and happiness. New Thought absolves the allegedly benign creator of all responsibility for bringing evils to good people and it does so without resorting to the claim that the ways of God are not our ways, or that evil is really good, or the most absurd of all, evil isn't real. New Thought just ignores evil and tries to get us to look the other way.

3) The Secret

New Thought probably won't have much influence on most corners of the world. More than one-third of the people on our planet don't even have access to a flush toilet. As the critical thinker Robert T. Carroll says: "Will Oprah Winfrey, one of the great promoters of New Thought in our time, advice 2.5 billion people to just believe in hygiene and it will come? Can anyone believe that if you happen to have the misfortune of being born, say, in a squalid Indian village governed by a caste system, that all you have to do is believe your way out? An ignorant person might blame karma or God's will, but nobody in his right mind should believe that anyone (for example children) born in those conditions lives and dies in those conditions because of her thoughts or beliefs, which could be changed by an act of the will."

Why do you think that 1% of the population earns around 96% of all money that's being earned? Do you think that's an accident? It's no accident. It's designed that way. They understand something. They understand *The Secret*: the Law of Attraction. Ah, there it is then. It is the *wise* people who have the money and the BMWs. Are we to conclude that the poor Indian man, the poor Chinese woman, the poor African woman, etc. are fools? The deeply offensive racial overtones are hard to ignore.

New Thought has grown into thousands of little movements in the past 150 years. *The Secret* and *What the Bleep Do We Know?* are just two recent manifestations of what Robert Carroll calls a Hydra-headed monster guarding the gates of wishful thinking, suggestion and self-hypnosis. There have been many others. Some might have heard of Jerry and Esther Hicks (they claim they were the discoverers of the Law of Attraction!). Some might remember Émile Coué's optimistic mantra therapy, Maxwell Maltz's Psycho-Cybernetics, or the prosperity preachers Norman Vincent Peale, whose bestseller *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) was a New Thought offshoot (see my article **Hypnosis, hypnotherapy and the art of self-deception**).

There are many anecdotes of people who quit behaving as if they were ill/poor and in need of healing/money started acting as if they were healthy/rich and healed (got success) after they began thinking more positively and developed some self-confidence. Such anecdotes are often used as "proof" of that New Thought is true. But we also know that we can't cure cancer, heart disease, measles, diabetes, high blood pressure, and a host of other illnesses by prescribing belief as a placebo.

Likewise, we know that teaching people to feel powerful and go for their dreams is not enough to guarantee success. You have to have more than belief in yourself. You need talent and you need some good fortune. For every success story like Oprah or Obama, there are thousands of failures who never get to tell their stories. Our evidence is incomplete. As Carroll says, then we never hear from the countless bartenders and waitresses who thought their desires would be enough to make them movie stars. In fact, we rarely hear from the ones who found out the hard way that hard work alone doesn't guarantee success. We never hear from the folks who tried the mind cure but died. They aren't around to give their testimony. So far, Carroll says, we have only the words of alleged psychics that the dead are appearing on Oprah or Larry King. When the dead do show up to give their testimony, however, they may cast some doubt on the power of belief.

As mentioned, *The Secret* is a best-selling 2006 self-help book written by Rhonda Byrne and based upon William Walker Atkinson's prior works and school of thought. A film based on *The Secret* was released before the book in DVD format. After being featured in two episodes of Oprah, the book reached the top of the New York Times bestseller list.

Rhonda Byrne has written a follow-up to *The Secret* called *The Power* after answering several thousands letters from readers of *The Secret*.

Before the film and the book were released Rhonda Byrne (born 12 March 1951) was an Australian television writer and producer. According to the dramatic narrative of *The Secret*, Byrne was shattered by the sudden death of her father and the news that

Prime Time was effectively bankrupt. Byrne says her teenage daughter handed her a copy of the 1910 get-rich-quick classic *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace D. Wattles, a book that led her to a deep immersion into self-help literature and the epiphany that most of these books sell the same message – that positive thoughts yield positive outcomes. Or as the management theorists say: “It is not facts, but the best story, that wins!”

As I have mentioned before, then New Age will, in the future, in large scale be based on the ability to tell a good new story. This will often be mixed with an ability to use modern technology within computer science and production of films. Make a great website, and tell a story like in a Hollywood film, and you have success. The latest within New Age is for example the so-called WingMakers Project. The difference between a Hollywood film though, and a New Age guru, is that the New Age guru is claiming that his story is true, though very well knowing, that the whole thing is a fiction. It is interesting, that the creator of the WingMakers Project, Mark Hempel, already now is defending his story as being true, against critics, who say that the story is a hoax. Hempel precisely have a background working in the computer and IT industry (see my article **Time travel and the fascism of The WingMakers Project**).

Or take the Human Design System, which is created by Alan Robert Krakower, who claims to have received it in a vision, whereafter he calls himself Ra Uru Hu. He was a well-educated and successful businessman, who worked as a contractor and magazine publisher with own advertising agency (see my article **A critique of the Human Design System**).

These kinds of story telling will be the future of New Age, and it will be amusing to follow, what the next “true” story will be. There is no doubt about that what I call **The Matrix Conspiracy** (which is a strong advocate for the use of hypnosis and hypnotherapy) will be made propaganda for through mass media phenomena such as Transmedia Storytelling, Alternate Reality Games (for example The Blair Witch Project), Viral Marketing/Internet Hoaxes and Collaborative Fiction.

Anyway, the Secret was released around the same time as the film version of “The Da Vinci Code,” and it was cleverly packaged as a historical mystery. There are lingering shots of faded cursive script on parchment paper, often accompanied by pounding drums or wordless choirs, and Byrne talks about “tracing the Secret back through history,” revealing all the great thinkers who have harnessed its power. (According to one titlecard, “The Secret was suppressed,” though we never learn how, or by whom). This is also an example of pseudohistory within New Age.

Intercut with this is a succession of American self-help gurus explaining that by really focusing on what you want, your “positive” energy flows out into the universe

and is rewarded (notice how it is an implied assumption, that it is “positive”, to focus on your own wishes/greed). And intercut with this mantra are dramatised scenes of this “Law of Attraction” in action: a little boy visualises a brand new bicycle and gets one from his dad; a woman focuses on some jewellery in a shop, and gets it; a man is visualizing a parking space, and vupti, there it is! At one point the “miracles coach” Joe Vitale likens the universe to a giant shopping catalogue. He says: “You flip through it and say, “I’d like to have this experience and I’d like to have that product and I’d like to have a person like that. It is you placing your order with the Universe. Its really that easy.”

On the official website (www.theseecret.tv) you can download a “Universal Bank (un)limited” check , which you can fill in with your name and the \$ amount you want. The drawer is The Universe account (unlimited abundance). You can also buy The Secret Lamp (“your real-life Aladdins Lamp); The Secret Scroll Document Holder; The Wealth Beyond Reason Starter Pack; The Wealth beyond Reason Power Pack, etc. You can also join the free forum (though, of course, the fee based “Abundant” membership is highly encouraged), and so much more more. For money.

Since appearing in bookstores, the book has sold 1,3 million copies and 2 million DVDs, outselling even the new Harry Potter novel. After translation the book sold more than 19 million copies worldwide. It is currently on track to becoming the fastest selling self-help book on record.

Oprah loves it. Hollywood stars Nicole Kidman, Meg Ryan and Scarlett Johansson swear by it. So you are really getting in trouble if you are criticizing it. But I will take the chance.

The film is launched – by the way like a number of other similar New Age products – with that Rhonda Byrne, one day at the end of 2004, discovered the secret laws and principles behind the whole of the universe, and therewith made her able to see through the secret behind everything, that has made the world’s large geniuses so brilliant and successful – including the greatest thinkers, scientists, artists and philosophers. She was surprised, why nobody else had discovered this, and will therefore share the secret with us.

The Secret is both something new and something old. It is something new in the sense, that it is based on management theory and positive psychology (see my articles **Management theory and the Self-help industry** and **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**). It is something old because it, by first view, talks about ancient spiritual/universal laws. However these laws become distorted to fit together with the management theories.

It is shortly told a giant manipulation-project, which purpose is to scrape so many money to itself as possible. The circulation of the idea happens via multi-level-marketing structures - that is to say: sales networks, which are built up in a pyramid structure – the ideas that also lie behind the illegal pyramid games.

The central concept in *The Secret* is – as we have seen - ”The Law of Attraction” – that is to say: if you think in compliance with this law, then you can attract a successful life as it fits you. This is because, as the book says, that your thoughts directly create the world, including the physical world. Everything that happens to you of negative or positive, is in other words due to your own negative or positive thoughts. You therefore have to change these negative thoughts with more positive thoughts.

Here the book, apparently in compliance with the wisdom traditions, mentions a concept such as love. But it is important to understand what precisely it is the book understands by love (I have already mentioned this weird belief). It namely urges readers to rid themselves of illness through “harmonious thoughts,” to attract love by loving themselves. Love is about loving yourself. Positive thinking is about adding love to your own needs, feelings, wishes, yes even to your dark sides; that is: see everything in you, not as something negative, but as something positive. It has nothing to do with the spiritual concept of love where you feel compassion with other people, and through this compassion receive the good. The spiritual concept of love is turned upside down in the book: you receive the “good” by loving yourself, by seeing everything in yourself as something positive, and therefore good.

4) The Law of Attraction is the law of black magic

It is this demonical turn I have referred to as the 666 aspect of the Matrix Conspiracy. The Law of Attraction idea is the most obvious example of the use of black magic/satanism within the Matrix Conspiracy (read more about the 666 turn in my article **The four philosophical hindrances and openings**).

I will here explain it in short. In a spiritual practice it is important to know the difference between a selfish use of energy, and an unselfish use of energy. You can also term this as a demonical use of energy, and a spiritual use of energy, or as black and white magic.

The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego’s incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: “it is no use with me!”; or: “Wonderful me!”. Both, either the denial or the confirmation of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity, and the ego-centralization. The ego’s religion and exercises are the ego’s needs and longings and

will: I want to, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, I hope, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, or, in its most common core: I, I, I...Me, Me, Me...

It should now be easy to see, that the positive psychology of the New Thought movement, and the Law of Attraction, are based on the ego-religion and the ego-exercises where it is about moving the focus away from the denial of the ego (the negative, evil), and encourage the confirmation of the ego, which is considered as positive, and in compliance with the divine, universal laws.

In the Danish New Age magazine *Nyt Aspekt* (New Aspect, January-March 2012), there is an article called “Super Thoughts” by the Health Coach Anni Simonsen. After having stated that “New research has shown...” that “everything is subjective”, and “Fantasy=reality” she claims that you can think yourself healthy, by standing in front of a mirror and repeating: “You are so beautiful!” “I love you!” She states that it is about giving yourself positive confirmations, to acknowledge, praise and love yourself as unconditional as possible. Thereafter she states that critical thinking belongs to the denial side of the ego, wherefore you of course should avoid such kind of negative thinking.

The Law of Attraction cannot admit doubt or skepticism. If one begins to doubt the power, or even to harbor critical (=negative) thoughts about it, one is assuredly on the road to ruin. Simonsen concludes that giving yourself positive confirmations are synonymous with healthy thoughts, and that such thoughts are good thoughts, light thoughts, super thoughts.

I don't know which research has shown this. Maybe the movie *The Secret*? *The Secret* says that “It has been proven scientifically now that an affirmative thought is hundreds of times more powerful than a negative thought.” But again: Proven by which scientists? And written up where? Because I couldn't find it. These are extraordinary claims that surely require extraordinary evidence, which *The Secret* does by using the word “science” over and over, as if merely saying the word is the same as *doing* it – as if feeling good about science will attract more science into your life.

Anyway, if you find it difficult, Anni Simonsen continues, you must borrow (here we see that Anni Simonsen also is a NLP coach, and that New Thought is the source of inspiration for both the Law of Attraction and NLP – see my article **Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), and Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT)**). She continues the exercise: Let yourself be inspired by a person, whom you would like to be like, and use this model to create your own self-image. When this self-image is ready, it is time to put sound on. Listen to your own voice. Find the sound that tells you that you speak to the world with confidence and trust. It is a voice people will

listen to! Listen to how the whole world will answer with acknowledgement, respect and love.

I am afraid I don't agree that the whole world will love Anni Simonsen because she stands in front of a mirror repeating to herself: "You are so beautiful!" "I love you!" I think it sounds like the evil queen from the fairy tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. I would at any time prefer Snow White who loves others in a state of complete self-forgetfulness.

Simonsen ends the article with a preconceived response to critique. If you think that the image not is true, but only is fantasy, then remember that everything is subjective.

And now to my claim that such thoughts are an expression of black magic, a way of turning spirituality upside down.

First of all: Subjectivism means that truth *only* is something you create yourself – there is no absolute, or objective truth. This of course raises the Socratic question: from where does Anni Simonsen (and other New Thought thinkers) know that everything is subjective? She can't *know* this if reality only is a fantasy you create yourself. Subjectivism is self-refuting. The self-refuting aspect is that subjectivism makes an exception of its own position. The very assertion of subjectivism is itself non-subjectivistic (see the thought distortion *Self-refuting arguments* in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

Besides this self-contradiction, then the assertion of subjectivism is in opposition to spirituality, which in its worship of a divine reality of course believes that truth is absolute and objective. The opposition is due to that religion, and therefore spirituality, has been reduced to psychology; a reductionism; a distortion of the human being (see my articles **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**, and **The pseudoscience of reductionism and the problem of mind**).

Secondly: We have seen that the ordinary ego-consciousness functions by being identified with the physical world, with instincts, sexuality, emotions and collective ideals. The true spiritual practice works through these aspects by means of, for example the core which exists in the basic monastic vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. These promises work with a restructuring of the ego's ownership to things, food and power, and they re-structure sexuality and emotions. First thereafter the mystical process can begin; where your so-called progressive karma (good karma) is beginning to work. Again: it should now be easy to see how positive psychology and New Thought are doing the exact opposite.

The ego is a demonical structure, and it attracts demonical powers and energies which also have been created by the ego phenomenon. The same energy-process and function, which realized spiritual teachers use, can therefore be used for other purposes than spiritual. When the energy-processes of the astral plane's collective history are used spiritual, then the ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside, and the energy is turned into the now, and therefore in towards the source and the spiritual dimension. The people, who around a spiritual teacher, constitute an energy-mandala, are in this way made transparent for a higher common human spirituality.

In a lesser realized person's use of energy the contact with, and the ability to manipulate with such collective forms of astral energy, can be used for other puposes than spiritual. It can be creative, ego-affirmative, political, demonical, and so on.

The powers that, by realized spiritual teachers are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same powers can be turned in through the ego-structures, and therewith into past and future, and fragmentation (conflict). In this way there can be opened creative channels, created super egos (super thoughts), created political leaders and popular seducers (in my article **The philosophy of Karen Blixen** I have investigated these phenomena in detail).

These phenomena are well known from history and from literature. In the story of the temptation in the desert, we can see these possible ways of using the energy pictured in anticipated form. Here you see the possibility of using the freedom and the power, to elevation of the ego and the consequent power and material glory. But Jesus abstains from this deification of the ego. It is also known from the Faust myth, described by for exampel Goethe and Thoman Mann.

When you in a selfish way use the powers from the collective history of the astral plane, and which demonical astral beings will help you with (because the ego phenomenon is their magnet of attraction), you can create personal power and material glory. That is the essence of Black Magic, and it is the background for the creation of the concept of the Law of Attraction (though the worshippers probably don't realize this - I think they have perfectly good intentions - see the thought distortion *Good Intentions Bias* in my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**).

A lot of the many New Thought channelers are frauds, or just disillusioned because they are completely controlled by subjective feelings, emotions, intuitions. But some of them are caught up in the ego-inflation side of a spiritual crisis, and are actually channeling entities from the collective time. The problem is that they don't know who it is they are channeling. Demons can be very charming, and very manipulating.

They will tell you what you want to hear, they will give you experiences, and help you to gain prosperity and success. But you will eventually meet the compensatory karma, or Nemesis (see my article **Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with channeling**).

You can in short not use these energies as you want to; that is: through thinking, and therefore not through will, choices or feelings.

The eternal circling around your own dreams, desires, success etc., will in other words be contra-balanced through the opposite categories.

I will repeat what we already have examined: as soon as your thoughts spread themselves too much out in an extreme, the energy-system compensates by seeking to bring itself back to the balance of the middle. The system does this by seeking over towards the opposite extreme (for instance from perfectionism to a feeling of fiasco). That is: through a contrabalancing, a compensation. The energy works as a pendulum. The more energy, which is invested in an extreme of a pair of opposites, the larger the swing in the opposite direction will become (read more in my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

5) Ethical problems connected with The Law of Attraction

Here is one of Rhonda Byrne´s own examples on positive thinking: If you as a female has a problem with being too fat, then this is due to that you think fat thoughts. Feeling a bit overweight these days? According to Rhonda Byrne, it is not an excess of food that´s making you fat – it is your thoughts that are adding on those extra pounds.

“To put it in the most basic terms, if someone is overweight, it came from thinking ´fat thoughts´ whether that person was aware of it or not,” writes Byrne. “A person cannot think ´thin thoughts´ and be fat. It completely defies the Law of Attraction.”

So if one simply think ´thin thoughts´, refrains from observing fat people and follows Byrne´s three-step process of “Ask-Believe-Receive” then you are guaranteed to lose weight, without actually doing anything about it.

The ”positive” in Rhonda Byrne´s example on positive thinking, is in other words an Egoistic ideal of beauty without any kind of ethics: avoid observing fat people!

The film is coming with a number of similar examples on, that its own concepts of positive thinking are equivalent with pure egoistic thinking. In addition to this the

film also has some messages to sick, weak and poor people, which is as ethical problematic. Sick, weak and poor people are namely told, that their disease, weakness or poverty are their own fault, because they think sick, weak and poor thoughts. The examples on, how they instead shall think, are as absurd as Byrne's own example: for example are cancer-sick people told, that they miraculously can heal their disease by watching funny films in three weeks, or by having send a few Gratitude-stones from LA.

For those of us unfortunate enough to fall ill, it really is all our fault. "You cannot 'catch' anything unless you think you can, and thinking you can is inviting it into your thought," says The Secret.

The flipside of the "Law of Attraction" that the Secret so keenly promotes is that as sure as positive thoughts bring wealth, health and happiness, negative thoughts are also responsible for any illness, poverty or bad luck that happens your way. The problem is the propensity for self-blame when it doesn't work. Besides that it is an invalid ad hoc clause (rationalization), to say that if the Law of Attraction doesn't work, then it is because you are not doing it correct, then such statements, as mentioned, are inducing a false dichotomy in people, that makes them easy targets for guilt, shame and depression.

Another weird aspect of this is something I have experienced when talking to Law of Attraction devotees. For example I talked with a woman, who for years had tried to "attract/manifest" a man into her life. But the men she "attracted/manifested" wasn't good enough. She said: "Well, you get what you are asking for!" She simply thought, that the "wrong" men was due to mistakes in her thoughts, in her way of attracting/manifesting these men. She didn't talk about the men as human beings, but as objects for her own wishes. She was exposing a me-me-me-and-then-perhaps-you-if-it-fits-me-logic. The last thing she was considering, was that a person with such a logic would be a nuisance to other people.

Here is the main reason why today's self-help industry has lost the true spirituality out of sight: the Ego-worship, which shuts itself away from this wholeness. Today the wholeness, or the Otherness, has been eliminated, and only the development of the self, or the Ego, is left. And the Self/the Ego is your personality; therefore personal development (also called self-improvement) The problem with this personal development is that it has developed into a never-ending development, an egoistic philosophy (see my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**).

In the view of nature in natural science, nature is reduced to atomic particles, empty space, fields, electromagnetic waves and particles etc., etc. Characteristic is that

nature is explained, and is described, in a way, which is a world away from our immediate sense experiences.

The support of a natural scientific view of nature has almost always led the supporters forward to combine it with an instrumental (technological) view of nature. This conception of nature is seeing it as pure material, or alone as a means for the unfolding of Man.

The instrumental view of nature rests on a sharp division between Man and everything else; that is to say: between inner and outer nature. Man is by force of his inner nature radical different from, and is standing over, the outer nature. This is, among other things, due to, that he, with reason and science, is in the position to master nature.

By the way, this thought characterizes almost all traditional Western philosophy, where that to philosophize is due to thinking alone, even though the theories within this tradition in other crucial points are highly contradictory. You find it in Christianity, in Descartes' view of Man as a self-dependant being, in the Enlightenment philosophers, in Romanticism's view of Man as a historical being, in Kierkegaard, Karl Marx and Auguste Comte, who respectively founded existentialism, Marxism and positivism.

In opposition to this, and under impression of the discussion about the damage, which we have caused nature, there has in the later years been worked out conceptions, which claims, that nature has a value in itself. It is not only a means, but ought to be respected for its beauty and richness. It is by the way a point of view, which also is well known from older times. In lack of better you could call it a communicative view of nature, since it is implying, that we in some sense have a community with nature.

And as the above shows, then these two views of nature are inseparable connected with a view of what a human being is. The discussions about Man, which I have outlined in my book **A Portrait of a Lifestylist**, have been about the status of reason in relation to desires and sensuous nature, as well as the relationship between naturalism and self-production.

The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has sought to create a synthesis of the many viewpoints. He claims that the development of reason, as well as the division, and the alienation, in the modern world, and the many out-specializations of areas of knowledge, have led to, that there in today's society rules a radical opposition between two kinds of reason: the instrumental and the communicative.

The instrumental, or technical, reason, is about how to find given means to given goals. It is for instance a necessary goal for Man to get his necessities of life satisfied by cultivating nature. The means is technology which today builds on the extensive knowledge of natural science. To cut a long story short: thanks to the instrumental reason we get control over nature. In technical competence we have gone far. The whole of that part of our lives has developed into extensive systems, such as the economy, the bureaucracy, the market and the market forces.

The communicative reason and competence is the reason we use in all relationships where it is about coming to an understanding with each other. It presupposes that we know our life-world. Among other things Habermas understands the life-world as the horizon of linguistic ability, cultural knowledge and individual skills, which is the condition in order to understand both the family jargon, as well as the tone between children, and in all the many communities. By the way Habermas argues for, that the difference between instrumental and communicative reason is given with fundamental structures in language, with different types of speech acts.

The core in Habermas' critique of culture is that the instrumental reason has conquered terrain from the communicative reason. The systems (the market and the bureaucracy) have colonized the lifeworld. This means, among other things, that political and philosophical questions are being made into technical questions, as when an election campaign is about details in the economical planning, as well as it leads to that we treat each other as means, or as items, which have come on a wrong course (the treatment society).

The instrumental reason is controlling and gets control. In accordance with Habermas there is nothing wrong in this in technical respect. The problem arises when this attitude come to characterize ordinary relationships between humans, as well as areas where values should be crucial; that is: in philosophical respect. It is also this attitude, which has caused that we, with reference to human problems, always shall hear what the specialists think, for instance economists, sociologists, historians, psychologists, biologists, etc. etc.

The philosopher, as philosophical counselor, has in short vanished, and therewith also the art of life, which could create unity and coherence in life. Many will perhaps against this object that the New Age movement advocates a new kind of wholeness-thinking. But there are a number of misunderstandings in this. Philosophy is by definition wholeness-thinking. You can therefore say that the New Age movement is an abortive attempt to re-create philosophy as an art of life. The attempt goes wrong already in the lack of ability to understand itself as precisely philosophy. Personally I

think that this is due to the many uneducated people we see within this environment, who have got all their knowledge by reading self-help books, or other New Age books.

This main failure is due to that the New Age movement in extreme way is characterized by the instrumental reason, and the treatment society, despite, that it should be a showdown with this. That which should have been art of life becomes reduced to treatment, especially psychotherapy, and New Age magazines are abundantly characterized by alternative treatment offers, rather than offers on counseling in art of life.

Another failure, where the wholeness-thinking is lost, is due to the psychologizing of philosophy, where it, in contradiction to its own claims, shuts itself away from the wholeness, or the Otherness, and locks itself inside the individual psyche.

That was Habermas. Another communicative thinker is the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. Central in Buber's thinking is the thought about two fundamental relationships: I-THOU and I-IT. He has investigated this in his wonderful poetic book *I and Thou*.

The I-Thou relationship is characterized by freedom, cooperation and a deep feeling of personal involvement. The I confronts its Thou, not as something which can be studied, be measured or manipulated, but as an unique presence which is answering the I in its individuality. This corresponds to the communicative view of Man and nature.

The I-It relationship is characterized by a tendency to treat something as an impersonal object controlled by causal, social or economical powers. This corresponds to the instrumental view of Man and nature.

Buber refuses the idea about that humans are isolated, autonomous beings, who act from abstract rules. Instead the reality exists between humans as they discover and change each other. Reality is shortly said dialogical in its nature. Buber describes God as the eternal THOU, the Thou, who never can be an IT. In that way you can reach God, not with a derivation or a conclusion (some images of life), but with a readiness to answer the concrete reality of the divine presence.

In accordance with Buber, then Man, in this way, can relate to life in two radical different ways: either as a subject who experiences something, namely an object, an It, which he is standing outside. Or as a person who is in the relationship with another person, a Thou. It is the last which is fundamental.

The “I” first becomes an “I” in this relationship with a “Thou”. There exists no “I” in and with itself. The basic purpose in the human existence is the actual relationship. The spirit, the human reality, is not in the “I” (as New Age and the self-help industry claim), but between I and Thou. First in this *between* is Man’s way of being constituted. The relationship with the Thou is in this way the mirror in which the “I” can discover itself. The relationship is a philosophical sparring partner.

In accordance with Buber, then the whole of the human existence goes off in the tension between challenge and reaction, which dialogical seen can be seen as questions and answers. Man becomes spoken to by the eternal Thou, God, through challenges and what happens to him. But through his reactions and actions he is conversely able to answer this question of the challenge; that is to say: to take the responsibility for himself, to answer individually.

So in any challenge you can - if you open yourself for it, and, in complete silence listen to the call of the Thou - hear the eternal Thou ask: “Where are you in thy life?” And by observing your reaction - that is to say: see your way of being and discover yourself - you can answer: “Here I am in my life, this is what I am!”

Buber has herewith shown an important philosophical exercise, namely that to see the relationship with the surrounding world as a philosophical sparring partner. Precisely like this functioned also Socrates’ method of philosophical dialogue, the so-called Socratic Pedagogy, where Socrates, through his questions, became a mirror in which his dialogue partners could discover themselves through their answers.

Over the temple in Delphi was written: “Know thyself”. And the intention with Socrates’ dialogues on the town square in Athens was, that they should function as a medium of self-exposure. Socrates was a philosophical sparring partner, a mirror in which his dialogue partners were able to learn to know themselves. Krishnamurti often said something similar (see my article **The philosophy of Krishnamurti**).

In the exercise *Philosophical Sparring Partners* self-knowledge arises by seeing the relationship with the surrounding world as a mirror. And in this mirror is formed the true portrait of yourself: a portrait of a lifeartist (see my book **A Portrait of a Lifeartist**).

Our most intense identity-experiences we paradoxically enough have in the experience of life-feeling, spontaneity and self-forgetfulness. This means that a human being who knows himself, who is himself present, at the same time often is

self-forgetful open for, and engaged, in life itself. In these experiences you have your identity in a presence, in the feeling of being in the middle of the stream of life.

What is, after all, life? Is it not all the time something new? It is something which constantly is changed and is creating a new feeling. Today is never the same as yesterday, and that is the beauty of life. This "new" is the unique in life, a unique presence: The Eternal Thou. Buber said: "By the Thou am I created. As I am created, I say Thou. All real life is meeting".

Man is a communicative being.

So the relationship is in connection with identity the mirror in which you can discover yourself. Without the relationship you are nothing. To be is to be in relationship, which is the actual life. You only live in relationship, otherwise you don't live, then life is without meaning. So it is not because you construct (think) your identity that you live. You live, and have your identity, in the ability to be self-forgetful engaged in the relationship, and it is the lack of ability to understand this, which causes conflict.

The reason why that there no understanding is of the relationship is that you use relationships to achieve something, become something, to be remoulded, to be something else than what you are. You use, as Habermas expresses it, the instrumental reason on human relations, where it only should be used on technical relations. Precisely as we see it unfolded in the Law of Attraction movement.

Another Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, worked, with inspiration from Buber, also with such a communicative thinking (very close to Krishnamurti's philosophy).

Levinas namely calls the unique presence in life *The Otherness* (God – Krishnamurti also called God *The Otherness*). The Otherness manifests itself as The Other, or as The Thou. Man can't be understood isolated, but always in a relation with, or in a meeting with "The Other". In the other's face, in thy neighbour's appearance, you meet an unfounded (metaphysical understood) demand about responsibility which you can't ignore, but of course very well try to drive out.

In Levinas' philosophy it is impossible to remain a spectator to the world. Man, and also language, is constituted by the indispensable connection with the Otherness - (as we remember, then also Niels Bohr said, that it is not us, who are putting reality in order, it is reality which is putting us in order – see my article **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr**). - The Otherness manifests itself in the other's

face. The face calls for you. Your reaction to the face is an answer, and it shows who you are. So it requires the responsibility that you listen to this call.

Levinas criticizes the traditional effort of philosophy in building up philosophical systems, as well as all kinds of idealism and subjectivism, because precisely the Otherness (the new) opposes the system, it opposes all idealism and subjectivism. That which is really something else, or different, is in accordance with Levinas *The Other* whom you are standing face-to-face with, the other person. This relationship is the foundation of ethics, and not a system, or thought constructions created by idealists or subjectivist as The Law of Attraction devotees. So just like in Buber there also in Levinas is a disposition to a philosophical life-practice very similar to the philosophy of Krishnamurti.

The Law of Attraction's lack of understanding such an ethics can be seen in an interview with Newsweek, where Rhonda Byrne is asked if the victims of the genocides in Rwanda in 1994 had attracted this destiny themselves. She answers with confirmation.

“If we are in fear, if we are feeling in our lives that we are victims and feeling powerless, then we are on a frequency of attracting those things to us,” says Byrne in reference to Rwanda.

So a spiritual concept of compassion with people who are suffering, as for example the victims of Rwanda, will in the Law of Attraction involve a risk of attracting the weak and powerless thoughts of these people (their stinkin' thinkin'). So instead you should turn your back to them.

Note that it is not only Byrne who answers in this way; it is a typical answer from Secreters, who of course always are asked these kinds of questions; for example in relation to children who are getting raped and murdered. And non-secreters are of course shocked over this attitude.

The thought falls for a *Reductio ad Absurdum* argument. Any psychopath, multiple murderer or tyrannical dictator would namely love the thought. Just try to use the idea on the German mass extermination camps under Second World War. The idea would actual be very useful in order to justify crimes in this style. It is, as mentioned, a way of thinking that is completely devoid of ethical thinking – that is: a psychopathic way of thinking. And that actually applies to the whole of the self-help industry. I have examined the psychopathic trait of self-help thinking in my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**.

The Secret uses a long line of the greatest geniuses of history to confirm its theories (from Emerson to Shakespeare, from Plato to Lincoln, from Victor Hugo to Newton and Beethoven) – as well as that all wisdomtraditions also are used to confirm them. But these people become – just like the wisdomtraditions - systematically abused by taking their statements out of their right connection, and twisting them in order to mix them with the film's theories.

The thought distortions, which the authentic spiritual traditions try to explore, change and restructure, are namely in the film directly used to manipulate with. Meanwhile I don't think the creators of the film do this fully consciously. I actually think that they believe in the idea. They are just extremely uneducated and naive. Without any philosophical or scientific training. And in this they remind about a lot of other New Age worshippers.

Like many other New Age directions (for example illustrated in the New Age film What the bleep do we (k)now?) The Secret wallow itself in the philosophical viewpoints relativism/subjectivism – that is to say: philosophical viewpoints, which can justify the management theoretical idea about, that it is not facts, but the best story, which wins (your thoughts directly create the world, including the physical!). Here the film uses – again like many other New Age directions – Einstein's theories of relativity, as well as quantum mechanics, to "prove" its theories. But again like many other New Age directions, these scientific theories are on the worst distorted (see my article **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies**).

The Secret's performers/followers manipulative sign themselves with all kinds of titles. Here is some examples from the book (which, by the way, also is quite revealing): "philosopher, lecturer, author and creator of true wealth, prosperity, and human potential programs," (James Arthur Ray), "moneymaking and business-building expert" (John Assaraf), "philosopher, chiropractor, healer and personal transformation specialist" (John DeMartini), "metaphysician and one of the top marketing specialists in the world" (Joe Vitali), "a nonaligned, trans-religious progressive" (Michael Beckwith).

(Joe Vitale is also signing himself Dr Joe Vitale, MSC.D. I wonder what these initials mean? I have never heard about them).

"The Secret," according to the film/book is, as mentioned "The Law of Attraction." And, defined clearly and simply, this "law," (as certain as the law of gravity) is that our thoughts always attract what they are about and bring them to reality. This is presented as a literal truth – a law just like the laws of gravitation. And it is stated like this: "Always works every time, with every person!" Note: **always**. And **every time**, **with every person!** No exceptions. It's a law, you see. Think about wealth, and you

will become wealthy. Think about that new car you've always wanted, and it will come to you. Think about getting a good parking spot on the lot, and one will open up for you. Think about your ideal weight (really, dwell on that number, write it on your scale), and you will attract that reality to yourself. (All of these are real examples in the book.) Rhonda Byrne is glad to report that since deciding her "perfect weight" is 116 pounds, she has moved to that mark, and nothing moves her from it, no matter what she does or eats, because she thinks "thin thoughts" (can thoughts also prevent her from getting older?).

Now here is how "the Law of Attraction" actually works, according to *The Secret*: "Thoughts are magnetic; and thoughts have a frequency. As you think, those thoughts are sent out into the universe and they magnetically attract all like things that are on the same frequency. Everything send out returns to the Source. And that source is you."

As Mel Lawrenz says in an article (*The Secret-Revealed*): "Now here's the bad news: whatever happens in your life is the result of what your thoughts have attracted - the good and the bad. Appendicitis? An auto accident? Poverty? You have brought it on yourself."

And Bible verses are quoted in the book, as if the book was about something holy. Lisa Nichols, motivational speaker and one of the contributors, notes that: "in Proverbs it talks about "so a man thinketh, he is." In Matthew, it says "if you ask and you believe in your prayers, then you will receive it."

And then there is James Arthur Ray, author of *The Science of Success: How to Attract Prosperity and Create Harmonic Wealth Through Proven Principles*, who says, "Here's the question I want you to consider - do you treat yourself the way that you want other people to treat you?"

Mel Lawrenz continues: "Does that sound familiar? It is a twist, a pretty severe twist, of one of the most universal principles of life called the Golden Rule, which Jesus described as "do to others as you would have them do to you." So this tried and true egoless principle of life ("do to others...") becomes the ultimate form of self-centeredness ("treat yourself..."). Oh, and by the way, you can attend James Arthur Ray's seminar, his "harmonic wealth weekend," for a seminar fee of a mere \$997. Somebody has figured out how to attract wealth to himself."

(As mentioned, then for example love is twisted in the same way: you will attract love by loving yourself, not by loving others. In the true spiritual traditions you attract love by loving others – what precisely is what Jesus talks about).

The Secret would lead you to believe that you are entitled to whatever you want, and you have the power within yourself to gain it. The book says: "Begin right now to shout to the universe: life is so easy. Life is so good. All good things come to me." And "You deserve all good things life has to offer." "You are the creator of you, and the Law of Attraction is your magnificent tool to create whatever you want in your life. Welcome to the magic of life and the magnificence of you."

Very different from the message of Jesus: the first will be last and the last will be first; lose your life and you will find it.

And in this we find the confusion of The Secret. It is all about the Ego, for the Ego, obsessed with the Ego. Even Newsweek magazine offers this ethical critique: "On an ethical level, The Secret appears deplorable. It concerns itself almost entirely with a narrow range of middle class concerns -- houses, cars, vacations, followed by health and relationships, with the rest of humanity a very distant sixth."

The Secret appeals especially to professional, middle-class American women (spreading to women all over the world), who are turned off by traditional religion yet feeling a yearning for a personal, non-denominational spirituality. They often refer to themselves as the new feminists. Sentiments such as, "You are the creator of you, and the Law of Attraction is your magnificent tool to create whatever you want in your life", resonate with them. They are not concerned with critics who wondered about the flipside: how people, even children, who suffer illness, violence, untimely death or other misfortune might have "attracted" that. The self-help industry as such is especially promoted through women's magazines (see my article **The new feminism and the philosophy of women's magazines**).

So, the Law of Attraction is the idea, that your positive or negative thoughts magnetically, magically, can attract the negative or positive into your life, so that it becomes reality. And what the idea considers as being positive or negative, is only circling around one special thing: how I can get my own wishes, feelings and needs satisfied. The believers claim, that the Law of Attraction is a spiritual law, which will help you in this quest. In other words: focus your thoughts on getting your own wishes, feelings and needs satisfied, and then you are living in compliance with the spiritual laws, and can make reality give you what you want.

An extremely manipulating thought, because if we take the true spiritual laws, then they say, that there is a duality in the Universe you have to realize in order to reach into non-dualism: for instance yin and yang, positive and negative, light and darkness, I and Thou.

This understanding of dualism goes on, that the opposites are defining each other; they are inseparable. If there comes an overweight of one of the poles it creates unbalance.

These laws exist everywhere: in nature, in society, in Man himself.

I will repeat the three important concepts in a true spiritual practice:

- 1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others)
- 2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the Ego)
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images)

And now, if we take the self-deception in the Law of Attraction in relation to the above-mentioned:

- 1) The believers close themselves in the positive; that is: what they *think* is positive: namely their own wishes, feelings and needs. In this way they leave out the negative, which causes a lack of ability to realize the laws of dualism. Their so-called exercises - which they think the idea of the Law of Attraction helps them with - is about how to drive out, force out, repress, even ignore, the negative.
- 2) When ignoring the negative they fail to understand the shadow, both their own dark sides, the Ego, as well as ignorance and suffering as such. And understanding your own suffering is a necessity in order to train compassion with other people (see my article **Suffering as an entrance to the Source**).

This causes that their empathy and compassion with other people can be hard to discover, illustrated Rhonda Byrne's words: If you as a woman feels you are too fat, then turn your back to fat people, so that their fat thoughts don't influence you - and in the words about, that peoples' suffering are their own fault, and that you should turn your back to them, so that their negative thoughts don't influence you.

The failure to realize their own dark sides can be seen in another episode with Rhonda Byrne. She typical meets people with a loving facade. At one time she wanted to remind the world about the crucial importance of gratitude: "Remember," Byrne was preaching, "if you are criticizing, you are not being grateful. If you are blaming, you are not being grateful. If you are complaining, you are not being grateful."

It was an odd time for Byrne to be preaching these words, because at the same time her lawyers had just sued two of the very people, who were instrumental in launching her book and film *The Secret* to phenomenal success. Drew Heriot, the Australian director of the film, and Dan Hollings, an Arizona internet consultant whose “viral marketing” helped propel Byrne to global fame via Oprah Winfrey, had both been demanding that Byrne pay them a share of the estimated \$ 300 million revenue they claim she’d promised them. In the weeks up to Thanksgiving, Byrne’s lawyers had counter-attacked by launching legal actions against both men in jurisdictions far from their homes, a tactic one judge has since described as vexatious and harassing.

For a woman whose central message is the power of positivity, Byrne has a surprisingly long history of such bust-ups, stretching back to her days as a television producer in Melbourne – but as we have found out by now: it is yourself you should not criticize, it is yourself you should not blame, it is yourself you should not complain over, it is yourself you should be grateful over, it is yourself you should love – and as a consequence: the ignorance about your own failures, about your own dark side.

3) They close themselves in their own idea about the Law of Attraction, which causes, that they don’t have any spiritual practice (no training of realization and compassion). We have already examined this. The Law of Attraction is not about doing anything. You don’t have to do anything, you only need to think about something, and then it will magically happen.

All and all it causes a total stop of any spiritual development, any ability to learn – especially because they don’t have to listen to other people. They lull themselves into a huge illusion and self-deception, which will cause an enormous unbalance.

6) The use of testimonials

The idea of the Law of Attraction goes wrong from the start because it is based on a misinterpretation of quantum mechanics, which you can see repeated again and again in numerous New Age books. A misinterpretation, which the believers could see corrected, if they, (instead of their easy-solution-to-everything-quest), were seeking other sources to their ideas than New Age books, for instance Niels Bohr himself (see my article **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr**).

The manipulative in the idea is then of course, partly that it says it is proven by science, but also that all great thinkers, artists and spiritual traditions, support it. As mentioned then this happens by taking short or longer quotes out of the correct context, and placing them so that it seems like they support the idea. Some of the coaches and speakers in the environment are masters in this manipulative art.

Manipulating is also the swollen titles they use about themselves, such as for instance "Super Coach", "The World's greatest Money Coach", and so on in the same style.

The word proven is also used manipulative in connection with the experiences the believers say they have had, after they have begun to use the Law of Attraction; that their experiences therefore "prove" that the idea is true.

Law of Attraction meetings are often going off as testimonials about these "proofs" – and when Law of Attraction devotees comment on blogs and forums, they almost always begin with testimonials. Scientifically seen this is pure nonsense (note that when I mention science, then it is only in relation to that New Thought and the Law of attraction devotees themselves use this concept and therefore have a burden of evidence – I would not demand scientific proof if a theory not was claiming to be scientific).

Of course you can create success by creating a manipulative stunt like *The Secret*, but this doesn't prove that the idea presented in the film therefore is true. Testimonials are usually permeated with thought distortions such as *Subjective validation, Selective thinking, Confirmation bias, Motivated reasoning, Classical conditioning and placebo effects, Proof by ignorance*, etc., etc. – again: see my book **A dictionary of thought distortions**.

Jeannine, for example, followed the advice of self-proclaimed expert manifesters Fred Fengler and Todd Varnum, authors of *Manifesting Your Heart's Desire* because she had a broken garage door:

I remembered reading your book and decided to manifest a fix. I started talking to the door and asking it to work. I...used to talk to plants and they tended to grow better so I talked to the door. After a few minutes of communicating with the door I pushed and the door worked perfectly.

Fengler and Varnum give other examples of successful manifesters. For example, an anonymous writer told them how he or she **sold a business**:

I decided to manifest using my will power. As I went to sleep, I said out loud, "OK universe, this is what I want. I want an offer. I want a good offer. In fact I want TWO offers. In fact I want them TOMORROW!"

The next day was perfectly normal. I 'reminded' the universe it was 4 PM and the office would close at 5:30. I felt confident that the universe would take care of me no matter what happened. Within ten minutes, I had a call from one prospect who said

he had an offer and would be right over. Ten minutes after he left the offer off, I got a call from my business consultant. He told me that a second offer was being written and it would be on my desk in 24 hours, which it was.

I accepted the first offer, and we flawlessly closed the deal in less than two weeks.

That's all there is to it. You let the universe know what you want and you'll get it! As Robert Carroll says, then this should be good news to those superstitious folks who try to sell real estate by burying a statue of St. Joseph on the property. There is an easier way: manifesting!

If they can create what they want in an instant, then they must not want very much, except maybe the many followers who might buy their books, tapes, crystals, etc. If the power of thought is so powerful, why don't they end the ethnic hatred in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, etc? They are telling us that they via the power of thought can make this world a better place but for some reason they choose not to. As Carroll says: I think we all know the reason: they are powerless. And I will myself add: It is not others they are concerned about, it is themselves.

And why don't they take the James Randi's One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge? – Here there is money they can attract and manifest very easily. James Randi is an American stage magician and scientific skeptic. His challenge is offering a prize of US\$ 1,000,000 to eligible applicants who can demonstrate evidence of any paranormal, supernatural or occult power or event under test conditions agreed to by both parties.

Let us take two other testimonials, and assume they are right.

1)

The testimonial of the editor of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books, Jack Canfield, provides an excellent example of selective thinking when he is talking about ask-believe-receive, and ignoring idea-action-results. He tells us that he visualized earning \$100,000 (even writing the desired amount on a bill worth far less and tacking it to the ceiling above his bed) and focused his mental energy only on the goal of attaining the money. He tells us that had absolutely no idea *how* he was going to get the money – he simply focused on believing that he *would* get the money, somehow. But how? For four weeks he had no breakthrough ideas but then, one day in the shower, he remembered that he had written a book and, if it was published (particularly if he sold 400,000 copies and he made a quarter on each) he just might

achieve his financial goals. Of course the book was published, and the results were only a few thousand dollars shy of 100,000 dollars.

Mr. Canfield attributes his success to knowing and applying the principles of *The Secret* – he literally *attracted* 100,000 dollars through good feelings, positive energy, and the power of visualization. Is it possible, however, that this is a misattribution, and that the actual reason for his success is that he suddenly remembered that he had written a book, got it published, and subsequently earned money from it? You know, all the other authors do it. Is he making an Arbitrary inference? The *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this therefore because of this) fallacy would appear to be working overtime in the minds of enthusiastic Secreters. “It happened because I wished for it,” the Secreter would say, instead of the more obvious explanation, “It happened because I worked for it.”

2)

In another instance, an advocate for the Law of Attraction tells us that he posted a picture of his dream home on what he calls his “vision board”, forgot about it, found the vision board five years later, and was astounded to discover that the home he was currently living in matched the one he had visualized.

This does sound amazing, except that he also tells us that he *spent an entire year renovating the house* that is currently his dream home. The question, therefore, is this: is he living in his dream home because he wished it, or because he renovated it?

And concerning the idea, then believers of all kinds of other beliefs (totally different from the Law of Attraction) also always have had experiences, and a lot of believers don't experience anything. It can also be pure fantasy, coincidence, etc., etc. Besides, black magic works. So, therefore note that I am not a cynical sceptic concerning this. I would actually to a certain extent accept that it works – as black magic. We have already examined the consequences of this.

And psychopaths also seem to have a strange ability to attract what they desire and want.

And look at the great Law of Attraction guru himself, James Arthur Ray. He must be able to give a lot of testimonials of his succes. But his career ended in complete failure and tragedy. He has been sentenced to two years in prison because of indifference to people in trouble during a sweat-lodge ceremony. Three people died because of this (see my article on the tragedy: **James Arthur Ray and the sweat lodge tragedy**).

So, testimonials don't *prove* anything.

Another question: how can the Law of Attraction support the wishes of all people? What if these wishes are contradictory? What about two parts in a war? What if another person wishes me dead, and I wish to live?

Remember: the Law of Attraction **always** works, **every** time, with **every** person. Examples are given in the movie. A man is showing worrying about being late, and so he gets stuck in a traffic jam. Another man is shown locking up his bicycle, presumably because he is worried about it being stolen; he returns later to find it *has* been stolen.

The absurdity of these examples should be obvious, and the absurdity arises because of the movie's extreme individualistic and egoistic thinking, where the existence of other people not even are considered. Are we supposed to believe the traffic jam wouldn't have happened if it were not for this one guy worrying about being late? What about other people in the traffic jam? Were they all thinking negative thoughts about being on time? And if they were, doesn't that debunk the "always works every time, with every person" mantra? And what about the guy getting his bike stolen? Are we to assume that if another *positive* thinking guy had left an identical *unlocked* bike at the same location, the bike thief would still have stolen the locked bike of the person *worried* about theft? Has anybody done a controlled study on this?

A third example: what happens when two drivers approach traffic lights on different roads, and both of them "attract" green lights at the same time?

And now, finally, to the most frightening thought: what if that psychopaths, massmurderers, dictators, terrorists, child abusers, etc., etc., got hold of the fact, that that there has arisen a new philosophy - the Law of Attraction (which famous people, and millions of other people, worship as the true divine power) – that actually would justify their ideas of what they find positive (their wishes, feelings and needs)?

There is nothing at all in the Law of Attraction-concept that can say that this would not be positive. Focusing on your wishes is per definition positive. The concept doesn't have any other ethical foundation than these two rules:

- 1) There doesn't exist any objective standards for good and evil!
- 2) Moral values are what you subjective *feel* is good!

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