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THE HUMAN POTENTIAL:

THE CAREER OF AN IDEA IN THE UNITED STATES

DURING THE THIRD QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A Dissertation in

History

by

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ABSTRACT

The Human Potential Movement of the 1960s and 1970s was an expression of a broad cultural trend within American middle-class of the mid-late twentieth century. This broad cultural trend, containing both secular and religious dimensions, represented an effort to promote greater human autonomy and personal authenticity in a wide variety of social relations. It developed in response to prevalent concerns over the supposed “diminishment of the self” within the American middle-class during the Cold War.

Those who gave voice to such concerns in the 1950s included influential social critics and cultural critics. Those who recommended solutions included humanistic psychologists and alternative religious theorists. The social critics, such as William H. Whyte, Jr., David Riesman, and C. Wright Mills, argued that the rise of dominating institutions of power, such as large American corporations and universities, created environments that crushed, or warped, human individuality and personal potential. The cultural critics, such as Dwight McDonald and Theodore Adorno, suggested that mass corporate cultural productions, such as movies, sports, and popular television shows, furthered this unfortunate trend by undermining western culture with the dissemination of cultural trash, or kitsch. These criticisms, furthermore, were disseminated to the public in a string of articles found in large-circulation, popular magazines, such as Life, Look, and Time, and were part of America’s Cold War dialogue with itself. The humanistic psychologists, such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May therefore
promoted methods, such as participatory business management techniques and encounter-group therapy, designed to free Americans from their social-psychological malaise.

In the early 1960s, entrepreneur Andrew Kay, of Non-Linear Systems, Inc., hired Abraham Maslow to help reorganize his company along lines consistent with the theories of participatory management; theories that would promote greater worker autonomy, while turning a profit for the company. Such techniques, along with encounter-group therapy, became a trend in American business throughout the 1960s. The alternative religious theorizers, such as Alan Watts and Aldous Huxley, suggested that organized religious institutions were also at fault. The dominant American churches, they charged, buried the spiritual potential of their supporters and they therefore promoted Asian religious practices, such as sitting-meditation and yoga, as practicable solutions.

In the early 1950s, entrepreneur Louis P. Gainesborough funded the American Academy of Asian Studies (AAAS) in San Francisco, which he created to foster East/West inter-cultural appreciation following World War II. Under the direction of Alan Watts, Haridas Chaudhuri, and Friedrich Spiegelberg, however, the organization also sought to help their students out of the alleged spiritual quagmire which they believed typified American religious sensibilities. Two students of the AAAS, Michael Murphy and Richard Price, went on to create the Esalen Institute of Big Sur, CA, in 1962. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Esalen Institute became a sort-of clearinghouse for all things countercultural and it was here that psychology wed religion in the form of the Human Potential Movement.

The psycho-spiritual theorizers associated with Esalen Institute represent a veritable who’s-who of the Human Potential Movement, which even came to influence the Episcopal Church in California during the 1960s. From an intellectual historical standpoint, the strands of
social influences derived from post-World War II social critics, cultural critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers had far-reaching consequences for American lives toward the middle-end of the twentieth century.
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Introduction:
From the Mind Cure to the Human Potential Movement:
Liberation, Autonomy, and Human Authenticity in America

The third-quarter of the twentieth century saw, in the United States, the rise of humanistic psychology, transpersonal psychology, the human potential movement, the counterculture, and the various movements for social justice that rocked American life in the 1960s. Each of these developments, at their core, including the movements for social justice, concerned themselves with reshaping the identities of those involved according to perceived social realities and social injustices. During the same period, and not coincidentally, participatory management theory made inroads into American business practice, progressive child-rearing became *de rigueur* in the white, middle and upper-middle class American home, and, in certain quarters, American religious practice became more progressive, more tolerant, more eclectic, and more “spiritual.” These developments, I will argue, are interrelated, informed by the ideals of liberation, autonomy, and human authenticity, and owe something to the “therapeutic ethos” that Jackson Lears, among others, found prominent in the twentieth century.¹ This work, then, is concerned with the ideals and practices through which Americans sought to reshape their realities and identities from the end of World War II through the mid-1970s.²

¹ Although the ideals of liberation and autonomy may seem, at first glance, to synonymous, there are important distinctions to be made. While liberation always implies autonomy, autonomy does not necessarily imply liberation in either its political or religious meanings. For a discussion of the therapeutic ethos and its significance to American consumer culture, see Lears “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880 – 1930,” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880 – 1930*, ed. Richard Wrightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 3 – 38.
² Foucault defined such practices as “technologies of the self,” that is, as technologies “which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.” See Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel
My thesis is that following World War II numerous scholars, many of whom were émigré intellectuals, including social critics, cultural critics, humanist psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers, bemoaning the supposed diminishment of the American self in the 1950s, laid common theoretical ground for the developments listed above. The counterculture and its upwardly-mobile twin, the human potential movement, as well as the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, derived not only from alternative subcultures, such as the Beats, nor strictly from earlier movements for social justice, but also from a prevalent therapeutic trend with a long history in the United States. My purpose, therefore, is not to explore the social history of any particular set of actors, but to explore how a variety of disparate actors, and disparate movements, claimed common ideals and worked them through in different, but culturally interconnected, settings and circumstances. This introduction will outline the flow of these ideals from the middle of the nineteenth century in the United States to the middle of the twentieth century. Although the body of this work is concerned with the period from about 1950 to about 1975, some theory and historical backdrop are, of course, necessary.

The Historiography of the Self

The central questions are these: What ideals did the various social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, including the counterculture, share at their core? How did these ideals shape the forms and practices of these social movements? Did others share these ideals outside of the social movements and, if so, in what practices did they endeavor to address them? In what ways were such practices new to the Cold War era and in what ways were they continuations of earlier projects? Does the presence of these ideals, again, of liberation, autonomy, and human

authenticity, found throughout American culture during the Cold War, and as the basis for a wide variety of social and religious projects, represent an identifiable cultural trend with a distinct history that can be traced?

In order to answer these questions a viable model of analysis is required. Drawing on the “historiography of the self,” I begin with the premise that the self is a social construction and that dominant configurations of the self therefore have discernable histories. The historiography of the self is cross disciplinary, international in scope, and seeks to problematize the self out of a recognition that notions of the individual as a distinct entity, a locus of thoughts and feelings contained within a “bag of skin,” or situated directly between the ears, are neither universal, nor ahistorical. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes, “The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set constrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures.”

Indeed, Philip Cushman, in Constructing the Self, Constructing America, argues that this “bounded, unique” self is but the latest form of Western selfhood and that Western history contains numerous other forms.

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3 Cushman puts it this way: “Vast historical changes in the last 500 years in the West have slowly created a world in which the individual is commonly understood to be a container of a ‘mind’ and more recently a ‘self’ that needs to be ‘theraped,’ rather than, say, a carrier of a divine soul that needs to be saved, or simply an element of the communal unit that must cooperate for the common good.” See Philip Cushman, Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), 1.


5 Cushman writes, “[S]everal configurations of the self, as Shakespeare wrote, strutted and fretted their ‘hour upon the stage’ and then were heard no more. There was the ‘nondeep’ self of the ancient Greeks; the self of the Hebrews that was a communal, equal partner with God; the empty, self-loathing Augustinian self; the crusading Christian self of the Middle Ages, container for the immortal soul, which lived in a circular, enchanted world, and which healed through obedience to warrior vows and by delivering death and destruction to the infidel; the Renaissance self with a foot in both the feudal and the about-to-dawn modern era; the rational, logical self of the Enlightenment era, intent
Individuals are, therefore, simultaneously creators of culture and creations of culture. Scholars working within this historiography seek to establish just how specific societies, specific cultures, create selves that are consistent with the needs of those societies and cultures under particular historical circumstances. Foucault phrased the central question in this manner: “How did we directly constitute our identity through some ethical techniques of the self which developed through antiquity down to now?” The answer that Foucault gives, for the modern West, is through institutions of culture, such as prisons, asylums, and schools, that take the individual as an object of scrutiny and social control and that, through encouraging self-surveillance, internalize coercion, thus creating selves appropriate to the prevailing social-political order. In *Discipline and Punish*, his treatise on the changing nature of western forms of social control and the punishment of criminals, Foucault suggested that by the nineteenth century governments no longer acted upon the bodies of criminals in public displays of punishment but rather, as he wrote, “[t]he expiation that once rained down upon the body must be replaced by a punishment that acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations.” In this way governments, with the assistance of social scientists, psychologists, statisticians, penologists, and other professionals, helped create individuals appropriate to modern industrial capitalism, thereby transforming the self into a scientific and political project of the nineteenth and twentieth

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6 Technologies of the Self, 146.
7 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Pantheon, 1977). It should be noted that not all scholars working within this historiography emphasize the coercive nature of the project. Lunbeck, for example, “gravitated less toward social control than toward the point at which knowledge and power fostered the conditions conducive to the realization of both” within the early twentieth century psychiatric program. See Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.
centuries. As John W. Meyer writes, “A concern to construct individuals in a way appropriate to society’s needs is as intrinsic a component of the modern social structure as are large-scale economies and bureaucratic states.”

Other scholars have noted, as Eghigian writes, that “it was in the course of the nineteenth century that the possibility of turning the self into a site for both scientific and political intervention, experimentation, and contestation fully emerged.” With the fall of the Old Regime and the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe and the United States, “traditional” forms of social arrangements, which bound the individual to feudal society, gave way before a new human type, homo economicus, the atomized individual in economic competition with all others and with human rights as bestowed by the Enlightenment. Along with the rise of industrial capitalism came the need for programs of social welfare, which integrate the individual into the common life of the nation. Governments, therefore, sought out the advice and assistance of the new human sciences in order to accomplish this.

As Eghigian, Andreas Killen, and Christine Leuenberger argue, “Changes in economic life both presented an expanded field of opportunities for individuals and exposed them to new kinds of shocks, injuries, and afflictions. Recognition of the extent to which the self was at risk from a host of social ills and of the uneven social distribution of these ills gave a further impetus to the emerging human sciences. The latter now involved themselves with a cluster of issues collectively known as the “social question.” The problems of nineteenth century society seemed ripe for scientific analysis and experimentation. So specialists in fields such as psychiatry,

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8 Discipline and Punish, 16.
10 Greg Eghigian, The Self as Scientific and Political Project, 6. (Forthcoming.)
criminology, and sociology took on the task of interpreting and offering solutions to these problems: revolution, delinquency, crime, illness, prostitution, alcoholism.”

The Mind Cure and Mysticism

While these specialists within the human sciences worked with government agencies to resolve the “social question,” others throughout the nineteenth century, such as Phineas P. Quimby, who invented the “mind cure,” claimed to discover the sources of social problems, and of disease, within the human mind and sought therapeutic methods of relief based on a rational/mystical synthetic understanding of the self. At the core of both New Thought and Christian Science, movements of mental healing that might be thought of as nineteenth century precursors to the human potential movement, was a therapeutic vision, as Moskowitz suggests, that “everything was possible and that man through the power of his mind could control his health and his happiness.” Such theories of therapeutic mental self-control or self-manipulation, which owe something to the work of Franz Anton Mesmer, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the Swedish mystic-scientist Emanuel Swedenborg, castigated both religion and science as purveyors of wrongful thinking that undermined the relationship of the self with itself and with the “higher power.” In his voluminous Science of Mental Health and Happiness, Quimby went so far as to argue not only that “religion and disease are synonymous,” but also that medical science wrongfully sought the causes of disease in the realm of the material or

11 Eghigian, 10.


13 Ibid, 20. Although the differences between New Thought and Christian Science are of little importance here, they should probably, nonetheless, be noted. Charles Braden outlines these differences as follows: Christian Science was authoritarian in its outlook, viewing Mary Baker Eddy’s pronouncements as final revelation. Christian Science tended to accentuate the negative (“disease does not exist”), while New Thought tended to accentuate the positive (“I am well, I am whole, I am perfect.”) and, finally, Christian Scientists, unlike advocates of New Thought, were
physiological.\textsuperscript{14} As Jenkins writes, “If disease existed only as thought, then only by curing the mind could the body be set right: disease was a matter of wrong belief.”\textsuperscript{15} And the way to cure the mind, according to New Thought, and in anticipation of William James, was to align it with the divine.\textsuperscript{16}

Decades prior to the emergence of psychoanalysis, by stressing the mind as the source of both disease and of social problems, and through advocating forms of psychological excavation and inquiry, Quimby, so Moskowitz argues, helped lay the basis for the modern therapeutic ethos that Philip Rieff found triumphant in the middle of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{17} Mowskowitz, in fact, views Quimby as a sort-of father of the therapeutic ethos that medicalized feelings. “New Thought’s psychologized vision of life,” she writes, “exceeded the bounds not only of the era’s morality but also of its medicine. Its medicalization of a whole range of feelings set it apart from late Victorianism. In conceiving of anger and doubt as diseases, New Thought challenged late-
nineteenth-century medical debate. In the 1880s and 1890s American medicine was still committed to a somatic interpretation of mental diseases. Thus, for example, George Beard in his famous book *American Nervousness*, of 1881, insisted that nervousness was ‘a physical and not a mental state.’ By contrast, New Thought embraced a far more psychological interpretation. Its promoters argued that debilitating emotions were a form of illness that required a special therapeutics, one that addressed the forces of mental causation. In medicalizing a whole range of feelings, New Thought legitimized a new kind of treatment for a new kind of problem.”

By the end of the nineteenth century, New Thought was so popular that Ralph Waldo Trine’s *In Tune with the Infinite* sold over a million and a half copies in the United States and was a favorite of both Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Henry Ford. The popularity of Christian Science and New Thought probably owes something to the rise of the new middle class toward the end of the nineteenth century. Advocates of “the mind cure” or “mental healing,” like the advocates of the human potential movement so many decades later, were generally white, Protestant, and middle-class, with the leisure time necessary to pursue such arcane, and perhaps self-indulgent, practices. Parker, however, suggests that it was a widespread sense of dissatisfaction with, and alienation from, the frenetic, clanking, industrial world that led many practitioners to find solace in an alternative, idealistic, semi-mystical worldview that sometimes went so far as to deny the very existence of matter.

Like the counterculturalists of the 1960s and 1970s, (also the products of the white, middle class), nineteenth century advocates of the mind cure witnessed the problems of industrial

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18 Moskowitz, 22.
20 Parker writes, “‘Matter’ was machines, giant corporations, evolution interpreted as fated, waste, cities, everything that made men uneasy by speed, noise, visual confusion, status uncertainty, or the sensation of physical weakness. Nervous exhaustion, neurasthenia, ‘Americanitis’ – these were the diseases of modern civilization.” Parker, 13.
21 Ibid, 24.
capitalism, the very problems that the psychiatrists, social scientists, penologists, and statisticians who worked with government agencies to address, and retreated, at least in part, into the mystical and transcendental. The peculiar forms of mysticism advocated by mind curists, however, were individualistic, therapeutic, and based, like psychoanalysis, on an interpretation of the mind in which non-conscious psychological operations determine conscious thought.

Dresser is explicit on each of these points. As to the individualistic nature of New Thought, he wrote, “The new age began in part as a reaction against authority in favor of individualism and the right to test belief by personal experience… The history of the New Thought is for the most part the record of one of several contemporaneous movements in favor of the inner life and the individual.”22 This idea, of course, is one that 1960s countercultural theorists, such as Timothy Leary, Richard Alpert, or Ralph Metzner would have agreed with wholeheartedly, as they themselves sought individualistic paths into the “inner life” via psychedelic drugs. 1960s “psychedelic revolutionaries” and 1890s New Thought practitioners, furthermore, associated individualism with freedom. It is for this reason Leary called his organization in Millbrook, New York, which was devoted to self-transformation through the stylized, and ritualistic, usage of psychedelics, the International Federation for Internal Freedom (IFIF). It is also for this reason that Dresser could write, “The New Thought stands for the affirmation or freedom of the individual.”23

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century advocates of New Thought and of Christian Science thus transmitted ideals of liberation, autonomy, and human authenticity, combined with a desire to synthesize mysticism with rationality and therapeutics with religion. They sought to liberate the self from the false notions that they believed created disease and did so by allegedly

22 Dresser, 8 - 10.
23 Dresser, 275.
aligning human thought, and re-orienting the self, with “the divine.” They sought to promote human autonomy because it was rigid orthodoxy, both religious and scientific, which they claimed promoted the false notions that created disease, and social disorder, and from which they required liberation. And finally, their analyses of the human condition were based on notions of an inherent, essential, and mystical authentic self to which the individual needed to return through generally non-directive forms of therapeutic self-reflection. This line from Dresser illustrates this final point. “The disciple of the New Thought,” he wrote, “who knows the therapeutic experience from within would speak… of the different levels or planes of consciousness, and of the ideals with the highest level or ‘real self.’”

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century advocates of New Thought and Christian Science, however, were not the only ones working on this rather abstruse project. While the “mental healers” interpreted their efforts within a generally Christian framework, late nineteenth century occultists, both in the United States and Europe, sought something closely related, but added their understanding of Asian religious thought into the mix. “The next movement to be somewhat connected with mental healing was the theosophical movement,” Dresser noted toward the end of his history of the New Thought movement. Indeed, toward the close of the nineteenth century, Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society, along with such quasi-masonic and “magical” organizations as Aleister Crowley’s *Ordo Templi Orientis* and MacGregor Mathers’ Golden Dawn, also sought to transform the self into something liberated, autonomous, and “true.” While Dresser and the New Thought advocates and theorists recognized in Asian religious thinking something akin to their own work, as Christians they could not accept

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24 Ibid, 298.
doctrines, such as reincarnation, that directly contradict the fundamentals of Christian metaphysics.  

Vivekananda and The World Parliament of Religions

The first and foremost representative of Vedanta in the United States was the Hindu swami Narendra Nath Datta, more commonly known as Vivekananda, who formally introduced Americans to Hinduism with his widely praised lecture at the World Parliament of Religions, held at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Vivekananda was a student and disciple of the famous swami Ramakrishna who, as an important figure in the Hindu reform movements of the nineteenth century, sought to reconcile Hinduism with western Enlightenment ideals of science and rationality. “Hinduism as presented by Vivekananda,” as Hanegraff notes, “consisted essentially of an abstract philosophical version of Advaita Vedanta, perfectly adapted to modern western tastes. It confirmed Transcendentalist universalism; it claimed that Hinduism was fully compatible with Western science; it criticized ‘dogmatic Christianity’; but it did not

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25 Dresser writes, “It is a well known fact that mental healing has always been in vogue in India from ancient times. In the Upanishads there are teachings closely resembling those of the New Thought. Very little has been done, however, to trace out the resemblances. Representatives of the Vedanta philosophy who have lectured in the United States have called attention to certain points of contact between the ideas that prevail in the Orient and those originating independently in the Occident.” Ibid, 274.

26 Wouter J. Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1998), 461. Aside from Vivekenanda’s specific contribution to the World Parliament of Religions, and subsequent influence over later American theological developments, the event is notable, as Taylor argues, because it “reinforced not only the interaction among denominations, but also the interfaith discussion of beliefs and values. It set the stage for the discussion of religious pluralism in the modern world, and it is recognized as an important landmark in the current proliferation of multiculturalism... It’s most important effect, however, was less obvious. For the first time, the various religious ideas of Asia were presented to American audiences by Asians themselves. This trend, the import of which was not immediately understood, was to continue and would later have important consequences in the American counterculture during the second half of the twentieth century.” See Eugene Taylor, Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America. (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint Press, 1999), 188.
require of its admirers to look at themselves as pagans: Vivekananda could reassure his audience that, rumours to the contrary notwithstanding, "there is no polytheism in India."²⁷

Perhaps more importantly, Vivekananda stressed an idea that would become a mainstay of what philosopher of religion, Jacob Needleman, called the “new religions” of post-war America; the idea that at the heart of all religions is an essential, experiential, and transcendental, universal truth.²⁸ Vivekananda told his audience at the World Parliament of Religions, “As different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.”²⁹ This idea that all religions of the world point to a single divine experience, or “universal truth,” is one that also resonated with the alternative religious thinkers of the American Academy of Asian Studies (AAAS) in the 1950s, as well as with the counterculture and human potential movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Although Haridas Chaudhuri, Friedrich Spiegelberg, and Alan Watts, the three figures associated with the AAAS examined in chapter four, varied in their theological positions, each agreed, nonetheless, with Vivekananda’s supposition to the universality of religious truth. It was for this reason that Watts could blend his Zen Buddhist practice with his duties as an Episcopal chaplain at the Evanston, Illinois campus of Northwestern University in the late 1940s. Spiegelberg, furthermore, took the idea as his thesis in his survey of world religions, *Living Religions of the World*, in which he argued that since all religions point to a single, transcendental truth than no

²⁷ Ibid, 461.
²⁹ Taylor also notes that, “Sub rosa, hidden in the minds of many who planned the event, was the goal that such a congress would show once and for all the superiority of Christianity over all other religions. But so many articulate, thoughtful, and pious members of non-Christian faiths showed up that the un-spoken Christian agenda was quickly swept aside.” Taylor, 186 – 187.
particular organized religion could claim a monopoly on the divine. For Spiegelberg, as for Chaudhuri and Watts, that single, transcendental truth was nothing more, nor anything other, than a direct, personal apprehension of the “here and now.” To quote Spiegelberg directly:

Again and again we shall return to this here-and-now in our study of the religions of Mankind, for, if we do not, we run the danger of becoming abstractionists and hence out of touch with the immediate reality of that which has even been the decisive object of every religion deserving the name.

It may sound as though I were about to propose a definition of religion. I am not. To do so would be a fatal error, for religion is utter indefinable, as is its object. That object, the subject-matter of belief, is that here-and-now reality which vanishes into the past as soon as we try to pin it down.

Vivekananda’s visit to the United States thus represents a pivotal moment in the history of American religion, and in particular, of the history of East/West religious cross-fertilization in America; a phenomenon that would have a profound influence on the Beats, the counterculture, the human potential movement, and the alternative religious thinkers, such as those at the American Academy of Asian Studies, in the middle of the twentieth century. Because the basis of Vedanta philosophy is the supposed illusory nature of the material world, claiming that only Brahma, the formless Absolute, is real, it neatly dovetailed with the idealism of New Thought and gave some credence to the western occult philosophies that incorporated Asian religious ideas and practices, such as reincarnation and yoga, into their systems. At the heart of these systems, whether mind cure, Christian Science, Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, or Crowley’s system of Thelema (Greek for “Will”), was the desire to recreate the individual in ways that stressed liberation, autonomy, and human authenticity through syntheses of mysticism with

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31 Ibid, 7.
rationality and Western religious notions with those from Asia. In each of these systems resided the idea that the self was alienated from its “true” nature and therefore needed therapeutic “technologies” designed to find that true self, or cure the self, or expand the self, or otherwise free the self from delusion. Furthermore, in each of these systems, like the non-directive therapeutic practices of the post-war humanistic psychologists, it was wholly incumbent upon the individual to take responsibility for one’s own practice. No spiritual and secular authority could transmit the desired changes. They had to be acquired through one’s own effort.

In any case, Vivekenanda’s visit to the United States, in particular, and the World Parliament of Religions, more generally, presaged the renaissance of European and American interest in Asian religions that developed around the turn of the century and popularized by the 1920s. At the conclusion of the meeting, Vivekananda toured the United States, lectured at Harvard University, and opened Vedanta centers throughout the country and abroad. Furthermore, other Asian religious teachers began touring and lecturing in the United States, including Anagarika Dharmapala, who lectured at Harvard on Theravada Buddhist meditation techniques, Abdul-Baha who represented the Bahai branch of Islam, and Soyen Shaku, who taught Zen and the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism. In 1900, not only did Swami Abhedananda, another disciple of Ramakrishna, lecture to a gathering at the New Thought national convention, but was even formally introduced to President McKinley, indicating just how fashionable Asian religious teachings had become.

The Psychologization of Mysticism

32 Aleister Crowley’s theory of mysticism, for example, starts with the necessity of such yogic practices as Hatha Yoga (the yoga of the body), Pranayama (the yoga of measured and controlled breathing) and Mantra (the yoga of repeated prayer). See Crowley, Magick: Book Four. (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1994), 7 – 46.
33 Taylor, 190.
By the turn of the century, furthermore, psychologists, both in the United States and Europe, began to examine mysticism, mystical symbolism, and the occult, within a psychological context. William James and Carl Jung, in particular, joined Vivekananda in championing the idea that at the core of the religious experience resided essential, universal truths, or mystic experiences, that transcended any particular mythological or religious system. For James this conclusion resulted from his functionalist approach to the field of psychology in which, as Homans writes, he “postulated that the purpose or function of the organism, both biologically and psychologically, was adaptation to the social order.”

In regards the experience of religion, James, as philosophical pragmatist, concluded that personal religious engagement should be judged according to its psychological and social consequences which, needless to say, he found to be generally positive and leading toward what he called “healthy mindedness.” In Jamesian psychology the personal experience of the “divine” became a sort-of imperative to the healthy functioning of the individual and a way of approaching “reality” as valid as the scientific approach. In this way James confirmed the essence of Quimby’s “mind cure” notions and represents one point on a continuum that, in the United States, starts with Emerson and leads directly to the Human Potential Movement and the so-called New Age of the 1970s. James wrote, “Religion in the shape of the mind-cure gives to some of us serenity, moral poise, and happiness, and prevents certain forms of disease as well as science does, or even better in a

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34 Jenkins, 72.
37 Hanegraff notes that the similarities between James and Quimby are not accidental because, “[t]hey represent his attempt to come to terms with a popular religious psychology which showed more than superficial resemblances to his own viewpoint. James’s Varieties has been highlighted as the most representative text of the functionalist school of American psychology which, in turn, has been presented as the beginning of the so-called ‘Psychology and Religion Movement.’” This whole movement, which can be traced from the 1880s to today’s Human Potential
certain class of persons. Evidently, then, the science and the religion are both of them genuine keys for unlocking the world’s treasure-house to him who can use either of them practically.”

Like the mind curists, then, James promoted a sort-of pragmatic mysticism designed to bring about not only “healthy mindedness,” but a healthy body as well, and like Vivekenanda he promoted the idea that at the heart of world religions resided profound mystical “truths.”

In this way, James helped clear space for the eclectic mysticism of the counterculture and the human potential movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Carl Jung, however, also bares some responsibility for this and held a special place in the countercultural pantheon of heroes. Jung’s interest in mystical symbols, such as mandalas, his notion of the “collective unconscious,” his fascination with the I Ching and the Tibetan Book of the Dead, dovetailed perfectly with the countercultural interest in mysticism and Asian religious practices. It is hardly coincidental, therefore, that the publishers of Leary’s The Psychedelic Experience, based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead, included a commentary by Jung. For many counterculturalists, Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious seemed to imply that behind the world of “regular” consciousness lurked a vast and murky unmapped terrain of mystic symbolism that gave credence to notions of a universal divinity.

This idea of a universal divine “truth” at the heart of world religions, as noted earlier, became a mainstay of countercultural theology during the 1960s and 1970s and explains why counterculturalists could so easily incorporate such an eclectic mélange of ideas and symbols into their religious, or “spiritual,” practices. In the nineteenth century, the idea was originally

Movement, is a distinctly American phenomenon: no European nation has displayed a similar fascination with uniting religion and psychology as is found in the United States since the late 19th century.” See Hanegraff, 490.

38 Ibid, 122.


developed in the United States through the work of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau. In India, a short period later, it was transmitted from Ramakrishna to his disciple, Vivekananda, who eventually related it to his audience at the World Parliament of Religions and to advocates of New Thought who found it consistent with their own beliefs. It was adopted by James and Jung early in the twentieth century, thus bolstering its credence within scholarly circles, more generally. In the middle of the twentieth century the idea passed into the Beat movement, as well as into the work of alternative religious thinkers such as Watts, Spiegelberg, and Aldous Huxley. It also cross-fertilized with the work of humanistic psychologists, such as Abraham Maslow, emerging in the idea of the “peak experience” as something similar to nirvana. From there it passed into the counterculture, as well as into the counterculture’s upper-middle-class and upwardly mobile sibling at the Esalen Institute: the human potential movement. Here it found expression, in among other places, within the writings of mythologist, Joseph Campbell, and scientist, John C. Lilly. The idea also became a central notion within the work of Transpersonal psychologists, such as Charles Tart, who sought to categorize and delineate “altered states of consciousness,” and of Timothy Leary, who, through combining the usage of

41 Robert C. Fuller makes the connection between Emerson, James, and humanistic psychology explicit. He writes, “Like Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William James, (Carl) Rogers holds that authentic human action is a direct function of an inward identification with Being itself. According to the Rogerian notion of authenticity, no less than the Emersonian or Jamesian, by opening ourselves to the raw impressions of nature we can take hold of the spiritual principle of things. Thus ‘psychological congruence’ is to Rogers what ‘consent to Being in general’ was to Edwards, ‘divine influx’ to Emerson, and incursions from the ‘subliminal self’ to James. All point to the psychological process whereby individuals can apprehend, and become inwardly connected to, an immanent divinity.” See Fuller, Americans and the Unconscious. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 170.

42 Spiegelberg notes, Ramakrishna “concluded that all religions were equally true and all of them absolutely true, a central point in his doctrine, and one that cannot be too much stressed in evaluating him.” See Spiegelberg, Living Religions of the World. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), 202; Hanegraff, 461.

43 Charles Prebish writes that by the mid-1970s, “‘Peak experience’ was a frequent synonym for nirvana, and often one would hear a discussion of Charlotte Selver or ‘Rolfing’ in place of the expected discussion of D.T. Suzuki or satipatthana. The Human Potential Movement gave Buddhists a new language for expressing human problems.” See Prebish, “Reflections on the Transmission of Buddhism to America” in Needleman and Baker, Understanding the New Religions. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 165.

psychedelic drugs with various forms of Asian meditation, sought to personally, and permanently, reside in such a state.⁴⁵

This idea, of a universal mystical experience at the core of world religions, is significant to this study because it represents one particular and influential notion that, by the middle of the twentieth century, was used as an organizing principle for therapeutic self-transformation by counterculturalists and advocates of the human potential movement. In The Making of a Counter Culture, an early and influential study of the 1960s youth movement, Theodore Roszak, referring specifically to psychedelic drugs, put it this way: “If we accept the proposition that the counter culture is, essentially, an exploration of the politics of consciousness, then psychedelic experience falls into place as one, but only one, possible method of mounting that exploration. It becomes a limited chemical means to a greater psychic end, namely, the reformulation of the personality, upon which social ideology and culture generally are ultimately based.”⁴⁶

The Diminished Self

As the American economy boomed following World War II, and as mass consumer culture consolidated its place at the heart of the American social order, social critics, cultural critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers, worried that the character of the American middle-class was changing in undesirable ways. They argued that large, vertically-structured institutions of power, such as universities and corporations, encouraged American selves that were diminished and inauthentic. Influential social scientists such as William H. Whyte, Jr., David Riesman, and C. Wright Mills, the social critics of this study,

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warned that the American middle-class was becoming, in the words of Riesman, a body of “other-directed” conformists who wanted little more from their lives than job security, peer approval, and the paltry entertainments of mass culture.\textsuperscript{47} In \textit{The Lonely Crowd}, Riesman saw long, broad shifts from a folk-based “tradition-directed” social character of the pre-modern world to the “inner-directed” social character of the nineteenth century liberal capitalist and skilled craftsman to, in the middle of the twentieth century, the “other-directed” conformist, white-collar corporate climber.\textsuperscript{48}

The self, therefore, according to Riesman, or at least, the white, middle-class, male American self, was in decline and submerging itself within “group-think.” Whyte, in \textit{The Organization Man}, echoed this assessment, though in different terms. Building off Weber’s idea of the Protestant Ethic, Whyte suggested that the typical values of that ethic, the values of thrift, hard work, self-reliance, and competitive struggle, had culminated in the nineteenth century under the conditions of both industrial capitalism and small town agriculture, but were gradually replaced in the twentieth century by the values of what he called the Social Ethic. The Social Ethic, according to Whyte, was the emerging moral imperative to find meaning and emotional sustenance within the wisdom of the collective as represented by the organization. Whatever the type of the organization, corporate, military, educational, or otherwise, it in essence “owned” the Organization Man.\textsuperscript{49} The Organization Man, therefore, knew not liberty, autonomy, nor human authenticity. He was, within Whyte’s schema, perhaps something less than human. As

\textsuperscript{47} Similar characterizations, it should be noted, continue to inform the analyses of various psychologists and cultural critics. Cushman, for example, claims that the current prevailing configuration of the self is the “empty self” which he defines as “a self that experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning – a self that experiences these social absences and their consequences ‘interiorly’ as a lack of personal conviction and worth; a self that embodies the absences, loneliness, and disappointments of life as a chronic, undifferentiated emotional hunger.” See Cushman, 79.


portrayed by Whyte, and no less by Riesman, he was a sort-of *cog* in the organizational machine. It was C. Wright Mills, however, whom, while also examining the relationship of this “cog” to the organization as controlled by the “power elite,” translated “personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals.”

By placing the argument within these terms, Mills implied that the “personal is political” and thereby foreshadowed an idea that would dominate 1960s left-political discourse.

Cultural critics, meanwhile, such as Dwight Macdonald, Clement Greenberg, and Theodore Adorno, among others, suggested that what made life within the vast American *lonely crowd* bearable were the entertainments consumed within mass culture. If large institutions of power required, created, and owned the diminished American selves that served their organizational needs, other similar institutions, associated with entertainment and sport, created the mass cultural products, or *kitsch*, consumed by these, in May’s words, “hollow people.” The consumption of *kitsch*, Macdonald argued, served a social and political function. Although it provided relief from the day-to-day monotony of allegedly diminished selves, it also reinforced that diminishment through debasing American culture, more generally, and did so in the service of corporate profits. Criticisms of cheap *faux* cultural and consumer products were thus criticisms of the social-economic order, more generally. While Greenberg and Macdonald suggested that *kitsch* reinforced competitive capitalism, Adorno and Irving Howe also suggested that it promoted totalitarianism by crushing individuality.

If the social critics and cultural critics explained what they understood to be the fundamental problems of western and American social-economic relationships, it was the

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humanistic psychologists, such as Rogers, Maslow, and May, as well as the alternative religious thinkers, such as those at San Francisco’s American Academy of Asian Studies, including Alan Watts, Haridas Chaudhuri, and Frederic Spiegelberg, that sought solutions. It is not coincidental, therefore, that the certain practices associated with, and advocated through, humanistic psychology, such as non-directive group therapy, progressive child-rearing, and participatory business management, came into vogue in the 1950s and 1960s. In the wake of European fascism, the cultural critics and social critics created the theoretical space within which humanistic psychology operated, within which the “therapeutic ethos” thrived, and did so through the implication that the prevailing American middle-class self was fast becoming a diminished, conformist, unfree, and inauthentic agent with potentially fascistic leanings. Rather than seeking economic solutions to the flawed market economy within which May’s “hollow people” lived, the humanistic psychologists took the self, in its relation to others within social institutions, as the site of experimentation and inquiry. It was the function of humanistic psychology, therefore, to invent methods by which this allegedly inauthentic self could be evaluated, diagnosed, therapeutized, and humanized without upsetting the prevailing social, political, or economic relationships.

The Social Movements and the Counterculture

Taking the underground press of the 1960s and 1970s as its subject, chapter three endeavors to show the ways in which the values of liberation, autonomy, and human


authenticity, embedded in the writings of the social critics, cultural critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers, influenced the social movements and the counterculture of this period. Focusing specifically on the countercultural press (the Oracle), the radical feminist underground press (off our backs, Ain’t I a Woman, It Ain’t Me Babe), the underground military press (the Bond, the Ally, A Four Year Bummer), and the New Left underground press (the Los Angeles Free Press), this section argues that each part of the Movement of the 1960s and 1970s sought a social transformation devoted to humanistic values in opposition to what they perceived to be a dishonest, violent, sexist, and de-humanized “culture of death.” Counterculturalists, radical feminists, and anti-war activists within the military did not only wish to change American society into something more peaceful, more humane, and more just, but sought, through their individual projects, to reclaim their own humanity. By the decade’s end, however, as my study of the Oracle and the L.A. Free Press demonstrates, the divisive nature of the conflict between, on the one side, counterculturalists and New Leftists and, on the other side, what they called “the establishment,” grew so rancorous that in the process of reclaiming themselves from the society they had grown to despise many counterculturalists and New Leftists sometimes came to deny the humanity of “ordinary” people. Through raising Charles Manson to the level of a saint, as did the L.A. Free Press, or through claiming that regular Americans were merely “ant people,” as Timothy Leary did in the pages of the Oracle, some counterculturalists and New Leftists came to betray the very ideals upon which their movements rested.

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53 One very important aspect of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s which I do not discuss, is the black freedom struggle or the rise of Black Nationalism out of the Civil Rights Movement. Although the importance of Civil Rights to radical feminism, to the New Left, to the counterculture, and to American society, more generally, is hardly in dispute, the subject is simply too large to receive the treatment that it would deserve in this study. It is with a certain regret, therefore, that I leave it aside in the hopes that its absence will not detract too seriously from the overall project.
Democratic Idealism in the American Family and Business Culture

If, as has often been noted, World War I fostered an atmosphere of cynicism, particularly within literature and the arts, World War II, on the contrary, fostered an atmosphere of democratic idealism that dovetailed with the optimism of humanistic psychology and found expression in progressive child-rearing techniques and participatory business management during the 1950s and 1960s. This growing tendency in the post-war years toward greater liberty within the family as well as within American business culture, the subject of chapter four of this study, was, moreover, consistent with American Cold War political rhetoric that emphasized the values of freedom and independence counterpoised against Communist and fascist totalitarianism. On this point Maslow was explicit. He wrote, [T]o the patriotic American… it would be impressive to point out the new kind of management is a form of patriotism and love of country…”54 The new kind of management that Maslow referred to was participatory management, sometimes called the social relations theory of management, that Maslow, among others, such as Douglas McGregor, championed in the third-quarter of the twentieth century.

Maslow believed that institutional relationships based upon the traditional authoritarian model were not only counterproductive to corporate profits, but suppressed the creativity and satisfaction of the worker. In order to test this hypothesis, in 1962 Maslow helped entrepreneur Andrew Kay, the owner of Non-Linear Systems, Incorporated, in Del Mar, California, reorient his company along the lines of participatory management theory. Toward this end, Kay, on Maslow’s suggestion, eliminated the use of time clocks, written employee evaluations, and even

formal production records. Each employee thus came and went with little in the way of official oversight. Although the experiment ultimately failed, what is significant here are the similarities in values between participatory management, progressive child-rearing, humanistic psychology, as well as the counterculture and Human Potential Movement.

Indeed, all of these trends drew from the same sources and thus exhibited similar assumptions concerning the nature of human beings. Just as Maslow suggested that worker efficiency could be increased by allowing the employee greater autonomy in the workplace, so advocates of progressive child-rearing suggested that children could better learn to compete in the system of American capitalism if their parents allowed them significant free-reign in their behavior and activities. Furthermore, just as Maslow suggested that employees should be encouraged to exercise their critical faculties in the workplace by questioning the methods of the boss, so advocates of progressive child-rearing suggested that children should be, in the words of Dominick Cavallo, “encouraged to question the rationales of the rules and restrictions imposed upon them.” This embrace of the values of freedom, autonomy, and critical inquiry, both in the workplace and in the home, reflected the values embedded in such practices as non-directive group therapy, as developed by Carl Rogers, and in the Human Potential Movement, more generally. This is hardly surprising given the fact that it was the humanistic trend in psychology that was responsible for participatory management theory, progressive child-rearing, and the various forms of group therapy that became quite popular in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Counterculture and the Human Potential Movement

It is a short jump from encouraging individual autonomy, creativity, and independent intellectual thought to encouraging a radically independent spirit that refuses to conform to the social requirements of one’s culture. Such was the case with the counterculture, and as applied to religion, to human potential movement, as well. The values of liberation, autonomy, and human authenticity, moreover, that informed both the therapeutic ethos and the humanist trend in psychology, also lay at the heart of the counterculture and the human potential movement. This, too, should not be surprising because the very people that influenced the counterculture, such as Aldous Huxley and Alan Watts, were themselves heavily influenced by humanistic psychology, and were, in fact, among the architects of the human potential movement. Chapters five of this study thus endeavors to show how the work of the teachers at the American Academy of Asian Studies (AAAS) in the 1950s, such as Alan Watts, Friedrich Spiegelberg, and Haridas Chuadhuri, were influenced by humanistic psychology and Asian religious thought, and how, in turn, they influenced the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, as a mystical/religious project. In the 1950s, poet and countercultural hero, Gary Snyder, for example, studied Zen Buddhism at the Academy under Alan Watts prior to his sojourn to Japan for more formal Zen Buddhist instruction. Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, and other Beat poets often visited the Academy, sitting in on lectures or attending seminars. What is perhaps most significant, however, is that it was at the AAAS that the notion of a psychological/mystical synthesis was developed years prior to either the counterculture or the human potential movement. The Esalen Institute of Big Sur, California, the subject of chapter six, was (and is) the foremost institution devoted to the human potential movement, or the growth movement, as it is sometimes called and the idea of
evolutionary synthesis was central to its founding vision; syntheses of mind/body, of East/West, of mysticism and science, of psychology and theology, even of religion and sport. Its founders, Michael Murphy and Richard Price, both of whom studied psychology at Stanford University, were also students of the AAAS and credit that institution with providing them much of the inspiration to for Esalen. If Snyder was most influenced by Alan Watts among faculty at the Academy, Murphy was most influenced by the charismatic Spiegelberg, with whom he studied at Stanford University prior to his involvement with the AAAS. Both Spiegelberg and Chaudhuri, however, were devotees of the Indian sage Sri Aurobindo and it was Aurobindo who, in his mammoth The Life Divine, put forth his philosophy of “integral yoga,” or “integral philosophy,” arguing for a synthesis of Eastern spiritual doctrines and Western forms of rationality, for the idea that at the core of every major religion resides the same mystic truth, as well as for the idea that humanity is “evolving” in a spiritual direction. In this way Aurobindo followed Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in claiming, in the words of Chaudhuri, “that all the historical religions and spiritual disciplines, if sincerely followed, lead to the same goal, namely, the luminous apprehension of the Spirit or immediate contact with the Divine Reality.”

These notions of spiritual evolution, of a common mystic reality at the core of world religions, and of the desirability of harmonizing rationality and materialism with mysticism, were at the core of the human potential movement, heavily influenced the counterculture, and found

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59 Ibid, 1.
60 Chaudhuri put it this way, “Integral philosophy brings together in a harmonious fusion the seemingly conflicting world views of science and spirituality. It holds that whereas science discloses the relational structure of the infinitely differentiated universe, spirituality provides a glimpse of the mystery of Being, the ultimate ground of the same universe, the nontemporal depth dimension of the cosmic whole.” See Chaudhuri, Being, Evolution & Immortality: An Outline of Integral Philosophy (Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publish House, 1974), 184.
their way into mainline religious organizations such as San Francisco’s Episcopal community at Grace Cathedral, the subject of chapter six. Furthermore, it was via these ideas that advocates of each movement underwent various practices, whether deep massage or encounter group therapy at Esalen, or psychedelic experimentation on Haight Street, designed to produce an epistemological transformation of the self. Both wings of this movement for self-transformation saw themselves on the cusp of a grand evolutionary leap and they were determined to do whatever they could do to push that evolution forward. In the early days of Esalen, Murphy and Price spoke of The Vision. “This was a vision of what was happening in the world,” writes Walter Truett Anderson, “or what could perhaps be made to happen: a major cultural change, an evolutionary leap, a psychological revolution. The Vision was forming, it was powerful, and yet it was elusive.”

This highly optimistic vision of personal and social evolution was also a mainstay of the counterculture. When Alan Watts, Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, and Gary Snyder met shortly after the Human Be-In for the “Houseboat Summit” to determine the next steps in the “psychedelic revolution” the idea of cultural revolution as humanity’s next inevitable evolutionary step was at the heart of the conversation.

What the counterculture and human potential movement held in common with such things as progressive child-rearing and participatory management theory was the presence of humanistic psychology as an ideological well-spring. Although the Beat writers, the civil rights movement, rock ‘n roll music, and the Vietnam War contributed to the development of the counterculture, the humanistic psychologists also influenced the rise of the counterculture, as well as the human potential movement, and represents a sort-of cultural hinge around which

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various developments in American society revolved. It is the theoretical interconnectedness of these developments that is the primary subject of this study.

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Chapter 1

Invasion of the Body Snatchers:
The Critics of Mass Culture and the Diminished American Self

In the famous 1957 film, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, aliens attempt to colonize Earth by replacing humans with pod-spawned clones. The movie’s main character, Dr. Miles Bennel, knows that if he sleeps his body will be replaced by an alien body; his mind will be replaced by an alien mind; his individuality will be absorbed by an alien collective. Though the movie is sometimes interpreted as expressing American Cold War suspicions of the Soviet Union, the idea of a declining American individualism was widespread in the middle of the twentieth-century and not limited to fears of Communist infiltration. In the 1940s and 1950s, many thinkers suggested that American individualism went into decline for social-historical reasons. Social critics, such as William H. Whyte, Jr., cultural critics, such as Dwight Macdonald, and humanistic psychologists, such as Abraham Maslow, identified large organizational structures, such as corporations, and the relentless spread of “mass culture,” as responsible for the diminishment of an American sense of autonomous selfhood. Although the influence of many of these scholars on Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the New Left has been explored elsewhere, very few have examined them with an eye toward the counterculture, the human potential movement, and the movements for social justice, more generally.

The social movements of the 1960s, including the hip counterculture, reflected the analyses of these thinkers because they based their criticisms of American life not only on questions of social injustice and war, but on the idea that American culture created diminished and inauthentic identities. Black Nationalists believed that a dominating white-Anglo American
culture warped authentic black identities. Feminists believed that a sexist, male-dominated
culture warped authentic female identities. Counterculturalists stressed that a “plastic,”
corporate-consumerist American culture quashed healthy and authentic human relations, as well
as inherent spiritual potentials.

This chapter will outline the arguments of these social critics, cultural critics, and
humanistic psychologists concerning the supposed diminishment of American selfhood in the
middle of the twentieth-century and will attempt to show what they had in common with 1960s
movement ideologies.

The Social Critics

In *The Organization Man*, William H. Whyte, Jr., referred to a device invented in the
mid-1950s: the Group-Thinkometer. He described it in the following way:

The Group-Thinkometer is an electric meter the dial of which is graduated in degrees of
interest. Feeding into it are ten remote-control switches which can be distributed around,
or under, the table, and by pressing the switch members of the group indicate approval or
disapproval. Since the needle on the meters shows only the accumulated group reaction,
one can veto a colleague’s idea without his being the wiser… Extreme? The Harwald
Company has only concretized, you might say, the underlying principles of group
philosophy.65

The Group-Thinkometer is an excellent example of the type of instrument, representing
the type of thinking that mid-century social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists
dreaded. Scholars such as Whyte, David Riesman, and C. Wright Mills worried about the
autonomy of the individual within a mass consumer culture dominated by large vertically
structured organizations, such as corporations and universities. They considered instruments like

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64 Steven Schwartz, *From West to East: California and the Making of the American Mind*. (New York: The Free
the Group-Thinkometer to be culturally toxic because it was based on the supposed desirability of erasing the prickly contours of individual thinking in favor of the collective wisdom of the organizational group.

As champions of the individual in conflict with the organization, these scholars influenced the social movements of the 1960s. The social movements, in turn, influenced recent historiography of the 1950s and the 1960s. Polar interpretations that set the 1960s against the 1950s or the social movements against the mainstream, broadly characterize these portrayals. Though activists of the 1960s integrated analyses of economic injustice with those of racial injustice, war, and later in the decade, gender injustice and the environment, it was the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologist of the 1940s and 1950s that laid ground for the influential idea, first articulated by second-wave feminist Carol Hanisch, that “the personal is political.”

Many scholars in the 1950s, because of the rising economic affluence of much of the United States, emphasized not the problems of economic injustice, but the social and psychological problems of the middle-class after World War II. Since an increase in national wealth was allegedly ridding the United States of poverty, the post-war social critics turned their attention toward the social and psychological issues of the middle-class in its relation to the “powers that be.”

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67 For example, David M. Potter suggested, “it may be that we have emphasized [abundance] too much as an economic fact and not enough as a social one – that we have not sufficiently considered the pervasive influence of abundance upon many aspect of our lives which have no obvious relation to the standard of living. For certainly it is an influence that impinges upon all American social conditions and contributes in the most fundamental way to the shaping of the American culture and the American character.” See: David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), 84.
Whyte, Assistant Managing Editor for *Fortune* magazine under Henry Luce, suggested that it was precisely “their values that will set the American temper” in the years to come.\(^6^9\)

Nonetheless, as Richard H. Pells notes in *The Liberal Mind in the Conservative Age*, “[t]he primary danger was no longer social inequality but standardization and uniformity, not economic exploitation but the moral consequences of abundance.” These consequences included the appearance of a new social type on the American scene, what Whyte would call the Organization Man.

Whyte and Riesman, foremost among 1950s interpreters of the middle-class social climate, described the rise and characteristics of a new American type. The Organization Man, in Whyte’s terminology, or the “other-directed” social type, in Riesman’s, eagerly sublimated the self within the group and deified the organization, corporate or otherwise, in exchange for the rewards of mass consumerism. It was not, according to Whyte, that the Social Ethic, the ethic of conformity typical of the Organization Man, created individuals overly submissive to formalized authority, but that it created individuals overly submissive to informal group authority within organizations. The character type associated with the Social Ethic, the Organization Man, was thus not anti-democratic, but too democratic.

In the 1950s, Whyte, Riesman, and Mills, each centered much of their criticisms on this new social character.\(^7^0\) Each argued that because of the intimate nature of nineteenth-century industrialism with the rise of the early great corporations, the prevailing social character of the nation had, certainly by the end of World War II, significantly changed. Social character,

\(^{6^9}\) Whyte, 3.

\(^{7^0}\) It is important to note the distinction between social character and national character. National character is a subset of social character and has a distinct, though overlapping, historiography. In this study, I will limit myself to a discussion of social character because the question of national character, to the extent that it remains a relevant concept in a country as pluralistic as the United States, opens up an entirely different set of historiographical questions that are not directly related to my thesis.
therefore, depended upon prevailing economic conditions and the institutions through which the economy functioned. As economic conditions changed, the nature of the organizations also changed, requiring different forms of social character. As Riesman concisely put it, “Social character is the product of social forms…” This new form of social character in the twentieth-century lived not within High Culture, nor within Folk Culture, but isolated, yet submerged, within Mass Culture.

For Whyte, following Weber, the transition was from a social character associated with the Protestant Ethic in the nineteenth-century to a social character associated with the Social Ethic in the twentieth-century. By Protestant Ethic, Whyte meant a series of values, such as thrift, hard work, self-reliance, and competitive struggle, through which the individual ensured his personal salvation and that were appropriate to the early-mid nineteenth-century American economy of small manufacturers and skilled craftsmen. By Social Ethic, he meant a moral imperative to see the group as the source of life’s meaning. This was the ethic of the Organization Man, whom Whyte claimed “belonged” to the organization. This was the ethic, he

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71 Erich Fromm, a leading theorizer of social character, did not specifically tie social character to economic conditions. He suggested, rather, that “social character is molded by the mode of existence of a given society; and that in their turn the dominant character traits become the productive forces shaping the social process.” Fromm, 296 - 297. In other words, culture creates social character, just as it is simultaneously created by social character, in a never-ending complex interplay of historically contingent factors, including, though not limited to, economic factors. See: Erich Fromm.


73 Dwight Macdonald wrote, “For the masses are in historical time what a crowd is in space: a large quantity of people unable to express themselves as human beings because they are related to one another neither as individuals nor as members of communities – indeed, they are not related to each other at all, but only to something distant, abstract, nonhuman: a football game or bargain sale in the case of a crowd, a system of industrial production, a party or a State in the case of the masses.” (His italics.) See: MacDonald, “A Theory of Mass Culture.” Diogenese, No. 3, Summer, 1953, 1-17.

74 The theorizers of social character owe something to Max Weber’s idea that the Protestant Reformation created an cultural atmosphere which stressed, in his words, a “moral emphasis on and the religious sanction of, organized worldly labor in a calling...”. In other words, the Reformation, according to Weber, created a cultural atmosphere in which the Protestant Ethic of restraint, frugality, and work as a “calling,” emerged, thus laying the social conditions within which capitalism could flourish. It is a short-step from this to organizing the attributes of the Protestant Ethic within a theoretical “social character.” See: Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 83.
argued, that was appropriate to the kind of large organizations (corporate, military, educational, and otherwise) dominant in the twentieth-century.

For Riesman, the historical transitions of social character as outlined in *The Lonely Crowd* were shifts from a pre-modern “tradition-directed” social character to an “inner-directed” social character to the social character defined by “other-directedness” in the twentieth-century United States. These “ideal types,” he stressed, were rarely distinct and each could be found in the subsequent period. The tradition-directed character, as defined by Riesman, was the individual whose highest values were grounded in obedience to the slow changing traditions of non-capitalist folk culture in which kin or tribe comprise the basic unit of the society. In contrast, the inner-directed social character was the social character appropriate to the Renaissance, the Reformation, and societies “characterized by increased personal mobility, by a rapid accumulation of capital (and by) intensive expansion in the production of goods and people, and extensive expansions in exploration, colonization, and imperialism.” According to Riesman, the greater choices available in such cultures required individuals who can make decisions based neither on the traditions of the group, nor on peer-group pressure, but on goals as defined by the culture’s “elders.”

The inner-directed individual, it should be noted, was therefore no less “conformist” than the other-directed individual. He merely conformed to the teachings of parents, rather than to the teachings of the tribe or to the peer-group. It was in the peer-group that the supposedly typical modern Western individual, the bureaucratic other-directed man, found his source of inspiration and cues for personal behavior. Associated with cultures in which the average numbers of workers engaged in production and the extraction of material resources declined while the

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75 Whyte, 7.
76 Riesman, 11 – 13.
numbers of workers engaged in white-collar work and the service trades increased, the other-directed individual’s primary motivation was peer-group approval.

C. Wright Mills described this “new man” on the post-war American cultural scene, this new middle-class social character, as a faceless and rudderless unit submerged in mass society and manipulated by the “power elite” in both work and leisure. In *White Collar* he argued:

> By examining white-collar life, it is possible to learn something about what is becoming more typically “American” than the frontier character probably ever was. What must be grasped is the picture of society as a great salesroom, an enormous file, and incorporated brain, a new universe of management and manipulation. By understanding these diverse white-collar worlds, one can also understand better the shape and meaning of modern society as a whole, as well as the simple hopes and complex anxieties that grip all the people who are sweating it out in the middle of the twentieth century.\(^78\)

This powerless “typical” American, according to Mills, was even more vulnerable to elite manipulation than was the nineteenth-century factory worker because of the influence of mass culture.\(^79\) If in “traditional” American culture the social order revolved around the family and the school and the church, in post-war American culture the social order revolved around the needs of large and powerful bureaucracies: political, economic, and military. The products of mass culture, that is the cultural products of these hegemonic bureaucracies, bound American society together through an allegiance to the institutions controlled by the elite. Because, in Mills scheme, the individual was an isolated, culturally displaced, and fearful unit, rendered so by the failure of traditional eighteenth and nineteenth-century certitudes and social forms, he

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\(^{77}\) Riesman, 15.


\(^{79}\) By the 1950s, Dwight MacDonald argued for the term “mass culture” over “popular culture” because “its distinctive mark is that it is solely and directly an article for mass consumption, “like chewing gum.” Unlike folk cultural productions that developed slowly and organically from “below,” mass cultural productions were quickly and artificially imposed from “above.” Macdonald stressed that Mass Culture is not the opposite of High Culture, but an infantalizing and parasitic cultural form created by corporate technicians who mined High Culture for content. It thereby integrated “the masses into a debased form of High Culture and thus (became) an instrument of political domination.” See: MacDonald, “A Theory of Mass Culture.” *Diogenese*, No. 3, Summer, 1953, 1-17.
made “excellent material for synthetic molding at the hands of popular culture – print, film, radio, and television.”

Mills, who has been called an “outlaw” of the academe for his contentious views, stressed that with the bureaucratization of power, power relations had become largely invisible to the great majority of Americans. No longer was the primary exercise of power linear and visible, that of the business owner over the employee or that of the monarch over his subject. In the post-war world, power had become dispersed within an opaque and interlocking hierarchy of corporate bureaucrats working within the military, the government, and America’s major corporations. In *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills argued that it was the foremost task of sociology to provide the individual with methods of revealing just how this interlocking, bureaucratized system functioned in society and to translate, “personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals.”

It was precisely this message, that the “personal is political,” that would inspire so much of the movement activity of the 1960s.

**The Cultural Critics**

This characterization of the mid-twentieth-century American white, middle-class as diminished, as conformist, as confused, spread into American culture not merely through the work of scholarly critics, but also through the popular cultural productions that the critics derided. In movies, books, and magazine articles throughout the 1950s, the American middle-class was presented with an unflattering image of itself as, in Mills’ term, a “rudderless unit.” Where there is a struggle to maintain personal integrity in these works, the individual struggling

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80 White Collar, xvi.
is generally someone who is either outside of organizational culture or who is put in the position of struggling against organizational requirements. For example, in *Rebel Without a Cause*, James Dean’s Organization Man dad is a thoroughly diminished, and in this case, hen-pecked, personality type who wears an apron around the house while advising his son to avoid trouble with a rowdy leather-jacketed classmate. It is Dean’s character, naturally, that has the wherewithal to make a stand, precisely because he has yet to conform to the requirements of an organizational structure. In the 1940s and 1950s, however, critics of mass culture suggested that television, movies, radio shows, and popular literature and magazines, eroded the American sense of autonomous self-hood. The entertainment of the masses, they argued, were not only of poor quality, but furthered the diminishment of their personalities, thus composing them as a “mass.”

The 1950s concerns over the diminishment of the individual within dominating institutions of power owe much to earlier criticisms of primarily left-wing intellectuals and cultural critics from the 1930s and 1940s. Although some conservative scholars by the 1930s, such as Jose Ortega y Gasset and T.S. Eliot, reviled mass culture not only because they thought that the general quality of radio shows and movies was intolerably poor, but because they believed, along with leftists like Dwight Macdonald, that popular culture crushed individuality. In *Revolt of the Masses*, Ortega y Gasset complained bitterly of the rise of “the masses” to positions of social control under circumstances of “hyperdemocracy.” “The characteristic of the hour,” he wrote in 1932, “is that the commonplace mind, knowing itself to be commonplace, has the assurance to proclaim the rights of the commonplace and to impose them wherever it will. As they say in the United States: ‘to be different is to be indecent.’ The mass crushes beneath it everything that is different, everything that is excellent, individual, qualified or select. Anybody
who is not like everybody, who does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated… Here we have the formidable fact of our times, described without any concealment of the brutality of its features.\textsuperscript{82}

By World War II, however, the majority of mass culture criticisms came from left-intellectuals endeavoring to understand the failure of socialism in the United States and the relationships between individuals and the state during a time of social flux, widespread suffering, and the spread of totalitarianism. It was the analyses of people such as Macdonald, Irving Howe, Theodore Adorno of the Frankfurt School, and art critic Clement Greenberg, in the 1940s that directly influenced the later famous works of Riesman and Whyte. By the 1940s, furthermore, C. Wright Mills had already formulated his criticisms of dominating institutions as destructive to the human spirit.

In an April 1944, article for Macdonald’s “little magazine,” \textit{Politics}, Mills wondered about the social price of powerful institutions on, in this case, American intellectual life. In “The Powerless People: The Role of the Intellectual in Society,” he suggested, “to understand what is happening in American intellectual life we have to consider the social position of its creators, the intellectuals. We have to realize the effect upon them of certain deep-lying trends of modern social organization.”\textsuperscript{83} Here Mills already connected the negative effects of large organizations on the integrity of the individual with an idea that would gain widespread prominence in the 1960s: that the political, cultural, and personal realms are intimately connected and intertwined; that the personal is, indeed, political. “Tragedy,” Mills argued, “may be experienced as a personal discovery and a personal burden, but it is also a reflex of objective circumstances. It

\textsuperscript{82} Jose Ortega y Gasset, \textit{The Revolt of the Masses} (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932), 11-19.
arises from the fact that at the centers of public decision there are powerful men who do not themselves suffer the violent results of their own decisions.”

In the large institutions of intellect, such as the major universities and the big presses, according to Mills, a sort-of self-censorship developed as a result of the influence of what he would later term “the power elite.” “An increasing number of intellectually equipped men and women” he insisted, “work within powerful bureaucracies and for the relatively few who do the deciding. And if the intellectual is not directly hired by such organizations, then by little steps and in many self-deceptive ways he seeks to have his published opinion conform to the limits set by them and by those whom they do directly hire.” The intellectuals within these institutions of power, he argued in Politics, slowly and sometimes unconsciously succumbed to an impulse for safety that took the form of aligning one’s intellectual production to the requirements of the organization over the intellectual independence necessary for vital academic discussion. In other words, according to Mills, even on the higher level of cultural discourse the products being generated, as with mass cultural productions, served the requirements of the organization at the expense of the individual mind.

Between 1944 and 1949, Politics magazine became a center for the analysis of a wide variety of interrelated topics, from American foreign policy, to the betrayal of socialism by the Soviet Union, to the state of the arts in the United States. Since the leading voices of the magazine, such as Mills and Macdonald, were also leading critics of mass culture, the magazine constantly evoked the theme of lost individuality due, not just to the large institutions of American capitalism, but the influence of these institutions on American cultural productions. In the inaugural issue of Politics, Macdonald published his “A Theory of Popular Culture” which

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84 Ibid, 69.
85 Ibid, 70. In more recent decades, this idea has also been championed by MIT linguist, Noam Chomsky.
stressed that popular culture, by definition, is culture manufactured strictly for the market, “like toothpaste.”

Developing a theme that Riesman would later seem to modify in The Lonely Crowd, Macdonald argued that late-nineteenth-century industrial-capitalism overthrew folk culture and replaced folk cultural productions with kitsch, or popular culture.

The spooning up of kitsch to “the masses,” he argued, was actually a form of political domination. “Folk Art grew from below… Mass Culture is imposed from above. It is fabricated by technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive consumers, their participation limited to the choice between buying and not buying. The lords of kitsch, in short, exploit the cultural needs of the masses in order to make a profit and/or to maintain their class rule,” Macdonald wrote, without ever explaining, at least in that piece, just how popular culture served to maintain class rule. He nonetheless suggested that the price paid for kitsch, aside from the idea that it bolstered the ruling class, was that it homogenized culture and acted parasitically upon High culture. “Like nineteenth-century capitalism, Mass Culture is a dynamic, revolutionary force, breaking down the old barriers of class, tradition, taste and dissolving all cultural distinctions. It mixes and scrambles everything together, producing what might be called homogenized culture… It thus destroys all values, since value judgments imply discrimination. Mass Culture is very, very democratic; it absolutely refuses to discriminate against, or between, anything or anybody. All is grist to its mill, and all comes out finely ground

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86 Dwight Macdonald, "A Theory of Popular Culture," Politics 1 (February 1944): 20 - 23. Macdonald was so fond of this article that he reworked it for publication twice over sixteen years, renaming it “A Theory of Mass Culture” in 1953 and then renaming it yet again in 1960 as “Masscult and Midcult.”

87 The terms kitsch, popular culture, and mass culture, can be taken as synonymous in a discussion of this topic as it was understood by mid-twentieth century thinkers. By the 1960s, mass culture was distinguished from popular culture because some 1960s intellectuals, such as Susan Sontag, used the term “popular culture” in order to defend it from the critics of “mass culture.” See: Rochelle Gurstein, “Avant-garde and Kitsch Revisited,” Raritan, Vol 22, Winter 2003, pg. 139.

indeed.”\textsuperscript{89} In this criticism of popular culture, if in little else, Ortega y Gasset and Macdonald agreed. They both thought “the masses” were crude, and their enjoyments, dehumanizing.

This idea of a parasitic mass culture feeding upon and ruining both folk culture and High Culture can be traced to a 1939 \textit{Partisan Review} article, “Avante-Garde and Kitsch,” by art critic Clement Greenberg. Greenberg believed that, because mass culture fed upon and diminished formal culture and “since the avant-garde forms the only living culture we how have, the survival in the near future of culture in general is thus threatened.”\textsuperscript{90} His primary intention was thus to shield modern cultural productions, such as Abstract Expressionism, from the deteriorating effects of mass-produced \textit{kitsch}. Part of what made kitsch dangerous, according to Greenberg, was that it came “predigested” and was therefore easily consumed. Unlike folk art, which required at least a degree of familiarity with, if not an intimate knowledge of, a specific folk culture, or formal art, which required an ongoing engagement with the great works of the past, popular culture required nothing because, in a sense, it was nothing. “Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas,” Greenberg wrote. “Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations, Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times.”\textsuperscript{91}

Echoing the Marxist idea that capitalism must continually expand and thereby inevitably disrupts and exploits cultures the world over, Greenberg suggested that corporate-capitalism created easily digestible \textit{faux} products which it spread throughout the world like a well-scrubbed plague. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
Kitsch has not been confined to the cities in which it was born, but has flowed out over the countryside, wiping out folk culture. Nor has it shown any regard for geographical
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{91}{Ibid, 102.}
\end{footnotes}
and national-cultural boundaries. Another mass product of Western industrialism, it has

gone on a triumphal tour of the world, crowding out and defacing native cultures in one

colonial country after another, so that it is now by way of becoming a universal culture,
the first universal culture ever beheld. 92

The immediate purpose of socialism, he argued in 1939, was less to create a new culture,
which would inevitably happen with its arrival, but to maintain a sort-of cultural rear-guard
action against the insidious spread of corporate-capitalist kitsch, as it preyed upon and devoured
“real” culture. Since the only “living culture” available to the citizenry was the avant-garde, the
avant-garde represented, according to Greenberg, “a holding action in world made
uninhabitable by capitalism.” 93

As Rochelle Gurstein notes in a recent article, Greenberg made it clear that criticism of
kitsch was criticism of the exploitative relationships within which it was created. 94  It was,
therefore, a political criticism of capitalist exploitation of “the masses,” an aesthetic criticism of
corporate cultural productions, and a criticism of how those cultural productions created a
“fake” culture. Just as the Organization Man was said, by the mid-1950s, to willingly subsume
his identity within large and tyrannically-democratic group structures, so 1940s left-intellectuals
argued that mass culture was absorbing, and thus destroying, authentic culture, both “folk” and
“High.”

It should be noted that by the 1950s, defenders of popular culture also entered the fray.

In a 1957 collection of essays on the topic, Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America, David
Manning White openly mocked the idea that twentieth-century popular culture was more
demeaning than popular entertainments from the past. He wrote:

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92 Ibid, 103.
93 Ibid, 100.
94 Gurstein, “139.
The xenophilic critics who discuss American culture as if they were holding a dead vermin in their hands seem to imply that in some other, better age the bulk of people were fair copies of Leonardo Da Vinci. No critic shudders more audibly than T.S. Eliot. Yet it is only realistic to note that in the England which became Eliot’s haven one of the most popular of diversions for nearly 700 years was bear-bating.95

These cultural analyses of kitsch owe much to the rise of totalitarianism in Europe prior to World War II. American intellectuals, particularly those of European origin, such as the Frankfurt School intellectuals, sought to understand the rise of fascism and the requisite “mind-set” of those who supported totalitarian regimes. It is not coincidental that in the 1940s and 1950s, Theodore Adorno explored both the “totalitarian personality,” as well as the meaning of popular music and television. A fundamental question behind much of their work on mass culture was: did mass cultural productions help create either totalitarian personality types, necessary for the building of totalitarian regimes, or indoctrinated and depersonalized individuals incapable of fending them off? While Whyte and Riesman suggested that the typical white, middle-class, American male was a highly democratic conformist, these intellectuals saw their conformity as evidence of a totalitarian mind. The blend of sociology and psychology (or Marxism and Freudian psychoanalysis) within Critical Theory was seen as a necessary development to help answer these questions because classical Marxist theory could not satisfactorily account for Hitler. Psychology had to be introduced to explain the totalitarian personality, as well as the uses of propaganda for creating indoctrinated individuals.

In the 1940s and the 1950s, some Frankfurt School intellectuals, and others, such as Irving Howe, argued that mass culture promoted not merely capitalism, but totalitarianism. In his 1948 article for Politics, Howe stressed the relationship between mass culture, leisure, and work. People absorbed mass cultural productions during their leisure time in order to provide

95 White, David Manning. “Mass Culture in America: Another Point of View,” in Mass Culture, eds. Bernard
relief from the monotony of work, he explained. In its relationship to the workplace, and by extension its relationship to industrial-capitalism and industrial-totalitarianism, mass culture was more desirable than other forms of culture precisely because it promoted conformity. In effect, mass culture had a political function. “The movies,” Howe wrote, “may not be truthful or authentic or profound comments, but they do touch on essential aspects of our relationship both to society and ourselves. The movies help us remain at peace with ourselves by helping us to suppress ourselves.”96 Suppressed individuals, needless to say, do not cause political problems. Even Donald Duck, Howe implied, should be suspect:

“On the surface the Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse cartoons seem merely pleasant little fictions, but they are actually overladen with the most competitive, aggressive and sadistic themes. Often on the verge of hysteria, Donald Duck is a frustrated little monster who has something of the SS man in him and whom we, also having something of the SS man in us, naturally find quite charming…”97

In his 1954 article, “Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture,” by explicitly connecting mass culture to fascism and “the lonely crowd” to mass culture, Adorno reconciled the cultural criticism of the 1940s with the social criticisms of the 1950s. Modern mass culture promoted totalitarianism, he argued, because it was a “medium of undreamed of psychological control. The repetitiveness, the selfsameness, and the ubiquity of modern mass culture tend to make for automatized reactions and to weaken the forces of individual resistance.”98 By presenting sometimes contradictory messages on various levels simultaneously, television subtly promoted both conformity and a totalitarian mind-set within American society. As Adorno noted, “the majority of television shows today aim at producing, or at least reproducing, the very

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97 Ibid, 499.
smugness, the intellectual passivity, and gullibility that seem to fit in with totalitarian creeds even if the explicit surface message of the shows may be antitotalitarian.”

What each of the critics of mass culture share, aside from their general revulsion toward the quality of most people’s entertainment choices, was the idea that the general American public was comprised of passive victims, or in Paul Gorman’s words, “helpless souls needing care.” By the late 1960s, with the rise of the “new social history” and the interest among scholars in reconstructing the social life of “ordinary people,” the mass culture criticisms had become passé and were openly mocked by cultural critics, such as Susan Sontag. With the growing acceptance of Pop Art among sixties’ cultural critics and the democratization of bohemia within the hip counterculture, the necessity of preserving formal culture seemed hopelessly stuffy and out of touch with prevailing trends. The idea that art could be fun was completely anathema to the earlier critics, such as Macdonald. Gurstein writes, “One can only imagine modernists, who were committed to the most challenging art of their time, growing apoplectic when Sontag informed them, ‘Because the new sensibility demands less ‘content’ in art, and is more open to the pleasures of ‘form’ and style, it is also less snobbish, less moralistic – in that it does not demand that pleasure in art necessarily be associated with edification.”

**The Humanistic Psychologists**

In 1953, Rollo May, a leading humanistic psychologist, published *Man’s Search for Himself*. May’s argument in this book, along with many others written by the humanists throughout the 1950s and 1960s, closely parallels the earlier criticisms of “mass culture,” as well as the social criticisms emerging from people such as Riesman. Humanistic psychologists, such

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99 Ibid, 479.
as May, Rogers and Maslow, explicitly agreed with the social and cultural critics that mid-
twentieth-century Americans, the “hollow people,” as May called them, shared a widespread
sense of emptiness, a desire to conform, and a sense of not knowing what they wanted or who
they truly were. \(^{102}\) In *Man’s Search for Himself*, May presented an image of the “typical” 1950s
suburban American male that remains compelling for many contemporary analysts. He wrote:

The clearest picture of the empty life is the suburban man, who gets up at the same hour
every weekday morning, takes the same train to work in the city, performs the same task
in the office, lunches at the same place, leaves the same tip for the waitress each day,
comes home on the same train each night, has 2.3 children, cultivates a little garden,
spends a two-week vacation at the shore every summer which he does not enjoy, goes to
church every Christmas and Easter, and moves through a routine, mechanical existence
year after year until he finally retires at sixty-five and very soon thereafter dies of heart
failure, possibly brought on by repressed hostility. I have always had the secret suspicion,
however, that he dies of boredom. \(^{103}\)

People of the white, middle and working-class, generally felt lonely, anxious, and
powerless, according to May and his colleagues, and this sense of powerlessness sometimes
resulted in unusual behavior. As an example, May noted the case of William Cimillo. \(^{104}\) For a
while in the late 1940s, Cimillo was the most famous bus driver in the United States. In a series
of articles published in the spring of 1947, the *New York Times* reported that school children
ignored other buses to ride with Mr. Cimillo. He signed autographs in their notebooks and on
the backs of their transfer stubs. Office workers and policemen hailed Cimillo as he passed them
on his route and called out to him, wishing him well.

\(^{101}\) Gurstein, 8.
\(^{102}\) “David Riesman, in his excellent book, *The Lonely Crowd,*” May wrote, “finds the same emptiness in his
fascinating analysis of the present American character.” See: Rollo May, *Man’s Search for Himself.* (New York:
\(^{103}\) Ibid, 21.
\(^{104}\) Ibid, 21.
William Cimillo’s popularity derived from the fact that after sixteen years with the Surface Transportation Company he one day in March, as he was supposed to begin his route, stole his bus and drove it to Florida. “I wanted to get away from New York and away from everything else,” he told the Times. “I just drove and drove and drove until I came to my senses.” Cimillo spent a few days driving his pilfered bus to Florida, where, having run out of funds, he blithely wired his boss for fifty dollars to pay his expenses back to New York. Shortly thereafter Florida police seized Cimillo at the Gulfstream Race Track in Hollywood. “He had $2.60 and said he had not placed any bets because of lack of funds,” the newspaper reported.

After being escorted back to the city by New York police, where he was greeted by a crowd of about five hundred people as a “conquering hero” and “radio men shoved microphones” into his face, Cimillo was charged with grand larceny by the District Attorney’s office. To help Cimillo cover his bail, as well as $1,896 in personal debt, about one hundred of his fellow employees held a fundraising dance on May 1 at the Bronx Winter Garden. Though the larceny charge was not officially dropped until October 1950, within weeks of his arrest Cimillo regained his place behind the wheel of a city bus, on his old route. “Many passengers joshed Cimillo about his trip to Florida and suggested jokingly that he try it again,” the Times wrote. “I had a swell time. A swell time, folks,” he told his admirers.

Writing five years later, May wondered why it was that Cimillo seemed to be a hero to many New Yorkers that spring. “Was it not,” he wrote, “that this driver who got bored to death with simply making his appointed rounds, going round the same blocks and stopping at the same corners day after day, typified some similar emptiness and futility in these middle-class people,

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106 Ibid, 29.
108 Ibid, 27.
and that his gesture, ineffectual as it was, represented some deep but repressed need in the solid citizens of the Bronx?**109**

May agreed with the social and cultural critics that the cause of this widespread sense of emptiness was the transition from the nineteenth-century social type grounded in an ethos of individual competition, what Riesman, following Weber, called the Protestant Ethic, to a twentieth-century social type grounded in an ethos of conformity, the Social Ethic. May suggested, along with the cultural critics, that this new social type was susceptible to an authoritarian mind-set. “Authoritarianism in religion and science, let alone politics,” May argued, “is becoming increasingly accepted, not particularly because so many people explicitly believe in it but because they feel themselves individually powerless and anxious.”**110** The rise of European fascism, resulting in the turmoil of World War II, not only caused anxiety but was the result of a widespread western failure of individual “selfhood.” Fascism, May argued, fed on the fear, emptiness, and conformity of ordinary people who gratefully submerged themselves into a mass devoted to a charismatic leader. “The lonely crowd” was therefore not only bored (and boring), but also potentially dangerous. For this reason the humanistic psychologists attempted to outline and practice methods, such as encounter group therapy, designed to encourage the autonomy of healthy psyches.

Because the humanistic psychologists acknowledged the basic premise of the social critics, that the major institutions of power created social environments that diminished individualism, they often worked directly with the people within such organizations in order to help them maintain, or discover, a stronger sense of self. Much of their work in the 1950s was conducted within American corporations seeking to use encounter group therapy as a way to

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**109** May, 22.

**110** Ibid, 58.
increase the efficiency of the organization. It is for this reason that Whyte, in particular, distrusted the efforts of encounter group therapists to grease the wheels of efficient production within American corporations. In *The Organization Man*, Whyte argued that encounter group therapy, because of its “leaderless” style and highly egalitarian ethic, contributed to the failure of American selves. He wrote, “The intellectual hypocrisy of the leaderless group has brought forth a new breed; into the very vacuum that they bespeak have moved the professional group expediter. The end they seek is compromise and harmony, but in their controlled way they can be just as militant as any desk-pounder of old, and a lot more self-righteous.”

What Whyte seems to have misunderstood about encounter group therapy, at least during the late 1950s, was that its sole function was never the creation of mere organizational efficiency, nor was it intended to submerge the individual into the group. Encounter group therapy refers to a number of psychotherapeutic methods developed by humanistic psychologists. Humanistic psychology is distinct from psychoanalysis in part because it takes the generally healthy psyche as its subject and in part because it places the responsibility of interpretation more on the client than on the therapist. It differs from behavioral psychology, popular at the universities in the 1950s, because it does not reduce internal experience to quantifiable outward behavior.

In encounter group therapy, self-awareness is encouraged through an intense group confrontation over a prolonged period of hours, if not days. The session is thus viewed as a “sample” of the outside world, supposedly reproducing conditions of interpersonal relationships. The individual, not the analyst, is responsible for changing destructive behavior or emotional patterns based on insights gleaned from the process. Gestalt therapy, developed by Frederick “Fritz” Perls, suggests that the client must become aware of and integrate various aspects of the

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111 Whyte, 61.
personality into a coherent, healthy whole. Like encounter group, it is often non-directive and requires the individual to take responsibility for insights. Unlike encounter group, it is often practiced in a one-on-one format with the therapist.

In a recent article, Elizabeth Lunbeck notes that mid-twentieth-century psychologists began reporting the appearance of a new type of patient. This new patient, while free of “the classic neuroses and their specific symptoms,” suffered from “emptiness, aimlessness, futility, and discontent.”¹¹² May, Maslow, and Rogers agreed that no longer were the great psychological problems of the day based on a conflict between human sexuality and social taboo, but on what Erik Erikson called “identity crisis,” the sense of not really knowing oneself. Though Erikson originally coined the term to describe a sense of social dislocation among soldiers returning home from World War II and would later use it as a reference to an expected stage of adolescence, by the late 1960s, Lunbeck writes, “identity crises were everyday events, ‘finding oneself’ a cultural imperative.”¹¹³

This quest for authentic selfhood, a central aspect of the social movements of the 1960s, was already well under way by the early 1950s in the work of the humanistic psychologists. Unlike the cultural critics of the 1940s or the social critics of the 1950s, the humanistic psychologists remained optimistic about the character of essential selves, as well as the potential for creating circumstances under which such a “true self” could flourish. In Maslow’s *Toward a Psychology of Being*, originally published in 1968, but based on his work in the 1950s, he suggested that “we have, each of us, an essential biologically based inner nature” and that this inner nature is fundamentally “good.”¹¹⁴ The problem, Maslow argued, was an unhealthy interplay between a sick culture and the troubled individuals comprising that culture. “Sick

¹¹³ Ibid, 1.
people are made by a sick culture,” he wrote, “healthy people are made possible by a healthy culture. But it is just as true that sick individuals make their culture more sick and that healthy individuals make their culture more healthy.” An approach to this problem, Maslow and Rogers agreed, could be found in creating a therapeutic atmosphere under which an essential self could emerge. It was for this reason that Rogers wrote so much about the need to remove “facades” and “masks.” He wanted to create therapeutic circumstances in which the client, not patient, could feel secure enough to allow the emergence of an authentic self. In *On Becoming A Person*, Rogers wrote, “This book is about the highly personal experiences of each one of us. It is about a client in my office who sits there by the corner of the desk, struggling to be himself, yet deathly afraid of being himself.”

The humanistic psychologists believed that under the proper social circumstances people naturally moved toward healthier ways of being and that this “process of becoming” had transcendent, or mystical, implications. May postulated that the process of becoming had four stages, innocence, rebellion, ordinary consciousness of self, and creative consciousness of self. “Innocence” is the world of the child, a pre-self-conscious way of knowing. “Rebellion,” generally associated with adolescence, is the period in life when people attempt to establish a degree of autonomy. “Ordinary consciousness of self” is the healthy, adult capacity for self-reflection, for taking responsibility, and for learning from one’s mistakes and interior experiences. May represented these first three stages as normal and healthy. The fourth stage, however, the “creative consciousness of self” transcended the self and is both highly desirable and rare. “The classical psychological term for this awareness,” May wrote, “is *ecstasy*. The

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115 Ibid, 6.
word literally means ‘to stand outside one’s self,’ to catch a view of, or experience something, form a perspective outside one’s usual limited viewpoint.” (His italics.)

May suggested that people have a difficult time seeing the world objectively because they cannot detach their views from themselves. They see all things, that is, through a lens of personal interpretation. Subjectivity colors anddistorts insight. In flashes of intuition, however, according to May, the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is briefly overcome, allowing, “glimpses of objective truth as it exists in reality.” He wrote:

This creative self-consciousness is a stage that most of us achieve only at rare intervals; and none of us, except the saints, religious or secular, and the great creative figures, live very much of our lives on this level. But it is the level which gives meaning to our actions and experiences on the lesser levels. Many people may have experienced this consciousness in some special moment, let us say, in listening to music, or in some new experience of love or friendship, which temporarily takes them out of the usual walled-in routine of their lives. It is as though for a moment one stood on a mountain peak, and viewed his life from that wide and unlimited perspective.

May, Rogers, and Maslow had faith in a-rational ways of knowing that held significant religious implications. Terms like “intuition,” “sudden insight,” or, in Maslow’s famous usage, “peak experience,” implied a radical acceptance of non-rational, non-cerebral, ways of understanding that, in fact, they considered more authentic than ordinary consciousness. “I have learned that my total organismic sensing of a situation is more trustworthy than my intellect,” Rogers wrote. This is a fairly remarkable statement from a highly esteemed “man of science” in the middle of the twentieth-century and it illustrates why many psychologists during this period looked at the humanists with a skeptical eye. There was an epistemological utopianism

117 May, 139.
118 Ibid, 139 – 140.
119 Ibid, 140.
120 Ibid, 141.
121 Rogers, 22.
about the humanists that Freudian psychotherapists and behaviorists found objectionable.

Rogers apparently cared little for the criticisms leveled at him from more traditional psychological standpoints, nor did he allow even his own ideas, or so he said, to stand in the way of insights gleaned not through an intellectual process, but through an experiential one.

“Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person’s ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience,” he wrote.122 (His italics.)

It may have been Maslow, however, who most fully grappled with the idea that non-rational ways of knowing were valuable both in themselves, as well as in the social operations of the individual. He divided cognition into two types, a superior “B-cognition” and an inferior “D-cognition.” B-cognition is a way of viewing the world based on the idea of “being,” rather than “becoming.” D-cognition, or “deficiency-cognition,” is a way of viewing the world based on the idea of “becoming” and is therefore typified by needs or self-interest. Maslow created a list of the human values grounded in B-cognition, what he naturally referred to as “B-values.” These are: wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, richness, simplicity, beauty, goodness, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, truth, and self-sufficiency.123 He argued against the view that needs, fears, interests, usefulness, or “survival value” necessarily determines cognition.124 “In B-cognition,” he wrote, “the experience or the object tends to be seen as a whole, as a complete unit, detached from relations, from possible usefulness, from expediency, and from purpose. It is seen as if it were all there was in the universe, as if it were all of Being, synonymous with the universe.”125

122 Ibid, 23.
123 Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, 83.
124 Ibid, 78.
125 Ibid, 74.
Maslow hypothesized that the gradual unfolding of an authentic self naturally led toward B-cognition and the associated B-values, depending upon the place of the individual within a pyramidal “hierarchy of needs.” At the base of the pyramid is the need for physiological security, with the category of “safety” directly above it. Only after the individual has food, shelter, and physical security, can he or she fully address personal social needs. Since humans are social creatures they cannot attain, according to Maslow, self-esteem until their social needs are met. Once they are, and once self-esteem is achieved, the top of the pyramid is reached and self-actualization becomes the project. The self-actualizing individual is, in the Maslowian framework, the most likely type to achieve the peak-experience and, as he wrote, “people in peak-experiences are most their identities, closest to their real selves.”

Maslow argued, therefore, that the achievement of authentic selfhood resided beyond the realm of rational ways of knowing. This idea would become very influential in the 1960s with the rise of the Human Potential Movement, as well as the “psychedelic revolution” of Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg.

The idea of the peak-experience, it should therefore be noted, carried a significant religious dimension from which the Human Potential Movement would shortly emerge. The humanistic psychologists, unlike the behaviorists or the classical Freudians, believed that ecstatic religious experiences represented a “higher” form of knowing. Mystics from different religious traditions, furthermore, shared this higher form of knowing. The religious type of peak-experience was, therefore, according to Maslow, the very foundation of world religions. He put it this way: “The very beginning, the intrinsic core, the essence, the universal nucleus of every

126 Ibid, 103.
known religion… has been the private, lonely, personal illumination, revelation, or ecstasy of some acutely sensitive prophet or seer.”

However much religions may differ from one another socially, culturally, or theologically, at their core resides a common mystic experience. This idea, already championed by Maslow and the humanists in the 1950s, would become widely shared in countercultural circles by the next decade and is partially, at least, an explanation for the various forms of religious experimentation that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. By the early 1960s, with the arrival of the Human Potential Movement and organizations like Esalen, theorists within secular intellectual traditions joined with religious theorists, such as Alan Watts, in an effort to understand and evoke mystical experiences. The significance of someone like Watts is that he, along with the humanistic psychologists, believed in the essential importance of such experiences and sought methods to achieve them outside of traditional Western churches. They each agreed that the sacred could be approached with rational, secular methodologies and that, in fact, the apparent dichotomy between secular and sacred was false.

Just as the mid-twentieth-century Organization Man seemed inauthentic, empty, and conformist, so their churches seemed spiritually vacant, as well. Maslow went so far as to say, “Organized Religion, the churches, finally may become the major enemies of the religious experience and the religious experiencer. This is a main thesis of this book.” By claiming hegemony over the sacred, he argued, traditional priesthoods pathologized religion by removing its very core from the natural world of facts and, therefore, science. In order to save the mystical experience from extinction at the hands of the churches, Maslow and the others felt that the sacred needed to be brought into the realm of rational inquiry. “If the sacred becomes the

128 Ibid, viii.
exclusive jurisdiction of a priesthood, and if its supposed validity rests only upon supernatural foundations, then, in effect, it is taken out of the world of nature and of human nature,” Maslow wrote.\textsuperscript{130} The overall project, therefore, was an attempt to synthesize the sacred with the mundane. As it spread into various quarters in the 1960s, it would have profound and varying effects on American culture and institutions. This is a subject that will be examined more closely in later chapters.

**The Social Movement**

What the 1960s social movements borrowed from the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists was that personal problems often had political causes and that the prevailing social system crushed authentic selves. The movements and the counterculture insisted that “the system” was not only economically and racially unjust, but that it warped human identities. The New Left, the black freedom struggle, second-wave feminism, and the hip counterculture, thus offered social-political analyses consistent with the thinking of the 1950s critics of “mass culture.”

Students for a Democratic Society’s *Port Huron Statement*, for example, shows the influence of Mills on the early New Left.\textsuperscript{131} Written primarily by Tom Hayden, SDS’s founding document contains three main themes: the presence of widespread injustice in American society, the prevailing objectification and passivity of the individual as a consequence of political and social manipulation, and the need for “participatory democracy” as a way to resolve alienation. The primary injustices that Hayden pointed toward were racial injustices upon African-
Americans not only in the South, but also in the northern cities, as well as the continual threat of nuclear annihilation due to ongoing tensions with the Soviet Union. In order to overcome these fundamental injustices the objectification and the passivity of individuals, particularly students, needed to be eliminated through direct citizen participation in national decision-making and politics, that is, through “participatory democracy.”

The *Port Huron Statement* was heavily influenced by the mass culture criticisms of the earlier thinkers. At its center resides the idea that the American experience was empty, that Americans held “deeply-felt anxieties about their role in the new world” and that work had been rendered meaningless. Each of these, it should be mentioned, are characteristics of the Organization Man. Hayden wrote, “We regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love. In affirming these principles we are aware of countering perhaps the dominant conceptions of man in the twentieth century: that he is a thing to be manipulated, and that he is inherently incapable of directing his own affairs. We oppose the depersonalization that reduces human being to the status of things…”132 In other words, the supposedly prevailing social character of the post-war period must be overcome not only in pursuit of racial justice and the end of the Cold War, but to fulfill the “human potential” of every person.133 In this way the *Port Huron Statement* contains echoes of the Human Potential Movement which was, at the time of its writing, beginning to consolidate on the West Coast.

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133 In this way the *Port Huron Statement*, and implicitly the New Left, combines the influences of the 1950s social critics with the basic principles of the Human Potential Movement, a topic to which I will return in a later chapter.
Both *The Power Elite* and the *Port Huron Statement* suggested that to overcome widespread public apathy there needed to be increased promotion of public political participation. In *The Power Elite*, Mills drafted this idea in terms of mass culture criticisms. He suggested that in order to regain a meaningful democracy certain aspects of mass culture would have to be overcome. In particular, he argued that within mass culture, public opinion was largely controlled by the power elite and dispersed through the media, rather than formulated and expressed by the public.\(^{134}\) “The media,” he wrote, “have not only filtered into our experience of external realities, they have also entered into our very experience of our own selves. They have provided us with new identities and new aspirations of what we should like to be, and what we should like to appear to be.”\(^{135}\) The mass media, therefore, actually created, according to Mills, the human identities within the mass.

*The Port Huron Statement* suggested that in order to fulfill human potentials, and thus overcome the supposed loneliness, estrangement, and isolation prevalent in post-war America, a social system should be created that promoted individual participation in democratic politics and decision-making. The politics of such a social system would not filter down from the mass media, but would “have the function of bringing people out of isolation and into community” and thus represent a “means of finding meaning in personal life.”\(^{136}\) The implication of this statement, as with the work of Mills, was that a web-like combination of power, politics, and media created unhappy, powerless, and spiritually empty social characters that supported the very institutions of American life that oppressed them. If racial justice was to be achieved, if the Cold War was to end, and if harmonious communities were to be created, than a new politics, reflective of a truly democratic social system, would have to be created through the widespread

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\(^{134}\) *The Power Elite*, 304.  
\(^{135}\) Ibid, 314.
participation of Americans in the decisions that directly affected their lives. At the core of Hayden’s statement, as at the core of the thinking of the 1950s social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists, is the idea that the social-political system created warped human identities.

The other 1960s social movements, including the re-emergent women’s movement, shared this idea. The counterpart of the Organization Man can be taken to be the post-war American housewife who suffered, in the words of Betty Friedan, from “the problem that has no name.” Published in 1963, *The Feminine Mystique* resulted from a series of interviews Friedan conducted with women of some privilege who, like Friedan herself, had graduated from Smith College in Massachusetts. These women, supposedly typical of the post-war white middle-class, married good providers, lived in clean and respectable suburban homes and raised healthy children.\(^{137}\) Friedan however discovered a whole series of symptoms, some dangerous and some relatively benign, indicating that these women felt themselves trapped within a “gilded cage” that stunted personal expression. The cause for this diminishment of the female self was a social order that ruined female identities as it closed off their ability to act in the public realm. If the 1950s social critics suggested that the Organization Man submerged his identity within the organization, Friedan suggested that their wives crammed their identities into an artificial mold constructed by middle-class American culture.

By the late 1960s, therefore, as second-wave feminism found its footing and voice, many American women explored various strategies designed to awaken authentic female identities.

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\(^{136}\) Hayden, 181.

\(^{137}\) They were, therefore, nothing like Friedan who had a long and active history in the radical political left many years prior to the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*. In the early 1950s, Friedan was a labor journalist for the *UE News*, the organ of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America which, according to Ruth Rosen, was “one of the most Communist-influenced unions of the postwar era…” See: Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America*. (New York: Viking Press, 2000), 5.
One of the most popular of these strategies was the “consciousness raising” session which, as Debra Michals points out, was designed to enable “the individual within a group setting to uncover her authentic self, the person – or the essence of the person – beneath the programming that dictate what a woman ‘should’ be and the socially sanctioned roles available to her.”  

The point of consciousness raising was to overcome the “social programming” that kept women in the kitchen and out of the universities, in the bedroom and out of the boardroom.

If, as *The Port Huron Statement* implied, and as the critics of American culture claimed, that Americans suffered from loneliness, estrangement, and isolation as a result of a social-political order that required the development of certain types of social characters, then consciousness raising was designed not only to recover an essential self, but through that recovery to encourage political action that would change the very social-political order that was responsible for both the Organization Man and the “problem that has no name.” If the Organization Man was both submerged within the organization and isolated from the community, then consciousness raising was designed to promote the expression of authentic female selves while joining women together as a community. Ironically, the thing that worried Whyte about encounter group therapy, that it supposedly merged the individual into the group, was the very thing that radical feminists invited through consciousness raising. Michals notes, “feminists believed in the possibility of a fusion of individual selves into a collective self through the experience of CR, and that this would be transformative in ways vital to igniting political activism and social change.”  

If in the 1960s the personal was political, it was out of a recognition that the personal was created by the social-political order and that the only

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139 Michals, 48.
meaningful way to bring about change was to incorporate changes to the personal, to the self, as a necessary step toward of a larger social agenda. The work of the social scientists, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists was relevant to the 1960s movements because their writings suggested that one’s very self was, in some measure at least, a diminished creation of the social order. To change the social order, therefore, it was necessary to change the self.

Because the self could either be authentic (true to the individual’s essential nature or true to the ethnic and/or gendered history of one’s group) or inauthentic (merely reflecting the requirements of the social order) the presentation of self, to use Irving Goffman’s phrase, became an important part of one’s political stance. This tension between the authentic and the inauthentic was also at the center of the conflict between black cultural nationalists, such as Ron “Maulana” Karenga’s US Organization, and black political revolutionary nationalists, such as Huey Newton’s Black Panther Party (BPP), in the late 1960s. While US members and Panthers adopted differing styles of dress and speech to reflect supposedly authentic inner identities, with US members reflecting identities based on their understandings of African culture and Panthers reflecting identities based on their understanding of the immediate condition of poor, urban blacks in America, they both recognized that the politics of identity was central to the black freedom struggle.

The rise of identity politics in the 1960s owes something to the work of mass culture critics because they helped spread the idea that personality traits, and thus personal expressions of identity, are beholden to larger social conditions. Such expressions can either be consistent with larger social conditions, such as the case of the Organization Man, or they can be reactions

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140 Early 1969 saw a shoot-out between US and the Panthers, after a meeting of the UCLA Black Student Union, resulting in the death of Panthers Alprentice “Bunchy” Carter and John Huggins. Afterward, the Panthers accused Karenga of planning the event as an assassination in fulfillment of a government directive. See: Brown, 241.
against larger social conditions, particularly if those conditions are viewed as unjust. In the cases of the US Organization and the Panthers, like that of the various feminist organizations, their personal reactions to larger social conditions, as expressed in styles of dress and speech, were based on an acute sense of injustice within American society. Whereas feminists acted out of a sense of the tyranny of gender role construction, black nationalists acted out of a hatred for American racism and a nurtured sense of pride.

The US Organization and the Panthers agreed that personal expressions of identity among black people that might be acceptable to American culture at-large, were inherently false, demeaning, and counterproductive to the struggle for racial equality. A figure such as Martin Luther King, Jr. was suspect among them not merely because the rhetoric of “black power” was overtaking the tactics of Gandhian “non-violence,” but because they thought King spoke and dressed like an “Uncle Tom,” a social type thought to serve the forces of racist oppression.

Karenga and US, therefore, as they rejected white-Anglo American society looked to Africa for cultural models. Like many African-American individuals and groups in the late 1960s, US members wore their hair natural or adopted the bald look; they donned dashikis and studied Swahili; they assumed African names and experimented with African religious rituals. Karenga suggested that because blacks in America had lost their culture in the diaspora and were forced to adopt the “foreign” culture of white racists, they needed to develop viable cultural

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141 Paul Leinberger and Bruce Tucker note this their early 1990s update of the Organization Man thesis. “A smoothly functioning social order,” they write, “which makes the trains run on time, is hardly the highest mark of virtue in a society or in the individuals who make it up. And in the thoroughly repellent social structures like that of South Africa, participation in a maladaptive social character becomes a badge of honor.” Paul Leinberger and Bruce Tucker, The New Individualists: The Generation After the Organization Man. (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 5.

142 In 1966 they invented the holiday of Kwanzaa as part of this project. Though most cultural nationalist personal experimentations owed far less to Africa than to the difficult conditions “on the ground” in African-American urban communities, it is hard to know the degree to which those who adopted cultural nationalist expressions thought that they were adopting truly African rituals and styles. William Van Deburg notes that when black nationalists visited Africa they were generally disappointed “because what they were seeing and experiencing failed to conform to their preconceptions. In essence, the black Americans’ view of the continent was a projection of their psychological and
expressions as an alternative to the dominant society. Because Karenga recognized that culture and politics were dependent upon each other, he wrote, “Everything that we do, think, or learn is somehow interpreted as a cultural expression. So when we discuss politics, to US that is a sign of culture. When we discuss economics, to US that is a sign of culture... In other words, we define culture as a complete value system and also means and ways of maintaining that value system.”

Central to the cultural revolution that Karenga had in mind was Kawaida, which, as Van Deburg explains, was “the theory of cultural and social change adopted by US. Kawaida theory held that black Americans needed to carry out a cultural revolution before they could mount a successful political campaign to seize and reorder established institutions of power and wealth.” It was on this question of the place of cultural expression in the seizing of political power that the conflict with the Panthers revolved around. The Panthers felt that this “afro-cosmic lunatic,” Karenga, and the “weird rituals and strange fashions” of “United Slaves,” as they derogatorily called Karenga’s group, set back the cause of black nationalism. The Panthers, and other critics of black cultural nationalism, called US members “black racists” and “a new type of Tom.” They argued that Karenga fetishized African-inspired cultural forms as ends in themselves and thereby promoted escapism from the socioeconomic realities of black life in America.

Such criticisms, as Scot Brown demonstrates, ignored the political commitment of the US Organization as they formed alliances with other groups to end the war in Vietnam and to

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143 Simultaneously, Karenga argued, in the words of Van Deburg, that “[a]ny vitality evident in white culture more often than not could be traced to theft or plagiarism from other traditions.” Van Deburg, 183.
145 Van Deburg, 172.
promote local control of black communities in and around Los Angeles. It also ignores the obvious fact that US was hardly alone in adopting alternative cultural expressions as part of the revolutionary process. The Panthers, while they did not wear *dashikis* or study Swahili, clearly assumed alternative cultural forms and personal styles as both an expression of their socioeconomic environment and as a reaction against the prevailing white-Anglo culture. The Black Panther uniform of black leather jacket, beret, and sunglasses, not to mention shotgun, was intended to frighten the white middle-class and to declare a revolutionary style of dress based on conditions in black, working-class, Oakland. It was therefore intended to express an identity in direct conflict with the white middle-class.

New Leftists, feminists, and black nationalists each expressed an important element of post-war American thinking that was developed earlier by the critics of mass culture. Though it would be difficult, and perhaps pointless, to argue that the US Organization was influenced by *The Organization Man, The Lonely Crowd*, or *The Power Elite*, it is nonetheless true that the 1960s social movement emphasis on personal and cultural expression as a method of overcoming coercive “social programming” is fully consistent with the theses of the social critics. The social critics argued that American institutions of power promoted the creation of certain character types that filled the needs of the institutions. New Leftists, feminists, and black nationalists each argued, though sometimes implicitly, for the necessity of denying those institutions the power to do so by adopting alternative personal expressions inconsistent with the styles, and therefore inconsistent with the ways of thinking, associated with the institutions of white, male authority.

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146 Van Deburg, 174.
147 Brown argues that until recently scholars of the black freedom struggle, to the extent that they even noticed the US Organization, tended to see them as apolitical and in frames created by the Panthers. Brown suggests that Karenga’s program was not apolitical, but blended the cultural with the political. See: Brown, “The Politics of Culture: The US Organization and the Quest for Black ‘Unity’” in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South: 1940 – 1980*. Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 223 – 253.
No sixties’ group, however, was more radical or consistent in their adoption of styles that offended the American mainstream than the psychedelic counterculture. By “psychedelic counterculture” I mean the individuals, mainly young, white, and middle-class, who used psychedelic drugs and marijuana for the expressed purpose of “expanding” consciousness. The people who followed this route believed that the key to social transformation was personal transformation. It is for this reason that one of the slogans of the “psychedelic sixties” was “Free your mind, and the rest will follow.” As Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle write, “To rid oneself of the drives that produced aggression, authoritarianism, sexism, racism, intolerance, and sexual repression, counterculturalists sought to disinherit pernicious social conditioning through a process alternately dubbed ‘deschooling,’ ‘reimprinting,’ or ‘deconditioning.’”

The psychedelic counterculture used mind-altering substances for a variety of reasons; to have fun, out of peer pressure, as a “revolutionary” act, out of boredom or out of psychological addiction, but the primary expressed reason was to “expand consciousness” and thereby free oneself of negative social conditioning. Proponents of psychedelia, such as Timothy Leary, Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts, and Allen Ginsberg, suggested that psychedelics held the potential to offer profound social and personal insights, as well mystical reawakening. They suggested that if the “disease” was a dull, repressive, inauthentic, and spiritually bankrupt American society then the “cure” was acid. This cure, Leary insisted, was necessary for almost everyone, because unless the general culture “turned on” then humanity was sure to indulge its darkest impulses and

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148 *Imagine Nation*, 15. It should also be noted that by the mid-1960s drug usage in “straight” America for the purpose of altering consciousness was rampant. David Farber points out that, “In 1965, doctors wrote 123 million prescriptions for tranquilizers and 24 million prescriptions for amphetamine.” See: Farber, “The Intoxicated State / Illegal Nation: Drugs in the Sixties Counterculture” in *Imagine Nation*, 17.
destroy itself.\textsuperscript{149} The use of psychedelics thus contained a moral dimension that is generally overlooked in most discussions of the topic.

Timothy Miller, in \textit{The Hippies and American Values}, itemized the ethical case that the psychedelic counterculture made for drug use: They saw it as a way to understand and cope with the evils of American culture. They saw it as a religious sacrament. They saw it as a method of achieving an understanding of, and unity with, the natural world. They recommended it as an aphrodisiac.\textsuperscript{150} They suggested that it heightened intimacy, interpersonal interaction and cooperation. They said that it was both fun and harmless. And, finally, they saw it as a way to access personal or artistic creativity.\textsuperscript{151} “If nothing else can be said for marijuana,” wrote an anonymous hippie in 1970, “it can be praised as a cultural detoxicant; it acts as an emotional detergent that breaks through the sham and hypocrisy and living-death of much of contemporary America, and allows that vision of beauty that American life seems so bent on destroying.”\textsuperscript{152}

The hip counterculture interpreted their use of drugs, their choice of clothing, their sexual adventurism, their music, and their “lifestyle,” as part of a process of social deconditioning. Like the critics of mass culture, “hippies” interpreted the dominant cultural forms and institutions through a prism that emphasized the conformity, alienation, injustice, and general unhappiness of American life. Like New Leftists, feminists, and black nationalists, they pursued alternative cultural expressions for the expressed intent of transforming society through, in part, transforming the self. Unlike classical Marxists, who argued that consciousness was formed by

\textsuperscript{149} Marin A. Lee and Bruce Schlain, \textit{Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD and the Sixties Rebellion}. (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1985), 80.
\textsuperscript{150} This was considered an ethical virtue because sexual modesty was interpreted as culturally-imposed sexual repression. Sexual repression, of course, was considered one important symptom, among many, of a diseased, emotionally barren, and life-denying society. Anything, therefore, that could relieve sexual repression became an ethical imperative for the psychedelic counterculture.
\textsuperscript{151} Timothy Miller, \textit{The Hippies and American Values}. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 34 – 45.
\textsuperscript{152} Miller, 35.
material conditions at the point of industrial production, the psychedelic counterculture believed that consciousness was, or could be, formed at the point of psychedelic consumption. If the major institutions and organizations of American life created social characters best suited to serve those institutions and organizations, and if those social characters were “diseased” with the values of sexual repression, greed, and spiritual bankruptcy, then psychedelics could, they insisted, undo that social conditioning.

In the ways discussed above, the various sixties’ movements interpreted their conflict with American society by emphasizing the necessity for a personal response to unhealthy social conditions that created inauthentic personality types. By framing the conflicts in a manner that stressed the individual versus the organization or the group versus American society in general, the various movements set the polar frame through which cultural-social historians have often interpreted the post-war era and, in particular, the 1960s. From the late 1960s through the 1990s, as discussed in the introduction, social-cultural historians, who were sometimes participants in sixties’ movements, usually maintained the frame of analysis created by these groups. In their discussions of the influences upon the hip counterculture, therefore, scholars such as Terry Anderson, Todd Gitlin, and numerous others, focus their attention on “alternative” cultures, such as Beat culture or the culture of the black freedom struggle, while giving short-shrift to cultural continuities within the mainstream of American life.
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Chapter 2

The Underground Press and the Critics of Mass Culture

Between the mid-1960s and the end of the Vietnam War, social movement radicals of every stripe advanced their agendas through a thriving and varied underground press. In *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life & Times of the Underground Press*, Abe Peck estimates that by 1969, at the “highwater mark of protest,” about five-hundred such papers were in publication nationwide, “with five hundred to a thousand more dissenting papers in high schools alone.” With the underground military press included, Peck’s estimation may be somewhat short. David Cortright, in his 1975 study, *Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today*, specifically identifies two hundred and fifty-nine military underground publications and estimates a total of approximately three hundred of just this one type. Whatever the exact numbers, there is no doubt that between 1964, when the *Los Angeles Free Press* began publication, and the middle of the 1970s, millions of young Americans read underground publications as an alternative to more traditional media forms, such as the *New York Times* or CBS News.

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153 Although I use it here, “underground press” is a misnomer. Virtually all the publications which called themselves “underground” were, in fact, well above ground. Only a very few, such as San Quentin prison’s *Outlaw*, was clandestine in the manner that *Resistance*, the newspaper of the French Resistance during World War II, was underground. See: Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life & Times of the Underground Press* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 39. “Underground,” nonetheless, is a relative term and some underground newspapers were more underground than others. For example, the Berkeley *Barb* was an entirely above ground operation. Its office space, publisher, and distribution system were completely above board and public. The underground military newspapers, however, such as the *Bond* and the *Ally*, were semi-underground in the sense that their distribution at military bases, both domestic and overseas, was conducted covertly by radicalized military personnel. However, because these papers referred to themselves as “underground,” the term is here retained.

154 Primary sources for this chapter come primarily from the *Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection*, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California.

155 Peck, xv.


157 Peck notes that the *LA Free Press* was the “first underground paper to publish on a sustained basis.” See: Peck, xiv.
Rodger Streitmatter, in *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America*, divides the underground press of the 1960s and 1970s into five broad categories. These include the anti-war press, the countercultural press, the ethnic-struggle press, the gay and lesbian press, and the feminist press.¹⁵⁸ Needless to say, these underground publications contained significant overlap in content and purpose. Although, for example, the San Francisco *Oracle* might be considered purely countercultural, focusing on psychedelic music, psychedelic drugs, and the transpersonal mysticism of Timothy Leary and his ex-Harvard partner, Richard Alpert, the earlier issues also displayed significant political concerns and covered local tensions between the San Francisco police department and movement residents of the Haight-Ashbury.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, although *off our backs*, *Ain’t I a Woman* and *It Ain’t Me Babe* leaned towards feminist separatism, they nonetheless contained significant anti-war movement and ethnic-struggle coverage.¹⁶⁰ *Gay Sunshine*, another San Francisco publication, was countercultural in style, and sought to reconcile gay issues with the movement as a whole.¹⁶¹ The Berkeley *Barb*, the Los Angeles *Free Press*, Detroit’s *Fifth Estate*, and Boston’s *Avatar*, among many others, were highly political and highly countercultural, both. Even the military underground newspapers, which were primarily devoted to ending the war in Vietnam, advancing the First Amendment rights of enlisted

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¹⁶⁰ *off our backs*, *Ain’t I a Woman* and *It Ain’t Me Babe*, *Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection*, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California.
¹⁶¹ For example, in early 1971, *Gay Sunshine* published an article complaining about the arrest of Timothy Leary by Eldridge Cleaver in Algiers. Leary, with the help of SDS, escaped from prison in California and was given refuge by Cleaver, who turned against him very shortly thereafter. *Gay Sunshine* published the following in support of Leary: “The Black Panther Party is but one revolutionary group – and counterrevolutionary in their sexism and so-called ‘revolutionary arrests.’ Although we support the Panthers when they are being hunted and jailed by the pigs, although we oppose their persecution, we must cease to look to them as the vanguard of our revolution and must build our own revolution. As we support them in demanding the freedom of Black and Third World Political Prisoners, we must simultaneously define all Gay prisoners as political prisoners and demand their release, and also define all drug prisoners, especially Rosemary and Tim Leary, as political prisoners. Free All Political Prisoners
personnel, and democratizing the military through a serviceman’s union, also contained
countercultural influences and news.  

What most of the various underground newspapers and publications held in common,
however, was contempt for what they considered to be the culturally and ideologically
hegemonic nature of mainstream publications and a desire to humanize American society, often
through revolution. While it is questionable the degree to which individual editors were
influenced by Antonio Gramsci, it is clear that virtually all of them saw their efforts as a way to
promote either the movement, or particular aspects of the movement, through the undermining of
normative cultural standards that justified competitive capitalism, social injustice, and war. They
sought, therefore, in the words of Noam Chomsky, to undermine the “manufacture of
consent.” Thomas Forcade, who headed the Underground Press Syndicate and who started
High Times out of that office, wrote in his introduction to 1972’s Underground Press Anthology,
“The underground press, as a specific and visible ongoing network, has the power and

Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California.
162 For example, an Ally, graphic accompanying an article on the “pot problem” in the US military shows a soldier smoking a marijuana cigarette with a smile on his
face and a caption that reads, “Get A Head In The Modern Army: How ya gonna keep ‘em down on Maggie’s Farm after they’ve seen Owsley?” Ally, August 8, 1968,
No 8, pg 8; Another issue of the Ally has a graphic of a soldier with long hair and a flowing mustache wearing a peace
symbol on his helmet and carrying a flower, clearly representing a hippie in military drag. The Ally, December
1968, 3; An undated issue of A Four Year Bummer: The Airman’s Voice contains an advertisement for Dimensions
163 Todd Gitlin defines hegemony as “uniting persuasion from above with consent from below.” He writes, “In the
version of Marxist theory inaugurated by Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is the name given to a ruling class’s
domination through ideology, through the shaping of popular consent.” See: Todd Gitlin, The Whole World is
Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press,
1980), 9 – 10. Also, of course, it should be noted that some underground publications were more revolutionary than
others and the most revolutionary ones, as Streitmatter points out, tended to be the shortest lived. See: Streitmatter,
278.
164 Chomsky’s “manufacture of consent” owes much to Gramsci’s notion of ideological hegemony. Essentially he
argues that the major media tend to replicate in the general population the world-view of the financial elites who
profit from war, oppression, and the unfair distribution of wealth and resources. Consent is thus “manufactured” by
the major media through portraying social realities, however unjust, as inevitable, normal, and thus beyond re-
consideration or dissent. This is accomplished not through “conspiracy,” but through the regular process of hiring
content producers who, at least in some measure, share the ideological predispositions of the editors and owners.
See: Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media
(New York: Pantheon Books, 2002.)
responsibility to stay alive and love and fight for people’s minds against the massive onslaught of every other form of media, from billboards to TV, from matchbook covers to money.”165 The underground press was thus revolutionary in nature in the sense that it did not usually seek political or institutional reforms, but the transformation of consciousness, the “fight for people’s minds.” These papers and publications sought the advancement not only of specific political agendas, such as ending the war in Vietnam or eliminating the subjugation of women or people of color, but they sought to do so through revolutionary alterations of consciousness and culture.

Despite the rancorous and corrosive divisions within 1960s social movement radicalism, what every part of the movement sought was a humanistic social transformation devoted to liberation, autonomy, and human authenticity. Facing what they considered to be a dishonest, violent, and de-humanized “culture of death,” counterculturalists, ethnic nationalists, feminists, and New Leftists, sought to replace the restrictive and “machine-like” dominant culture with a more open, more personally expressive, and more egalitarian culture devoted to ideals of spirituality, social justice, economic justice, civil liberties, and peace. In this way, the middle-class trend toward humanistic values expressed by the critics of mass culture in the 1950s became sacralized, radicalized, and democratized, in the 1960s.

The countercultural underground press of the 1960s and 1970s was mainly concerned with psychedelic drugs, music, and mysticism and owes much to the earlier trend toward experiential religion that flowed through the American Academy of Asian Studies and the Esalen Institute. Newspapers such at the Oracle, the East Village Other, and Gandalf’s Garden, of London, followed virtually every hiccup of popular mystical theorizers, such as Timothy Leary, and others closely associated with the Esalen Institute. The Oracle devoted itself almost entirely

to these writers and to promoting a sort-of psychedelic-tribal-magical anarchism. The psychedelic tendency was so strong that *Oracle* publisher Allen Cohen claims, “LSD was the rocket engine of most of the social or creative tendencies that were emerging in the 60s.”

Although this statement completely ignores 1960s’ “social or creative tendencies” that had little or nothing to do with psychedelic drugs, such as, of course, the black freedom struggle and radical feminism, it nonetheless illustrates how convinced the *Oracle* was concerning the inevitability of psychedelic revolution. LSD for the *Oracle* was the “rocket engine,” not merely one particular influence upon American culture among others. And the very function of LSD, as Leary noted within the *Oracle*, was to undermine the “plastic, robot Establishment” or “fake-prop-television-set American society.”

In other words, Leary and the *Oracle* insisted that psychedelic drugs humanized denizens of “the machine.” If Riesman, Whyte, and Mills pointed out that large institutions of power, such as corporations, hospitals, and universities, created diminished American selves, and if psychologists such as Maslow, Rogers, and May sought methods to re-humanize people subject to those institutions, then Leary, et al, suggested that the best way to accomplish this was to “turn on, tune in, drop out.” Leary, and the others, pursued a transformation of consciousness that they considered more real, more human, and certainly more fun, than encounter-group therapy or participatory management. If the humanistic psychologists sought reform, the ministers of *psychedelia* sought cultural revolution.

Revolution of a different type was also sought by radical women within second-wave feminism. Feminist activists, writers, and theorizers, such as Kate Millett and Shulamith Firestone, suffered no illusions concerning a psychedelic *Shangri-la* to be built upon the

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decaying ruins of the “old” culture. What these women wanted was the end of patriarchy, or what Alice Echols calls the “sex-class system,” through the elimination of gender-role construction. Radical women considered gender-roles tyrannical not only because they hindered women from attaining power in either the public or private realms, but because they did so through the de-humanization of women, more generally. While the “feminine mystique” kept women out of the corporate boardrooms and political halls, it also forced women into donning fake-feminine masks. Although Betty Friedan was no radical or revolutionary, her major contribution in The Feminine Mystique was the recognition that, in the words of Jane Gerhard, “women’s single-minded focus on the home, on children, and on being perfect wives had cost them their ‘identity.’ In short, American middle-class white women… had lost their sense of self and individuality thanks to the ideology of ‘the feminine mystique.’” Because the recovery of the self-actualizing potential of women was foremost on Friedan’s agenda, it is not surprising that she took Abraham Maslow as one of her major theoretical influences.

What off our backs, Ain’t I a Woman, and It Ain’t Me Babe have in common with the non-feminist underground press, as well as with the 1950s critics of mass culture, is a focus on the project of re-humanization and self-determination. While each of these newspapers took on specific feminist issues, such as abortion rights, women’s self-defense, or diagnosing rape as a political act, what holds each of these issues together is a concern for recovering female

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170 In a chapter of The Feminine Mystique entitled “Progressive Dehumanization” Friedan wrote, “It is not an exaggeration to call the stagnating state of millions of American housewives a sickness, a disease in the shape of a progressively weaker core of human self that is being handed down to their sons and daughters at a time when the dehumanizing aspects of modern mass culture make it necessary for men and women to have a strong core of self, strong enough to retain human individuality through the frightening, predictable pressures of our changing
autonomy, freedom, individuality, and authenticity, which is to say, humanity. This is explicit in the January, 1970, premier issue of *It Ain’t Me Babe*. The very first statement of that radical feminist publication was: “Sisters have united in Berkeley to defend our right to be treated as human beings.”

As with the underground countercultural press and feminist press, the underground military press loudly complained that the war in Vietnam, and the military more generally, dehumanized American soldiers. Between the mid-1960s and the end of the war, enlisted men resisted military authority in a wide-variety of ways, both in and out of uniform. As Cortright notes, “The grunts’ rebellion seldom reached the stage of formal mutiny, assuming instead less-visible forms: ‘search and avoid’ missions, with patrols intentionally skirting potential enemy clashes or halting a few yards beyond the defense perimeter for a three-day pot party; threats against commanders, often forcing officers and NCOs to worry more about their own men than the Vietnamese; defiance of authority, with GIs blatantly disregarding dress and hair regulations and military custom; and covert obstruction, ranging from intentional inefficiency on the job to major acts of sabotage.” As drug usage grew to alarming levels among soldiers, and as some sought to thwart military authority through violent rebellions at army bases and military stockades, other soldiers began to organize not only to end the war, but also to create institutions that would represent the radicalized or anti-war soldier in opposition to the brass. This was the function of the GI underground press.

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environment. The strength of women is not the cause, but the cure for this sickness.” See: Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1963), 305.


172 Cortright, 29.
Newspapers like the Ally, the Bond, Gigline, A Four Year Bummer, and numerous others, sought to empower enlisted men and did so through the GI coffeehouse movement and the related efforts to build a servicemen’s union.\textsuperscript{173} Former Penn State University student, Andy Stapp, in fact founded the American Servicemen’s Union (ASU) in 1967 and began publishing the Bond as its official organ upon his discharge in April, 1968.\textsuperscript{174} An examination of the Bond, as well as other underground GI papers, reveals the rhetorical strategies through which radicalized soldiers sought to re-humanize their fellow grunts, while seeking to de-humanize officers and non-enlisted personnel, or lifers. While it has often been noted that pro-war propagandists and soldiers in war-time refer to their enemies in dehumanizing ways, often as animals or insects, nothing has been written concerning similar rhetorical strategies directed at the officers or career military men.\textsuperscript{175} Likewise, as those soldiers sought to dehumanize the brass, they also complained that soldiers became “robots” or “slaves” through military discipline and the codified hierarchy of military relationships. In this way, the efforts of radicalized soldiers, such as Stapp, neatly dovetails with the general mid-century American trend toward liberation, autonomy, and human authenticity as heralded by the 1950s’ critics of mass culture. These soldiers sought to establish and explore their human individuality within the organizational constraints of the institution. The underground GI press therefore sought to reclaim the humanity of enlisted men while simultaneously dehumanizing lifers and officers.

\textsuperscript{173}Ibid, 53. Los Angeles’ About Face, for example, ran its operation out of the Echo Mike Coffee House and encouraged disgruntled servicemen to drop in for legal counseling, as well as live music and the camaraderie of enlisted men. About Face pointedly notified non-enlisted personnel that, “Brass and lifers are not welcome in the Echo Mike.” See: About Face, April 1969, 3. Roll 33:2. Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California.
\textsuperscript{175}John Dower points out the racial aspects of this dehumanization by noting that in World War II the Japanese were often likened collectively to animals, while the Germans were not. He writes, “A characteristic feature of this level of anti-Japanese sentiment was the resort to nonhuman or subhuman representation, in which the Japanese were perceived as animals, reptiles, or insects (monkeys, baboons, gorillas, dogs, mice and rats, vipers and rattlesnakes,
By the end of the 1960s, the humanistic trend had moved in a variety of directions wholly unlooked for by people such as Riesman or Maslow or Watts. The high school underground press, for example, was also a site upon which the youngest members of the movement sought to establish their autonomy and individuality and, as with the underground military press, part of the strategy was through the de-humanization of authority figures. Typically the editors of underground high school publications singled out specific teachers or principals whom they portrayed as intractable enemies seeking to undermine the liberty of students in service to their own unjustified power. The reviled authority figure was sometimes portrayed as in hot-pursuit of the crafty editorial staff that always remained just one step ahead of retribution.¹⁷⁶

By 1970, this tendency to de-humanize authority figures devolved, however, toward a tendency to de-humanize anyone outside of the movement while romanticizing any public figure seen as part of the movement. One of the most unfortunate examples of this latter inclination is illustrated in the response of much of the underground press to the arrival of Charles Mansion on the American cultural landscape. Because “Charlie” was viewed, by some, as a member of the counterculture and because, by 1970, the mainstream of American society was utterly reviled by hard-core movement radicals, the Los Angeles Free Press, and other underground newspapers, such as Tuesday’s Child, held Manson aloft as a type of a hero. Maslow, no doubt, would have been horrified.

¹⁷⁶ For example, a Los Angeles high school newspaper, The University High School Worrier, consistently portrayed University High School principal, Hugh Foley, as a wealthy and powerful elitist who wanted nothing more than to trample student rights. One cartoon has him literally chasing the editors who are, of course, far too quick to ever be caught. Another cartoon shows principal Foley dressed in a tuxedo and, sitting with his feet on his desk, answers the
The Houseboat Summit: The Oracle and the Counterculture Press

The San Francisco *Oracle* initiated one of the high profile countercultural events of the 1960s, the *Human Be-in*. On January 14, 1967, a few thousand hippies and movement people invaded Golden Gate Park for a “gathering of the tribes.” The purpose of the “be-in” was not merely to assemble hippies in Golden Gate Park, but an attempt by members of the older *Beat* contingent, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, to reach out to young political radicals. As part of that effort Jerry Rubin, a crossover figure, was invited to speak out against the war in Vietnam. While the “be-in” was a success in that it was highly attended and received considerable coverage in both the mainstream and underground press, it nonetheless failed to reconcile the irreconcilable: politics and psychedelic-mysticism.

By 1967, most leftist political radicals had already seen enough street resistance to understand that a “psychedelic revolution” could never overcome hard-edged political and economic realities. By 1967, however, it is also true that large numbers of college students were sampling LSD and Timothy Leary became a media star. The Haight-Ashbury and New York’s Greenwich Village, as well as numerous smaller college towns, such as Austin, Texas and Tucson, Arizona, were becoming havens for what Theodore Roszak would brand, one year later, the “counter-culture.”


177 Issue number five of the *Oracle*, which was devoted entirely to the “be-in,” announced it in the following terms: “A union of love and activism previously separated by categorical dogma and label mongering will finally occur ecstatically when Berkeley political activists and hip community and San Francisco’s spiritual generation and contingents from the emerging revolutionary generation all over California meet for a Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In at the Polo Field in Golden Gate Park on Saturday, January 14, 1967, from 1 to 5 p.m.” See: “The Gathering of the Tribes” *San Francisco Oracle*, Vol 1, No 5, 2.

178 The *Barb* had high hopes for the “be-in,” claiming “In unity we shall shower the country with waves of ecstasy and purification. Fear will be washed away; ignorance will be exposed to sunlight; profits and empire will lie drying on deserted beaches; violence will be submerged and transmuted in rhythm and dancing.” Quoted in: Terry
to generate specific and practical proposals on what to do next, Watts sat down with Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Timothy Leary. This event, which the *Oracle* devoted issue number seven to, did not generate nearly the attention of the “be-in,” but nonetheless illustrates both the failure of Ginsberg and Snyder to reconcile psychedelics with politics, as well as the nature of the countercultural movement as it evolved out of the San Francisco Renaissance of the 1950s.

After resigning the presidency of the American Academy of Asian Studies in the spring of 1957, Alan Watts spent a few years traveling and writing before settling into the *Vallejo*, an old ferryboat docked in Sausalito, with painters Gordon Onslow-Ford and Jean Varda as roommates.\(^\text{179}\) It was during this period that Watts came to take the idea of a psychedelic-based spirituality seriously. Watts, who received a two-year travel and study fellowship from Harvard University, began a series of visits to Cambridge and spent considerable time conferring with Timothy Leary on the potential of psychedelic drugs in the alteration and “expansion” of human consciousness.\(^\text{180}\) By the middle-end of the 1960s, when the counterculture began to fully flower, people such as Watts, Leary, Ginsberg, Snyder, and others, combined a mystical interpretation of the psychedelic experience with humanistic psychology, creating, or influencing, a new and controversial branch of that subject, transpersonal psychology.\(^\text{181}\)

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\(^\text{180}\) Haridas Chaudhuri and Frederic Spiegelberg never followed Watts down the road of psychedelic revolution. Chaudhuri was, after all, a family man and Spiegelberg was a respected academic on the faculty of Stanford. Neither believed, as Watts would come to believe, that psychedelic drugs represented a meaningful short-cut to spiritual liberation.

\(^\text{181}\) Harvard psychologist Eugene Taylor notes, “Within this flood tide (of social and political upheavals), between 1967 and 1969, humanistic psychology split into at least three parts: The first was transpersonal psychology, with its emphasis on spiritual practice, meditation, and higher states of consciousness. The second was experiential encounter, which emphasized emotional relationships, cultivation of sensory experience, and a greater awareness of the body. Finally, there was radical therapy, a catchall term referring to the marriage of psychology and radical political action in such divergent areas as militant feminism, the antipsychiatry movement, critical thinking, and
The countercultural underground newspapers, such as the *Oracle*, were psychedelic in orientation, but their marriage of psychedelic drugs with Eastern religious practices (Zen meditation, *yoga*, *tantric* sexuality, etc.) and European occultism (tarot cards, astrology, Crowleyan magical rituals, etc.) represents the concerns of transpersonal psychology in a popular, and perhaps bastardized, form. The *Oracle*, the *East Village Other*, and *Gandalf’s Garden* were not, of course, formal venues for the expression of transpersonal psychology; they were, however, venues for the informal and democratized expression of transpersonal thought geared toward young, white, middle-class Americans who rejected both competitive capitalism and organized religion.

By February, 1967, when Leary, Watts, Ginsberg, and Snyder, held the “Houseboat Summit” it was clear that *formality* of any sort (formal politics, formal academics, formal religious practice) was strictly *out* and Leary, who dominated the discussion, declared any partnership between political radicals and psychedelic revolutionaries, dead. This represented a point of tension between Ginsberg and Leary, because it was Ginsberg who continually sought to bring about alliances between various movement factions and who conferred with political activist Mario Savio on just this topic only two nights prior to the meeting.¹⁸²

When Ginsberg mentioned this early in the discussion, implying the ongoing need to court young political leftists, Leary would have none of it. “I want no part of mass movements,” he bluntly stated. “I think this is the error that the leftist activists are making. I see them as young men with menopausal minds. They are repeating the same dreary quarrels and conflicts

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for power of the thirties and forties, of the trade union movement, of Trotskyism and so forth. I think they should be sanctified, drop out, find their own center, turn on, and above all, avoid mass movements, mass leadership, mass followers. I see that there is a great difference – I say completely incompatible difference – between the leftist activist movement and psychedelic religious movement… I think that the activists want power. They talk about student power. This shocks me, and alienates my spiritual sensibilities.”183 When later in the conversation an audience member pointed out that if political radicals “drop out,” which is to say, go countercultural, “isn’t there a danger that it will leave the non-turned on people in control of the machine, and would just be Vietnam after Vietnam,” Leary responded, “The only way to end the war in Vietnam is to let’s ALL drop out and change American consciousness as quickly as possible.”184

Leary’s rejection of the New Left represents one example of the rift between Sixties’ political radicalism and Sixties’ cultural radicalism.185 While there was significant crossover between these two wings of the movement, there was also tension around how to transform American society. The politicos (New Leftists, socialist feminists, and ethnic nationalists) argued that in order to change people’s consciousness it was necessary first to change dominant political structures and social relationships. Cultural radicals and counterculturalists argued, rather, that unless consciousness was transformed first, power would continue to be abused by those who had it.

183 San Francisco Oracle, Vol 1, No 7, pg. 3. Leary believed that if enough people dropped out of American society and legally incorporated their own religions they could fight against the Vietnam War by withholding tax dollars and gaining status as conscientious-objectors. Ibid, 30.
184 Ibid, 14.
185 This rift that also found expression in the tension between the Black Panther Party (BPP) and Malauna Karenga’s US Organization. Bobby Seale once said, “I have a natural (haircut) and I like it, but power for the people doesn’t grow out of the sleeve of a dashiki.” See: William L. Van Deburg, New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965 – 1975. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 174.
When Leary suggested that there existed irreconcilable differences between political activists and counterculturalists, Ginsberg countered that he misrepresented the motivation of the political radicals. “They’re just as intelligent as you are on this fact,” he told Leary. “They know about what happened in Russia. That’s the reason they haven’t got a big, active organization. It’s because they, too, are stumped by: How do you have a community, and a community movement, and cooperation within the community to make life more pleasing for everybody – including the end of the Vietnam War? How do you have such a situation organized, or disorganized, just so long as it’s effective – without a fascist leadership? Because they don’t want that either.”¹⁸⁶

Although Ginsberg, like many on the left during this period used the term “fascist” in a rather loose fashion, the implication was that leadership, in and of itself, was highly suspect, tending inevitably toward authoritarianism. Watts put the matter plainly: “Well, I think that thus far, the genius of this kind of underground that we’re talking about is that it has no leadership.”¹⁸⁷ Indeed, throughout this period the New Left, the counterculture, and radical feminism maintained an uncomfortable relationship with the very idea of leadership. The New Left, of course, had “non-leaders” and feminist cooperatives consistently strove toward an egalitarianism in which formal leadership was hoped to be unnecessary.¹⁸⁸

This disapproval of leadership, and the disinclination of social movement leaders, such as Ginsberg, to acknowledge their own leadership status, was a major part of the humanist trend from the 1950s that migrated into the social movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Just as humanistic psychology employed methods such as non-directive encounter-group therapy, or

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¹⁸⁶ San Francisco Oracle, Vol 1, No 7, 6.
¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 6.
¹⁸⁸ Alice Echols, Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967 – 1975 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1989), 204.
progressives raised their children without resort to coercion or compulsion, and just as Andrew Kay tried to run Non-Linear Systems, Inc. on the basis of Maslow’s egalitarian participatory management style, so the social movements of the 1960s rejected the need for formal leadership. The Movement would be free and free meant social libertarianism, an emphasis on individual choice, and a deep skepticism toward authority.

This social libertarian emphasis, an emphasis that transcended left-right political considerations, was also a mainstay of the religious inclinations of the American Academy of Asian Studies, as well as the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. At Stanford University and the AAAS, Frederic Spiegelberg taught the “religion of non-religion.” He emphasized, that is, the idea that mystical truths were not the privileged domain of any particular religious institution. Haridas Chaudhuri certainly agreed with this and sought, along with Watts, a synthesis, or integration, of East-West religious teachings, an idea championed by Chauduri’s and Spiegelberg’s respected elder in India, Aurobindo Ghosh.189 Both of these ideas, subsequently, became central to the mysticism of the counterculture along with the idea, also advanced by Aurobindo, that humanity was undergoing a sort-of spiritual evolution toward the divine.190 What was new in all this was the elevation of lysergic acid diethylamide # 25 (LSD), along with other psychedelic or “mood altering” substances, to the status of “sacrament.”191

189 Aurobindo put it this way, “A unity behind diversity and discord is the secret of the variety of human religions and philosophies; for they all get at some image or some side clue, touch some portion of the one Truth or envisage some one of its myriad aspects.” Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine (New York: The Greystone Press, 1949), 623 – 624.
190 It is this idea of human spiritual evolution which led some counterculturalists to refer to themselves as “mutants.” The implication, of course, was that counterculturalists represented the cutting-edge of this evolutionary process. For this reason, also, Leary said that his group in Millbrook, New York, “consider ourselves a tribe of mutants.” Ibid, 7.
191 It should be noted that the idea of East-West spiritual synthesis could be found in occult circles since at least the end of the nineteenth-century. Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society, which was formed in New York City in 1875, represented one such nineteenth-century attempt at spiritual synthesis, as did Aleister Crowley’s Ordo Templi Orientis, as well as MacGregor Mathers’ Order of the Golden Dawn. See: Philip Jenkins, Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41.
It was for this reason that the pages of the *Oracle*, the *East Village Other*, and all the underground countercultural newspapers, celebrated the mystic potential of LSD. The counterculture took the ideas of East-West religious synthesis and spiritual evolution and combined them with a reverence for psychedelic drugs as sacrament. During the Houseboat Summit, Leary, Ginsberg, Snyder, and Watts, convinced that this psychedelic-religiosity would soon sweep away the “old” culture, speculated on what the new culture would look like and how best to facilitate its arrival. That it would arrive they seemed utterly certain. At one point in the conversation, Leary referenced mainstream opposition to the psychedelic revolution as placing them under “bayonet point.”192 Snyder replied, “That’s too paranoid. We’re on the verge of winning, really.” To which Leary said, “Oh, no doubt about that.”193

The vast and inevitable social transformation that the psychedelic revolutionaries envisioned was to be anarcho-tribal in nature, which, of course, is why the *Human Be-in* was billed as a “gathering of the tribes.” “Yes, it’s a new social structure. It’s a social structure which follows certain kinds of historically known tribal models,” Snyder explained.194 “My historical reading of the situation,” Leary responded, “is that these great, monolithic empires that developed in history: Rome, Turkey and so forth… always break down when enough people (and it’s always the young, the creative, and the minority groups) drop out and go back to a tribal form. I agree with what I’ve heard you say in the past, Gary, that the basic unit is tribal. What I envision is thousands of small groups throughout the United States and Western Europe, and eventually the world, as dropping out. What happened when Jerusalem fell? Little groups went off together.”195

192 San Francisco *Oracle*, Vol 1, No 7, 30.
193 Ibid, 30.
194 Ibid, 6.
195 Ibid, 6.
The psychedelic revolutionaries seemed sure that industrial-capitalism, the market economy, the nuclear family structure, as well as the government of the United States, were all on the verge of withering away before the cultural influence of roaming bands psychedelic neo-shamans. Snyder suggested that, “We’ve turned a corner. It’s a bigger corner than the Reformation, probably. It’s a corner on the order of the change between the Paleolithic and the Neolithic.”\(^{196}\) The great cities would all fail as people moved into the countryside to live off the land. “There will be deer grazing in Times Square in 40 years,” Leary foresaw.\(^{197}\)

The psychedelic revolutionaries believed that advancements in technology would create such material abundance that work would become strictly voluntary and no one would be forced into the position of having to conform to what Watts called the “commute-necktie-strangle scene.”\(^{198}\) Rather, according to Watts, “we’re going to have a huge leisure society – where they’re going to reverse taxation and PAY people for the work that the machines do for them.”\(^{199}\)

These new and desirable advancements in technology, however, would not come from the scientific establishment based in the universities or corporate research centers where, as Snyder suggested, “the Judaeo-Christian and Western imperialist boss sense of the universe” prevailed.\(^{200}\) When Ginsberg therefore wondered, “Where are you gonna learn engineering, or astronomy, or anything like that?” Leary told him, “The way men have always learned important things in life. Face to face, with a teacher, with a guru.”\(^{201}\) “I can envision ten M.I.T. scientists, with their families, they’ve taken LSD,” Leary speculated. “They’ve wondered about the insane-robot-television show of M.I.T. They drop out. They may get a little farm out in

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\(^{196}\) Ibid, 32.  
\(^{197}\) Ibid, 32.  
\(^{198}\) Ibid, 7.  
\(^{199}\) Ibid, 10.  
\(^{200}\) Ibid, 8.  
\(^{201}\) Ibid, 8.
Lexington, near Boston. They may use their creativity to make some new kinds of machines that will turn people on instead of bomb them.”

Whatever one makes of these ideas they nonetheless demonstrate that the 1960s countercultural press was not exactly frivolous in its orientation. Although sex, drugs, and rock ‘n roll were the mainstays of the Oracle, and the other countercultural newspapers, the purpose of these newspapers, and of the counterculture, more generally, was to bring about a social revolution in which people would be free from undue authority, gain access to a spirituality without the allegedly deadening impulse of organized religious institutions, and allow people to organize themselves in such a way as to avoid the necessity to attach themselves to the large institutions of power that Riesman, Whyte, and Mills warned diminished human individuality and authenticity. Indeed, all these references to a “Judeo-Christian imperialist boss sense of the universe” or a “television-prop-fake show” American culture suggest a way of looking at American society heavily influenced by the critics of mass culture from the 1950s. Like the humanistic psychologists before them, the psychedelic revolutionaries, celebrated within the pages of the countercultural press, advocated methods to reawaken human authenticity, individuality, and autonomy, in ways both secular and religious.

One very unfortunate consequence of this tendency to organize around these social criticisms, however, was that it created an “us versus them” mentality, in which them came to be seen as less than human. Counterculturalists, who liked to think of themselves as people of peace, sometimes dehumanized those who failed to agree with their psychedelic idealism. In the Houseboat Summit, Leary went so far as to suggest that humanity was evolving in a dual direction, toward a “tribal people” and an “anthill people.” The tribal people, of course, would be the spiritual descendents of Leary and his co-believers in psychedelic revolution while the

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202 Ibid, 8.
anthill people would, essentially, be everyone else. Instead of, as Aurobindo, Chaudhuri, and Spiegelberg thought, that humanity in general was evolving toward an integration with the divine, Leary suggested that only some people were so doing. “Just as there are many kinds of primates: baboons and chimpanzees and so forth,” Leary told the audience assembled on Watts’ houseboat, “In a few thousand years we’ll look back and see that from – what we call man – there may be two or more species developing. There’s no question that one species, which could and probably will develop, is this anthill. It’s run like a beehive with queens – or kings… BUT you’re gonna have another species who will inevitably survive, and that will be the tribal people…”²⁰³ Gary Snyder, much to his credit, thoroughly disagreed with this notion. “I don’t think that you’re right about that anthill thing at all though,” he told Leary. “That’s a very negative view of human nature. I don’t think it’s accurate.” To this Leary responded, “It’s no longer even human nature. We won’t call them human anymore.”²⁰⁴ In this way Leary fractionated the humanistic trend by suggesting that it was fit only for counterculturalists. By the end of the 1960s, this divisive tendency would undermine the movement as a whole and lead to such poisonous social phenomena as the deification of someone like Charles Manson.

“Rape is as common as bullshit on Haight Street.”:
The Radical Feminist Underground Press

Issue number five of the Oracle contains an address that Alan Ginsberg delivered to the Arlington Street Church in Boston, on November 12, 1966. In that speech Ginsberg made a rather unusual “political” statement. “America’s political need,” he told the parishioners, “is orgies in the park, on Boston Common & in the Public Gardens, with naked bacchantes in our

²⁰³ Ibid, 10.
²⁰⁴ Ibid, 10.
national forests.” For Sixties’ counterculturalists, as for second-wave feminists, politics and sexuality were intimately connected. To the extent that counterculturalists could be said to have a politics, it was the politics of the personal. It was a politics that emphasized, in the words of Jerry Rubin, “how you live your life, not who you vote for.” It was also a politics that suggested, among other things, that pleasure and sexuality could be revolutionary and that sexual imagery should be employed as a symbol of freedom. “Transgressive sexuality,” as Beth Bailey writes, “offered a visual and verbal language with which to challenge the Establishment.”

Through the late 1960s, the underground press was thus full of sexual imagery designed specifically to challenge the sterility perceived to define the mainstream of American social life. This sexual imagery, furthermore, was often presented in a manner that sometimes suggested politics, sometimes suggested violence, and sometimes suggested both. One example is an advertisement for the off-Broadway production of Che, published in New York City’s Corpus. Above the word “CHE” the ad shows two young naked men standing with two young naked women, holding an assault rifle. What Guevara might have made of this is anyone’s guess, but it illustrates that by the end of the 1960s the underground press presented sexuality

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205 Alan Ginsberg, San Francisco Oracle, Vol 1, No 5, 17.
206 Quoted in Echols, 17.
207 Leary took this notion of the revolutionary potential of sexuality in a highly unusual direction when he suggested that when combining sex with LSD, “it’s as though every cell in your body — and there are trillions — is making love with every cell in her body.” The implication of this is that if LSD can bring about a revolutionary and mystical alteration of consciousness, then sex under the effects of LSD was even more effective. “In fact, that is what the LSD experience is all about,” he told Playboy magazine in 1966, “Merging, yielding, flowing, union, communion. It’s all lovemaking.” See: Timothy Leary, The Politics of Ecstasy (Berkeley, CA: Ronin Publishing, Inc, 1968), 127 – 128.
209 As Streitmatter notes, “A liberated attitude toward sex was a hallmark of the counterculture press, in both editorial and advertising content.” Streitmatter, 208.
and politics in a manner that sometimes implied violence and that was designed to shock “average” Americans. Furthermore, as Bailey suggests, “In many cases these sexual images, while presented as attacks on the establishment, were also a form of macho posturing, a vision of postrevolutionary possibility in which rape played a central role and the word ‘fuck’ was a powerful incantation.”211

Indeed, the fact of sexual harassment, not to mention sexual assault, within countercultural circles was lost neither on radical feminists, nor on those concerned for the well being of youthful dropouts. The Communication Company, which produced posters and neighborhood news in San Francisco, published the following in the spring of 1967: “Pretty little 16-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it’s all about & gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed… then feeds her 3000 mikes [micrograms of LSD, 12 times the standard does] & raffles off her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest Haight Street gang-bang since the night before last. The politics & ethics of ecstasy. Rape is as common as bullshit on Haight Street.”212 Not surprisingly, therefore, it was around the meaning of sexual imagery within the underground press that dissident feminists would make a stand in the late 1960s, taking over several underground newspapers, starting many of their own, and sometimes splitting-off from any association with the movement, more generally.

The year 1970 marks the moment when radical women finally had had enough of sexism within the counterculture and the New Left, as well as within Black Nationalism, and began

211 Bailey, 311.
publishing numerous underground newspapers of their own. With the publication, in 1970, of Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* and Shulamith Firestone’s *Dialectic of Sexuality*, radical women developed a gender-based political consciousness in contradiction to notions of “sexual revolution” promoted by people such as Ginsberg and by the underground press, in general. Perhaps the most influential clarion call for radical feminists to disassociate themselves from the counterculture, the New Left, and the sexual revolution came from Robin Morgan in her statement, “Goodbye to All That,” also published in 1970. In that year, furthermore, the influential *off our backs* commenced publication, as did feminist separatist underground newspapers such as *Ain’t I a Woman* and *It Ain’t Me Babe.*

The tensions within radical-left social movements leading up to that split, however, played themselves out throughout the 1960s and revolved around the meaning of sexuality to gender, of gender to personhood, and of personhood to politics. Just as the critics of mass culture in the 1950s pointed toward the diminishment of human selves within hegemonic institutions of power, such as corporations and universities, so second-wave feminists perceived a stifling of female identity within western society, and virtually all of human history, through the social construction of gender-roles. The fundamental criticism was not merely that women were not offered respect within the social movements of the 1960s, but that those movements, New Left and ethnic nationalist, bolstered patriarchy, and thus crushed, warped, or damaged female identity. The movement, the “sexual revolution,” and the puerile usage of female sexual imagery as both symbol of freedom and weapon against the “establishment,” therefore came to

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213 Streitmatter claims, “During the early 1970s, women created some 230 feminist publications that demanded an end to gender-based oppression.” Streitmatter, 256.

be seen by many feminists not as revolutionary in nature, but as counter-revolutionary. Sexual “freedom” came to be seen as yet another way for men to control women’s bodies in furtherance of the patriarchal oppression of women.

Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, is usually considered one of the founding documents of second-wave feminism. The central idea of *The Feminine Mystique* is that, as Gerhard writes, “femininity was a cultural construct permeated with social values that had little basis in biology or genuine female experience. Identifying what she termed a ‘malaise’ afflicting white middle-class American women at mid-century, Friedan argued that this was malaise was caused by the social denial of women’s ‘human potential’ in the name of femininity.” Friedan, like Maslow and the critics of mass culture in the 1950s, and also like Huxley and the Esalen people who created the human potential movement in the early 1960s, developed criticisms of American and western culture that highlighted the ways in which that culture crushed authentic human selves. Friedan’s contribution to this ongoing and broad mid-century project was to locate gender-role construction as the site of female de-humanization.

Just as the nineteenth century American woman’s movement developed out of a dissatisfaction with the treatment of women within abolitionism, so the twentieth century radical feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s grew out of a dissatisfaction with the treatment of women within the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left. “These two vivid epochs,” as Susan Brownmiller writes, “were separated by more than a century, yet nearly identical forces

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215 Beth Baily notes, “As more and more women… began to insist that the adolescent male fantasies of unfettered ‘tits’ and violent rape did not symbolize their cultural revolutions, the uneasy alliance of communities that had come together to form a counterculture began to dissolve and resolve into new strands. See: Baily, “Sex as a Weapon: Underground Comix and the Paradox of Liberation” in *Imagine Nation*, 322.

216 Jane Gerhard writes, “In her best-seller *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan set out the first pillar of second-wave feminism – that femininity was a cultural construct permeated with social values that had little basis in biology or genuine female-experience. Identifying what she termed a ‘malaise’ afflicting white middle-class American women at mid-century, Friedan argued that this malaise was caused by the social denial of women’s ‘human potential’ in the name of femininity.” Gerhard, 88.
applied. After fighting alongside men in a radical movement to correct a grievous wrong, the women then woke up and wondered, ‘What about us?’” Indeed, what about the women? In 1964, SNCC organizer Stokely Carmichael famously asked and answered that question. “What is the position of women in SNCC?” he inquired of himself. “The position of women in SNCC is prone.”

It was just this kind of slap at the humanity of women that fed the resentments of late-1960s radical feminists and helped incline them to break from the New Left. In 1965, shortly after Carmichael’s famous wisecrack, two SNCC women, Casey Hayden and Mary King, circulated a brief paper, “A Kind of Memo,” outlining the problem and proposing further discussion. They wrote, “There seem to be many parallels that can be drawn between treatment of Negroes and treatment of women in our society as a whole. But in particular, women we’ve talked to who work in the movement seem to be caught up in a common-law caste system that operates, sometimes subtly, forcing them to work around or outside hierarchical structures of power which may exclude them. Women seem to be placed in the same position of assumed subordination in personal situations too. It is a caste system which, at its worst, uses and exploits women.” Radical men within the movement through the invocation of biology, they noted, justified this caste-system. “That’s the way it’s supposed to be. There are biological differences,” the men argued.

Throughout the 1960s, men in the black freedom struggle, and within the New Left, refused to heed Hayden’s and King’s call for reasoned discussion of sexism within the

217 Gerhard, 88.
219 Ibid, 14.
221 Ibid, 1.
movement, and they did so even as Friedan, and others, provided intellectual ammunition and inspiration for the burgeoning women’s movement. The failure of radical men to incorporate the concerns of radical women within their political analyses thus contributed to the fragmentation of the radical-left social movements by the end of the decade. Brownmiller reports that at the 1967 SDS convention in Ann Arbor, a Women’s Liberation workshop wrote a resolution demanding “full participation in all aspects of movement work” which was greeted by “hoots and catcalls… when it was read to the full convention.”

Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green suggest that the snubbing of women at the 1967 SDS convention generated women’s groups in New York and Chicago and stoked the process through which radical women began to form their own organizations and publications. By 1968, radical women were well on their way toward developing political philosophies that highlighted not only predatory capitalism, but also male supremacy and sexism, as sources of injustice and oppression. The 1968 SDS Resolution on Women, a resolution that many SDS men found difficult to support, stated that “male supremacy persists in the movement today” and that “a socialist revolution could take place which maintains the secondary position of women in society. Therefore, the liberation of women must become a conscious part of our struggle for people’s liberation.”

By 1969, the emerging rift between radical men and radical women was probably beyond repair and a number of events took place that led to a separate women’s movement, as well as a separate radical women’s underground press. At the January Counter-Inaugural rally held by the National Mobilization Against the War (the MOBE) at the Washington Mall the weekend that Richard Nixon was sworn in as president, Shulamith Firestone and Marilyn Webb received a

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222 Brownmiller, 16.
224 Quoted by Linden-Ward and Green, 415.
rather rude reception when it came their turn to speak. Standing upon a swaying platform and looking down upon a muddy field filled with anti-war activists, Webb told the crowd, “Women must take control of our bodies. We must define our own issues. We will take the struggle to our homes, to our jobs, to the streets.”\textsuperscript{225} The reaction to Webb’s speech, a speech that the women considered mild and even conciliatory, was practically a riot in the streets. “Take her off stage and fuck her!” someone yelled out. “I’ll go to the streets with you. Down an ally!” shouted someone else. Webb told Brownmiller, “Screams and fistfights were breaking out in front of me. Screams and fistfights… Men were hitting each other. Beating each other up. And Dave (Dellinger) was getting hysterical…”\textsuperscript{226} Webb reports that later that evening she received an anonymous phone call in which the caller bellowed at her, “If you ever give a speech like that again, we’ll beat the shit out of you.” Webb later told Brownmiller, “That was the moment when it all broke up. That was the moment when I suddenly knew that Women’s Liberation was going to be an independent movement.”\textsuperscript{227}

The next year, 1970, was the year that radical feminists seized the \textit{Rat}, one of New York City’s underground newspapers, demanded “women’s issues” of underground papers, such as \textit{Vortex} out of Lawrence, Kansas, and began publishing their own newspapers, such as \textit{off our backs}, Marilyn Webb’s publication, as well as \textit{Ain’t I a Woman}, out of Iowa City, Iowa, and \textit{It Ain’t Me Babe}, from Berkeley, California, to name just a few. The February, 1970, seizure of the \textit{Rat}, however, is an epochal event in the history of the underground press of the 1960s and 1970s and Robin Morgan’s “Goodbye to All That,” published in that newspaper and reprinted in numerous others, became, as Streitmatter notes, “the guiding credo of the Women’s Liberation

\textsuperscript{225} Quoted in Brownmiller, 57.
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid, 57.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid, 58.
Morgan’s statement in “Goodbye to All That” resonated with young radical feminists not because it called upon radical men to join radical women in working on issues of concern to women, as Hayden and King did in “A Kind of Memo,” but because it turned the tables on radical men completely, accusing them of being counter-revolutionary, of being the problem, and did so in the strongest terms possible:

Goodbye to Hip Culture and the so-called Sexual Revolution, which has functioned toward women’s freedom as did the Reconstruction toward former slaves – re instituted oppression by another name…

Sexism is NOT the fault of women – kill your fathers, not your mothers…

Was it my brother who listed human beings among the OBJECTS which would be easily available after the Revolution: ‘Free grass, free food, free women, free acid, free clothes, etc.?  

It hurts to understand that at Woodstock or Altamont a woman could be declared uptight or a poor sport if she didn’t want to be raped…

Goodbye, goodbye, forever, counterfeit Left, counterleft, male-dominated cracked-glass-mirror reflection of the Amerikan nightmare. Women are the real Left…

We are rising with a fury older and potentially greater than any force in history, and this time we will be free or none will survive. 229

The publication of “Goodbye to All That” marks a moment when significant numbers of feminists separated from the movement and began working toward the liberation of women, without the help of men, and makes plain some of the issues, such as rape and the objectification of women, that radical women endeavored to analyze, and to counter, in the pages of the underground feminist press. Perhaps even more importantly, “Goodbye to All That” represents a step away from emphasizing the subjugation of women as one form of capitalist oppression and

228 Streitmatter, 259.
a step toward viewing the oppression of women as “the original and basic form of domination from which all others flow.” It is also important to note that the seizure of the *Rat* by radical women was precisely that, a *seizure*. Whereas the male editors of *Vortex* agreed to allow women editorial control of a single March 1970, issue, the male editors of the *Rat* faced young women, many of them former friends, armed with pistols and knives. It was the forced nature of the seizure of the *Rat*, not the willing relinquishment of editorial control that characterized *Vortex*, which inspired radical women. In its subsequent edition, *It Ain’t Me Babe* issued a warning to other underground newspapers. “Underground press beware!” it threatened, “Such an action is long overdue in Berkeley.”

Accompanying this statement, *It Ain’t Me Babe* published a cartoon dramatizing the takeover. The cartoon pits the sexist male editors of the *Rat* against their female colleagues. In the first panel, a longhaired male editor sits back in his chair, feet upon his desk, and says to three *Rat* women, “We need fewer women writers and more secretaries around here and maybe a maid to clean up once a week.” The next panel shows two male editors drooling over pornography as one masturbates, saying, “Hey, Chief! Dig the latest issue… stories on pornography… on masturbation… clit power… like this is real radical, no shit! Really revolutionary!” As the cartoon unfolds, the radical women practice karate, wield weaponry, and forcibly take over the editorial offices of the newspaper.

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230 Quote from statement of the Bread and Roses Collective delivered at the National Student Strike rally at Harvard University in May, 1970. See “Revolutionary Feminism,” *Rat*, v. 3, 7, May 22 – June 4, 1970. In her memoir, published that same year, Morgan is just as explicit on this point. “Sexism,” she wrote, “is the root oppression, the one which, until and unless we uproot it, will continue to put forth the branches of racism, class hatred, ageism, competition, ecological disaster, and economic exploitation.” See: Morgan, *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Random House, 1970), 9.
232 Ibid, back page. In a later issue an article written by anonymous *Rat* woman, and reprinted in *It Ain’t Me Babe*, describes how after the initial seizure of the newspaper the women refused to give up editorial control. “Jeff Shero, et al, came back to resume control,” she wrote, “and started picking sexist pictures for the cover and joking about how tits sell and obviously not having gotten the point of the women’s issue at all… it was (then) decided that
Whereas *It Ain’t Me Babe* celebrated the women’s seizure of the *Rat* and joined with Robin Morgan in saying, “goodbye,” the women at *Vortex* received little accolades for their efforts one month later. The writings of the *Vortex* women in that issue are considerably more tentative than Morgan’s work and filled with mixed signals. In their opening statement the female editors lamented their own inexperience and also found themselves competing for copy space with the editors of *AWOL*, an underground military newspaper whose writings *Vortex* published.233 While the “women’s issue” published “Goodbye to All That,” made some bold statements regarding sexual revolution as counter-revolution, and promoted the Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH), a short-lived radical feminist organization founded by Morgan, among others, it also published a cartoon equating women’s liberation with sado-masochism and an article countering “Goodbye to All That” by Genie Plamandon, the Minister of Communication for John Sinclair’s White Panther Party.234

Plamandon, in “Hello to All That,” pleaded with radical women to remain part of the larger movement and defended John Sinclair whom Morgan had condemned along with the Yippies, the Black Panther Party, and numerous other high-profile movement men and their organizations. “I cannot accept her as a revolutionary,” Plamandon wrote, “when she says ‘Goodbye’ to so many of the people and movements that have brought us to the point in history

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women would take over the *Rat* for an indefinite period of time; that the hierarchical structure of the paper would change, and that it would be run by a collective of women, with no woman having any more power than any other.” See: “Keep on Truckin’ Sisters” *It Ain’t Me Babe*, Vol 1, No 5, April 7, 1970, pg. 11. The takeover of the *Rat* by radical women was so complete that many years later when Alice Echols wrote *Daring to Be Bad* she refers to the *Rat* as simply “the women’s *Rat.*” Echols, 248.

233 *Vortex* “Women’s Issue” 18 March 1970. Roll 68:1, *Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection*, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California. The presence of the *AWOL* material in the women’s issue of *Vortex* indicates that either the women’s issue was not entirely controlled by the women or that the women editors felt an obligation to uphold a previous agreement with that paper. In either case, it served, at least in some measure, to undermine their project.

we have reached now.” Plamandon charged Morgan with lashing out at men in the Movement because, “brothers and sisters who cannot reach the real oppressor start striking out at each other.” And, perhaps most significantly, stated, “I’m not going to join any women who want a genderless society – they can have their own genderless tribe, I’m not down on that…”

Within the Movement, by 1970, lines were thus drawn between radical feminists who privileged gender-based analyses, as they sought to confront patriarchy, and feminist politicos who privileged race and class-based analyses, as they sought to overthrow capitalism. An examination of the radical feminist underground press from that year reveals the porous nature of those lines, as well as certain theoretical parallels between late-1960s, early-1970s, radical feminism with the mass culture criticisms of the Riesman / Whyte Fifties.

Newspapers like *off our backs*, *It Ain’t Me Babe*, and *Ain’t I a Woman*, indicate that while radical feminists sought their own movement by 1970, they nonetheless, despite “Goodbye to All That,” struggled with just how, or to what extent, they would disassociate themselves from the counterculture, the New Left, or the male-dominated black freedom struggle. Although the pages of the underground feminist press are filled with denunciations of the Movement, countercultural and New Left influences still rang through their pages and the divisions between radical feminists and politicos, that Echols writes of, were anything but clear. Examples are

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235 Ibid, 7.
236 Ibid, 7.
237 Ibid, 7.
238 Echols notes that politicos insistence “that socialism was sufficient to liberate women led radical feminists to make the counterclaim that women’s liberation would automatically undermine capitalism.” See Echols, 10. Shortly after the first issues, the radical women of the *Babe*, in fact, found themselves confronted by politicos demanding a say in editorial decisions. “We then faced our first crisis,” wrote *Babe* editors. “Angered at our editorial and at the first strip of Belinda Berkeley (which was a critique of the RYM (Revolutionary Youth Movement)-sponsored San Francisco International Women’s Day Rally) the Leftists in Berkeley WL (Women’s Liberation) called a meeting with the *Babe* editorial board, demanding that we allow two of them to be on the board. We refused, claiming that the *Babe* had been started as an independent feminist newspaper, that we were not the organ of Berkeley Women’s Liberation, and that we were within our rights closing the board, particularly to women with a radically different approach to Women’s Liberation. We felt that ‘feminists’ and ‘leftists’ could each accomplish the most by working independently.” See: “A Struggle for Identity” *It Ain’t Me Babe*, 6 – 20 August 1970, 2.
numerous, but perhaps a few will suffice to illustrate. A cartoon in the December 14, 1970, issue of *off our backs* shows a young woman who, in panel one, says to herself, “If I don’t go home for Thanksgiving my parents will kill me…” In panel two she says, “If I don’t go to the Panther Convention my friends will kill me…” And in panel three she concludes, “I think I’ll stay here and get stoned!” Although only so much can be read into the meaning of this cartoon, two things are clear: the Panther Convention remained an option and the countercultural affinity for mood-altering drugs was still very much apart of things.

Of the two, perhaps the former is most surprising because by 1970 the underground feminist press had roundly condemned the Panthers as a sexist organization. In the October 9, 1970, issue of *Ain’t I a Woman*, the editors, in reference to a Panther convention that year, stated bluntly, “the Black Panthers are sexist.” Yet, an *Ain’t I a Woman* contingent attended the convention in the hopes of some form of reconciliation. “An agreement was reached with the Panthers,” wrote the editors of *Ain’t I a Woman*, “that the convention would reflect consciousness of women’s oppression and sexual self-determination, that a third world woman with a heavy woman’s consciousness be a keynote speaker, and that a woman chair the sessions.” The Panthers, however, failed to live up to this agreement and accused the radical women of “racism and bourgeois indulgence.” By the conclusion of this article, the point is made very clear. “The hysterical and paranoid reaction of the Panthers has helped us to realize the potency of our position as women whose primary concern is our own revolution.”

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241 Ibid, 4.
242 Ibid, 4.
243 Ibid, 4.
In many ways, the nature of that revolution parallels the theories and criticisms worked out in the 1950s by the critics of mass culture, but taken in different directions by people living under different social circumstances. The radical feminist aversion to hierarchy, insistence upon democratic decision making, the goals of self-determination, empowerment and self-defense, the rejection of western forms of religious orthodoxy as the sole arbiter of religious truth, and the project to regain one’s personhood through the undermining of gender-role construction, as well as identifying the objectifying potential of pornography, are each roughly consistent with the writings and theories of the social critics, cultural critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers, described earlier in this work.

“Although it is instructive to locate radical feminism within the feminist tradition,” as Echols notes, “one cannot really comprehend radical feminism unless one situates it within the ‘60s movements from which it emerged.”244 And the social movements of the 1960s, including the counterculture, emerged from within American society during a period in which Americans struggled with questions of conformity versus individuality and authenticity, authoritarianism versus egalitarianism, and control versus freedom, during the Cold War. Such struggles, of course, were not new in American history, however following World War II they took specific and diverse shapes. In the 1950s, as American politicians accused Soviet Communism of crushing human individuality, so sociologists such as Riesman, Whyte, and Mills accused large institutions, corporations, hospitals, and universities, of doing likewise, within the United States. During these same years, alternative religious thinkers, such as Watts, Spiegelberg, and Chaudhuri suggested that mainline churches offered faux spirituality and psychologists, such as Maslow, Rogers, and May sought methods, such as non-directed encounter-group therapy or participatory management theory, to recover and re-empower individual selves. The emergence
of radical feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, can be viewed as one cultural movement, among and connected with others, that developed from within a general cultural framework defined by growing opposition to arbitrary authority and the desire to reformulate authentic individualities. This tendency, as previous chapters demonstrate, was not just a tendency of the 1960s and 1970s, but was already well in place and developing in various directions by the 1950s.

The De-Humanizing and Re-Humanizing of the American Soldier: The Underground Military Press

In the spring of 1964, Andrew Dean Stapp, an undergraduate in archeology from Penn State University, joined an expedition to Egypt for the purpose of studying the sculptures at Abu Simbel, before the Aswam Dam inundated them.245 “I went to Egypt to learn about ancient history,” Stapp writes, “Instead I learned about modern history, about the Egyptians’ struggle against the British and about the horrible legacy left by the British, a legacy of squalor and ignorance and disease.”246 In his memoir, Up Against the Brass, Stapp claims that the most significant idea that he took from his time in Egypt was the conviction that no nation had the right to impose its will upon another. Back on campus the following August, Stapp came across an SDS leaflet featuring a picture of a U.S. Army truck dragging the body of an apparently dead

244 Echols, 15.
246 Ibid, 11.
Vietnamese man. In his memoir, Stapp claims that seeing this photograph “was like being punched in the guts,” motivating him to learn more about the history of western and American involvement in that country: “I began studying the background and events of the war, and the more I read the more I discovered what a hypocritical role the government was playing. They placed puppets in power and preached democracy. They killed and said they abhorred violence. They burned and bombed and called it progress.

Angry over the Vietnam War, as well as the legacy of western colonialism and imperialism, Stapp hitchhiked to Washington D.C. for the Hiroshima Day rally on August 6. During that rally, Stapp, along with a number of others, confronted the police, was beaten unconscious, and went to jail for eleven days. While in lock-up another protestors pulled some radical literature from his boot and passed it around. “Where before I had seen the evils of English colonialism,” Stapp remembers, “now I began to get a glimmer of the nature of finance capitalism and its demand for foreign markets and raw materials at the expense of the world’s people.”

Upon his return to Penn State, Stapp organized against the war in Vietnam and encouraged draft resistance among students. On October 16, 1965, at a street meeting on the Penn State campus, Stapp, along with several others, burned his draft card in a World War II Nazi helmet.

Less than one year later, however, Stapp presented himself to the local Army recruitment board in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, and volunteered for service. Needless to say, Stapp did
not have a change of heart regarding the military or the Vietnam War. He joined the Army for the specific purpose of radicalizing soldiers and disrupting American military efforts. Out of his efforts came the Bond, one of the foremost underground military newspapers, as well as the American Servicemen’s Union (ASU), of which Stapp was president.

An examination of the underground military press from the late 1960s reveals that the major concerns of anti-war enlisted men, aside from avoiding injury or death in an unjust war, revolved around the de-humanizing nature of the military experience. In the pages of the underground military press, radicalized anti-war soldiers sought to reclaim their humanity through legal strategies that upheld their rights as citizens, as well as rhetorical strategies that re-humanized grunts, while de-humanizing military officers and lifers. Underground military newspapers, such as the Bond, from New York City, and the Ally, from Berkeley, California, along with smaller ones, such as About Face, from Los Angeles, or A Four Year Bummer: the Airman’s Voice, from Champaign, Illinois, demonstrate the pervasiveness of this theme, particularly within letters to the editor. In letter after letter, enlisted soldiers criticized the military in a manner that echoes the criticisms of Riesman, Whyte, and Mills toward hegemonic institutions of power in the 1950s. Whereas the critics of mass culture in the 1950s condemned corporations and universities, among other institutions, for allegedly creating a nation of conformist drudges, or in the words of Riesman, “other-directed” personality types, so anti-war military personnel in the 1960s and 1970s, claimed that the U.S. military turned people into “slaves” or “robots.” In fact, one anti-Vietnam war critic, retired General Hugh B. Hester, wrote an article for the Bond claiming that the “Draft is Slavery.”

Hester wrote, “Let’s face up to it: Military conscription is one of the most cruel and vile forms of involuntary servitude. This is

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especially true when used as now for procuring cannon fodder for the prosecution of a war of aggression against a peasant people. Even the Southern slaves were not required to kill and be killed by their masters during our Civil War.**253**

A few other examples will serve to further illustrate:

“The biggest problem with the Army in the states is that you become a *slave* for some E-6.”**254** (Italics mine.)

“Hidden behind fear, ignorance, and propaganda is the truth about the military man. He is little more than a *slave* channeled into the military by political and social pressures.”**255** (Italics mine.)

“‘Attention!… Right Face… Forward march!… Say ‘sir’ when you’re talking to an officer!’ are merely every day humiliations to prepare you to be a willing *robot* to do the dirty work, to die if the boss-man says so, so that the boss-man can go on giving unjust orders.”**256** (Italics mine.)

Anti-war soldiers who believed the military subjected them to a dehumanizing process therefore sought to reclaim their rights as human beings as outlined in the Constitution of the United States. Most particularly, dissident soldiers sought to affirm their First amendment rights to free speech and free association, arguing that their presence in the military did not automatically deprive them of their rights as American citizens. Attempts by enlisted men to assert their First amendment rights to free speech often centered around the right to possess literature, including the underground military newspapers, that military leadership found both offensive and subversive. It was for this reason that the masthead of the *Bond* contained this advisement, “This newspaper is your personal property. It cannot be legally taken from you for

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253 Ibid, 7.
256 “Join the GI’s Union to Break Down the Bars” The Bond, 13 May 1968, 1. Roll 29: 5 Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California.
any reason.”257 It was for this reason, also, that the premier issue of A Four Year Bummer contained an article, “Toward GI Power,” insisting upon soldiers’ rights to free speech. “Free speech is a basic right of every GI. After all, this is the principle that GI’s are pledged to defend. But the military has seen fit to repeatedly stifle individual liberties… On many military posts and installations the so-called underground GI newspapers have been prohibited. Such a violation of the Constitution is intolerable… The right of free speech, which guarantees that all opinions and viewpoints may be heard and read, should not be controlled by brass gods who wield arbitrary power in the name of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” wrote the anonymous author.258 The soldiers’ rights to free speech therefore obviously included the right to read newspapers critical of the war. The March, 1968, issue of the Ally therefore contained this “Statement of Purpose”:

For too long the American serviceman has been isolated from accurate news of world events. The Stars and Stripes gives the GI only news and opinions which have passed through the fine sieve of official scrutiny and censorship.

The Ally has been organized by an independent group of citizens, reservists, and Vietnam veterans to fill the information gap that exists for American servicemen. The Ally staff believes that the IG is entitled to know all the news and that there are truths about the Vietnam war which are not carried to him through official channels.

We give the GI credit for more intelligence than the military brass does; we think that the average Army latrine orderly or Navy messcook has at least as much common sense as any deskjockey general or admiral.259

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259 “‘Statement of Purpose’ The Ally, March, 1968, Vol 1, No 2, pg. 4. Note the way this article both affirms GI First amendment rights to possess non-scrutinized, non-censored news, as well as an affirmation of the intelligence of ordinary enlisted men in comparison to military command. This can also be contrasted with the Ally’s reprint of a cartoon from a 1916 issue of the Masses. This cartoon shows an Army medical officer standing in front of a giant and muscle-bound soldier, lacking a head. The officer says, “At last a perfect soldier!” The Ally, December, 1968, Vol 1, No 12, pg. 1. Roll 28: 22 Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California. Still another cartoon published in Gigline, an amateurish underground military newspaper published in Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, shows a marching soldier with a wind-up key sticking from his back. Gigline, Vol 1, No 4 (undated), 8. Roll 36:6. Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California.
Just as the underground military press articulated the First amendment rights of soldiers, so anti-war enlisted men sought to elude the confiscation of this material by officers. For this reason newspapers such as the *Ally* were distributed in a clandestine manner, seeking to shroud the nature of the content until safely in the hands of their readership.\(^{260}\)

Not coincidentally, it was around soldiers’ First amendment rights that Andy Stapp faced his first court-martial, in June, 1967, about one year prior to his involvement in the *Bond*, an event that turned him into something of an anti-war celebrity.\(^{261}\) While stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Stapp turned his footlocker into a small radical socialist library of sorts and did his best to share this material with any soldier who was willing to look it over. On May 13, his one year anniversary in the military, Lieutenant John Urquhart ordered Stapp to open his footlocker, but Stapp refused, telling the lieutenant that the order was illegal and invoking the First amendment to the Constitution, as well as Army Regulation 381-135, which protected soldiers’ rights to possess the reading material of their choice. “Urquhart,” Stapp remembers, “pointed to the lieutenant’s bar on his shoulder and said, ‘This makes it legal, Private.’ ‘Like hell it does,’” Stapp allegedly replied.\(^{262}\) Lieutenant Urquhart then ordered Sergeant Daniel Carnes to take an axe to Stapp’s locker and confiscate the contents. These included socialist and revolutionary

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\(^{261}\) If history has not entirely forgotten Stapp, he certainly received more attention from the media during the Vietnam War than he has in scholarly accounts of anti-Vietnam War activity among soldiers. In Cortright’s *Soldiers in Revolt*, published in 1975, Stapp receives a brief discussion. In Gerald Nicosia’s recent *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans’ Movement*, Stapp is entirely absent. Conversely, Cortright makes no reference to a young, anti-war veteran named John Kerry, while Nicosia’s treatment, not surprisingly, gives Kerry considerable attention. Nonetheless, by 1970, numerous newspaper articles, radio shows, and television shows featured Stapp’s activities, including his defense of First Lieutenant William Calley during the *My Lai* Massacre trial. Stapp’s American Servicemen’s Union called Calley’s conviction a “whitewash because the senior officers who are as guilty as Calley and who gave him his orders have all had the charges dropped against them.” See: Linda Charlton “Verdict Protested Anew; 3 Try to Jail Themselves” *New York Times*, 1 April 1971, 18.

\(^{262}\) Stapp, 43.
books, as well as the Harvard Crimson, the New Republic, Fact magazine and his American Civil Liberties Union membership card. “They were all the same to him,” Stapp later wrote.263

The Army thus court-martialed Stapp for disobeying a direct order, found him guilty, and sentenced him to forty-five days of hard labor with a rank reduced to Private E-1, the lowest possible in the United States Army. During the proceedings, Stapp claimed, “Many men in the unit are opposed to the war and have literature similar to what was in my foot locker. I was singled out at random for punishment as an example to others for the purpose if intimidation. The ruling class needs robots in its Army, but we refuse to be unthinking cannon fodder.”264 Stapp’s court-martial received considerable press attention, both in the United States and Europe, prompting no less a figure than philosopher Bertrand Russell to issue this statement: “I was very interested to learn about the case of Private Andrew Stapp, who has shown great courage in his opposition to the Vietnam war. I earnestly hope that other American soldiers will follow his example.”265

Attempts by enlisted men to assert their First amendment rights to free association often centered around the right to unionize, the right to attend anti-war rallies, and the right to associate with like-minded soldiers in the GI coffeehouses springing up outside of military bases throughout the country in the late 1960s. What motivated much of this dissent however was the idea that soldiers were not slaves, animals, or machines, in service to the brass, but human beings held hostage against their will to an unjust and violent foreign policy:

263 Ibid, 43.
264 Ibid, 53.
265 Ibid, 56.
“The military is finding out that more and more GIs are thinking of themselves as human beings – and as such, they oppose the war and will fight for their right to so.”266 (Italics mine.)

“The war, the war effort, the dehumanizing process that our society invokes – all will be defeated.”267 (Italics mine.)

“‘They treat people like animals,’ Gaedtke said. ‘When I make officer I’ll treat them like human beings.’”268

Just as these soldiers sought to re-humanize themselves, they also sought to de-humanize and humiliate authority figures, officers, and the career soldiers whom they sometimes despised. One Bond cartoon, for example, shows two GIs in the brig, guarded by a particularly hairy military policeman with distinctly simian features, as an officer says to them, “It’s a free country and your fighting to keep it free… whatsa matter don’t you believe in Freedom?”269

By 1970, in fact, the reference “pig,” popular in movement circles, became commonplace in letters to the editors in the underground military press, particularly in the militant Bond. “Pigs Panic Over Peace Sign,” headed one letter to the editor.270 “Let the Hogs Snort – It Won’t Stop Us,” headed another.271 “Mickey Mouse Lifers – A Porky Pig Minority,” headed yet another.272 “How The Pigs Treat Our Wounded Brothers,” headed still another, while the heading of a letter to the editor on the same page complained, “They Treat Us Like Cattle.”273 As with movement

268 Stapp, 30.
rhetoric more generally, the epithet “pig” dehumanized the opposition. The front-page headline of one issue reads, “All Right, You Pentagon Pigs, We’ve Got You Surrounded.”274 One Bond statement, in its letters to the editor section, explicitly made the case, “When a man becomes a cop he resigns from the human race.”275

Some anti-war soldiers, however, objected to the negative portrayal of career soldiers by the underground military press because they hoped to eventually recruit them to the anti-war movement. A letter to the editor of Gigline, a relatively amateurish newspaper out of Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, is explicit:

Editor,

It has been fashionable in some quarters, recently, of the anti-military movement To refer to career soldiers (lifers) as ‘pigs’, ‘oinks’, and other insulting terms. This is wrong! Granted, there are those who deserve to be called pig, but it is wrong to group all lifers together, making no exceptions, and calling them pigs. There are many who are against Viet Nam and the oppressive atmosphere presently existing in the military establishment. They are lifers because of the security and training offered in the military. They may have been brainwashed or terrorized into submitting to military repression, but they can be persuaded to join the fight. How? By not turning them off by calling them pigs. By talking to them, no matter how much you dislike conversing with them, or how much static you get from your buddies for associating with lifers. Convert the lifers to our views. Get them to work actively with you to convert others, Remember, this is a GI movement, and they are GIs. The Army’s power is perpetuated by the lifers. Convert them and you convert the Army. – A GI.276

The efforts by American soldiers during the Vietnam War to reclaim their humanity, even as they denied it to others, was part of a larger cultural trend that found its way into the counterculture and the movement, more generally. Although such efforts were not new to the

Cold War period, by the 1960s the trend became widespread throughout American culture, particularly within the counterculture and the activist-left. This is, of course, not coincidental. In the 1950s, the critics of mass culture and the alternative religious thinkers laid intellectual ground for ideas that large swaths of the general population, including anti-war soldiers, embraced in the 1960s. The idea that the central institutions of American life, whether the corporation, the military, the church, or the family, somehow distorted or crushed personhood resided at the heart of the counterculture, the New Left, second-wave feminism, as well as African-American cultural nationalism. In each case, however, the trend expressed itself through the specific circumstances and interests of the individual group creating hitherto unforeseen political divisions, such as the division between counterculturalists and political activists, the division between radical feminists and New Left women, and finally between the movement and the rest of humanity.

“Charley is a Beautiful Man.”: The LA Free Press and the Case of Charles Manson

Throughout 1970, the Los Angeles Free Press hardly published an issue without some reference to Charles Manson, “the Family,” his trial, and the Tate/La Bianca Murders. Like Tuesday’s Child, the underground newspaper that anointed Manson “Man of the Year,” The Los Angeles Free Press promoted a view of the famous murderer that suggested that Manson was a counterculturalist and a misunderstood mystic-genius. In the pages on the L.A. Free Press,

277 For this reason, VanDeburg writes, “For cultural nationalists, black culture was Black Power. By asserting their cultural distinctives via clothing, language, and hairstyle and by recounting their unique historical experiences through the literary and performing arts, cultural nationalists sought to encourage self-actualization and psychological empowerment.” (Italics mine.) See: VanDeburg, 171.
Charles Manson became an almost Christ-like figure, unjustly persecuted by official authorities of the state. In an ongoing series of articles, interviews, and even a sort-of column penned by Manson, himself, the L.A. Free Press adopted Manson as a cause celebre. In one article, the editors suggested “if Manson had worn a uniform and had committed murder for his superiors in Vietnam he would have been hailed as a hero.” Indeed, some movement people juxtaposed the Manson murders with the My Lai massacre, suggesting that even if Manson was guilty of the murders, the outrage of the “straight” world was hypocritical.

It is interesting to note, furthermore, that the L.A. Free Press’s interpretation of Manson is similar to the interpretation offered by Vincent Bugliosi, the prosecuting attorney in Manson’s trial. Both the L.A. Free Press and Bugliosi suggested that Manson was a “hippie,” of sorts, who held to a bizarre mystical philosophy that underscored his behavior. The fundamental difference, of course, is that the L.A. Free Press generally approved of Charles Manson, and doubted his guilt, while Vincent Bugliosi was determined to see Manson convicted and removed from society.

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278 This love of Charles Manson was also shared by Weatherwoman, Bernadine Dohrn, who, according to Bugliosi, told an audience at an SDS convention, “Offing those rich pigs with their own forks and knives, and then eating a meal in same room, far out! The Weathermen dig Charles Manson.” Jerry Rubin, also seems to have “dug” Charles Manson. “I fell in love with Charles Manson the first time I saw his cherub face and sparkling eyes on TV,” he wrote in We Are Everywhere. “His words and courage inspired us. Manson’s soul is easy to touch because it lay quite bare on the surface,” Rubin wrote. See: Quoted from Vincent Bugliosi, Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 221 – 222. Rubin, in fact, found Manson so compelling that he, along with singer-songwriter Phil Ochs, visited Manson in prison during the summer of 1970. See: Ed Sanders, “Talk to Charles Manson - $1,000 a Crack” Los Angeles Free Press, 5 June 1979, 3.


280 An underground comic-book published a comic titled, “My Lai, March 16, 1968 vs. Hollywood, August 9, 1969” in which the My Lai massacre and the Tait / LaBianca murders are juxtaposed. In the first scene two soldiers are preparing to attack a village as one says, “Awrite you combat-happy Joes – This here village is a Cong hideout… We’re gonna hafta wipe em all out! Let’s Move In!” directly above a similar scene that shows two hippie-murderers preparing to attack an upper-middle-class household. One says to the other, “Paranoia is Love! If you love me you will do as I say, and I say that Piggies must die! Let’s Get ‘Em!” Throughout the next series of scenes the action of troops in Vietnam is shown as essentially identical to the rampages of psychedelic murderers with the exception that in the final scene the soldier receives a medal while a hippie-murderer receives death in the electric chair. See: Sy Wizinsky, Charles Manson: Love Letters to a Secret Disciple (Terre Haute, Indiana: Moonmad Press, 1976), 180 – 185.
By 1970, the lines drawn between the movement and “straight” society had become so stark and so rigid that a newspaper like the L.A. Free Press could hold Manson aloft precisely because he presented himself as a type of hippie-messiah, spreading universal wisdom, constantly speaking of love. “Even if the Man beats me, I still love him, and he’s my brother,” he told the L.A. Free Press in one interview. Elsewhere in that same interview Manson holds forth with, “God is love, is nothing, is beyond logic and words. God is infinite being. Every man has his God. Mine is love.” In “A Letter from Charles Manson’s Friends at the Spahn Ranch,” readers of the L.A. Free Press learned that “the music of Charles Manson speaks truth. It is tuned to a Universe. It SHOWS the gentleness of a man willing to give all.” Writing within his own space in the L.A. Free Press, Manson briefly adopted a role similar to that of Timothy Leary, the role of hippie-mystic-philosopher spreading love:

Once tens of thousands of brothers & sisters gave all! The preacher has tried to hide this by putting one man, J.C., out front, cramming holy holy down people’s throats, putting crosses everywhere, murdering all in his lie. Taking all the beauty and trying to make ugly, evil and sin of all the things god lives.

Check this lie, ‘God is love’ but the preachers says ‘No, don’t make love.’ I say you make love and you will see peace, love, contentment, but only after you ride all shams, guilt and evil from your mind.

The people who died on crosses, the one the Romans did not like, lived together and loved each other enough to ‘die’ for each other. Brothers, sisters… those words fall short of the strong oneness we must show others.

Christ was not one man, he was many men and women as one. Beautiful people, giving all to become one, now you know who you are and I’m calling me to give my love to

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282 Ibid, pg. 4
you, for I love my world and don’t want to destroy it anymore. If you see it as yours then you must do what you must do.\textsuperscript{284}

Perhaps not coincidentally, in the May 1, 1970, issue of the L.A. \textit{Free Press} the editors published a front-page article on Manson directly above a letter from Timothy Leary in which Leary states, referring to his wife Rosemary, “We find our religious center in our love.”\textsuperscript{285} Given all the “love” that Manson and Leary were spreading it is no surprise that one L.A. \textit{Free Press} letter to the editor, from “Damsel,” maintained, “Charley is a beautiful man.”\textsuperscript{286}

Throughout 1970, the underground press and the traditional press framed the case of Manson in different ways. Some movement people writing in the underground press concluded that Manson was one of them, only more so: not just a hippie, or counterculturalist, but a hippie-messiah-philosopher-celebrity, not entirely unlike people such as Timothy Leary.\textsuperscript{287} Bugliosi, in arguing his case before the court, suggested that Manson was a \textit{Svengali-like} figure wishing to spark a genocidal race-war in which he, along with the Beatles, would come to rule after annihilating the existing social order. It was, according to Bugliosi, Manson’s motivation to initiate this race war that led to the Tate / LaBianca murders. Manson, Bugliosi argued, hoped to frame black nationalists and thereby encourage retribution so hysterical that race war would result; a war that Manson and his disciples would survive by hiding in a “hole” somewhere in


Death Valley. Susan Atkins, known as Sadie Mae Glutz within “the Family,” gave credence to this view in an interview for a *Los Angeles Times* article that, in Manson’s own words, projected him as “love itself, magic musicmaker, a devil, a guru, Jesus and the man who ordered her and others to kill. Her story gave the newsmedia the material for any fantasy of death and perversion they cared to print.”

Despite Manson’s brief career as a hippie-theologian in the pages of the L.A. *Free Press*, he argued in later years that all the talk of love and all the theorizing about his alleged powers-of-mind was strictly nonsense. In the 1980s, Manson told writer Nuel Emmons that the Tate / LaBianca murders were dreamed up, not by himself, but by some “Family” members as a way of throwing doubt on the possible murder conviction of Bobby Beausoleil, a “Family” member on trial for the murder of a drug dealer. The hope was that by conducting murders in a style reminiscent of the Beausoleil murder, they would convince either a jury or the authorities that they were holding the wrong man. Manson claims that although it was not his idea, and that at first he was against the plan because he did not wish to return to prison, he nonetheless went along with it out of a generalized disgust with humanity. He told Emmons, “I had a moment or two of regret, but for the most part, bitterness and contempt for a world I didn’t give a shit about allowed me to go along with anything that might come of the night’s activities.”

As for his reputation as a charismatic cult leader, Manson said this: “I was a half-assed nothing who hardly knew how to read or write, never read a book all the way through in my life, didn’t know anything except jails, couldn’t hold on to my wives, was a lousy pimp, got caught every time I

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289 Ibid, 201.
stole, wasn’t a good enough musician to hit the market, didn’t know what to do with money even if I had it and resented every aspect of family life. But a week after Sadie’s story, I was a charismatic cult leaders with a family, a genius who could program people into doing whatever I asked of them. Shit, if there were any truth to what I was said to be capable of, I’d have been sitting in Hearst Castle with stereos in every room, listening to my own platinum albums.”

By 1970, the humanistic trend had come full circle as an ethos of total liberation captured the imagination of Movement people. What was, in the 1950s, a social trend that stressed autonomy and human authenticity, became, by the late 1960s, a trend that often stressed complete liberation from “mainstream” values, obligations, and common decency. The countercultural emphasis on “transformation of consciousness” resulted in a dichotomous worldview in which Timothy Leary could speculate that humanity was evolving toward entirely separate species, the “tribal-people” who maintained their humanity and heralded the coming psychedelic future, and the “ant-people,” who would no longer be recognizable even as human beings. Because the turn from Humanistic Psychology to Transpersonal Psychology transitioned the emphasis from the human to the mystical, the value of human life sometimes came to be seen as negligible. Richard Alpert, of all people, inadvertently expressed this in an interview for the Oracle:

“… as I was looking for real estate, a cat down on the lower East Side said, ‘Come and have a drink. My scene isn’t LSD, it’s hash, but I’d like to talk with you, anyway.’ And he said, ‘The LSD people next door, they’re having a party up on the eight floor and they were looking out over the terrace and one of the guys said, ‘I think I’ll jump.’ And the other guys said, ‘Cool!’ And so he jumped and fell eight stories and he fell with his head against the curb broken and he was coughing blood out of his mouth and nose and this guy was watching out of his window, and the fellow on the curb, while the ambulance

290 Ibid, 222.
was coming, was blowing kisses to the people up on the eighth floor and saying, ‘Here I am, dying in the gutter, looking at my friends. Goodbye... Goodbye.’ And the ambulance came and he died. And the guy said to me, ‘Isn’t that horrible. He was only nineteen. He had all that promise.’ And I said, ‘Well, what’s so horrible about it?’ I said, ‘His life made a pretty strong statement because you remembered it and just told me and I am gonna tell lots of people.’”

Under these circumstances, the support that Charles Manson received throughout much of the movement is comprehensible. Manson stood for total liberation, complete human autonomy, and thus the right to act without any social restraint whatsoever. He therefore stood entirely beyond American society, beyond the machine-like “culture of death” that supported competitive capitalism, social injustice, and the Vietnam War. When Manson spoke of “love” and when the L.A. Free Press published his metaphysical ramblings, he was marked by the counterculture as, perhaps, one of their own. While it is probably true that most counterculturalists did not approve of Manson, many nonetheless did. And for those who did, his victims were hardly recognizable as human beings. Particularly egregious examples of this can be found in Ed Sanders’ series of articles on the Manson case in the L.A. Free Press that reduced the gruesome murders to a “cosmic chopchop.”

It is for this reason, as well, that radical women broke from the New Left and the counterculture. Women such as Robin Morgan and Marilyn Webb argued that the movement did not recognize their humanity, that it resisted their appeal for rapprochement, and therefore they broke from it. The anti-war soldiers, such as Stapp, and those who read the Bond or the Ally, endeavored to reclaim their own autonomy and humanity, but in the process, de-humanized and

291 The San Francisco Oracle, Vol 1, No 5, 10.
292 Ed Sanders, “Tate Meets Cosmic Chopchop” Los Angeles Free Press, 28 August 1970, 6. Roll 46:1. Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection, San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California. In fairness to Sanders, it should also be noted that he began to change his tune concerning Manson after being shown a photograph of Sharon Tate’s corpse. “It was the worst visual experience for me in my life,” he said. “I realized that anything that supported that type of behavior was something that I was totally opposed to with all of my moral being.” See: Peck, 227 – 228.
demeaned others. It is under these circumstances that Abraham Maslow could be an icon to the counterculture, even as he vehemently complained about the movement in his journal. Like Haridas Chaudhuri’s *integral* philosophy, Maslow sought the synthesis of seeming opposites: the synthesis of Eastern religious practice with Western religious practice and science or the synthesis of psychology with mysticism. There is much irony in the fact that by the late 1960s, when such views gained the popular interest of millions of Americans, the divisions in American society hardened to such a degree that even the idea of a shared humanity became suspect.

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Chapter 3

Maslow, Management, and the American Counterculture

“[T]o the patriotic American… it would be impressive to point out that the new kind of management is a form of patriotism and love of country…”

– Abraham Maslow, *Maslow on Management* (81)

“In the authoritarian society freedom, self-sufficiency, curiosity, free probing, free questioning, are all very dangerous; in the democratic society, of course, they are exactly the opposite, i.e., they are extremely desirable and even necessary.”

– Abraham Maslow, *Maslow on Management* (85)

In *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History*, Dominick Cavallo notes that historians generally account for the rise of the 1960s “youth movement” in three ways. The first of these suggests that the Vietnam War was “the major force behind the decade’s radical movements.”

In this view, outrage at the draft and a powerful sense of the war’s injustice contributed to an already growing alienation among young Americans that found expression in the counterculture and the New Left and which also encouraged the pivot from Civil Rights to Black Nationalism among activists within the black freedom struggle. The second explanation suggests that the roots of youthful rebellion should be located in post-war affluence and an ever-

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expanding culture of “promiscuous consumption.” In this view, the counterculture and the anti-war movement were the brat-like responses of a spoiled generation of young people. The rise of the counterculture and the New Left were, therefore, less responses to American social injustice than they were the “acting out” of white, middle-class youngsters inexperienced with harsh worldly realities.  

The third view, however, that Cavallo traces to psychologist Kenneth Keniston in the late 1960s, argues that counterculturalists and youthful radicals primarily acted “on the values they had learned at home” and when they discovered that the “United States was not the paladin of democracy, equality, freedom and universal affluence they had learned about in their textbooks” they rebelled or dropped out.

The thesis of this chapter owes something to this third view. The values of autonomy, individuality, and freedom, by which Americans contrasted themselves with the Communist world during the Cold War, were also the values that animated the counterculture and represent a reaction to fears of a diminishing American self, as outlined in a previous chapter. These

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294 Ibid, 4.
295 This view is prominent among, although not limited to, conservative social critics who continue to view leftist post-war social activism and the counterculture with disdain. Adam Garfinkle, for example, notes, “The Vietnam generation may also have been affected, in ways we do not yet fully understand, by the explosion of vivid and colorful fantasies in movies and television. Mainly designed for children, movies such as Cinderella and Peter Pan may have given many members of the Vietnam generation extraordinarily high expectations of a normal life.” See: Garfinkle, Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement, 47. ; David Frum, How We Got Here: The 70s: The Decade that Brought You Modern Life – For Better or Worse. (New York: Basic Books, 2000.)
296 Ibid, 7. This view is consistent with how white, middle-class activists and counterculturalists often explained their motivation. In the Port Huron Statement, for one example, Tom Hayden cites a clash of “American virtue” and “American ideals” with actual American social and political behavior as a primary motivating factor for Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). He wrote, “Not only did tarnish appear on our image of American virtue, not only did disillusion occur when the hypocrisy of American ideals was discovered, but we began to sense that what we had originally seen as the American Golden Age was actually the decline of an era.” See: Tom Hayden, “The Port Huron Statement” in Judith Clavir Albert, Albert, Stewart Edward, eds. The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishing, 1984), 177.
297 Aside from such countercultural values as creativity and pleasure, Timothy Miller also cites “decentralization, distrust of bureaucratic and hierarchical structures, freedom (and) anti-authoritarianism” as values central to the counterculture. Such values, of course, also animated political conservatism, and political anti-communism, throughout the twentieth-century in the United States and therefore may be taken as, if not universal, at least widely shared among Americans across the social-political landscape. See Miller, The Hippies and American Values (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 104.
values, furthermore, were central not only to the American white, middle-class “mainstream” of the twentieth-century, but are, in fact, the values most closely associated with classical liberalism, as well as the founding ideologies of the United States. They, therefore, of course, have a long lineage within the history of American social identity. Their central presence within countercultural ideology represent but one strand of that lineage moving in a direction that many Americans found socially unacceptable.

Throughout the middle of the twentieth century these values found expression in a wide variety cultural spaces beyond Cold War political rhetoric and beyond the boosterism of economic entrepreneurship. Progressive child-rearing practices, for example, stressed nurturing the autonomy and individuality of children. The post-war business trend toward “participatory management” or the “human-relations theory of management,” likewise, stressed nurturing the freedom, autonomy, and individuality of American workers. All of this took place during the Cold War as the United States sought to distinguish itself from the Soviet Union through a rhetorical emphasis on American freedom versus Communist conformity and all of it expressed skepticism toward authoritarian social relations. Countercultural ideology, which owes much to this trend, might therefore be viewed not as a rejection of values at the center of American social identity, but, perhaps ironically, as an expression of those values moving in both social-libertarian and spiritual-liberationist directions. In any case, the counterculture derived from the same cultural milieu as participatory management, progressive child rearing, and, indeed, the

298 Although it is hardly necessary to formulate an argument that questions of liberty and freedom were at the forefront of “the founders” views as they prepared for rebellion against the British, nonetheless, Bernard Bailyn notes, “Suspicion that the ever-present, latent danger of an active conspiracy against liberty was becoming manifest within the British Empire, assuming specific form and developing in coordinated phases, rose in the consciousness of a large segment of the American population before any of the famous political events of the struggle with England took place.” See: Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 95.
Cold War emphasis on American freedom in contrast to Communist conformity and repression. It is all of a piece.

In the early 1960s, Abraham Maslow, an icon of the counterculture, during a period of his life when he became closely associated with the Esalen Institute, worked with Non-Linear Systems, Incorporated, of Del Mar, California, to apply the principals of participatory management to the work-place. Maslow’s work with Non-Linear Systems, as well as his reaction to the changing social and political environment of the 1960s, illustrate certain ways in which ideals closely associated with the counterculture of the 1960s dovetailed not only with the work of “progressive” theorizers of American business practice and child-rearing in post-war America, but with widely held presumptions concerning the importance of human autonomy and individuality which lay at the center of American criticisms of Soviet Communism.

By the middle of the 1970s a backlash developed against participatory management, progressive child rearing, and the human-potential movement. This trend, closely associated with the rise of political conservatism, paralleled the backlash against the counterculture and the social movements of the 1960s and became, by the 1980s, a dominating voice in American social and political discourse.

The Roots of Participatory Management

The roots of participatory management can be traced to the work of Elton Mayo of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration in the 1920s and it is Mayo’s work that influenced the theorizers of participatory management, such as Maslow. In 1923, Mayo conducted a study in a Philadelphia textile mill in which he endeavored to discover the reasons

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for high employee turnover rates. Assuming that the fundamental problem was one of worker fatigue, Mayo invited employees to participate in the study, allowed them influence over the work schedule, and introduced the commonsensical idea of periodic rest periods. Not surprisingly, in the view of someone such as Maslow, productivity increased, morale increased, and, thus, employee turnover dropped. As Sol W. Gellerman writes, in *Motivation and Productivity*, “This group moved into a sort of partnership with management rather than into opposition with it. Mayo had thus stumbled upon the very keystone of what later became known as human-relations theory.”

Pleased with his result at the textile mill, Mayo went on to perform motivational experiments at the Western Electric Company in Chicago. Western Electric engineers hoped to increase worker productivity through the simple contrivance of improved lighting in the electrical assemblage factory. As an experiment to determine the influence of factory illumination on worker productivity the engineers sometimes increased lighting, sometimes decreased it, and sometimes held it constant. To their surprise the engineers discovered that productivity increased in all cases. Unsure of why this might be Western Electric contracted Mayo and his team of researchers who repeated the experiments with lighting and varied the length of the workday and employee rest periods. As with the semi-formal experiments conducted by the company engineers, Mayo’s group discovered, again, that in each case worker productivity increased. Mayo concluded that employee productivity at the Western Electric plant depended less on such external, physical factors as lighting than upon an increased sense of employee participation and team development. He wrote, “The major experimental change was introduced when those in charge sought to hold the situation humanly steady…by getting the

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300 Ibid, 177.
301 Ibid, 176.
cooperation of the workers. But what actually happened was that six individuals became a team and the team gave itself wholeheartedly and spontaneously to cooperation in the experiment.”

Mayo therefore recommended that Western Electric hire supervisors skilled in human-relations; supervisors who listened to employees, communicated with them, and who held respect for workers.

Although Mayo’s conclusions wielded little contemporary influence, by the 1960s researchers on corporate management, such as Maslow, looked to his work as a basis for the development of participatory management. Participatory management theory, furthermore, with its emphasis on “human growth” through individual autonomy and responsibility, neatly dovetailed with the conclusions of the psychologists, such as Kurt Lewin, developing encounter group therapy during the same period. Both practices, participatory management in the workplace and the concurrent development of encounter group therapy, merged in the late 1950s as humanistic psychologists teamed with corporate managers to find ways not only to increase worker productivity, but to stem the allegedly rising tide of an American conformity that could undermine such liberal values as capitalist entrepreneurship and that some, such as Adorno and the Frankfurt School intellectuals, feared might encourage the emergence of a distinct form of American fascism.

It is not coincidental that the values and assumptions underlying participatory management, encounter group theory, and progressive child-rearing practices are also the values of the countercultural projects of the 1960s and 1970s. It is for this reason that Maslow, who loathed “hippies,” could be an advisor to the corporate world while simultaneously maintaining status as an icon to the very counterculture he disdained. In this way Maslow embodies certain ways in which the counterculture and the business world of post-World War II America did not

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302 Ibid, 177.
represent opposite poles along the cultural spectrum, but in fact struggled with a central contradiction of American social life that influenced both.

This contradiction is embedded in a single word: freedom. If the notion of “freedom” defined the United States in contrast to the Soviet Union and if classical liberalism promoted the idea that individuals are free to pursue their own happiness and material well-being without undue governmental restraint, it also true, and perfectly consistent with classical liberal values, that the individual is free to reject the constraints placed upon him or her by the liberal institutions, corporate or otherwise, that define the American social-economic system. While the dominant voices in American social life traditionally defined freedom as freedom of the market, the counterculture defined freedom as, among other things, freedom from the market economy. It is, therefore, not that hippies rejected American values or the values of their upbringing, but that they took those values in an unanticipated direction. If Maslow, as he told his friend Mike Murphy of the Esalen Institute, represented a “bridge” between the counterculture and the mainstream, it was a bridge with only one lane. Maslow was never able to reconcile the freedom to “self-actualize” within dominant institutions, which of course he advocated, with the freedom to reject the dominant institutions of power and their behavioral imperatives, which he associated with hippies and which he vehemently rejected. For Maslow, the bridge moved in only one direction, toward an enhanced, “self-actualized,” middle-class professionalism, but hippies, black nationalists, New Leftists, and anti-war activists, people he defined as his political “enemies,” kept running over the bridge, in all their flamboyant regalia, in the opposite direction.
Participatory Management, Child-Rearing, and the Counterculture

The values embedded in participatory management theory are those of autonomy, individuality, freedom, and egalitarianism. These values, it must be noted, are identical to those that underlay both mid-twentieth-century progressive childrearing theory, as well as the countercultural projects of the 1960s and 1970s.\(^3\) It must be noted, yet further, that these are among the very same values by which Americans, and their politicians, contrasted themselves to the Soviet Union during the Cold War.\(^4\) None of this is likely coincidental. During and after World War II, and throughout the Cold War, the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists, as described in an earlier chapter, worried that Americans were losing their individuality under the pressure to conform within large institutions of power, such as corporations and universities. The trend to reaffirm individuality, therefore, found expression in various social projects throughout American culture, including the counterculture. A comparison of a participatory management project, created in part by Abraham Maslow and heavily influenced by the progressive management theories of Douglas McGregor, with progressive American child-rearing practices and counterculture ideology will illustrate.

\(^3\) Individuality as a countercultural value is reflected in Jerry Rubin’s manifesto, *Do It!*. He wrote, “Dig the environment of a university! The building look like factories, airports, army barracks, IBM cards in the air, hospitals, jails. They are designed to wipe out individuality.” See: Rubin, *Do It!* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 210. Abbie Hoffman was even more strident in his denunciation of American educational as stultifying the individual. He wrote of counterculturalists, “They were sick of being programmed by an education system void of excitement, creativity, and sensuality. A system that channeled human beings like so many laboratory rats with electrodes rammed up their asses into a highly mechanized maze of class rankings, degrees, careers, neon supermarkets, military-industrial complexes, suburbs, repressed sexuality, hypocrisy, ulcers and psychoanalysts.” See: Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 15.

\(^4\) Stephen Whitfield notes, “The belief system that most middle-class Americans considered their birthright – the traditional commitment to competitive individualism in social life, to the liberal stress on rights in political life, and to private enterprise in economic life – was adapted to the crisis of the Cold War.” See: Whitefield, *The Culture of the Cold War*. (Baltimore: The John’s Hopkins University Press, 1991), 53. In comparison, “Soviet culture was notoriously straight-jacketed by official dogma, completely constrained by censorship, throttled by political and moral vigilance.” Whitefield, 62. If Americans were intent on freedom and individuality, then Communists were intent on an international system based upon enforced obedience to the government. The popular anti-communist, John A. Stormer wrote, “The communists are after your children or grandchildren who can still be molded into
In 1952, businessman Andrew F. Kay established Non-Linear Systems, Incorporated in Del Mar, California, near San Diego. Non-Linear Systems manufactured electrical measuring instruments, such as digital voltmeters, which Kay sold to U.S. government agencies and the science departments of various universities. Throughout the 1950s, the company was a leader in its industry and grew from employing only five people in 1952 to three hundred and forty people by the early 1960s. From early in his career, Kay sought ways of establishing relations with his employees that would enhance productivity and profits, while also enhancing the individual potential and life-satisfaction of his workers. In August 1962, Kay hired Maslow as a consultant on an experiment in participatory management in the hopes that Maslow’s ideas concerning the empowerment of employees might result in the fulfillment of that goal. Drawing on the theories of behavioral scientists, such as Peter F. Drucker and Douglas McGregor, who advocated a “human relations approach” to management and motivation, Maslow and Kay based their experiment at NLS on the following ideas; ideas taken directly from McGregor’s *The Human Side of Enterprise*:

1. Work is as natural as play or rest, and if made a source of satisfaction it will be performed willingly and voluntarily.

2. In the service of objectives to which he is committed, man requires little or no external direction or control. He will exercise self-direction and self-control. The degree of his self-control will depend upon the degree to which he is committed to these objectives.

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3. Commitment to objectives is a function of rewards associated with their achievement, these rewards being those which go to satisfy man’s physiological, psychological, safety, social, ego, and self-actualization needs.

4. Many humans not only are ready to accept responsibility, they seek to shoulder it. Avoidance of responsibility, lack of ambition, and emphasis on security are not inherent human characteristics.

5. The powers of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity are more widely distributed throughout the population than most executives admit. They simply await the proper time, place, stimulus, and atmosphere of receptivity to pour forth.

6. Under the conditions of modern industrial life, man’s intellectual potentialities are only partially realized.\(^{308}\)

Between 1962 and 1965, Kay, on the advice of Maslow, rearranged his company in manners consistent with the above theories of human motivation. Although the official “top-down” corporate structure of NLS remained the same on paper, Kay introduced a radical reorganization of his company in an effort to empower his employees and to minimize, or eliminate, the traditional authoritarian business structure. Toward this end, Kay divided the Non-Linear Systems management organization into the three sections: trustee management, general management, and departmental management. The first two sections were traditional in the sense that they represented top-down oversight of the general operation. The third section, however, included thirty department units consisting of three to twelve employees, plus the department manager, each. In this way regular company employees, at all levels, acquired management responsibilities for the structure and practices of their individual departments. On the level of actual manufacturing, each production unit worked at its own pace and decided for itself the degree of labor division and whether or not to operate on an assembly-line basis; a practice they universally rejected. Because Kay and Maslow eliminated the use of time clocks, written

\(^{308}\) Malone, 53.
employee evaluations, and even formal production records, each employee came and went with little in the way of official oversight.\footnote{Malone, 54 – 56.}

This newly gained employee freedom was based on the assumption that increased individual autonomy encouraged an institutional atmosphere in which a sense of personal responsibility would “naturally” emerge and in which, therefore, productivity would increase.\footnote{Maslow noted that although “it was possible to increase productivity for a time by authoritarian and hierarchically controlled pressure programs,” in the long term such measures “decreased loyalty, interest, involvement in the work... and caused attitudes to worsen. To put it briefly, all the human assets which are not seen on the balance sheet were cut very considerably, so that in fact, the welfare of the business to some extent was injured in the long run in favor of increased productivity in the short run.” \textit{Maslow on Management}, 248. Malone, 56.}

Kay and his management staff, furthermore, encouraged employees to sign up for internal job training programs and paid for any useful outside courses of study that any employee wished to take. As a way of moving from a vertical management arrangement to a horizontal management arrangement, the company eliminated both its Accounting Department and its Inspection Department. To make sure that the books were properly kept, company accountants operated out of individual departments, rather than the Accounting Department, and reported on a more-or-less regular basis to the company treasurer. Because Kay eliminated the Inspection Department, each manufacturing team took the responsibility of product inspection and quality assurance, conducting that work in any manner that the individual manufacturing units deemed proper.\footnote{Maslow suggested that, “Non-Linear was an effort to be Eupsychian.” See: Maslow, \textit{The Journals of Abraham Maslow}, 191. By “Eupsychian” Maslow meant a revolutionary and utopian experiment in which the social circumstances helpful for “self-actualization” would be laid. Eupsychia refers, he wrote, to “the culture that would

Although the experiment eventually faltered, and then failed, it was initially heralded as a revolution in corporate management yielding remarkable results.\footnote{Vance Packard, writing in the November, 1963, issue of \textit{Readers’ Digest}, noted, “There are no time clocks. Everyone receives a weekly salary, with no docking for sickness or lateness. There are no scheduled

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coffee breaks – anyone can get coffee whenever he feels like it… What have been the results? Sales have doubled in the three years that the new program has been in force, and the man-hours devoted to building each instrument have been cut in half – enabling Non-Linear to offer the highest pay in the community. ‘Efficiency is way up,’ says vice president Arthur H. Kuriloff. ‘Morale is excellent; our turnover is down to one fourth the national average. Complaints from customers have dropped 90 percent.’ Based on these reports, Packard enthusiastically told his readers that Non-Linear Systems is “one of the most revolutionary companies in America.”

During the early-mid 1960s, as Kay and Maslow’s experiment at Non-Linear continued, the company received favorable press from small, no-nonsense, trade publications, such as Steel: The Metalworking Weekly, as well as from large-circulation, national business journals, such as Business Week. In the spring of 1964, Steel informed its readers that at Non-Linear, “Sales have doubled in the last three years – the firm now supplies more than 50 per cent of its market. Production man-hours have been sliced in half, while production is 30 per cent higher than it has ever been. High morale holds turnover to one-fourth the national average. New product development time has been shortened (by eight months on some items). The product line has expanded fourfold. Customer complaints have dropped 70 to 90 per cent.” Steel, like Packard, attributed Non-Linear’s success to a work environment that created “healthier” employees due to a non-authoritarian management style promoting worker autonomy and freedom. In his interview for the trade journal, Kay said, “We regard management as basically

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314 Ibid, 114.
an affair of teaching and training, not one of directing and controlling. We control the process, not the people.”

By early 1965, Non-Linear’s press remained positive, however doubts began to creep into the reporting. *Business Week*, echoing Maslow’s conclusions on worker motivation, noted that at the core of the experiment “is the assumption that the employee is good, intelligent, and willing to work if work will help fulfill his needs. That’s at the opposite pole from the assumption that the worker basically doesn’t want to work.” Although *Business Week* repeated the enthusiastic claims to Non-Linear’s success, high morale, low employee turnover, and high rates of customer satisfaction, the magazine also reported that Non-Linear “executives shun ‘permissive management’ on their own level.” Non-Linear vice president, Kuriloff, told *Business Week* that “unease” among Non-Linear executives was because “the more intelligent a man is, the more he wants ‘fences’ – wants to know where he stands in relation to the rest of the company.”

As it turned out, however, the unease of Non-Linear executives may have had less to do with desiring psychological “fences” than with actual company performance and, perhaps, with Kay, himself. By the end of 1965, with profits, sales, and employee morale actually suffering, Kay reluctantly terminated his experiment in participatory management. In order to reestablish the company along lines that were successful prior to the experiment, Kay instituted the following changes back towards a more traditional formula: “Line organization procedures were reestablished at the top levels. Direct supervision was provided. Specific duties and

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316 Ibid, 91.
318 Ibid, 93.
319 Ibid, 94.
320 In his journal, Maslow noted that although “a couple of dozen such entrepreneurs as Kay would be enough to change a whole darned country,” his executives may have felt intimidated by him. “Very interesting that all his
responsibilities were assigned. Standards of performance and quality were reestablished. Authority was delegated commensurate with responsibility. Records were reinstituted and maintained. Remuneration was related to effort.”

Although the experiment at NLS did not confirm Maslow’s views of human motivation, it is significant that the values driving the experiment are consistent with the values of mid-twentieth-century progressive child-rearing theory, the values central to the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the values of “Americanism” in its opposition to Soviet Communism during the Cold War. Central to each of the six points which drove the experiment is the idea that developing worker autonomy through non-authoritarian worker-management relations would result not only in enhanced levels of productivity, but increased worker satisfaction through the unhindered self-exploration of individual potential. In this way, participatory management theory is to business management what progressive child-rearing theory is to child rearing. Both stressed social relations based on independence, individuality, and non-coercion leading to self-confidence, accountability and, thus, enhanced status within the American capitalist system.

Both mid-twentieth-century participatory management and progressive child-rearing theory also depended heavily on experts in the psychology of human motivation to guide a process that hitherto was usually directed by either the boss or the parent. In *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for American Middle Class*, Loren Baritz describes the dependence on experts in the following terms:

> By the 1950s, the rules for being a good parent had been re-written and `appropriated by a growing number of experts, including physicians, psychologists, counselors, teachers, employees below the council simply admire, are affectionate, perhaps a little afraid, but not threatened & therefore not hostile. Only those who are close get threatened.” See: Maslow, *The Journals of Abraham Maslow*, 271.  

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321 Malone, 59.
social workers, juvenile courts, and newspaper columnists. Motherhood had become a profession requiring advanced study and credentials, along with never-ending vigilance not only over her child’s behavior and development but over her own motives, feelings, and expert knowledge. She was obliged to conform to the ‘scientific’ advice of others on whom she now depended. She assumed that on her own she would damage her child. Newsweek’s science editor commiserated with the modern mother, who, he said, was ‘untrained, vulnerable, insecure, young, inexperienced, and incompetent.’ This was probably the world’s first generation of mothers who were told – and believed – that they did not know what they were doing.\textsuperscript{322}

Just as mid-century parents became more and more devoted to the advice of social scientists and psychologists in the rearing of their children, so McGregor predicted that “the position of the manager vis-à-vis the social sciences will one day be no different that that of the engineer vis-à-vis the physical sciences or the doctor vis-à-vis chemistry or biology. The professional need not be a scientist, but he must be sophisticated enough to make competent use of scientific knowledge.”\textsuperscript{323}

The six points that Kay outlined as the basis for his experiment in participatory management were lifted directly from Douglas McGregor’s \textit{The Human Side of Enterprise}, a book heavily influenced by Maslow’s theory of human motivation as based on the “hierarchy of needs.”\textsuperscript{324} Those who advocated progressive child rearing, as well as those who advocated a countercultural life-style also broadly shared these ideas.

Point one: “Work is as natural as play or rest, and if made a source of satisfaction it will be performed willingly and voluntarily.”

Maslow believed that the desire to perform good work, or to create something useful or beautiful, was innate. The real question for Maslow was: how is it that for many people that innate desire gets blocked? He wrote, “Everyone has the motivation to create and to work, every

\textsuperscript{322} Loren Baritz, \textit{The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 204 – 205.
child, every adult. This can be assumed. What has to be explained are the inhibitions, the blocks, etc. What stops these motivation which are there in everyone?”

This notion that work, when made a source of satisfaction, would be performed willingly and voluntarily by employees flies directly in the face the dominant management assumption that participatory management theorizers, such as Maslow and McGregor, called “Theory X.” Theory X suggested that people inherently disdain work and must therefore, if organizational objectives are to be realized, be forced to do so through strategic implementation of both “carrot” and “stick.” McGregor put it this way: “Because of this human characteristic of dislike of work, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed, threatened with punishment to get them to put forth adequate effort toward the achievement of organizational objectives.” Maslow and McGregor recommended an alternative theory, which they called “Theory Y.” Its first principle is identical to the first principle of the Non-Linear experiment: “The expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest. The average human being does not inherently dislike work. Depending upon controllable conditions, work may be a source of satisfaction (and will be voluntarily performed) or a source of punishment (and will be avoided if possible.)”

As with participatory management, the idea that effort should be performed voluntarily was also an important part of progressive American child-rearing practices in the 1950s and 1960s. Cavallo, referencing Barbara Ehrenreich’s Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class, notes how social status among mid-twentieth-century professionals depended not on “ownership of capital or property” but on the achieved academic and professional credentials of the white, middle and upper-middle class. In order to attain that social status children, needed to

324 “Understandably,” Goble writes, “Maslow was particularly interested in Douglas McGregor’s book, since it described management theories which were based primarily on Maslow’s own theories of basic needs.” Goble, 97.
325 Maslow on Management, 9.
326 McGregor, 34.
reproduce the “intellectual, psychological and emotional qualities that made their parents successful,” qualities that would gain them entrance into the elite universities. Those qualities included self-reliance, self-confidence, and a strong sense of competition. In order to cultivate self-reliance and, thus, self-confidence, progressive parents did not dictate their children’s behavior because to do so would encourage dependence, an attribute more associated in the public mind with socialism than with American capitalism. Rather, from the earliest years children needed to learn to think and act for themselves. As Baritz writes, “The new credo was simple: old-fashioned parental authority would stunt the authenticity, creativity, and spontaneity of the child, who would positively bloom under the gentle care of democratic parents carefully tuned to the subtlest vibration from the newly imperial infant.”

Therefore, all childhood activity, like worker activity at Non-Linear Systems, must “be performed willingly and voluntarily.”

Not only was the American free-enterprise system superior to the planned Soviet economy but American child rearing practices were also thought to be freer, and thus more effective, than Soviet child-rearing practices. Christina Hardyment, in Dream Babies: Three Centuries of Good Advice on Child Care, is explicit on this point. She writes, “Once the child-rearing principles of the Third Reich and Stalin’s Russia became threats to freedom rather than models of egalitarianism, a reaction set in, a determination grew to allow the children of the free world to be more free than children had ever seen.”

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327 McGregor, 47.  
328 Cavallo, 47.  
329 Ibid, 49.  
330 Baritz, 205.  
If there is once characteristic of the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, outside of their affinity for drugs and lack of circumspection regarding sex that rankled many Americans it was their attitude toward work. Hippies, like the “Beatniks” before them, seemed to disdain work.\(^{332}\) As Timothy Miller writes, “In a nation built on the Protestant ethic, the counterculture proclaimed the heresy that play was better than work.”\(^{333}\) Miller goes on to argue, however, “that does not mean that counterculturalists were determined to never lift a finger again; what it dead mean was that they were determined to avoid the slavery of drudgery…”\(^{334}\) Miller, citing Charles Reich and Philip Slater, argues that counterculturalists were not opposed to work in and of itself, but to “drudgery,” meaningless and joyless work, or work grounded in a death-like “technocracy,” to use Roszak’s term. He notes, “Work directly related to pleasure and human needs became ‘work transformed,’ work that was fun to do.”\(^{335}\) This way of thinking of work is perfectly in keeping with the beliefs of Kay, Maslow, and McGregor. Work “transformed” becomes “as natural as play or rest.”

Point two: “In the service of objectives to which he is committed, man requires little or no external direction or control. He will exercise self-direction and self-control.

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\(^{332}\) The word “Beatnik” here means the popular image of the Beats as it was spread through the press and media in the late 1950s. It does not refer to writers such as Ginsberg, Kerouac, Snyder, et al.

\(^{333}\) Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pg. 112.

\(^{334}\) Ibid, 114.

\(^{335}\) Ibid, 114. Abbie Hoffman reflected this sentiment when he wrote, “The work that the kids saw around them was so odious, so boring, so worthless that they came to regard WORK as the only dirty four-letter word in the English language.” See: Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation*, 19. In *Growing Up Absurd*, Paul Goodman placed a gendered spin on this idea of the meaninglessness of most available employment. “I intend to show...,” he wrote, “our abundant society is at present simply deficient in many of the most elementary objective opportunities and worth-while goals that could make growing up possible. It is lacking in enough man’s work.” See: Goodman, 12.
The degree of his self-control will depend upon the degree to which he is committed to these objectives.”

For this reason Maslow believed that the authoritarian-type manager was counterproductive to the organization. According to Maslow, those who displayed authoritarian impulses lived in a world in which a counterproductive “jungle view” prevailed. “If all people are divided into hammers and anvils, lambs and wolves, etc., then brotherhood, sharing of goals, identification with team objectives becomes difficult, limited, or impossible,” he wrote.336 Since Maslow believed that the desire for good work and for shouldering responsibility was “natural” among psychologically healthy people, the authoritarian manager, who might try to bully efficiency out of their staff, actually produced the opposite result. He did not argue that “little or no external direction or control” would work with everyone, however. Maslow recognized that for many people the lack of external direction would bring to the surface individual weaknesses, such as lack of talent or stultifying inhibitions.337

The idea of minimal parental direction or control upon children was likewise central to mid-century progressive child-rearing practices, such as those advocated by Dr. Benjamin Spock, as well as the source of the idea that it was “permissiveness” that eventually led to both the anti-war movement and counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s.338 It also neatly dovetails with two other prominent ideas deriving from

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336 Maslow on Management, 21
337 Ibid, 189.
338 In a lengthy 1968 article for the New York Times Magazine, Christopher Jencks, a collaborator with David Riesman, asked the question, “If respect for authority, for the school, for the family has broken down, Is It All Dr. Spock’s Fault?” See Christopher Jencks, “Is It All Dr. Spock’s Fault?” New York Times Magazine, March 3, 1968, pgs. 27 – 96. Ehrenreich, in Fear of Falling, lays out the intellectual genealogy of the “permissiveness” argument and shows how many people, both conservative and liberal, have seen progressive child-rearing techniques as the source of 1960s radicalism. See Ehrenreich, Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 68 – 74. As late as 2000, David Frum resurrected this argument in a laundry list of
contemporary psychological thinking: the idea of directionless encounter group, as advocated by Carl Rogers, and the prominent notion in American child-rearing that children should be encouraged to think critically of authority. As Cavallo puts it, “In order for children to develop autonomy and critical awareness, as well as the capacity to adapt to change and progress, they should be encouraged to question the rationales of the rules and restrictions imposed on them.”

Point three: “Commitment to objectives is a function of rewards associated with their achievement, these rewards being those which go to satisfy man’s physiological, psychological, safety, social, ego, and self-actualization needs.”

With the addition of the word “psychological” this is a re-statement of Maslow’s famous “hierarchy of needs” which, lowest to highest, are: physiological, safety, social, esteem, self-actualization. By adding the word “psychological” to the list, Non-Linear Systems experiment also includes Maslow’s idea that work can improve the interior lives of the worker to such an extent as to be revolutionary. Maslow put it this way:

Work can be psychotherapeutic, psychogogic (making well people grow toward self-actualization). This of course is a circular relationship to some extent, i.e., given fairly o.k. people to begin with, in a fairly good organization, then work tends to improve the people. This tends to improve the industry, which in turn tends to improve the people involved, and so it goes. This is the simplest way of saying that proper management of the work lives of human beings, of the way in which they earn their living, can improve them and improve the world and in this sense be a utopian or revolutionary technique.

accusations against mid-twentieth century American liberalism. See Frum, How We Got Here: The 70s: The Decade that Brought you Modern Life – For Better or Worse (New York: Basic Books, 2000.)

339 Cavallo, 48.
340 Goble, 52.
341 Maslow on Management, pg. 1
Douglas McGregor also suggested that a management style in which employees were encouraged to explore their individual talents could lead to “improved” human beings. In his preface to *The Human Side of Enterprise* he therefore worries that “we have not learned enough about the utilization of talent, about the creation of an organizational climate conducive to human growth.”

Point four: “Many humans not only are ready to accept responsibility, they seek to shoulder it. Avoidance of responsibility, lack of ambition, and emphasis on security are not inherent human characteristics.”

Maslow believed that the desire to accept responsibility was true of most normal, healthy individuals, but certainly not everyone. Among those who “don’t have such an impulse,” he wrote, included “the crushed, the hopeless, the beaten, people reduced to the concrete, anxiety-ridden, fearful, demented…”

As with the matter of work, counterculturalists were often castigated for shirking their responsibilities and for lacking ambition. While it is obviously true that counterculturalists tended to avoid the responsibilities associated with the American middle-class and “mainstream,” such as the responsibility for building a career, raising a family, even paying off debts, it is also true that many counterculturalists saw themselves as taking on even greater responsibilities and shouldering even larger ambitions. They often viewed themselves as cultural revolutionaries eager to overthrow “the old order”

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344 In an article for the *East Village Other*, Abbie Hoffman noted this by saying, “Take W-O-R-K. When we say that nobody is going to work in the new world, it really spooks them. Not ideology or drugs.
and building new egalitarian and non-coercive forms of social arrangements. It is therefore not that counterculturalists avoided responsibility and lacked ambition per se, but that the responsibility that they did shoulder and the ambitions that they had were of an entirely different sort. 345

Point five: “The powers of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity are more widely distributed throughout the population than most executives admit. They simply await the proper time, place, stimulus, and atmosphere of receptivity to pour forth.”

Progressive middle-class American child-rearing practices during the post-war period were heavily influenced by the idea that authoritarian family relations crushed the creative potential of children. As Cavallo writes, “scolding a child about ‘messing up’ the house sent a message that being ‘neat and clean’ was more important than being creative and autonomous.” 346 In order to create an atmosphere within which the child’s potential could flourish, parents therefore began purchasing toys not merely for their entertainment value, but for their ability to stimulate the “imagination, ingenuity, and creativity” of their kids. 347 The popularity of toys from the 1950s and 1960s, such as Etch-A-Sketch, Lego building blocks, and home chemistry sets derived from the idea that such toys provided the stimulus to release the child’s natural intelligence and creativity.

W-O-R-K. When you tell the straight world you are never going to work again they go into ulcers.” Hoffman quoted by Miller in The Hippies and American Values. See: Miller, 113.

345 Whatever the viability, or lack thereof, of the 1960s cultural revolutionary project, it was certainly ambitious. In Woodstock Nation, Abbie Hoffman makes it clear that the goal was the creation of an entirely new “nation” within the boundaries of the United States. By “nation,” of course, Hoffman was not referring to a nation-state, but to new ways of being and new ways of thinking that would spread throughout the culture, thus replacing traditional politics and competitive or coercive human relations with a radical form of social libertarianism. “When I appear in the Chicago courtroom,” he wrote, “I want to be tried not… because I’m against corporate liberalism, but because I think people should do whatever the fuck they want…” Woodstock Nation, 8.

346 Cavallo, 50.
347 Ibid, 50.
The idea that “imagination, ingenuity, and creativity are more widely distributed throughout the population than most executives admit” was a mainstay of countercultural and “human potential movement” thinking. As early as the late 1950s, Paul Goodman noted this in reference to his study of the Beat Generation in *Growing Up Absurd*. Referring to the youthful drop-outs hanging around the North Beach section of San Francisco, he wrote, “Everybody engages in creative arts and is likely to carry a sketchbook, proving what the psychologists and progressive educators have always claimed, that every child is creative if not blocked. Resigning from the rat-race, they have removed the block.”348

The very idea of “the human potential,” as outlined by Aldous Huxley, and explored by Michael Murphy and the Esalen folk, directly relates to the idea that people have far more ingenuity and creative powers than is usually thought and that if it is cultivated such potential may come to fruition. This idea is central to participatory management, to progressive child rearing, to the counterculture, and is perfectly consistent with the optimistic American “can-do” spirit that was said to underlay American successes in business, science, and war.

Point six: “Under the conditions of modern industrial life, man’s intellectual potentialities are only partially realized.”

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348 Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized Society*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 176. Goodman, of course, recognized that the mere fact of a more widely distributed creative impulse among people than was generally recognized does not imply that everyone is potentially a good artist. Goodman considered the quality of most Beat art to be rather modest, if not, in many cases, considerably worse. He also suggested that the good artists among the San Francisco Beat sub-culture of the late 1950s were not, in fact, Beat at all, because they have a vocation and are, thus, not “resigned.” Ibid, 177.
Early in the twentieth-century, the famous American psychologist, William James, argued that most people developed only a fraction of their full intellectual capacities. He wrote, “Compared to what we ought to be, we are only half awake. Our fires are dampened, our drafts checked, we are making use of only a small part of our mental and physical resources.”

This idea, which lies at the heart of the human potential movement and was also an idea within progressive child rearing, was shared by Maslow and the purveyors of participatory management. For Maslow, intellectual potential was but one human potential that people failed to fully explore.

In the post-war period, middle and upper-middle-class followers of progressive child-rearing techniques increasingly worried that their children’s intellectual potential become fully realized. For this reason, McCall’s magazine published “I.Q. Tests for Babies,” which informed parents how to measure the intelligence of their children. During the 1950s and 1960s, such parents increasingly encouraged their children to academically excel and some supplemented schoolwork with additional homework created not by the teachers, but by themselves. In order to foster the intellectual capacity of their children, these parents also encouraged their children to think critically. “In order for children to develop autonomy and critical awareness,” Cavallo writes, “as well as the capacity to adapt to change and progress, they should be encouraged to question the rationales of the rules and restrictions imposed upon them.”

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349 Goble, 54.
350 Goble draws a direct and explicit, if somewhat off-handed, intellectual geneology from James, through Maslow, Rogers, and Fromm, to the Esalen Institute around the notion of the “human potential.” See: Noble, 156.
351 Cavallo, 51.
352 Ibid, 51.
353 Ibid, 48.
The idea that “modern industrial life” stultifies potential, intellectual and otherwise, was also a central tenet of countercultural thinking, as well as the thinking of the social critics, cultural critics, and, of course, humanistic psychologists. One of the very first pieces of analysis written on the counterculture is Roszak’s *The Making of a Counter Culture* and it is Roszak’s central thesis that “modern industrial life” had become an unbearable “technocracy” for the pampered, American, white, middle-class youth that comprised the main bulk of the counterculture. “By the technocracy,” Roszak wrote, “I mean that social form in which an industrial society reaches the peak of its organizational integration. It is the ideal men usually have in mind when they speak of modernizing, up-dating, rationalizing, planning.” Furthermore, the technocracy transcended the debates between conservatives, liberals, and radicals because it was a “grand cultural imperative which is beyond question, beyond discussion.” The countercultural affection for psychedelic drugs and marijuana, was not merely an affection based in the pleasurable affects of those substances, but in the idea that marijuana, psilocybin mushrooms, and particularly, LSD, acted as an “emotional detergent” that could free the individual from the repressive consequences of the “technocracy.” As Miller argues, “More than a few hippies claimed to have found through dope startling new insights and sometimes a comprehensive philosophy of life.”

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355 Ibid, 9.
356 Miller quotes an anonymous hippie as claiming, “If nothing else can be said for marijuana, it can be praised as a cultural detoxicant; it acts as an emotional detergent that breaks through the sham and hypocrisy and living-death of much of contemporary America, and allows that vision of beauty that American life seems so bent on destroying.” Miller, 35.
It is a short jump from encouraging individual autonomy, creativity, and independent intellectual thought to encouraging a radically independent spirit that refuses to conform to the social requirements of one’s culture. Such was the case with the counterculture. It developed out of the same social values that animated participatory management and progressive child-rearing during a period when the United States stressed such values in contrast to the supposed opposite values of Soviet totalitarianism. The complaints directed at large institutions of power in the United States by the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists, furthermore, were precisely the same criticisms that the United States directed at the Soviet Union. Both were accused of promoting conformity and an enforced acquiescence leading to systems of dominance that diminished the creative, autonomous self. The conflict between the counterculture and the “mainstream,” therefore, was less a conflict of competing values than it was a conflict of the same values when taken to their logical, though extreme, conclusion by one side, while moderated in the service of social practicality and material necessity by the other.

When those who despise the sixties’ counterculture, such as conservative presidential speechwriter, David Frum, argue that an unfortunate “permissiveness” is partly responsible for the sixties’ counterculture, they may not be entirely wrong, however they fail to note that this permissiveness developed within a Cold War context that contrasted American autonomy and independence with Soviet conformity and control. Many parents of counterculturalists were permissive, as were the counterculturalists themselves upon becoming parents, but that atmosphere of permissiveness was specifically cultivated to off-set the conformity and failure of

357 Miller, 29.
individual autonomy that some, such as C. Wright Mills, found in the workplace, and that many others, such as Richard Nixon, found in the Soviet Union. “In the mid fifties,” Cavallo writes, “years before he achieved notoriety as the high priest of LSD, Timothy Leary taught psychology at Berkeley, and was the father of two young children. He and his wife were intent on becoming what he called ‘a new breed of parents.’ The couple treated ‘our kids as equal, independent, privileged human beings.’ They ‘would not stunt their [children’s] growth with restrictions.’”³⁵⁸

The permissiveness that the young Leary encouraged with his children was implemented specifically to not “stunt their growth.” It was a tactic designed, therefore, to encourage the values of freedom, autonomy, individuality, and success that one most associates with the United States, and with classical liberalism, and not with the anti-liberal U.S. competitors who promoted international communism. If Leary and the counterculturalists were radical individualists who disdained the American mainstream and its institutions, their radicalism, therefore, derived not just from alternative subcultures within American society, but from the very mainstream values by which Americans defined themselves.

**Maslow versus the Counterculture**

Maslow’s relationship with the counterculture illustrates some of the tensions within and between the “mainstream” of American life and the counterculture. Although Maslow, as is clear from his journals, worried that the counterculture, the New Left, and the anti-war movement represented some of the worst expressions of American egalitarianism and anti-intellectualism, he nonetheless remained a significant figure for countercultural youth and

³⁵⁸ Cavallo, 55.
countercultural theorists. Maslow’s work on “peak-experiences,” in particular, bestowed some scholarly credence on the psychedelic theories of Timothy Leary, a friend of Maslow’s, because it suggested that the peak-experience represented a characteristic of the self-actualized individual; because it sought to reconcile the mystical with the scientific, the secular, and the non-theistic, and because it suggested, along with the work of the mystic-intellectuals at the American Academy of Asian Studies, that at the core of world religions resided a common metaphysical reality. In *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*, Maslow wrote, “This private religious experience is shared by all the great world religions including the atheistic ones like Buddhism, Taoism, Humanism, or Confucianism. As a matter of fact, I can go so far as to say that this intrinsic core-experience is a meeting ground not only, let us say, for Christians and Jews and Mohammedans but also for priests and atheists, for communists and anti-communists, for conservatives and liberals, for artists and scientists, for men and for women, and for different constitutional types, that is to say, for athletes and for poets, for thinkers and for doers.”

This notion that all world religions point to a single metaphysical reality that represents a sort-of meeting ground between the mystical and the secular was extremely common among counterculturalists of the 1960s and 1970s and owes something to the scholars at the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco between 1951 and 1968.

Given Maslow’s comfort with religious mysticism and alternative psychological practices, such as his advocacy of nude encounter group and the distinct possibility that he experimented with LSD, it seems natural that counterculturalists such as Abbie Hoffman might

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359 Maslow’s biographer, Edward Hoffman, notes, for example, that “[m]any more were affected by (Maslow’s *Toward a Psychology of Being*) than actually read it. Terms like peak-experience and self-actualization began to penetrate the popular vocabulary and help shape the zeitgeist of 1960s America. Before long, nearly every college student in the country was hearing such phrases, as legions of admirers promoted Maslow’s approach.” See Hoffman, *The Right to be Human: A Biography of Abraham Maslow* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1988), 266.

confuse him with one of their own.\textsuperscript{361} Hoffman, a student of Maslow’s at Brandeis University in the late 1950s, suggested that “Maslovian theory laid a solid foundation for launching the optimism of the sixties. Existential, altruistic, and up-beat, his teachings became my personal code.”\textsuperscript{362} Hoffmann unequivocally acknowledged, “I loved Abe Maslow. I took every class he gave and spent long evenings with him and his family.”\textsuperscript{363} In particular, Maslow captivated the young Abbie Hoffman by suggesting that social rebellion was not necessarily a sign of psychological maladjustment, but perhaps the opposite.

Hoffman’s biographer, Marty Jezer, notes that “At Brandeis freshmen were required to take an introductory course in psychology taught by the chairman of the department, Abraham Maslow. In one of the first classes Maslow said it would be all right to use words like \textit{fuck} in his courses. Maslow’s point was that language in itself could not be obscene; it was the subjectivity of the listener that made it so… Even more seductive was his belief that social rebellion was not necessarily a manifestation of maladjustment and that conformity did not necessarily represent healthy or moral behavior. This was music to Abbie’s ears.”\textsuperscript{364} Indeed, in his 1951 article, “Resistance to Acculturation,” Maslow cited David Riesman’s suggestion of a “saving remnant” of inner-directed people in mass society for whom non-adjustment to prevailing social norms signified not emotional immaturity, but potentially the behavior of a self-actualized individual of superior social functioning.\textsuperscript{365}

Throughout much of Maslow’s scholarship he explores the idea that “superior” self-actualizing individuals continually struggle with “inferior” non-self-actualizers, who seek to diminish the social standing and achievements of their betters and it is around this conflict that Maslow’s place as counterculturalist theorizer seems to clash with his role as business management theorizer who advocated participatory management. Some interpreters of Maslow’s work, such as Allan R. Buss, suggest that Maslow was a champion of liberalism who, like Jean Jacque Rousseau, gave primacy to “human nature” over environmental influences. Others, such as Robert Shaw and Karen Colimore, suggest that Maslow was a conservative authoritarian who penned brilliant apologetics for western capitalism through an updated, psychologized form of Social Darwinism.

Although these interpretations are not mutually exclusive, they suggest something about Maslow’s conflicted relationship with the counterculture and illustrate additional complexities concerning the relationship of the counterculture to American conservatism. Since the late 1960s, the American conservative movement has been considered, in part, a backlash against the supposed decadence and “anti-Americanism” of the sixties’ counterculture. This imply that there is something fundamentally anti-conservative about the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. Rebecca Klatch, however, in A Generation Divided, demonstrates that some absolute mutual exclusivity between conservatism and counterculturalism did not exist in the 1960s and that ideological space existed within conservatism for the counterculture. During the 1960s, in fact, considerable numbers of conservative student members of Young Americans for Freedom

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366 Maslow suggested that individuals human beings have an essential nature, or core personality, that often conflicts with the social requirements of contemporary liberalism, resulting in psychological stress or illness. He wrote, “We have, each of us, an essential biologically based inner nature, which is to some degree ‘natural,’ intrinsic, given, and, in a certain limited sense, unchangeable, or, at least, unchanging… If this essential core of the person is denied or suppressed, he gets sick sometimes in obvious ways, sometimes in subtle ways, sometimes immediately, sometimes later.” See Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1968), 3.
(YAF) were libertarian counterculturalists who smoked marijuana, wore their hair long, and opposed the Vietnam War. Klatch argues that “opposition to the Vietnam War and hostility toward the state forged bonds between sectors of the left and the libertarian right during the late 1960s. In addition, the counterculture became a dividing line within both SDS and YAF, with some members of each organization adamantly opposed to the counterculture, while others embraced youth culture in beliefs and lifestyle.”

As an individual, Maslow illustrates that countercultural views could be contained within an essentially conservative mind because certain beliefs central to the counterculture not only did not contradict conservatism, but were consistent with conservativism and with a broad set of American values, more generally.

Writing in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology in 1979, Buss, in “Humanistic Psychology as Liberal Ideology,” emphasizes that in Maslow themes such as “growth, becoming, self-actualizing, individual freedom, and tolerance, are all the psychological embodiment of the liberal frame of mind which emphasizes optimism, pluralism, individual freedom, piecemeal progress, and the gradual development toward perfection.” In this way, Buss implicitly suggests a Maslow that reconciles classical liberalism with counterculturalism, despite the fact that the counterculture often seemed, at least, to reject the western liberal project. Although, as Timothy Miller suggests, the counterculture rejected “privatism, competition, elitism,

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370 The word “liberalism” in this context, of course, refers to the classical definition which emphasizes, among other things, free markets and the founding ideas of modern capitalism, as well as representative democracy. Terry Anderson points out that the apparent tension between counterculture ideology and liberal capitalism was never resolved. He notes, “hippies argued about money and profit. Critics often mocked them for denouncing capitalism while establishing hip businesses or working for a paycheck.” See: Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protests in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 265.
selfishness, jealousy, and reinforcement of the territorial imperative,” liberalism, because it is
diverse, always contained significant elements of communalism, cooperation, egalitarianism,
charity, and the recognition of both public property and the common good. Buss’ explication
of Maslow as a liberal, therefore, could just as easily be an argument for Maslow as a
counterculturalist and therefore suggests ways in which the counterculture, rather than being
strictly at odds with the liberal American mainstream, derived from a common philosophical
source.

This common philosophical source, traditional liberalism, contains the tensions that some
scholars see in play within Maslow’s scholarship. In a 1988 article by organizational
behaviorist, Robert Shaw, and psychologist, Karen Colimore, these tensions are examined as
tensions within liberal-capitalistic ideology. The central tension that Shaw and Colimore
identify at the core of both capitalism and the philosophy of Maslow, a tension also found in
notions of progressive child-rearing and participatory management, is the tension between liberal
egalitarianism and the prerogatives of the elite. The notion of “human potentiality,” a central
idea within the counterculture, also contains this tension between social egalitarianism and
elitism. For this reason the contradictions that Shaw and Colimore locate within both capitalism
and Maslow are also located within the hip-counterculture.

372 This is important to note because it helps build the case that the counterculture derived not merely from
alternative sub-cultures or movements, such as the Beat movement, but from a long-standing social-economic
movement at the center of American society, i.e., traditional liberalism. It is for this reason, furthermore, that
American commercial interests and advertising, as discussed by Thomas Frank in The Conquest of Cool, so easily
adapted itself to countercultural styles by the early 1960s. It could do so because the contradiction was always more
Consumerism. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.)
373 Shaw and Colimore are specific on this. They write, “We find that Maslow’s contradictions – the most
significant being that his work contains both democratic and elitist worldviews – are understandable when viewed as
expressions of capitalist ideology.” See: Robert Shaw and Karen Colimore, “Humanistic Psychology as Ideology:
It is not surprising, therefore, that Maslow contained the very contradictions found within the liberal tradition, as well as within its countercultural progeny. Maslow’s idea of “self-actualization” represents an expression of the liberal-elitist ideal, just as it represents an expression of countercultural epistemological transformation toward that ideal. For Maslow, the superiority of self-actualized individuals was rooted in biology and continually in conflict with the great mass of “inferiors” endeavoring to bring “superiors” down to their own miserable level. He wrote, “I think there are innate superiors and inferiors. How could there not be? Everything varies from more to less… We must make the world safe for superiors. The lower the culture & the lower people are the more likely they are to resent and hate superiors and so kill them off or drive them into hiding and camouflage. The more we educate the bulk of the population, the better it will be for the elite, e.g., less danger, more audience, more disciples, protectors, financiers, etc.” On the surface, such a statement seems to contradict the radical egalitarianism of the experiment at Non-Linear Systems. In fact, however, Maslow always recognized that the experiment with participatory management depended on psychologically healthy employees, those with the potential to be “superiors,” along with a recognition that the “superiors” must be protected and allowed, when necessary, to dictate the terms of the relationship. “Maslow learned this from first-hand experience in the classroom,” Goble writes. “Some students were used to being dictated to and thought anything else was softheaded

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374 Maslow, *The Journals of Abraham Maslow*, Volume 1, 262. As a further illustration of Maslow’s obsession with “superiors” and “inferiors,” Edward Hoffman, relates a relevant anecdote concerning Maslow’s pride in his IQ. Hoffman writes, “For the rest of Maslow’s life, he regarded his IQ as a mark of triumph. At parties and social gatherings, he liked to spark conversation by casually inquiring about someone’s IQ and then volunteering his own. He once asked his Brandeis colleague Max Lerner, the well-known political analyst, ‘Do you know what your IQ is?’ ‘No, I don’t think so,’ replied Lerner. ‘Don’t worry,’ Maslow assured him, ‘it’s probably almost as high as mine.’” See: Hoffman, *The Right to be Human: A Biography of Abraham Maslow*. (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1988.), 74.

375 “No society can function,” Maslow wrote, “unless the inferiors have the ability to admire the superiors, or at least not to hate them nor attack them. Also, no society and no enterprise can be really efficient unless superior people
and tried to take advantage. With these types Maslow found it best to be tough, to crack down, to make it very clear he was the boss.”

Although Maslow was highly respected among counterculturalists, and participated in the upwardly mobile, “human potential movement” wing at the Esalen Institute, he, nonetheless, held contempt for the “hippies” and social activists who revered him. He did so because he believed that “the movement” and their left-intellectuals allies undermined liberal democracy and it was liberal democracy that countered the malevolent march of totalitarianism and that best nurtured the individual in his or her continual evolution toward self-actualization. Hippies, anti-war activists, and leftist intellectuals, such as his colleague, Herbert Marcuse, in Maslow’s view, failed to recognize that the Soviet Union was a menace and that the Vietnam War was a worthy proxy fight in the ongoing struggle between liberalism and totalitarian Communism. Unlike virtually everyone else appreciated by the counterculture and the New Left, Maslow favored the Vietnam War, despised Marxism, and viewed himself as a “patriot.”

In an August, 1966, journal entry, written after an evening spent with friends who opposed the Vietnam War, Maslow poured out his frustration at their apparent inability to hold the Soviet Union, and its allies, to the same standards of conduct that they insisted upon in the behavior of the United States’ government and military:

I just don’t get it. Bert was horrified by a military mistake in which a friendly village was bombed – clearly an understandable mistake. But in the same newspaper, the Vietcong had exploded a huge bomb in Saigon in the midst of a group of Vietnam civilians & deliberately & consciously murdered a lot of women & children, all civilians. Bert made no mention of this. Any American blunder or mistake is ferociously seized upon, even when transparently well intentioned, or simply part of the inevitable stupidity of war. Meanwhile the most deliberate ferocities, assassinations & murders, the total terror-as-a-policy just like Stalin or Hitler, the total suppression of all human rights

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are freely chosen and elected by other people. This part of the requirement of the ideal situation.” Maslow on Management, 169

among the Communists, there, go unremarked, without protest. It reminds me of the Communist ‘30s, when I remember feeling anti-Communist, partly because the individual Communists were all such awful people, but also because, as I remember thinking, why did they not love the Bill of Rights? It just didn’t bother them about tyranny, or freedom of press or speech, etc. The whole intellectual-liberal community that I knew was then, as now, somehow attracted to authoritarianism if only it be vocally on the Left. They just don’t seem to love political democracy. They just can’t see Communist Party policy as evil & and as a repudiation of everything they should hold valuable… The U.S. tries to be virtuous, even if clumsily; the others don’t even try, & in addition sneer altogether at virtue itself. Why, then, do they all attack the U.S. so venomously all over the world? And within the liberal-intellectual community? I just don’t understand it. 377 (His italics.)

For Maslow, if “the human potential” was to be nurtured, then liberal democracy must be protected and Soviet totalitarianism aggressively opposed. Radicalized students, hippies, anti-war activists, and left-intellectuals, the very people who most appreciated his work in the 1960s, therefore, also represented political enemies who failed to understand the necessity of Cold War anti-communism and, thus, the Vietnam War, in upholding western liberal-capitalism. Liberal democracy, and thus capitalism, according to Maslow, represented the ideal form of social-political arrangement because it best nurtured the possibility of individual “self-actualization.” It is for this reason that Shaw and Colimore argue that “Maslow’s psychology is not just a reflection of social conditions – be they political or economic. It is a new and seductive form of Social Darwinism that can be used to justify a capitalistic system along with the privileges and practices of its powerful elite.” 378

Indeed, the very notion of the superior self-actualized individual ascending a pyramidal “hierarchy of needs” represents a form of spiritual-psychological “class consciousness” in which the activist seeks not to destroy economic class distinctions, but to highlight one’s superior place with a “natural” human aristocracy. Maslow shared this elitist notion with counterculturalists

378 Shaw and Colimore, 56.
who often viewed themselves as on the vanguard of epistemological evolution. For this reason, furthermore, Maslow highlighted the autonomous individual struggling toward fulfilling his or her own personal self-interest as the ideal type of individual and believed that those who sacrificed “personal self-interest” at the alter of social reform were misguided. He wrote, “it’s useless to be a do-gooder, to try to improve the average person, much less to sacrifice for them, die for them, etc. That’s a waste of effort. A schlemiel remains a schlemiel. Only thing you can do is to look for the superiors that exist.” If, for whatever reason, “inferiors” were unable to meet even their lowest needs on Maslow’s famous hierarchy then they must meet the necessary fate that awaits them. He wrote, “As for the unemployed loafers today, in a time of shortages of help, I’d simply be willing to let them starve, ultimately. Short of this, nothing will work.” For this reason, Maslow also implied that the government should curtail the rights of “inferiors” to breed. “Not everyone has the right to have babies or to keep them,” he wrote. Furthermore, Maslow even believed that “inferiors” were entitled to fewer political rights than “superiors.” “It’s ridiculous giving a ‘low’ person the same laws as a ‘high’ person,” he wrote in journal. “Supreme court rulings treat every person as if he were Thomas Jefferson. I’d say the diminished person has fewer rights than the self-actualizing person.”

Because Maslow believed that personality was primarily rooted in biology and that worldly success depended upon personality, it is natural that he rejected both Marxism and the

379 Writing in the Harvard Review, Timothy Leary announced that through psychedelic drugs the human species was on the cusp of an epistemological evolutionary flood. “Make no mistake,” he wrote, “the effect of consciousness-expanding drugs will be to transform our concepts of human nature, human potentialities, existence. The game is about to be changed, ladies and gentlemen. Man is about to make use of that fabulous electrical network he carries around in his skull. Present social establishments had better be prepared for change. Our favourite concepts are standing in the way of a flood tide of 2 billion years building up. The verbal dam is collapsing. Head for the hills, or prepare your intellectual craft to flow with the current.” See: Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert, “The Fifth Freedom: The Right to Get High.” Harvard Review Vol 1, No 4 (Summer 1963).
382 Ibid, 632.
New Left. As the 1960s ticked by, and as American political discourse grew increasingly fractious, Maslow found himself becoming more and more unhappy with anti-war activists, Black Nationalists, left-intellectuals, and many of his own students. Concerning the last of these, he wrote in 1969, “I couldn’t have predicted the antirationality & anti-intellectualism. Nor the total rejection of even the mildest & most benevolent & obviously rational & covert authority (like Hayakawa or Humphrey, or as in my own class last semester)… And then the stupid choice of heroes! Paul Goodman! Allen Ginsberg!”

Maslow held special contempt for the heroes of American youth in the 1960s. Aside from Ginsberg and Goodman, he also rejected Che Guevara, Abbie Hoffman, and his Brandeis colleague, Herbert Marcuse. Concerning Guevara, he wrote, “a bum & a killer & a stupid jerk who contradicted the principles he himself had written & gotten killed for after a lot of useless killing that achieved nothing (& he’s admired instead of being seen as a restless shlemiel). Marcuse!!!… I think that article on the stupidities of youth could be very salutary (thru the ages, but especially right now when it’s become anti-intellectual & antihistorical & antifactual in a wild way.”

During the famous trial of the “Chicago 8,” one of whom was Maslow’s former student, Abbie Hoffman, he was asked about the fact that Hoffman cited him as one of his primary influences. Maslow, who referred to Hoffman and his co-defendants as “clowns” and

383 Ibid, 687.
384 He wrote, “But this A.M. it again occurred to me that all the sophisticates are of the past, of the last century. They’re fighting the last war. I & my type are of the future, of the next 50 –100 years, looking forward in time, while they are still on Union Square in 1935, but now cynical and pessimistic because everything they really believed in has been proven wrong – Marx, Stalin, Russia. / I have almost intentionally felt about Marx in the same way – high-level abstractions so far away - & am content that it becomes a word game! I said that I could never understand Marx. But I never really tried. Every taste of it repelled me.” Maslow, The Journals of Abraham Maslow , 522.
385 Ibid, 948.
386 Ibid, 948.
“murderers,” could only, in the words of Ellen Herman, “grudgingly admit that he had no control over the lessons others extracted from his life work.” 387

By the end of the 1960s, Maslow’s disdain for the American left became so ferocious that he began to see himself as a “soldier,” a General, in a domestic war raging through American politics and culture. This war, in Maslow’s configuration, was not a war between American anti-war youth and their New Left allies versus “the establishment” of politicians and business leaders, but a war that pitted the forces of chaos, anti-intellectualism, irrationality, and proponents of political violence, versus those, such as Maslow, himself, who advocated moderation, liberalism, and the “humanistic-democratic ethos.” He wrote in his journal that he considered himself “to be at war & a soldier, or rather a general within it” and that in war, “I accept as allies anybody who will fight on my side whether I like them or respect them or not. / It also means a lineup of enemies. Last night I heard that Leonard Bernstein is giving benefits for the Black Panthers (not for the NAACP), & at once I felt of him as an enemy, someone to fight any way I could. That makes a very long list of enemies, of people I have contempt for, including an awfully big proportion of the intelligentsia community… I’d now say there’s a war going on. The humanistic-democratic ethos being attacked by the culture of malice, despair, & destruction. If the U.S. goes down, the world goes down. / Let’s talk about the humanistic establishment. Take the word ‘Establishment’ back from the stupid kids & use it well. They’re frequently against any organization & just in favor of chaos & planlessness.” 388 (His italics.)

Although Maslow condemned the violent tactics of some on the political left he felt little compunction about state sponsored violence against leftist activists who took to the streets: “Coming home, I thought more about how the liberals & conservatives would be quite shocked

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at how tough I’d be with the rioters (I’d shoot them if necessary, even to kill if unavoidable)…
I’d jail & punish all the civil disobedients. And for the ones who plume themselves on being arrested, I’d have real punishment, anything that they would fear & that would deter them, even if I had to change the laws about cruel & unusual punishment.”

These thoughts, of course, were thoughts that Maslow conveyed only in his private journals and were not shared with his colleagues at Brandeis or his friends at the Esalen Institute. One can reasonably assume that if the Esalen regulars, such as Mike Murphy, Richard Price, and George Leonard, knew of Maslow’s extremist attitudes toward his political “enemies” he might not have been quite so revered at the hot springs of Big Sur. Nonetheless, the apparent contradiction between Maslow’s advocacy of egalitarian business arrangements with his stress on the primacy of “superiors” reflects similar internal contradictions present within participatory management, progressive child rearing, the counterculture, and American society, more generally.

Maslow and the Counterculture in a Cold War Context

Maslow’s disdain for the counterculture should also be understood within the context of American Cold War culture defining itself in opposition to the Soviet Union in the decades following World War II. His self-described provincialism, patriotism, individualism, and spirituality, reflect, and are perfectly consistent with, the wide-spread Cold War sense of American liberal values, or “Americanism,” in conflict with “Un-American,” international, anti-liberal forces enshrined in Marxism and the Soviet Union. Cold Warriors sometimes viewed the counterculture, as well as the New Left, feminism, black nationalism, and all the left-leaning social movements associated with the 1960s, as a Soviet inspired threat to the “American way of

389 Ibid, 631.
life.” What they self-consciously defended were the values associated with classical liberalism; values that stressed the necessity of maintaining a social-political environment that allowed the autonomous individual to pursue his or her economic self-interest without undue interference from government.

Because by the middle of the twentieth-century the primary terrain upon which American liberalism expressed itself was the business world, hostility toward that world, such as countercultural hostility toward American business, was sometimes viewed as an attack directed at the heart of western civilization. The counterculture, however, was not a bohemian rejection of “Americanism,” or western civilization, but an expression of liberal individualism, moving in a particular direction under the specific historical circumstances of the Cold War. When hippies, like the Beats before them, refused to take regular jobs and contented themselves with living off the leftovers of American capitalism, it was not out of disdain for the American values of individuality, freedom, or democracy, but a desire to more fully live those values through freeing the individual from the supposedly death-like conformity, and social requirements, of American business culture. It was therefore an expression of liberalism that valued personal autonomy over material self-improvement.

George Nash, for an example, notes that conservative critics of the counterculture and New Left considered these movements as seeking, in the words of Gerhart Niemeyer, “the destruction of the entire social order and the reversal of all values in Western countries.” See: George H. Nash, The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America. (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996), 281.

It is for this reason that Friedrich Hayek’s Road to Serfdom was so popular among conservative intellectuals throughout most of the twentieth-century. Hayek suggested that “[p]lanning leads to dictatorship” and, therefore,
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government should not impose itself upon the individual pursuit of economic self-interest. To do so would lead directly to “serfdom.” Nash, 3.


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Chapter 4

The Search for Authenticity and the American Academy of Asian Studies

In the 1950s, influential scholars described white-collar workers as conformist drudges, lost within power relations that they could not understand. The social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists charged that white-collar work within large institutions not only damaged individuality, but represented a potential threat to liberal democracy. 

During the second half of the twentieth-century a wide variety of Americans increasingly concerned themselves with questions directly related to those charges. Scholars such as C. Wright Mills and Rollo May held institutions of power responsible for creating diminished and inauthentic human selves. In the 1960s, this idea informed numerous political movements. Feminists, black nationalists, environmentalists, New Leftists, and anti-war activists also embraced ideas of personal authenticity and condemned American culture and institutions not just for social injustice, but for the distortion of human identities.

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392 See previous chapter.
transcended left-right politics, finding expression in the psychedelic counterculture as well as conservative Evangelicalism.

Between the late 1950s, with the emergence of the Beats on the national scene, until the late 1970s, significant numbers of white, middle-class Americans rejected mainstream American social presumptions in favor of a religious-mystical search for an authentic sense of self. In the early 1950s, San Francisco’s American Academy of Asian Studies developed into a seed of this movement, “the counterculture.” Years prior to the publications of Ginsberg’s “Howl” or Kerouac’s *On The Road*, many of the writers who would become associated with the Beat movement and the counterculture attended classes and seminars at the Academy. Much of what they later transmitted to American youth derived from their participation in the American Academy of Asian Studies.

Housed in a Victorian mansion on Broadway Street in Pacific Heights, a group formed around the organization that became a nucleus of the San Francisco Renaissance of the late 1950s. Prior to his first visit to Japan, poet Gary Snyder, for example, attended the Academy as a student. Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, and other Beat poets often visited, sitting in on lectures or attending seminars.  

Zen popularizer and counterculture figure, Alan Watts, directed the institute throughout most of the 1950s. Michael Murphy and Richard Price, co-founders of the Esalen Institute, received much of their graduate-level education at the Academy. The Asian mystical practices that marked the San Francisco Renaissance and the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, practices such Zen meditation (*zazen*) and hatha yoga were already being explored through the Academy during the early fifties. Just as the counterculture owes

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something to the San Francisco Renaissance of the late 1950s, therefore, so the San Francisco Renaissance owes something to the American Academy of Asian Studies.

An examination of the Academy is relevant to American post-war historiography in a number of ways. It strengthens the case for the religious nature of the counterculture and demonstrates that it should not automatically be associated with the political left. It also reveals, significantly, how the countercultural movement in the United States derived not just from alternative or bohemian subcultures, such as the Beat movement, but also from the American business community, the veritable heart of the mainstream. Some of the people who in the 1960s would eventually be castigated by countercultural writers and New Left activists for serving the “machine” of the American social-political order, that is white-collar businessmen, actually spent much of the 1950s laying institutional ground for the emergence of the counterculture that would soon revile them.

Timothy Miller, probably the foremost expert on “hippies,” defines the movement as “a romantic social movement of the late 1960s and very early 1970s, mainly composed of teenagers and persons in their early twenties, who through their flamboyant lifestyle expressed their alienation from mainstream American life.” Miller’s periodization, however, is too narrow. The counterculture did not end in the very early 1970s, nor did it begin in the late 1960s. The counterculture “began,” in the sense that it began receiving national media attention, in the late 1950s perhaps with Allen Ginsberg’s reading of “Howl” at the Gallery 6, but the currents were in place well before then.

Recent analyses of this subject argue that the counterculture (usually lumped in with the New Left, feminism, black nationalism, and the environmental movement) was not only an irrational movement among the young, but the ensuing backlash against the hedonism and
“immorality” of the movement helped fuel the New Right. The movement is, thus, partially responsible for the successful coming of Ronald Reagan and “neo-conservatives” into national politics.

Adam Garfinkle suggests that the counterculture mainly derived from the childish psychological fantasies of American youth after World War II. “The Vietnam generation,” he argues, may “have been affected, in ways we do not yet fully understand, by the explosion of vivid and colorful fantasies in movies and television. Mainly designed for children, movies such as Cinderella and Peter Pan may have given many members of the Vietnam generation extraordinarily high expectations of a normal life.”

Under this analysis, television and movies during the early Cold War presented an idealized fantasy world that American children took seriously. When that fantasy life met the real-world necessities of earning a living or clashed with the realities presented by the Civil Rights movement, counterculturalists retreated deeper into a fantasy life played out in the streets of America’s large, urban areas or in rural communes. “It burst the bubble of optimism, progress, fantasy cum future,” Garfinkle writes, and therefore American young people went into psychological and social retreat. This view of the counterculture, as an irrational flight from hard realities, is not so much wrong as it is an incomplete and negatively biased interpretation.

The counterculture was, of course, a project not based upon the rational. Miller points out that counterculturalists “questioned the very rationality upon which Western culture has been built. To the counterculturalists,” he writes, “reason had run its course; now it was time to return to the mystical and intuitional.”

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398 Miller, 4.
Reich, agree with Garfinkle, on the political right, and Miller, on the political left, that the counterculture was “irrational” in the sense that those involved often rejected Western forms of logic and rationality. The reason that the counterculture rejected Western logic was not only because, in the words of Reich, “It’s rationality must be measured against the insanity of existing ‘reason’ – reason that makes impoverishment, dehumanization, and even war appear to be logical and necessary,” but because at the heart of the countercultural project was a search for authenticity that took the form of religious mysticism.

The counterculture was, in fact, a transnational and highly eclectic religious movement containing a wide variety of mystical ideas and practices. Some of these ideas and practices derived from Asia, such as Zen, and some derived from the West, such as Renaissance occultism and alternative forms of Christianity. Practitioners used these various religious forms to undermine mainstream “social programming,” because they construed Western culture as malevolent. One of the central tenets of the counterculture, however, was that Western society was on the verge of redemption through a sudden spiritual-evolutionary leap. The counterculturalists themselves, or so they believed, represented the avant-garde of this evolutionary moment and as the avant-garde they would lead the way into a new, golden future. The stale forms of liberal capitalism would melt away not through confrontation or political revolution, but through the sheer joyous energy of a new and prevailing evolutionary “mutation.”

The presence of this idea in American culture, and others that marked the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, owes something to the American Academy of Asian Studies.

400 Reich, 4.
401 Thus, the charge that the counterculture was irrational is not entirely incorrect, though “a-rational” is probably a fairer term.
The Refugees Come Together

In 1937, a forty-year old “refugee theologian” arrived in New York City from Nazi Germany. 402 Hired as an instructor in Columbia University’s Department of Philosophy, Friedrich Spiegelberg was a professor of Indian civilization and comparative religion. A student of Paul Tillich, Martin Heidegger, and, in a less formal capacity, Carl Jung, Spiegelberg studied what he took to be the essential core of all great religious traditions: the meaning of mysticism. 403 By 1937, the German state, of course, was a less than hospitable place for a socially liberal and mystically-inclined theologian who specialized in Hindu religious systems and the Sanskrit language. He therefore secured passage for London, en route to the United States and Columbia University.

While in London, Spiegelberg introduced himself to the Buddhist Lodge, the center of Buddhist intellectual thought in England. Here he met a number of individuals whose writings would later prove noteworthy in the urban, hip circles of late-1950s United States. These included Christmas Humphreys, president of the Buddhist Lodge and author of Buddhism, Deisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, one of the very first to introduce Zen to a western audience, and a twenty-two year old independent scholar named Alan Watts. During his brief stay in London, Watts, editor of the journal of the Buddhist Lodge during the mid-1930s, published Spiegelberg’s article, “The Religion of Non-Religion.” 404

These two concepts, “refugee theologian” and “religion of non-religion” are intrinsically connected and central to Spiegelberg’s view of himself and to his understanding of his subject.

402 Spiegelberg, Curriculum Vitae. Spiegelberg Archives, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA.
403 Ibid.
By “refugee theologian,” he meant not merely that he was a refugee from a famously unjust and brutal political order, but that his approach to theology was both experiential and ecumenical; in other words, he was at home in the mystical core of all religions, but always a refugee from his own Christian tradition and always a visitor in the religious houses of others.  

Eugene Taylor, in *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America*, argues that the 1960s witnessed “another great awakening, this time a spiritual reaction spawned by the rampant effects of materialism, the paranoia of worldwide totalitarianism, the threat of atomic annihilation, the destruction of the environment, and the assault on human rights.” His suggests that this mid-late twentieth-century “great awakening” should best be understood as a bubbling to the surface of a “shadow culture,” an alternative religious culture with a long history in the United States. Elements of this shadow culture include nineteenth-century American spiritualism and the presence on American soil of non-mainline religious organizations, such as Theosophy and Christian Science, that flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and that are still present today. He notes that the shadow culture is comprised of various types of individuals including those he calls “spiritual pilgrims.” He defines the spiritual pilgrim as “an otherwise healthy personality who, for one reason or another, has willfully chosen to disengage from culture, either permanently or temporarily, and who has, as a result, adopted a different way of seeing daily events.”  

Spiegelberg was of this type, as was Watts, each of whom, along with Chaudhuri, played important roles in the development of the Academy.  

Dr. Spiegelberg, who around the time of his appearance in the United States altered his Christian name from Friedrich to Frederic, spent a number of years teaching at a

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407 Ibid, 10.
variety of American universities before settling into a tenure-track position at Stanford University in 1941. He taught at Columbia University (1937 – 1939), University of Rochester (1939), the Union Theological Seminary in New York (1940), and at the University of California in Berkeley (1941). Between December 1948, and June 1949, a period in which he helped create the American Academy of Asian Studies, he traveled under a Rockefeller Grant throughout India and much of Asia. He lectured at major universities, museums, and ashrams, and sometimes lived briefly as a monk among devotees in India and Tibet. During the early part of his Asian trip, Spiegelberg spent considerable time at Benares Hindu University. In April, he lectured in Darjeeling, under the joint auspices of the Darjeeling Government College and the Vivekananda Study Circle. At the end of May, he lectured on “Yoga and Modern Art”

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408 He was apparently a very popular professor among the students there. In 1950 he was voted an outstanding teacher of the year by the Stanford student body and years later Watts, with his usual pugnacity, recalled, “Several years ago the students of Stanford voted him the best teacher on the faculty, which must have enraged his colleagues because you cannot maintain proper status in an American university without cultivated mediocrity. You must be academically ‘sound,’ which is to be preposterously and phenomenally dull.” At a California Institute of Integral Studies board of trustees meeting in 1983, Michael Murphy remembered a “tough old guy” who ran a bookstore in Stanford in the early 1950s who, as Murphy was purchasing a book on Aurobindo, said to him, “‘Ah, Spiegelberg… defiling the young men of Palo Alto,’ and he turned around and said, ‘Aw, they come in here one after another.’” Walter Truett Anderson writes of Spiegelberg, “He himself was one of Europe’s leading scholars of Oriental religion and, unlike many such scholars, had the ability to communicate his knowledge; his courses at Stanford were immensely popular.” Spiegelberg Obituary, http://www.paloaltoonline.com/weekly/morgue/community_pulse/1994_Nov_18.OBITS18.html; Watts, In My Own Way, 115.; Michael Murphy. “Origin and Vision of the California Institute of Integral Studies: A Dialogue with Michael Murphy.” California Institute of Integral Studies: Vision and History (San Francisco, CA: California Institute of Integral Studies, 1985), 3; Walter Truett Anderson, The Upstart Spring, Esalen and the Human Potential Movement: The First Twenty Years. (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2004), 27.


410 Spiegelberg received considerable funding for his field-trip to India. Check stubs at the Stanford University Spiegelberg Archives show that he received at least $4,000 for travel expenses, with additional funds paid out for various purchases including books, prayer wheels, religious images of brass and marble, amulets, wood-block prints, and native clothing. Check stub dated 11/30/1948 for $3,000 with memo, “Trip to India.” Check stub dated 10/25/1948 for $1,000. Green Library, Stanford University, “Spiegelberg Archives,” Box 1; Memo titled, “Personal Purchases for United State’s Custom’s Declaration.” “Spiegelberg Archives,” Box 1


412 B.L. Atreya, Head of Department of Philosophy, Benares Hindu University to Spiegelberg, 9/2/1949.

and “The Religion of No Religion” at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, in Calcutta.  

Spiegelberg accomplished three objectives during his trip. He saw Sri Aurobindo at the Pondicherry ashram. He arranged for Professor Haridas Chaudhuri to come to the United States to help him organize the American Academy of Asian Studies. He began arranging for a shipment of fourteen Tibetan “ghost traps” to be sent to Stanford, where the scholarly community and public received them with considerable interest. 

If the hip and psychedelic counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s has a lineage that includes the American Academy of Asian Studies, then Aurobindo, along with Spiegelberg and Chaudhuri, is a thus far unacknowledged influence on vital and contentious changes in American culture that took place during the Vietnam War era. Some biographical information on this figure is therefore necessary.

Aurobindo Ghosh was born on August 15, 1872, to a wealthy Indian family in Calcutta. In 1879, Aurobindo’s family moved to London and as a young man he attended Cambridge where he joined the Indian independence movement. In 1893, Aurobindo returned to India where he became an English professor and Vice Principal of the Baroda College. His educational activities, however, did not distract him from becoming increasingly distressed at the English occupation of his country. In 1906, with Indian nationalism on the rise, Aurobindo gave up his post, moved back to his native Calcutta and joined the highly political Bengal National College.

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415 Frederic Spiegelberg to Haridas Chaudhuri, 18 December 1950, Chaudhuri Archives, Cultural Integration Fellowship, San Francisco, California.

During this period Aurobindo became known not as a holy man, of course, but as an angry and educated political agitator. Working outside the Indian tradition of non-violence (ahimsa), Aurobindo believed that the Indian National Congress was far too timid, far too weak, and that revolutionary violence might be necessary to force English withdrawal from his country. He did not labor in political obscurity, however, and was eventually arrested on charges of sedition by the English government. Imprisoned in Alipore jail for about a year, he underwent a religious conversion experience. He spent much of that year reading the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads, learning yoga and practicing meditation. According to Haridas Chaudhuri, one of his foremost interpreters, Aurobindo “saw (Krishna) in the criminals of the jail - in thieves, swindlers and murderers.”

When the authorities released Aurobindo, he gave up on radical politics entirely. He moved to Pondicherry in 1910 where he lived among a growing number of devotees until his death in 1950. In 1926, Aurobindo gave up direct administration of his ashram and went into seclusion in order to meditate and write. In 1949, the same year that Spiegelberg visited Pondicherry, and only one year prior to his death, Aurobindo published his magnum opus, The Life Divine, a one-thousand page treatment of East-West metaphysical philosophy.

By the time that Spiegelberg arrived at the Pondicherry ashram, Aurobindo was essentially a hermit that offered visual contact (darshan) to his followers on only the rarest of occasions. On February 22, 1949, Spiegelberg presented himself to the Pondicherry ashram in order to meet the famous sage. What he was apparently unaware of prior to his arrival, however, was that he would be competing for Aurobindo’s attention with thousands of other admirers who

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also hoped to receive *darshan*. “They came by plane from New Delhi, by train from Madras and from the neighboring villages they came on foot or by ox-cart,” Spiegelberg later recalled.\(^{419}\)

The professor, needless to say, was less than pleased. He assumed that since he had been in touch with the ashram prior to his arrival and because he was a well-respected professor at a major American research institution, that he would be allowed a reasonable amount of time with “the master.” On this point, however, Spiegelberg was mistaken. After being told that he must wait on line with everyone else and that he would be allowed only five seconds in Aurobindo’s company, Spiegelberg became a little angry. “I said that I would be ruthless and take as much time as I want and in giving the flower offering to the Master, I will stay and look as long as I please,” he admitted to an audience in later years.\(^{420}\) Nonetheless, he waited on line with the rest of Aurobindo’s devotees where, as he told an audience at the Esalen Institute in 1964, “groups were directed by the voluntary ashram police officers, men in white gowns with long, black curly hair hanging down and from one corner of the large ashram patio crowded with potted plants took the stairs which led upstairs to the domain of the master.”\(^{421}\) Presumably unlike the rest of the devotees waiting to receive *darshan*, Spiegelberg wondered if he was not wasting his time. He had spent years studying Aurobindo and had, as he says, “read everything that Aurobindo had read.”\(^{422}\) Now, at last, he was about to meet the sage and he worried that it would prove to be a terrible disappointment. What, after all, could he possibly learn from Aurobindo in five seconds?

As it turned out, however, five seconds in the presence of Aurobindo was plenty for Spiegelberg. He told the audience at Esalen that Aurobindo “saw me, or rather not really me,

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\(^{419}\) Transcript of Speigelberg speech on anniversary of Aurobindo’s death, August 17, 1958. Haridas Chaudhuri Archives, Cultural Integration Fellowship, San Francisco, CA.

\(^{420}\) Ibid.

because he had a strange focusing of his eyes which seemed to penetrate me and look somehow at, shall we say, that atman, at the true self that was my real being...”\(^{423}\) He came away from that experience proclaiming Aurobindo “the Great Sage of India” and that those five seconds were, he insisted, “infinitely more inspiring and powerful then I could ever have expected.”\(^{424}\)

On Spiegelberg’s first semester back at Stanford, Michael Murphy, at that time a Stanford “fraternity-boy,” wandered into Spiegelberg’s classroom by accident. Murphy had enrolled in a social psychology course that the administration had moved to another room and when he sat down he did not realize that he was about to meet a man that would prove to have a profound influence on the direction of his life. In \textit{Upstart Spring}, Walter Truett Anderson relates the following:

Spiegelberg lectured that day on the Vedic hymns, and he talked about the Brahman, rolling out the name of THE BRAHMAN in a sonorous voice that seemed to carry within its own resonance all the grandeur of the Hindi concept of the great spirit of the universe. Murphy had never been exposed to these concepts before, nor had he ever read any of the Eastern religious texts. But when he walked back to the fraternity house for lunch that day, he know that his world had changed.\(^{425}\)

Murphy says, “I walked into a class of Frederic Spiegelberg’s at Stanford just about the time he was conceiving the old Academy of Asian Studies. And after that first lecture, in which he talked about the Vedic hymns, I was walking back to my fraternity, up the Stanford fraternity row, and a voice just went through my head that said, ‘I’m never going to be the same again.’”\(^{426}\)

Upon returning to the United States Spiegelberg threw himself into organizing the American Academy of Asian Studies. As originally conceived, the Academy was to be, “[a]
center for developing international understanding between Americans and the peoples of Asia” which “would provide practical training for leaders in government, education, politics, industry, foreign trade.”  

With the financial backing of his partner in the project, businessman Louise P. Gainsborough, Spiegelberg continued the process of recruiting faculty, developing curricula, and arranging for an appropriate facility. Gainsborough, owner and CEO of the Login Corporation, a trading operation with offices and subsidiaries in Europe, Australia, South America, Africa, Shanghai, Bombay, and the Philippines, offered the temporary use of a building he owned on Sansome Street in San Francisco’s financial district. Two of the original faculty that Spiegelberg approached were Watts and Chaudhuri.  

Throughout the 1940s, Spiegelberg and Watts maintained correspondence. During this period, while Spiegelberg taught and researched at Stanford, Watts, to the chagrin of many of his Buddhist friends, joined the Episcopal Church, earned a Master’s Degree in Theology and, in 1945, became a chaplain at the Evanston, Illinois campus of Northwestern University.  

By the time that Spiegelberg returned to the United States from his visit to Asia, however, Watts had left the priesthood and was writing *The Wisdom of Insecurity* on a Bollingen Foundation grant in

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428 The rest of the original faculty included Judith Tyberg, a Theosophist and expert in Sanskrit from the University of Benares; and Lama Tokwan Tada of the Sera Monastery in Lhasa, Tibet and the Imperial University in Tokyo. American Academy of Asian Studies program announcement, Fall, 1951. Spiegelberg Archives, Stanford University Green Library, Box 1. Other faculty members that would arrive in the very early years of the Academy include Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiayar, previously dewan of the state of Travancote; Rom Landau, a scholar of Polish/English descent who taught Islamic studies; and Poon Pismai Diskul, a Thai scholar and an actual princess. Monica Furlong. *Zen Effects, The Life of Alan Watts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), 132 – 133.  
Millbrook, New York. Spiegelberg offered Watts a position on the Academy’s faculty.

At the end of October 1950, Watts wrote Spiegelberg to accept the invitation. In this letter, Watts tells Spiegelberg what he hopes to explore through his teaching at the Academy:

My immediate reaction as to the subject-matter of the two courses is that one of them should deal with the whole problem of relating Eastern and Western religion and philosophy, especially with regard to the different “languages” in which spiritual experience is expressed. For the other, I should like to do something on the psychology and metaphysics of Buddhism, perhaps with special reference to some of the problems raised by modern logic in its criticism of traditional metaphysics. Titles for the two courses might be: (a) Religion & Philosophy in East & West – A Problem of Language; (b) Mind & Reality in Buddhism. I would appreciate your ideas as to the suitability of such courses, since others could be substituted if these overlapped too much with what other people might be teaching.

The first thing to notice about Watts’ course proposal is that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the stated objectives of the organization. Right from the beginning the Academy was torn between competing visions of what it should be. Gainsborough imagined an institution, the first of its kind in the United States, that would offer practical information to leaders and students of American-Asian foreign relations and trade. As a businessman with interests in Asia, he intended the organization to be something that it never was, an educational facility that primarily offered practical guidance to pragmatic people. In his autobiography, Watts noted, “Spiegelberg and I had no real interest in this nonetheless sensible idea of an information service about Asian culture, nor was this what really concerned Chaudhuri, Aiyar, and Tyberg. We were

430 Millbrook, coincidentally, would later gain some fame in counterculture circles as Timothy Leary’s refuge after being expelled from Harvard University.
431 Alan Watts to Frederic Spiegelberg. 28 October 1950. Spiegelberg Archives, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA.
432 “New University in S.F., School to Teach Americans about Asia.” San Francisco Chronicle, 2/27/1951, pg. 5. This is not to suggest, however, that Gainsborough was entirely uninterested in Asian religious thinking. On the contrary, Gainsborough, though a pragmatically minded businessman, was also interested, along with the faculty and the student body, in Asian spirituality.
concerned with the practical transformation of human consciousness, with the actual living out of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist ways of life at the level of high mysticism: a concern repugnant to academics and contemptible to businessmen, threatening to Jews and Christians, and irrational to most scientists.”  

The other thing to notice, aside from the fact that the faculty was primarily interested in the “transformation of human consciousness,” is that Watts’ course proposals focused on East-West synthesis. This would be a theme, in keeping with Aurobindo’s philosophy, that would continue to inspire the Academy throughout its existence. What the faculty was after was a synthesis, or integration, of religion and psychology as well as of Asian religious philosophy with Western religious philosophy and science. A full ten years before the Esalen Institute began distributing similar ideas into American culture, the Academy was already pursuing a project that would eventually inform the hip counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s.

Perhaps even more significant than Watts to the development of the Academy was Haridas Chaudhuri. Though Spiegelberg had known Watts for many years when he offered him a teaching position, Chaudhuri came at the recommendation of Aurobindo. Married with two daughters at the time of his agreement to relocate to the United States, Chaudhuri secured a five year leave of absence from Krishnagar College, where he was Chairman of the Philosophy

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433 Watts, In My Own Way, 247.
434 When the Academy failed in 1986, it was Chaudhuri that created a successor organization, the California Institute of Asian Studies (CIAS) that is currently thriving as the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). There is some disagreement among current faculty concerning the question of lineage. Some faculty, however, claim Chaudhuri, not the AAAS, as the original inspiration behind the current organization. Jim Ryan, in discussion with author, San Francisco, CA, February 2005.
435 Spiegelberg note dated 6/12/1953. Chaudhuri Archives, Cultural Integration Fellowship. “Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, Professor of Philosophy, Krishnagar Government College, West Bengal, India, came to join the Faculty of the American Academy of Asian Studies, San Francisco, on invitation of the said Academy, and on recommendation of Sri Aurobindo (the great seer-philosopher of modern India.”
Department, and left his wife, Bina, to care for their children until she could join him in San Francisco over a year later.436

Arriving in California on March 27, 1951, Chaudhuri stayed with Spiegelberg and his wife, Rosli, in their home before moving briefly into a Palo Alto hotel.437 Michael Murphy made a point of tracking Chaudhuri down shortly after his arrival. “So Haridas came here in 1951,” Murphy recalled. “I remember the thrill it was to meet Haridas at the Stanford Hotel down in Palo Alto. I went right up there, I had just started to meditate, with very intimate burning questions about meditation. I was a little shocked at my intensity and the bluntness of the questions, but he gave me some marvelous answers and he was a very dear friend always after that, from 1951 on.”438

Chaudhuri maintained an inspiration of East-West cultural exchange that pleased Gainsborough and that would become commonplace within the counterculture of the 1960s.439 For Chaudhuri this inspiration came directly from his understanding of Aurobindo. Though Aurobindo awed Spiegelberg in those five seconds of darshan in the winter of 1949, it was Chaudhuri who was the foremost Aurobindoan on the faculty.440 Chaudhuri’s PhD dissertation, from the University of Calcutta in 1948, in fact, was an interpretation of Aurobindo’s thinking

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437 Spiegelberg claimed that one of Chaudhuri’s very first sentences upon his arrival to Palo Alto was, “I never would have thought that America could be so quiet.” Spiegelberg to Theodosia Gardner, 11/9/1975. Spiegelberg Archives, California Institute of Integral Studies.
439 Gainsborough referred to Chaudhuri as “our gem.” Frederic Spiegelberg to Theodosia Gardner. 9 November 1975. Spiegelberg Archives, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, CA.
440 Watts, it might be noted, thought Aurobindo’s writings rather dull and long-winded. He wrote that Tyberg and Chaudhuri, “together with Spiegelberg himself, were enthusiasts for the teachings of Sri Aurobindo Ghose – the mahatma of Pondicherry who had written the voluminous *Life Divine, Essays on the Gita*, and numerous other works including some very stilted and ponderously British-style poetry under the title *Savitri*, all of which was, for my taste, unreadable and as sober and sound as it was boring.” Watts, *In My Own Way*, 246.
entitled, *Integral Idealism*.\(^{441}\) In later years he would continue to write on Aurobindo, including such books as *Sri Aurobindo: Prophet of Life Divine* and *The Integral Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo: A Commemorative Symposium*, which he co-edited with Spiegelberg in 1960.\(^{442}\)

Immediately after arriving in California, Chaudhuri set about creating another organization that would be devoted entirely to East-West cultural exchange. In the early 1950s, the migration of an Indian Hindu scholar to the United States was still rare enough, apparently, that it received considerable attention from the local press. The San Francisco *Chronicle* and the San Francisco *Examiner*, as well as other California newspapers, featured a number of stories about the arrival of the Chaudhuri’s on the West Coast.\(^{443}\) While Chaudhuri took up his teaching responsibilities at the AAAS, he also received requests for talks and lectures throughout the Bay Area.\(^{444}\) Recognizing that many people unassociated with the Academy also maintained interests in Asian culture, he created the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF) to further the twin goals of East-West cultural exchange and the spiritual evolution of the species. It’s founding principles were as follows: “Stimulating and developing intercultural growth and harmony, exploring the universal spiritual values that underlie all human life, and incorporating universal cultural and spiritual values into human relations and daily life.”\(^{445}\) Vern Haddick, who edited the CIF’s fiftieth-anniversary bulletin, put it this way, “During this first year that he was here, the Cultural Integration Fellowship was founded as a venue for dialogue and learning between the world’s

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\(^{441}\) Vern Haddick, *Unity in Diversity*, 10.


\(^{443}\) Chaudhuri Archives, Cultural Integration Fellowship, San Francisco, CA.

\(^{444}\) Ibid.

\(^{445}\) Haddick, 14.
cultures, a center at which various traditions could speak for themselves, dialogue, and learn through sharing experiences of their religions, philosophical beliefs, and arts.”

The CIF offered, and still offers, numerous classes and workshops on, among other things, Indian cooking, flower-arranging, styles of dress from around the world, dance from non-western traditions, non-western music recitals, Chinese brush painting, spiritual techniques, such as meditation, tai-chi, and the various schools yoga, lectures on the connection between Western psychology and Asian religious thought, and Sunday morning talks by Chaudhuri, himself.

Spiegelberg would often drop by, sometimes in the capacity of a student and often as a teacher. Murphy and Price were frequent guests and, in fact, met one another through the CIF.

Gainsborough also took a great deal of interest in the CIF and saw its work as complimentary to the mission of the Academy.

Along with Gainsborough, a number of other financial backers and businesspeople took an interest in the Academy and the CIF. These included Rudolph Schaffer of the Schaffer School of Design, Charles Gruenhagen of the American Box Corporation, Walter Johnson of the American Forest Products Corporation, Grover D. Turnbow, President of Foremost Dairies, Inc., Starr Bruce, Vice President of C. Brewer & Co, W. P. Fuller Brawner, President of W. P. Fuller & Co., Claire Giannini Hoffmann, Director of the Bank of America, and numerous others as the years passed. These businessmen were not, of course, bohemian intellectuals, like Watts, nor, like Spiegelberg, mystically-inclined academics. They were people of means, sometimes with

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446 Ibid, 13.
447 Ibid, 15 – 16.
448 In the late 1950s, Murphy spent sixteen months at the Pondicherry ashram seeking “enlightenment.” When he returned to the United States he lived briefly in Palo Alto before moving into the CIF ashram on Fulton Street across from Golden Gate Park. It was there, at the CIF, that Price, who had also been a psychology student at Stanford during Murphy’s period there (thought they did not know one another at the time), first met one another. Anderson, The Upstart Spring, 33.
financial interests in Asia, who were deeply concerned with the status of American-Asian trade after World War II. Though they maintained business ties throughout Asia and had a vested financial interest in East-West cooperation, they were also interested lay-students of Asian culture and philosophy.

Were it not for the financial backing of these businessmen, needless to say, neither the Academy nor the CIF could have functioned. Though Gainsborough would run into financial difficulties only a year, or so, after the opening of the Academy, difficulties that would have a negative impact on the Academy’s ability to meet its financial obligations, the organization formed a nucleus of individuals that represent a “seed,” as Jamison and Eyerman put it, to the counterculture of the 1960s. Furthermore, as Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri, and Watts used the Academy as a venue for their ideas, those ideas directly related to the work of the social critics, cultural critics, and Humanistic psychologists who worried about a supposed American slide into conformity and diminished American individuality in the 1950s.

Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri, and Watts agreed with Maslow, Rogers, and May that formal, organized religion, particularly though not exclusively in the West, did not well function as a means to the sacred. In Spiegelberg’s *Living Religions of the World* he argued that “today all the religions of the world have stultified, just as all people today have about them a touch of neurosis. Religions are sick, and the scholar of comparative religion, as a physician with a full casebook, can diagnose the sickness. He will find that it consists of a universal confusion of what is essential with that is inessential in any creed. The essential is a realization of the

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Ultimate behind all being; and this has become confused with the all too anthropocentric formulations of this Being upon which all faiths have come to rely.

The Diminished Self and Comparative Religion

Just as Maslow, Rogers, and May criticized the failure of organized religion to provide a pathway to the sacred from a psychological perspective grounded in Western science, so Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri, and Watts did so from a theological perspective grounded in Eastern, primarily Hindu and Buddhist, religious formulations. As early as 1947, Watts, whose primary area of expertise was Zen Buddhism, put it as follows. “[M]odern Church religion is little concerned with giving any consciousness of union with God. It is not mystical religion, and for that reason it is not fully and essentially religion.” (His italics.) “Church religion is spiritually dead,” he insisted, “and the best minds of the Church admit and deplore it openly.”

Part of the problem, each agreed, was the persistent tendency on the part of organized religions and their adherents to literalize and anthropomorphize religious symbols. If the common function of world religions was to act as an entrée to the sacred, then people thwarted that function by turning religious symbols into plastic idols and by failing to even acknowledge the mystic core inherent within each. Spiegelberg illustrated this problem by relating his experience of a particular French church. “Over the altar of a church in Menton, France,” he wrote, “there is a large lunette of the Virgin Mary as the Light of the World. In her hand she holds a large old-fashioned Edison electric light bulb, which actually lights up when the priest pulls a switch. The thing is enormous and the glowing filament is at least a foot and a half long.

454 Ibid, 3.
This is exactly the kind of misunderstanding we are discussing here. It is absurd, for it reduces a metaphor to an allegory, and the allegory to the status of a household appliance. Whenever we take a religious statement literally, that is exactly what we accomplish.”

Watts suggested that the taking of religious symbols and concepts literally was a form of idolatry that subverted the adherents’ proclaimed desire to achieve faith in the unknowable by replacing it with mere belief in outward forms. For the Academy’s original faculty, religious symbols and religious concepts were double-edged; they could either move the religious practitioner toward an experience of the sacred through ritual practice or, if taken literally, prevent such an experience. Part of the reason that Watts became an Episcopal minister at Northwestern University in 1941, aside from his desire to find employment in his chosen field of study and his realization that the liberal Episcopal Church offered more latitude of behavior and style than other Christian denominations, was that it offered ritual workings that could, if understood and engaged properly, bring the worshipper into a direct experience of the divine in a manner that could be both playful and sincere.

When the Church ordained Watts on Ascension Day, 1945, little did they understand what the Episcopal students of Northwestern University were in for. Watts, who through most of his career considered himself more a shaman than a priest and certainly more a Buddhist than a Christian, was never entirely at home in his role as Episcopal minister. He wrote, “I chose priesthood because it was the only formal role of Western society in which, at that time, I could

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455 Spiegelberg, Living Religions of the World, 47.
456 He argued that religious language itself could become idolatrous. He wrote, “Verbal definitions of God in the form of creeds, dogmas, and doctrines are far more dangerous idols than statues made of wood, stone, or gold, because they have the deceptive appearance of being more ‘spiritual,’ and because a creedally formulated God has been reduced to words, and is no longer experienced immediately, like clear water or blue sky.” (His Italics.) Watts, In My Own Way, 76.
457 The idea of religious “play,” which will be discussed later in this chapter, was of particular significance to Watts who abhorred both dry formality and dullness of spirit. He wrote, “To this day it remains beyond my
even begin to fit, not being qualified for tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, doctor, lawyer, merchant, or
chief. But it was an ill-fitting suit of clothes, not only for a shaman but also for a bohemian –
that is, one who loves color and exuberance, keeps irregular hours, would rather be free than
rich, dislikes working for a boss, and has his own code of sexual morals.” Watts therefore did
his best to infuse his Christian religious practice with all the color and dance that he could
muster.

The Church assigned Watts to Canterbury House, the Episcopal center at Northwestern
University, where he performed all the usual functions of a minister, but, certainly, in his own
way. He told the students that in order to celebrate Mass properly, they must indeed celebrate
and that he “wanted no skeletons at the banquet coming merely out of a sense of guilt or
duty.” Watts believed that for a ritual to function properly it must be vivid. He therefore
arranged for volunteers from the Northwestern School of Music to help train some of his
youthful congregation in Gregorian chant. He performed Palm Sunday services as a dramatic
ritual and held the Vigil of Easter at Midnight. He kept his sermons to fifteen minutes and told
his congregation that “Creator and creation were an outpouring of reckless and ecstatic
love…” In these ways, Watts hoped to demonstrate an interpretation of Christian ritual
practice that emphasized the joy, or splendor, he believed lacking within the formal mainstream
and which could act as a “pressure valve” for the supposed dullness and conformity of American
cultural life, more generally.

comprehension why so many people who are neither sick nor starving cultivate drabness as a way of life, and feel
embarrassed for those who come out in vermilion trousers or dance in the streets.” Watts, In My Own Way, 163.
458 Ibid, 186.
459 Ibid, 188.
460 Ibid, 188.
Watts and Spiegelberg, along with the other critics, believed middle-class men were conformist and fake. Spiegelberg, a friendly acquaintance of Rollo May, echoed the psychologist when he wrote of the “typical” middle-class American that:

He is born and brought up; he goes to school and college; he matures and reaches adulthood; he works at a job in order to go on working; he gets married in order to bear children who will go through the same thing all over again; he dies. What is all this about? Where are we going and why? We do not ask ourselves such questions, for they are subversive and disturb the social order… When we turn over the brightly colored pages of Life or The Saturday Evening Post we see everybody in the advertisements riding in cars; cooing over washing machines; and exulting in sanforized shirts. Everyone is happy; everyone smiles; and everyone is fifteen to thirty years old, healthy, ruddy-cheeked, having a swell time, and preserved from grief by Monuments of Eternity and air foam mattresses… It is comfortable and snug. But it is not secure. A second look is enough to convince us that the happy life so advertised is sheer, unadulterated boredom.\footnote{Spiegelberg, Living Religions of the World, 12.}

Though Spiegelberg and Watts mainly reserved their cultural criticisms for supposed Western failings, Chaudhuri as a native of India, held a significantly different perspective. Following Aurobindo, Chaudhuri explained that it was not a matter of re-introducing the materialist, conformist, “mass culture” West to the possibilities of the sacred, but to also revitalize the East through the introduction of Western science and worldly engagement. As someone committed to East-West cultural integration, Chaudhuri argued that while materialist Westerners could benefit from Eastern spiritual practice, so Indians could benefit from a Western secular education and individualist point of view.

Though to contemporary perspectives, Chaudhuri’s criticisms are fraught with unfair stereotyping of his native culture, those criticisms are no more stereotypical than western criticisms of the American white, middle-class. In Sri Aurobindo, The Prophet of Life Divine, Chaudhuri formulated the problem in the following manner:
The dominant impulse in the civilization of the East has been the realization of ‘Heaven’ or transcendental spiritual freedom on the basis of an ascetic denial of Matter and all mundane interests. As a consequence, a high degree of inwardness, an extraordinary measure of spiritual excellence, has been accompanied by a marked deterioration in the sphere of social organization and scientific development. The key-note of Western civilization has been, on the contrary, an excessive preoccupation with the demands of ‘Earth’ or material living… as a result of its relative deafness to the call of the Spirit, Western civilization contains the seeds of self-destruction… What is essentially needed to save mankind from recurrent catastrophes and to put it on the triumphant march to its noblest destiny, is a harmonious fusion of the cultural ideals of the East and the West.462

As a solution to the apparent desiccation of modern Western religious sensibilities, Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri, and Watts recommended a sort-of synthesis, or integration, of East-West religious thinking. Each agreed that Westerners could gain profound insights into their own religious traditions through an engagement in Asian religious thought. Their projects, though substantively different in many respects, nonetheless sought a common core of religious experience that could transcend the superficial differences embodied in culturally specific terminologies and symbols. For this reason, as comparative theologians, they continually sought points of contact between widely disparate religious traditions.

This effort, however, was never merely academic. None of these gentlemen saw themselves as pure, dispassionate scholars, objectively removed from their subject. Spiegelberg drew an analogy between his status as a political refugee and a “refugee theologian.” He wrote that the term “refugee theology” specifically, “refers to those who in our day were forced to flee from political conditions in their own country, and who could bring with them no baggage but the imponderable and essential. Let us consider the plight of such a theologian. In order to escape at all, he had to conceal the fact that he was fleeing, so he could leave with at most a few suitcases, as though for a short trip. Thus he was compelled to reduce his possessions to the
minimum... When we are forced to strip down to the bare essentials, it is perhaps only then that we discover what are the bare essentials, of survival, of existence, and even of faith.”

Spiegelberg, clearly, did not arrive at his theological and scholarly convictions entirely through an emotionally removed process of intellectual analysis. Like so many Europeans throughout World War II, circumstances beyond his control forced Spiegelberg to strip to essentials.

By the late 1940s, just prior to his acceptance of Spiegelberg’s offer to teach at the Academy, Watts, too, though for entirely different reasons, felt himself stripped to the bare essentials of his life. When he left the Episcopal Church and moved to Millbrook, New York, he did so under the shadow of a semi-public scandal that concluded his career as a chaplain. Under such circumstances, it is no coincidence that he titled the book he wrote during this period, *The Wisdom of Insecurity.*

Though his personal situation by 1950 is hardly comparable to Spiegelberg’s in 1937, nonetheless, like Spiegelberg, Watts became a “refugee,” without the formal structures of faith or any long-term standing within a community. They both, furthermore, along with Chaudhuri, sought a synthesis of Eastern and Western religious practices and ideologies that could ease tensions between cultures and promote greater personal understandings of the mystical core of religions.

Chaudhuri derived his understanding of religious synthesis from his study of Aurobindo’s philosophy (Integral Idealism) and methods (Integral Yoga.) He wrote, “It is necessary for the highest fruition of the life of humanity that the different currents of spiritual activity, the diverse modes of approach to the Divine, should be blended together in a harmonious synthesis. Integral

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464 Furlong, 110 – 125.
Yoga represents a resolute attempt to bring about this desired synthesis." Aurobindo and Chaudhuri believed that human civilization was engaged in a process of spiritual evolution amenable to human assistance. They were mystical utopians who believed in the eventual, and perhaps inevitable, perfection of human social relations and political arrangements through the integration of metaphysical understanding in the daily life of people. This perfection could be, in the philosophy of Integral idealism, ushered into reality through the conscious effort of yogic practitioners who aligned their efforts with “divine will.”

Chaudhuri and Aurobindo postulated that this mystic-evolutionary process moved in opposite directions simultaneously. The ascension of human consciousness operated in coordination with the hypothetical descent of the sacred into the material world. Both these ascending and descending aspects could be, according to Integral Idealism, assisted by the practitioner not only through religious practices, such as through the various forms of meditation and yoga, but also through activity in daily life. One of the main proposals of Integral Yoga was therefore not only an East-West synthesis of religions or even the integration of Asian religious philosophies with Western rationalism and science, but a conscious synthesis of the material with the metaphysical in the daily life of people. “For Integral Yoga,” Chaudhuri wrote, “body, life, and mind are not simply means of rising up to the highest peak, but also means of bringing down below, and expressing here, the glories of the highest.” Part of what distinguishes Aurobindoan thinking from classical Hindu religious philosophy was that unlike Upanishadic denigration of the material world in favor of a mystical apprehension of Brahma, Integral

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466 Ibid, 54.
467 Ibid, 50.
Idealism embraces mind and body, the metaphysical and the material, as equal expressions of the divine.\textsuperscript{468}

Chaudhuri’s views, variants of which would become popular in countercultural circles, represent a reworking of one of the main threads of Upanishadic interpretation. The Upanishads, of which there are thousands in Indian culture, are “revealed scripture” that contain the central expressions of Indian metaphysics. Unlike the earlier Vedic ritual material which are worldly, affirmative, and optimistic, the original orthodox Upanishads focus on renunciation, reincarnation, and breaking the “bonds of karma.” They are in this sense “otherworldly” and tend to focus on the \textit{Brahman}, the idea of an ineffable and absolute reality that is the source “behind” the world of material and psychological forms. The wandering lone mendicant, not the Vedic priest, is the archetypal figure of the Upanishadic period from about 800 to 300 B.C.E.

One important strain of Upanishadic interpretation, that of Vedanta, suggests that \textit{Brahman} is all and that the world of the senses is \textit{maya}, illusion. Chaudhuri and Aurobindo, however, come from the Tantric school of Upanishadic interpretation which stress the essential non-duality of the imminent with \textit{Brahman}, or of the “manifest” with the “unmanifest.” Therefore, Aurobindo’s \textit{Life Divine} and Chaudhuri various writings express an understanding of metaphysics that views the material world as the expression of \textit{Brahman} on the level of perception. Where Aurobindo and Chaudhuri differ from classical Tantric thinking is in the evolutionary idea. Unlike Darwinian evolution, Chaudhuri’s view is teleological. Evolution, they believed was moving toward an end-point of spiritual integration in which the individual could consciously help the project along.

\textsuperscript{468} In \textit{The Life Divine}, Aurobindo put it this way: “The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognize not only eternal Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept Matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, build recurrently the unending series of His mansions.” Aurobindo, 8.
The failure to recognize the spiritual within the material, Chaudhuri argued, was, in fact, dangerous. Throughout Chaudhuri’s writings he comes back to this point again and again. In *Integral Yoga: The Concepts of Harmonious and Creative Living* he puts it this way:

Traditional mystics, yogis and religious seekers looked upon the body as a burden upon the soul. Plato regarded the body as a prison-house for the free and immortal soul. Some mystics considered the body as an incorrigible abode of evil and sin, of passion and temptation. Ascetics looked upon the body as a necessary evil which must be discarded on the attainment of spiritual liberation. This pessimistic attitude of traditional spirituality encouraged the widespread practice of bodily torture, austerity and self-mortification as a means of spiritual advancement. It released the masochistic and escapist tendencies latent in human nature.\(^{469}\)

These escapist tendencies, in Chaudhuri’s opinion, were culprits that prevented Indian society from a full expression of its social-political and industrial potential. Chaudhuri viewed escapism from the body as a form of escapism from the material world which, in itself, was a form of escapism from both life and the Life Divine. Since Integral Idealism stressed the collective, not merely individual, liberation of humanity, fear and hatred of the body represented a countervailing force on human spiritual evolution; a countervailing force that needed to be overcome through a recognition of the body as the *form* of the metaphysical in the material realm.

Among the faculty of the Academy, this idea of integration probably gained its most complete expression in the writings of Chaudhuri. Integral Idealism meant integration of the

\(^{469}\) Haridas Chaudhuri, *Integral Yoga: The Concept of Harmonious and Creative Living* (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1965), 42. It hardly needs to be emphasized that the Beats of the late-1950s and the hip counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s thoroughly embraced this idea of the body as sacred. For Watts, in fact, this idea was central to his understanding of Christianity. In a 1945 letter to Spiegelberg, Watts suggested that the Christian principle of Incarnation implied the divinity of the body. He wrote, “It seems to me that the central principle of the Incarnation is even more deeply repressed – that is to say, hidden under symbolic forms. I do not feel that the Christian consciousness has every really accepted the implication of this given union with God to the flesh. ‘Verbum caro factum est’ is a colossal truth of which most Christians are thoroughly afraid!” Alan Watts to Frederic Spiegelberg, 22 November 1945. Green Library, Stanford University, “Spiegelberg Archives,” Box 1.
material with the metaphysical, integration of the great religious practices of the world, and integration of religion with science. There is little in Chaudhuri’s writings that could claim exemption from this integral imperative. One reasonably clear exception, however, is in the meaning of psychotherapy in its supposed relationship to Eastern religious practices. Here it should be noted, Chaudhuri strongly disagreed with Watts. Though in the early-mid twentieth-century, some scholars suggested that psychotherapy and Asian religious practices maintained similar functions, Chaudhuri insisted such a conflation was nonsense. 470

In *Psychotherapy East and West*, published shortly after Watts left the Academy in the late 1950s, he suggested that “if we look deeply into such ways of life as Buddhism and Taoism, Vedanta and Yoga, we do not find either philosophy or religion as these are understood in the West. We find something more nearly resembling psychotherapy.” 471 Watts, following the work of the social critics and humanistic psychologists, argued that psychoanalysis and the Asian “ways of liberation” both served to transform consciousness and to release the individual from unhealthy social conditioning. 472

Like the humanistic psychologists, Watts claimed that social institutions warped or diminished authentic human individuality and that it was the function of both psychotherapy and Asian religious practices to help the individual to see beyond negative and illusory social conditioning. Also like the humanistic psychologists, Watts claimed that institutional social conditioning created tensions between the individual’s authentic self and the social contexts within which they operate. People therefore sought relief from this tension in various ways. He wrote, “The multitudinous differences between individuals and their social contexts lead to as

many ways of seeking relief from these conflicts. Some seek it in the psychoses and neuroses which lead to psychiatric treatment, but for the most part release is sought in the socially permissible orgies of mass entertainment, religious fanaticism, chronic sexual titillation, alcoholism, war – the whole sad list of tedious and barbarous escapes.”

Since social conditioning takes place in the realm of thought and since Asian religious philosophies often stress the illusory nature of intellectual concepts, thus, in Watt’s scheme, the goal of psychotherapy and Asian religious practice hold something fundamental in common: to release the individual from *maya*, the world of illusion. Despite Chaudhuri’s advocacy of mysticism and his pious reverence for a well-known Indian “philosopher-sage,” his respect for rational interpretations of metaphysical concepts led him to question the intellectual integrity of such a formulation. Chaudhuri insisted on what seems obvious: that Western psychological theory and methods are about as far removed from Asian religious practice as one can imagine.

Though the supposed connections between the two had a profound influence on certain aspects of the hip counterculture, on the Human Potential Movement, and on Transpersonal Psychology in the decades ahead, by the mid-1950s, Chaudhuri already registered his dissent. “Yoga is essentially an art of spiritual life,” he argued, “an art of living in tune with the Infinite or the Eternal Order, whereas psycho-therapy is the art of healing psychically-conditioned diseases such as neuroses. Therapy sets out to cure a man of abnormal psychological symptoms and thus to bring him back to the normal order; yoga inspires a man for the attainment of an exalted unitive consciousness…”

Though the humanistic psychologists would have taken some issue with the idea that the sole function of therapy is to condition the individual to

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473 Ibid, 9.
conform to the “normal order,” Chaudhuri’s insistence on maintaining crucial distinctions between the goals of psychotherapy and the goals of Asian religious practice is well-taken.\(^{475}\)

**The Academy is Formed**

On March 21, 1951, the American Academy of Asian Studies opened its doors to students in a building owned by Gainsborough at 221 Sansome Street in San Francisco. Though only twenty-two students registered for the first trial semester, the numbers of non-registered students easily tripled that number and within a year, or so, those involved with the academy, either as registered students or non-registered students, would grow into the hundreds.\(^{476}\) The significance of the Academy, of course, is not determined by student enrollment figures, but by the fact that the Academy functioned as a source of inspiration for the San Francisco Renaissance of the late-1950s and helped introduce many of the ideas that would spread through the sixties’ counterculture and the Human Potential Movement over a decade later.

Murphy later recalled that, “a considerable amount of the inspiration for the poetry of the Beat Generation came right through that Academy of Asian Studies. Michael McClure and David Meltzer, Phil Whalen, Ginsberg and Snyder… I would say all of them either directly or indirectly were influenced by Haridas Chaudhuri, Alan Watts and Frederic Spiegelberg, either directly or indirectly, and some of them would be in the audiences of those early colloquia and in those classes.”\(^{477}\) In his autobiography, Watts suggested something quite similar. He wrote,

\(^{475}\) As a scholar, Watts recognized that his views placed him well out of the mainstream of academic thinking. In his autobiography he wrote, “I think it will now be clear that my own approach to Asian philosophy was part of an individual philosophical quest. I am not interested in Buddhism or Taoism as particular entities or subjects to be studied and defined in such a way that one must avoid ‘mixing up’ one’s thinking about Buddhism with interests in quantum theory, psychoanalysis, Gestalt psychology, semantics and aesthetics, or in Eckhart, Goethe, Whitehead, Jung, or Krishnamurti.” Watts, *In My Own Way*, 273.


\(^{477}\) Murphy, 3.
“The American Academy of Asian Studies was one of the principal roots of what later came to be known, in the early sixties, as the San Francisco Renaissance.”

The early years of the Academy were its hey-day. Though it would not receive accreditation until 1954 when the College of the Pacific adopted it as its graduate school in Asian culture and philosophy, by the mid-1950s much of the original fire had already somewhat diminished. By the end of the 1950s, when the San Francisco Renaissance and the Beat movement were in full swing, the Academy limped along and did so without Spiegelberg or Watts. Chaudhuri maintained an affiliation throughout the tenure of the Academy until its dissolution in 1968, but by that point he had long since directed most of his energies to the Cultural Integration Fellowship and his own writings.

In the early fifties, nonetheless, the Academy became a focal point for ideas that would eventually explode onto the American scene in the mid-1960s. Interest in the Academy, however, was not limited to bohemian-intellectuals or counterculturalists. In the early 1950s, the Advisory Board and the Board of Governors included such notables as J. Paul Leonard, President of San Francisco State College; Robert G. Sproul, President of the University of California; Lynn White, Jr., President of Mills College, Robert E. Burns, President of the College of the Pacific; the Ambassadors to the United States from Lebanon, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Saudi-Arabia; the Consul Generals of India and Pakistan; and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the former President of the United Nations.

The Academy opened in the spring of 1951 with a curriculum as ambitious as its Advisory Committee and Board of Governors. It offered classes in a wide variety of Asian languages including, Sanskrit, Hindustani, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, and Tibetan. With an initial

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focus on India, the Academy offered its students courses on the Cultural History of India, Indian Literature, the History of Indian Philosophy, Vedanta and its Interpretations, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, Veda and the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Renaissance of Hindu Thought. Other classes, listed under General Courses in the original bulletin, demonstrate the influence of the synthetic ideal. Offerings such as The Application of Asian Psychology to Modern Psychiatry; Comparative Religion, East and West; Comparative Psychology, East and West; and the Colloquium on Interconnections of Asian Culture, establish the focus on East-West synthesis and the attempted synthesis of religion with science.\textsuperscript{480}

A \textit{New York Times} article in May, 1951, stated that the Academy would offer both the MA and the PhD and would be an “accredited post-graduate university devoted exclusively to the study of Asia” that would “provide practical training for leaders in government, education, politics, industry, foreign trade and social service.”\textsuperscript{481} The students, however, do not remember it that way. Virtually none of the students, from the very beginning, had any interest whatsoever in politics, industry, or foreign trade and the curriculum never offered any such subjects of study. Unlike the financial backers and the advisory board, the students and the faculty were primarily interested in the personal transformation of consciousness. Watts put it this way:

By and large our students wanted no more than to get by in the world of supposedly practical affairs. They had no ambitions for working with the Department of State, and still less for making fortunes in commerce with the Far East. They might, in a one-eye way, be thinking that a Ph.D. would be useful in getting a teaching position, as a reasonably interesting way of supplying bread and butter. But the other eye was on something else – the thing variously called \textit{moksha}, \textit{bodhi}, \textit{kaivalya}, or \textit{satori} in the

\textsuperscript{480} Ibid, 4.
Asian religions, which is the wisdom of transformed consciousness, of liberation from that exclusive identification of oneself with personality…

The Quest for Authentic Self-Hood

Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri, and Watts each believed that the fundamental question of religious practice revolved around a question of authentic self-hood. Unlike the humanistic psychologists and social critics who argued that social institutions crushed or warped authentic identities, the mystic-intellectuals, drawing on Asian religious philosophies, argued that the self, as a unique personality, was illusory. Paradoxically, as writers and thinkers, they each agreed that words and thoughts, ideologies and concepts, mental constructs of any sort, created the illusion of subject and object and thus the illusion of an alienated self, confronting an indifferent world. Spiegelberg maintained that the very object of religion, “the subject matter of belief, is that here-and-now reality, which vanishes into the past as soon as we try to pin it down.”

The purpose of religious practice is thus, according to the mystic-intellectuals, to nurture an epistemological transformation in which the “here and now” is apprehended through the dissolution of a personal ego enmeshed in an illusory web of concepts. As early as 1936, Watts already struggled with this problem. In The Spirit of Zen, originally published in that year, he wrote, “the object of the Zen School of Buddhism is to go beyond words and ideas in order that the original insight of the Buddha may be brought back to life.” Watts argued in that book, as well as in many others, that the purpose of religious practice is to recognize “reality.”

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482 Watts, In My Own Way, 274 – 275; This is confirmed by Bina Chaudhuri, the wife of Haridas Chaudhuri, and Kimberly McKell, a student of the Academy during the 1950s. Bina Chaudhuri in personal interview, 1/26/2005, San Francisco, CA; Kimberly McKell in personal interview, 2/5/2005.

483 For Aurobindo the concept of “self” was so central to his thinking that the index of The Life Divine contains thirty headings on variants of the topic, with hundreds of references throughout the text. Aurobindo, 1016 – 1018.

484 Spiegelberg, Living Religions of the World, 7.

reality he referred to is the reality of immediate perception, the “here and now.” "Zen is often a form of iconoclasm,” he wrote, “a breaking down of the mere intellectual images of the living reality, knowable only by personal experience.”

For the students, as well as for local bohemian-intellectuals and artists in 1950s San Francisco, one of the attractive aspects of the Academy were its weekly Friday night colloquia, chaired by Spiegelberg, in which such ideas were discussed. Held in the basement of the Academy’s new home, as of 1952, in a rambling old Pacific Heights mansion, the weekly colloquia were casual affairs that sometimes ran into the early hours. They originated as off-hand conversations among students and faculty after class hours, but soon became central features of the Academy in which faculty and students engaged in spirited discussion, and sometimes debate. Spiegelberg, the “invariably provocative moderator,” as Watts wrote, sometimes found himself caught in some crossfire between Watts and Chaudhuri.

The arguments generally centered on, in Watts’ terms, “the problem of the self.” Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri and Watts each agreed that the usual sense of self, the self as an isolated or separate ego, was fundamentally illusory. Drawing on various Asian philosophical traditions, the faculty wrangled not over the differences between Buddhist and Hindu doctrine, but on practical questions of how practice could be used to free the individual from this “illusion.” One of the fundamental doctrines of Theravada Buddhism is anatman. Atman, refers to the self,

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486 For example, in Behold the Spirit, Watts wrote, “We do not have to seek for God; he is already here and now, and to seek for him implies that he is not. We do not, in this sense, have to attain union with God; it is already given as an act of the divine love.” Behold The Spirit: A Study in the Necessity of Mystical Religion. (New York: Vintage Books, 1947), 17 – 18; Religious “doctrines have to do, not with the future and the everlasting, but with the present and the eternal. They are not a set of beliefs and hopes but, on the contrary, a set of graphic symbols about present experience.” The Wisdom of Insecurity: A Message for an Age of Anxiety (New York: Pantheon Books, 1951), 137.; “Eternity is now, and in the light of unpressed vision the physical organism and the physical world turnout to be the divine world.” Psychotherapy East and West (New York: Random House, 1961), 166.

487 Ibid, 18.

which in orthodox Hinduism is held to be identical with *Brahman*. *Anatman* means that the self is not an essential reality. This, of course, is far different from suggesting, as they do in Hindu doctrine, that *atman is Brahman*; that the individual self is, in fact, quite literally, identical to the source of life and consciousness. In either case, the self, as an isolated ego, is deemed illusory. The fundamental question that the faculty often discussed in the colloquia was, therefore, how best to see beyond the isolated ego; how to transform one’s own consciousness in such a manner that one no longer identifies oneself with the illusory ego.

The mystic-intellectuals at the Academy agreed that language and concepts cut the individual off from a direct perception of the “here-and-now.” Spiegelberg put this in rather blunt terms when he wrote, “It may sound as though I were about to propose a definition of religion. I am not. To do so would be a fatal error, for religion is utterly indefinable, as is its object.”490 The metaphysical reality that religions serve to convey, therefore, are beyond intellectual concepts and represent “idols” that thwart mystical potential. This was the paradox that Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri and Watts grappled with; how could they articulate the metaphysical meaning “behind” religion if not with words or concepts? In an interview for the *Nation* magazine during the late 1950s, a period when Asian religions received considerable attention from the national press as a result of Beat writings, Watts said, “The whole nature of Buddhist philosophy is a correction of our perception. And it is a liberation of perception from preconception – from concepts, from ideas, from thoughts.”491 The problem, of course, is that the very idea of “liberation” from concepts is itself a concept, a notion, that also stands between the individual practitioner and the reformulated consciousness he or she hopes to achieve.

489 Watts, In My Own Way, 248.  
Watts derived his suspicion of intellect from his study of Zen. For Chaudhuri similar ideas came from his study of Aurobindo’s thinking and the Tantric philosophical traditions within which Aurobindo worked. The thirteen primary Upanishads, for example, are filled with warnings of the inadequacy of intellect to apprehend Brahman. In fact, verse (mantra) nine of the Isa Upanishad reads, “Into blinding darkness enter those who worship ignorance and those who delight in knowledge enter into still greater darkness, as it were.”\(^{492}\) This verse actually suggests that to “delight in knowledge,” that is, to delight in the intellectual manipulation of concepts, brings even greater spiritual “darkness” than ignorance. Section two, verse three of the Kena Upanishad, titled “The Paradox of the Inscrutability of Brahman,” suggests that, “To whomsoever it is not known, to him it is known: to whomsoever it is known, he does not know. It is not understood by those who understand it; it is understood by those who not understand it.”\(^{493}\) In other words, anyone who thinks that they know God cannot know God, because the higher reality represented by the word “God” is utterly beyond the limits of thought. Aurobindo wrote, “The truth of the spirit is a truth of being and consciousness and not a truth of thought: mental ideas can only represent or formulate some facet, some mind-translated principle or power of it or enumerate its aspects, but to know it one has to grow into it and be it; without that growing and being there can be no true spiritual knowledge.”\(^{494}\)

While the mystic-intellectuals at the Academy struggled with intellect as a tool for conveying spiritual meaning, they also presented to their students, and to one another, the various forms of practice within which they were expert. Chaudhuri was more traditional than Watts and laid great emphasis on the necessity of formal methods of Asian religious practice, such as the various forms of yoga and meditation. Watts believed, however, that formal practice,

\(^{493}\) Ibid, 585.
something that he was never entirely comfortable with, could be another form of ego enslavement because, as he wrote, “one does not dissolve an erroneous concept, however hypnotically compelling, by an effort of will, by straining one’s muscles, clenching one’s jaws and fists, wrinkling one’s brow, or holding one’s breath against an idea.”

Watts suggested that “I” cannot, through any form of effort or practice, free itself from itself; that as long as “I” perform hatha yoga or zazen or pranayama than the illusion of a personal self continues within the form of the practice. “Thus in these faculty colloquia,” Watts wrote, “as in all my work at the Academy, in my lectures, and in my writing, I was always being accused of being a lazy fellow who had the absurd idea that transcendence of egocentricity could be achieved (by whom?) without long years of effort and discipline.”

It is unusual that Watts portrayed religious practice as “straining one’s muscles, clenching one’s jaws and fists,” since he knew as well as anyone that Asian religious practice, in the various forms of meditation, are typified by anything but “straining.” What he objected to was not practice, per se, but the idea that the attainment of “spiritual awakening” must be grounded in discipline and hard effort over many long years. What he suggested was that to strive after spiritual attainment was always to fail in its achievement. The very act of striving toward spiritual understand, of desiring spiritual understanding, inevitably meant falling short. “We do not have to seek for God,” he wrote in Behold the Spirit, “he is already here and now, and to seek for him implies that he is not. We do not, in this sense, have to attain union with God; it is already given as an act of the divine love.”

Ibid, 249.
Ibid, 250. This sentiment echoes ideas from an earlier work on Christian philosophy, Behold The Spirit, that Watts wrote as a chaplain in Evanston. He argued that, “mystical religion is not a technique, a remedy, that may be humanly applied… There is no rule, no method, no formal technique whatsoever that one may simply copy and attain the knowledge and love of God.” Watts, Behold The Spirit, 16.

Watts, Behold the Spirit, 17 – 18.
question of intellect, held another paradox for the spiritual quest for authenticity: to achieve spiritual understanding one needed to practice, but to practice usually implied desire for a spiritual understanding that remained absent.

In *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, a book that Watts called the philosophical equivalent of *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, he named this dilemma the “backward law” or the “law of reversed effort.” “When you try to stay on the surface of the water,” he noted, “you sink; but when you try to sink you float. When you hold your breath you lose it…” During his time as an Episcopal Chaplain, however, Watts suggested that the dilemma contained a saving grace; a grace emergent through suffering, or more properly, despair. He argued that the striving after God, because of its very impossibility, led to suffering, the dark night of the soul. At a certain point, however, when the despair of the soul becomes unbearable, “there dawns upon it with a great illuminative shock the realization that the divine state simply IS, here and now, and does not have to be attained.” In yet another book, Watts argued that Zen *koans*, those famous unsolvable riddles, served much the same function. The devotee is given a *koan*, a riddle that defies rational solvability, but that he must nonetheless find a rational answer to. He applies all of his mental effort to solving the unsolvable, grasping the ungraspable, until he achieves the sudden “realization that life can never be grasped, never possessed or made to stay still. Whereupon he ‘lets go,’ and this letting go is the acceptance of life as life, as that which cannot be made anyone’s property, which is always free and spontaneous and unlimited.”

499 Ibid, 9.
500 Watts, *Behold the Spirit*, 73.
The “paradox of effort” dovetails nicely with the Hindu doctrine of *Lila*, which Aurobindo defined as the “cosmic game… a play, an amusement of the Divine Being.”\(^{502}\) Under this idea, the search for spiritual understanding need not be taken as a terrible burden to be endured, but a “game” to be played with joy; “the child’s joy,” Aurobindo wrote, “the poet’s joy, the actor’s joy, the machanician’s (*sic*) joy of the Soul of things eternally young, perpetually inexhaustible, creating and re-creating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation, - Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the playground.”\(^{503}\) In this view, creation itself is a “cosmic game” initiated by the Creator as It perpetually hides Itself and reveals Itself for, in mundane terms, the pure fun of it.

Needless to say, Watts in particular, though Chaudhuri and Spiegelberg, as well, recognized and encouraged an element of “play” within their spiritual efforts. Play, in this context, has two meanings. It means both *to* play and to be *in* a sort-of play. It means to find joy in a quest recognized as having a sort-of stage-play quality to it. This aspect of the religious quest for authenticity, like the other aspects outlined above, profoundly influenced the hip counterculture and the Human Potential Movement of later years. By the mid-1960s, the word “joy” would take on special meaning both for hippies and for students of “human potential.” At the Academy, despite a rigorous curriculum, it was this sense of play, this sense of joy, this sense of discovery, that fueled the devotion of the students and helped illumine the San Francisco Renaissance of the late-1950s. The significance of a figure such as Neal Cassady, for example, was certainly not in any remarkable insight into human behavior, nor in any great artistic

\(^{502}\) Aurobindo, 368.
\(^{503}\) Ibid, 96.
What made Cassady significant to Ginsberg and Kerouac, aside from their love of him as a friend, was that he seemed to embody Lila.

Watts in his own way, did as well. One former Academy student recalls that Watts would occasionally enter the classroom with a jug of wine that he would share with the students during lecture. Though behavior such as this, then and now, is obviously frowned upon within academia and could just as easily be viewed as evidence of Watts’ emerging alcoholism, it was nonetheless carried out with a certain joie de vivre that most students appreciated. In fact, it was the failure of joy within organized Christianity that Watts’ most detested about religion as usually practiced. He recalled that, “When I first received the Holy Communion there was nothing interesting about it except the taste of the port, though everyone walked back from the altar rail looking like the cat that swallowed the canary. There was no joy, no camaraderie or conviviality, no sense of being turned-on, but only an intense and solitary seriousness. Everyone in his own private box with God, apologizing for having masturbated, fornicated, or adulterated. (One of the boys, lacking all sexual education, understood the commandment ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ as ‘Thou shalt not kick the poultry,’ a much more sensible admonition.”)

Demise and Rebirth

Only about a year, or so, after opening the Academy, Louis Gainesborough hit financial hard times and the organization was barely able to meet its economic obligations. The Board of Governors reduced salaries and Spiegelberg, with a wife and child to support, returned to his post at Stanford University. The remaining faculty, however, agreed to accept a

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504 Cassady’s autobiography, The First Third, one of the few things that he ever wrote for publication, was hardly an inspired work of writing.
505 Kimberly McKell interview.
506 Watts, In My Own Way, 61.
percentage of tuition as the basis for pay and between 1952 and 1956 the Academy moved forward under the directorship of Watts.\footnote{Watts, \textit{In My Own Way}, 265.} Forging relationships with San Francisco’s Chinese and Japanese communities, the Academy continued to function with their support. Watts noted, however, that just as the organization failed to fulfill Gainesborough’s original vision of a pragmatic institution devoted to training businesspeople and politicians in the ways of Asian culture, so the Asian communities in San Francisco could not easily relate to an organization based, in some respects, on a Western mystical interpretation of Asian philosophy. Watts, writing specifically of the Chinese backers, suggested, no doubt unfairly, that they were “bending over backward to be Rotarian Americans and, with the exception of their diet, had forgotten the taste of Chinese culture.”\footnote{Watts, \textit{In My Own Way}, 268.} The same was true, he claimed, of the Japanese supporters whose “younger Jaycee-type members had the heebie-jeebies when their priests chanted the sutras, and preferred instead to sing: Buddha loves me, this I know / For the sutra tells me so.”\footnote{Ibid, 268.}

Despite the financial difficulties, Gainesborough remained head of the Board of Governors and Spiegelberg continued to lecture on an \textit{ad hoc} basis, remaining a friend and supporter of the organization throughout its existence. In 1954, Watts and Gainesborough secured the Academy’s academic accreditation through a merger with the College of the Pacific, California’s oldest institution of higher learning.\footnote{Watts, \textit{In My Own Way}, 268.} Its status as a graduate school under the auspices of the college, however, was, for reasons that remain unclear, not to last. By 1956, Watts, always the free spirit, lost interest in the daily grind of his administrative role and left the Academy to pursue his work as an independent lecturer and writer. Ernest Wood, the “venerable

\footnote{Watts, \textit{In My Own Way}, 265.} \footnote{Bina Chaudhuri, in personal discussion.} \footnote{Watts, \textit{In My Own Way}, 268.} \footnote{Ibid, 268.}
Theosophist,” as Watts called him, took over the position as dean, but within a year the College of the Pacific withdrew its association.\(^{512}\)

Throughout most of the 1960s, the Academy staggered along under the directorship of a number of deans, including Ved Vrat, a Professor of Indian Philosophy who assumed that position in 1959, and Rom Landau, a Professor of Islamic and North African Studies, who remained in charge until the organization closed its doors in 1968. Throughout this period, Chaudhuri remained on the faculty but focused more and more of his attention on his own organization, the Cultural Integration Fellowship. Because the Academy lost academic accreditation it became increasingly difficult to attract serious students and some students labored under the false impression that, in fact, the Academy was accredited.\(^{513}\)

Chaudhuri and Spiegelberg, nonetheless, remained committed to the idea that the Academy represented; that is, to maintaining an ongoing organization devoted to the study of Asian culture and philosophical thought. When the Academy closed, Chaudhuri filled the gap by opening the California Institute of Asian Studies (CIAS) which he conceived of as the educational wing of the Cultural Integration Fellowship. In 1973, Watts died of heart failure related to an ongoing problem with alcoholism. In 1975, Chaudhuri also died, but the organization that he created, which changed its name to the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in 1979, gained accreditation and continues in operation with about 1,300 students currently enrolled. Spiegelberg, who passed in 1994 at the age of 97, remained a guiding presence for the CIIS throughout the final decades of the twentieth-century and Michael Murphy yet remains an influential member of the current Board of Trustees.

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\(^{513}\) Bina Chaudhuri, in personal interview, 26 January 2005, San Francisco, CA.
The American Academy of Asian studies, directly or indirectly, gave rise to at least three surviving organizations: the Esalen Institute, the San Francisco Zen Center, and the California Institute of Integral Studies. The Esalen Institute, of course, became famous in the 1960s as the premier “human potential” organization in the United States. The Zen Center, likewise, became the foremost organization of its type in the country and both these organizations were heavily influential with the counterculture. These organizations thrived because throughout the latter half of the twentieth-century large numbers of Americans believed what the social critics (Riesman, Whyte, Mills), cultural critics (Macdonald, Howe, Greenberg), humanistic psychologists (May, Rogers, Maslow) and mystic-intellectuals (Spiegelberg, Chaudhuri, Watts) claimed to be true: that Americans suffered from a diminishment of the self during the middle of the twentieth-century. This notion, however, was not limited to the movement. It was present both in the workplace and in the Evangelical churches.\footnote{Lisa McGirr explicitly sites the desire for personal authenticity as a driving principal within mid-century conservative Christianity. See: Lisa McGirr, \textit{Suburban Warriors: the Origins of the New American Right}} In ways requiring further exploration, the quest for authenticity became an impulse found throughout the breadth American society.
ARCHIVES

Frederic Spiegelberg Archives
Green Library
Stanford University
Palo Alto, CA

Frederic Spiegelberg Archives
California Institute of Integral Studies
1453 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA

Haridas Chaudhuri Archives
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360 Cumberland Street
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Chapter 5

Esalen, the Counterculture, and the Human Potential Movement

“Here we were, growing up in the late fifties, with the whole idea of material success, the designer brain mentality. We could have credit cards if we wanted. We could have good paying jobs. We didn’t have to worry about keeping up with Mr. Jones because we were Mr. Jones. And, we said “no” to that prime time culture. We just said “chuck it.” We just said it’s boring, it’s spiritually unrewarding, and it’s unjust for people too poor to participate in it. Now, they couldn’t understand that at all.”


In 1967, hippies flocked to Big Sur’s Esalen Institute. Wanting out of the cities and away from the police, many young American counterculturalists headed toward rural communes of various sorts. Though the Esalen Institute was definitely not a commune, to Mike Murphy and Richard Price’s dismay it, nonetheless, attracted large numbers of youthful dropouts eager to live a bohemian life. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Esalen Institute is closely associated with the counterculture. The few writings available on the organization emphasize, like

515 Murphy wrote, “Thousands of young people from all over the United States were coming down the coast highway looking for some final Mecca of the counter-culture, and during the summer of 1967, the ‘Summer of Love,’ it seemed that most of them wanted to camp on our grounds. They came with dazed and loving looks, with drugs and fires, swarming into the redwood canyons and up over the great coast ridges, many of them polluting and stealing along the way. The air was filled with a drunken mysticism that undermined every discipline we set for the place.” Mike Murphy, Golf in the Kingdom (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 7.

516 There is much conversation within the historiography around the meaning of the term “counterculture.” The term is not here meant in the broad sense as referring to all culturally or politically dissenting groups. Rather it refers to cultural radicals, mainly young, middle-class, and white, from the 1960s through the 1970s that “dropped out” of American culture, however temporarily, in pursuit of a hedonistic and communal life-style, a “revolution of consciousness” and who are commonly referred to as “hippies.” It also includes their theorizers, such as Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts, Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary and others, who gave literary expression to the movement.
Walter Truett Anderson’s Upstart Spring, Esalen and the Human Potential Movement: The First Twenty Years, either the “growth center” nature of Esalen, or, like William Irwin Thompson’s At the Edge of History: Speculations on the Transformation of Culture, the “countercultural” nature of the organization. Under the first category Esalen is generally viewed as the premier organization of the human potential movement, while under the second category Esalen is generally viewed as a countercultural organization. As a countercultural organization, Thompson emphasizes the radical a-rationality among Esalen’s hippie fugitives.

In At the Edge of History, Thompson relates visiting Esalen during the height of the hippie invasion. Driving up route 1 on his way to Big Sur, Thompson picked up a pair of longhaired hitchhikers, also on their way to Esalen. In their conversation one of them told Thompson, “You see, The Lord of the Rings is the real history of this planet. I mean like there are a lot of karmic refugees from Atlantis around; that’s what the generation gap is all about. It’s not the same old gang of souls on earth anymore.”

Thompson, not surprisingly, interprets the presence of hippies at Esalen as an a-rational countercultural escape from liberal society by youthful middle-class dropouts, eagerly awaiting the implosion of American society. He writes, “To encounter such apocalyptic vision might be expected among the messianic cargo cults of Melanesia, but to find it in the dropout children of

The meaning of the term is complicated by the social and ideological overlaps between the sixties’ counterculture and other groups that dissented from “mainstream” American culture and politics during this period. This overlap has led feminist historian Debra Michals, for example, to argue for a “feminist counterculture,” Doug Rossinow to argue for a politically-inclined “New Left counterculture,” and sociologist Rebecca Klatch to argue even for a youthful libertarian countercultural presence within the New Right’s Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). In a recent contribution that analyzes the influence of the counterculture on mainstream religion, Mark Oppenheimer takes this trend much too far by conflating Gay Liberation and the women’s movement with the counterculture. Michals, “From ‘Consciousness Expansion’ to ‘Consciousness Raising’: Feminism and the Countercultural Politics of the Self” in Imagine Nation, eds. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002), 41 – 68. Rossinow, The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity and the New Left in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Klatch, A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Oppenheimer, Knocking on Heaven’s Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture (New Have: Yale University Press, 2003).
California’s affluent upper-middle class, the most highly educated generation in history, was a blow to the liberal middle-class vision of progress. The liberals had built the huge University of California and brought to the state the greatest public educational system in the history of mankind, and now, in a flash, it was all going up in smoke from the burning leaves of grass.” 518 However one interprets Esalen, however, it must be acknowledged that the human potential movement and the sixties’ counterculture were closely related social trends and Esalen was connected to both. 519 Both developed from the earlier criticisms of mass culture and humanistic psychology; both were fundamentally utopian, opposed to the Vietnam War and in favor of Civil Rights; both were heavily influenced by western interpretations of Asian religious thought and owe something to the American Academy of Asian Studies; and both criticized modern society for its violence, competitiveness, racism, and inauthenticity. The human potential movement, however, developed a sizeable inventory of formal, or semi-formal, psychotherapeutic procedures, such as encounter group therapy, gestalt therapy, primal screaming, and various forms of massage, that were practiced in “growth centers,” such as the Esalen Institute, whereas the hippie counterculture remained spontaneous and anarchistic.

By the mid and late 1970s, with these “movements” on the verge of failure in the Reagan eighties, both were accused of narcissism and irrelevancy. Just as the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists of the 1950s criticized the American white middle-class for

518 Ibid, 33.
519 Stephen A. Applebaum, Out in Inner Space: A Psychoanalyst Explores the New Therapies (New York: Anchor Press, 1979), 44. Applebaum defines the human potential movement as “a loose, informal term that refers to a wide variety of activities, all resting on the belief that there is more to most of us than meets the eye, that we have much unrealized potential. It further rests on the assumption that individual change can be brought about through self-help. Primarily one merely needs to be open to the possibilities of change, to be educated about some of these possibilities, to experiment with them, and to be determined to have them make a difference. Practically any activity
a failure of individualism due to their supposed subjugation within hegemonic bureaucracies, Christopher Lasch, in his best-selling *The Culture of Narcissism*, painting with a brush no less broad than the ones used by Riesman or Whyte two decades earlier, accused the white middle-class of a self-involved “naval-gazing.” The very tools designed by the humanistic psychologists to free the self from the “lonely crowd” were, by the late 1970s, held responsible for creating an equally repugnant social type; the nervous “psychological man,” compulsively jogging his way through a “therapeutic culture.” If in the 1960s, movement radicals recognized that “the personal is political,” by the end of the “me decade,” according to Lasch, an inauthentic, non-religious and politically irrelevant “cult of authenticity” dominated American culture.

The human potential movement, which Lasch castigates, might be thought of as the counterculture for economically comfortable adults. It emerged from the blending of humanistic psychology as developed by Maslow, Rogers, and May, with western interpretations of Asian religious practice and theory as outlined by such people as Spiegelberg, Huxley, Watts, and Chaudhuri. Most working people in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, however, did not have the leisure time, nor inclination, to devote themselves to Asian mysticism or to

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521 In his introduction, Lasch writes, “After the political turmoil of the sixties, Americans have retreated to purely personal preoccupations. Having no hope of improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement, getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food, taking lessons in ballet or belly-dancing, immersing themselves in the wisdom of the East, jogging, learning how to ‘relate,’ overcoming the ‘fear of pleasure.’ Harmless in themselves, these pursuits, elevated to a program and wrapped in the rhetoric of authenticity and awareness, signify a retreat from politics and a repudiation of the recent past.” See Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, 4.

522 This view is reflected in an October, 1967, *New York Times* article. The *Times* wrote, “Adherents of the human capacity movement, like hippies, seek ‘to turn on,’ but usually without drugs. For both groups self-awareness is a major goal. The human capacity participants are sometimes called ‘white collar hippies.’” See “Coast Group Spearheads a Movement Seeking Clue to Human Feelings,” *New York Times*, 8 October 1967, 55.
encounter group therapy or to unusual massage treatments, such as rolfing.\textsuperscript{523} The people who promoted these practices were upper-class or upper-middle-class and white and with the spare time necessary for therapeutic explorations. Although Doug Rossinow argues that the “counterculture was, by definition, both marginal and oppositional” and Timothy Miller notes, “behind both the 1960s counterculture and its predecessor beat culture lay black America,” in fact the counterculture derived as much from the white, affluent “mainstream” as it did from oppositional cultures, such as Beat culture, or from marginalized American ethnicities.\textsuperscript{524}

\textbf{Michael Murphy}

Only a child of privilege has the economic security to drop out of graduate school to move to a Hindu ashram in India. The very ashram at Pondicherry that Spiegelberg visited in 1949, Aurobindo’s ashram, Mike Murphy lived in for about a year and a half in the late 1950s.\textsuperscript{525} Having learned of Aurobindo from Chaudhuri and Spiegelberg at the Academy, Murphy put away his textbooks and flew to India, via Scotland, in 1956, at the age of 26.\textsuperscript{526} During his layover, Murphy took to the links where he met a sort-of golfer-guru who would inspire him to eventually write \textit{Golf in the Kingdom}, a work appreciated both by \textit{Sports Illustrated} and the \textit{New York Times}.\textsuperscript{527} Similar to other works published in the 1960s and 1970s, such as, for example,

\textsuperscript{523} Rolfing is a form of “deep massage” developed by Ida Rolf and practiced at the Esalen Institute. Frederick Perls, who came to Esalen in the early-mid 1960s suffering from severe angina pectoris pains, credited Rolf’s method with easing those pains and making his life bearable. See: Perls, \textit{In and Out the Garbage Pail} (Bantam Books, Inc., 1969), 191 – 193.


\textsuperscript{526} Walter Truett Anderson, \textit{The Upstart Spring: Esalen and the Human Potential Movement, the First Twenty Years}. (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2004), 31.

Herrigals’ *Zen in the Art of Archery*, *Golf in the Kingdom* is a description of the “liberatory” potential of sport.

In the mid-1950s, of course, golf was a decidedly upper-class, or at least upper-middle-class, activity and one that Murphy developed a love for through his father. John Murphy, a locally prominent criminal defense lawyer in Salinas, California, was the son of Dr. Henry Murphy who purchased the Big Sur property, then known as Slate’s Hot Springs, in 1910. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Henry Murphy already had the idea of turning the Big Sur land, with its fabulous views and mineral hot springs, into a spa of the sort he and his wife, Vinnie Murphy, visited at Baden-Baden. For decades, however, the plan came to nothing because transportation into the area was difficult in the extreme. Not until after World War II, with the completion of route 1 along the snake-like central California coast, could the Murphy’s expect enough people to travel into the remote area in numbers necessary to sustain a resort. From 1910 to the early 1960s, therefore, the Big Sur property served as a Murphy family vacation spot, as well as, in the 1940s and 1950s, the location of a small, but notorious, bohemian community around writer Henry Miller.528

It is likely that Michael Murphy’s interest in Asian religious thought, though derived directly from Chaudhuri, Watts, and Spiegelberg, also owes something to the popularity of Asian culture among California’s economic elite from the end of the nineteenth-century until the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Despite the ongoing hostility toward Asians in California among labor unions and the presence of what one writer calls “yellow peril ideology,” educated

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Californians often appreciated Asian cultural productions. The iconic success of Gump’s department store in San Francisco, which, as California historian Kevin Starr writes, had a “thriving trade in screens, statuary, and objets d’art from Japan,” speaks to the popularity of Asian cultural productions among California’s wealthy.

For someone such as Murphy, an interest in Asian culture, and thus Asian religious thought, was not unusual. What was unusual, particularly in the 1950s, was the degree of his devotion. Already by his junior year at Stanford, Murphy’s relationship with the world of education and regular employment was rattled. He moved out of his fraternity house and started meditating for eight hours a day in an off-campus apartment. As Anderson writes, “His plan was to drop out for the spring quarter and take some classes in San Francisco at the American Academy of Asian Studies… and then go back to Stanford to study religion and philosophy.”

Graduating Stanford with a bachelor’s degree in psychology in 1952 the government drafted Murphy into the army and sent him to Puerto Rico where he served in a cushy assignment as an interviewer of other draftees. Upon his release two years later, Murphy returned to Stanford with the idea of working towards an advanced degree in philosophy in preparation toward becoming a university professor. Murphy never completed this work because the post-war emphasis on qualitative analysis within the humanities and social sciences did not fit well with his more romantic and personal views of philosophy, mysticism, and religion. Murphy did not want objective analysis so much as he wanted personal transformation. For this

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529 Kevin Starr points out that educated Californians tended to be Japanophilic, which explains why the city of San Francisco arranged for the 1893 Columbia Exposition’s Japan Pavilion was placed permanently in Golden Gate Park as a tea house and public garden. See Kevin Starr, Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940 – 1950 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 38.
530 Ibid, 38.
531 Anderson, 29.
reason Murphy dropped out graduate school and packed his bags for the ashram at Pondicherry.\textsuperscript{532}

Whatever his expectations, Murphy’s time at the Aurobindo ashram was pleasant and informative, certainly, but not entirely life changing. Though Aurobindo died in 1950, years prior to Murphy’s arrival, as a religious philosopher within the Hindu \textit{Tantric} tradition, he allowed his devotees almost complete freedom in their daily routines and the ashram, unlike many others, was western in its devotion to modernity.\textsuperscript{533} The buildings were modern and spacious. The ashram ran a printing press, publishing the writings of Aurobindo and others, including Chaudhuri. Even sports was a large part of the curriculum and Murphy, in fact, set up several soft-ball teams during his year and a half in Pondicherry.

Murphy was not, however, entirely satisfied with the ashram. “Murphy thought,” Anderson writes, “Aurobindo was one of the great philosophers of all time, but he was disturbed by the way Aurobindo’s followers seemed to want to surrender their ability to think for themselves. Aurobindo’s works were an eloquent statement of the need for being open to all dimensions of human experience, and yet they were being petrified into another gospel.”\textsuperscript{534}

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\textsuperscript{532} Ibid, 29 – 32.
\textsuperscript{533} \textit{Tantra} is a philosophy within Hinduism that affirms the physical world as a manifestation of \textit{Brahma}. Unlike \textit{Vedanta}, which Huxley and Heard studied in 1940s Los Angeles, \textit{Tantrics} do not conceive of the natural world as illusory or, as they would say, \textit{maya}. See: Andre Padoux, “Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism” in \textit{The Encyclopedia of Religion}, Volume 14, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), 277.
\textsuperscript{534} Anderson, 31. In an undated and unpublished interview, Murphy explicitly states that Aurobindo is largely responsible for the direction of his thinking, a direction that was encouraged by Chaudhuri, Spiegelberg, and Watts. Murphy said, “There has been this arrow in my life. I really took vows when I was twenty as an undergraduate at Stanford to that vision that was framed for me most broadly and deeply by Aurobindo, Sri Aurobindo, the Indian philosopher.” [Murphy interviewed by “Russell”] Esalen Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara.
\end{flushleft}
Richard Price

Murphy returned to the United States with precious little idea of what his future would hold, but with the easy confidence of young man from a wealthy family. Back in Palo Alto, he nonetheless took a series of part-time jobs and began outlining the book that would eventually become *Golf in the Kingdom*. Though by this point, the late 1950s, the San Francisco Renaissance was taking shape, he had very little to do with either the burgeoning art scene or the Beat writers prowling through the streets North Beach.\(^\text{535}\) For about two years he continued to spend eight hours a day meditating, stayed in close and friendly contact with his family, and read a great deal into, as always, the philosophy of religion. In 1960 he decided to move into Chaudhuri’s ashram in San Francisco on the edges of Golden Gate Park, the ashram associated with the Cultural Integration Fellowship. It was here that he met his future partner Richard Price.\(^\text{536}\)

Though they had not known one another, Murphy and Price were undergraduates together in Stanford’s psychology department during the early 1950s. Upon earning his Bachelor’s degree in 1952, Price moved on to Harvard with the intent of pursuing an academic career in psychology, but like Murphy he found himself alienated from the rigors of qualitative analysis and what he took to be the authoritarian culture of Harvard’s Department of Psychology. Toward the end of his first year in the graduate program Price’s disdain for the department

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\(^\text{535}\) Murphy was never entirely comfortable with either the bohemia of the late 1950s, nor the “hippie” movement of the 1960s. In an interview with Deborah Stevens and Gary Heil for a new edition of *Maslow on Management*, the authors note that although Esalen was “a hotbed for counterculture ideas” Murphy “has always been the very straight guy in the middle of the ‘Summer of Love’ movement which was anything but straight. As he says himself, ‘First off, very early I developed a powerful allergy to hallucinogens. Second, I was too fond of cashmere sweaters.’” See: Abraham Maslow, *Maslow on Management*. Eds. Deborah Stevens and Gary Heil. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 193.

became mutual after he wrote a paper for class criticizing the way Harvard approached the field and received a C grade in the course; a clear signal, at least from that professor, that Price was not the stuff that Harvard graduate students in psychology were made of.\footnote{Anderson, \textit{The Upstart Spring}, 35.}

At this point in his life Price was not particularly interested in Asian religion or mysticism, but this would soon change. He joined the Air Force with the intention of working as a psychologist at the military’s Human Relation Research Institute in Colorado. Unfortunately for Price, one year of graduate work in psychology was hardly enough experience to actually work as a psychologist and he was assigned the job of running an adding machine. Hating this job even more than his experience with Harvard, Price put in for, and received, a transfer to Parks Air Force Base in California, less than one hours’ drive north of San Francisco, where he worked as a teacher. His schedule was flexible and the teaching load was light, affording Price the leisure to re-enroll at Stanford where he, like Murphy, encountered the dynamic classroom presence of Frederic Spiegelberg. Inspired by the charismatic professor, Price began cultivating an interest in Asian religious thought and began also taking classes, including one with Alan Watts, at the American Academy of Asian Studies. Also like Murphy he did not directly participate in the early Beat scene, did not smoke marijuana, and did not write poetry. He did however consider becoming a Buddhist monk and moved into the city in order to be closer to the Academy and to the Soto Zen temple on Bush Street where he spent considerable time practicing \textit{zazen} (sitting meditation).\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Upstart Spring}, 37.}

It was around this time, the mid-1950s, that Price married, but also suffered a psychological breakdown that would result in several years of detention in various mental institutions. He spent three months under observation at a clinic on the base, undergoing
electroshock therapy, and claiming to have visions of past lives. At the end of these months, feeling a little better and hoping to be released, Price’s father exerted influence with a politician friend in Washington D.C. and managed to have Price transferred to a military hospital in Illinois, not far from the family home. From there Price’s father arranged for him to be admitted into the Institute for Living in Connecticut. By the end of 1956, Price wanted nothing so much as to simply get away from mental hospitals, but nonetheless agreed to voluntary incarceration at the institute in Connecticut. Because he was there voluntarily, Price knew that he could sign himself out at will. When he did so, however, his father intervened again and had him formally committed into the Institute for Living, which diagnosed him as a paranoid schizophrenic. During the year he spent at the clinic Price received fifty-nine insulin shock treatments, ten electroshock treatments, and the news that his parents had arranged for the annulment of his marriage. When he finally gained his freedom, however, Price’s will was not entirely broken. He moved home to his family in Illinois and worked as a purchasing agent for an uncle’s company in Chicago, which made neon beer signs.

Not long afterward, however, sometime in the spring of 1960, Price heard from an old friend from the San Francisco Zen Center, Gia-fu Feng, who informed him that some of his former friends had created a cooperative, East-West House, prompting Price to return to San Francisco in May of 1960. 1960 would prove a turning point in Price’s life because this was the year that he met Murphy at Chaudhuri’s ashram and also because it was in 1960 that Price attended Aldous Huxley’s lecture on “human potentialities” at the University of California in Berkeley.\textsuperscript{539}
The Human Potential: Aldous Huxley

Huxley, like Watts and Spiegelberg, left England in 1937 and, with his friend and colleague, Gerald Heard, moved to Los Angeles where they pursued interests in science, pacifism, and mysticism and where they studied Vedanta under Swami Prabhavananda. By 1960, Huxley and Heard were convinced that a radical revolution of consciousness was humanity’s only hope in the nuclear age. Huxley is quoted by George Leonard as saying, “The Founding Fathers of this country were concerned with the sources of power of that time and with humane restraint of that power. Now new sources of power have developed – enormously greater than anything previously imagined. I feel we need some kind of new constitutional convention, a new meeting of ‘Founding Fathers’ who will take steps to ensure that the power released by science will not limit human freedom or destroy the world.” Huxley’s concerns, like those of Murphy and Price, were not merely personal, not merely of “the human potential,” but infused with social and political relevance.

Like many countercultural radicals, Huxley and Heard came to believe that politics, even radical politics, could never transform consciousness in a positive direction. Counterculturalists often believed that only by transforming human consciousness along mystical lines could fair and universally beneficial social structures be created. Grounds for tension between “hippie

anarchists” and political New Leftists within Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the late 1960s, therefore, were already being plowed by Huxley, Heard, and the teachers at the American Academy of Asian Studies throughout the 1950s, and earlier. Furthermore, Huxley’s concept of “human potential” is the nexus around which the various forms of mysticism and meditation would combine with the various types of body work and humanistic psychological practices, such as encounter group therapy and gestalt therapy, that would define not only Esalen, but the human potential movement as a whole. In this way that the human potential movement might be thought of as containing countercultural elements, while remaining a distinct trend.543

Huxley’s lecture on “human potentialities” was based on his work over the previous year at the University of California in Santa Barbara, where he delivered a series of lectures in 1959. In one such lecture, “Latent Human Potentialities,” Huxley began by describing Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs,” though he failed to credit the famous psychologist. Huxley, like Maslow, argued that once biological and social needs were met, people generally sought to fulfill more rarified needs. The final need, in Huxley’s formulation, was to fulfill human potential and that two circumstances allowed for the spontaneous maximum expression of human capability. The first was the moment of intense crisis when people would sometimes demonstrate capacities they had never previously demonstrated. “The other circumstance in which there will be an exceptional display of human power occurs,” he told audiences, “when there is some kind of

543 As a way of marking this distinction Eugene Taylor employs the term “psychotherapeutic counter-culture” to refer to those trends within the human potential movement and transpersonal psychology that derived from humanistic psychology. He writes, “When humanistic psychology ceased being an active form of discourse in academic psychology after 1969, it became absorbed into the psychotherapeutic counter-culture and fractioned into: 1) meditation and altered states of consciousness, 2) bodywork and experiential group therapies, and 3) radical political psychology.” Eugene Taylor, “Foundations of Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology Learning Guide.” (San Francisco: Saybrook Graduate School, 2001), 21.
upsurge of joy and creativity… when some kind of divine influx comes rushing in and raises us, so to speak, to a higher level, where we are capable of being more than our ordinary selves.”

From there Huxley proceeded to describe methods people could employ to deliberately gain access to higher levels of functioning. Not surprisingly, the first of these he mentions are pharmacological in nature. Speaking as if he had never experimented with psychedelics, he told the students that “one can imagine” drugs that could enhance cognition or produce euphoria, “the uprush of joy which is one of the conditions of human effectiveness.” Acknowledging that drugs, in themselves, are not sufficient to achieve the maximization of human potential, Huxley then suggested that what is required is an education in, and exercise of, human perception. Striking a note that would resonate strongly with the human potential movement of later years, Huxley insisted, “We have to learn to perceive clearly how it feels to be what we are where we are. We have to know what surrounds us; we have to know how we react to what surrounds us; we have to know what is happening in our bodies; and we have to have a clear idea of what it is that we are thinking and feeling and wishing and willing. In other words, we have to obey the old Socratic maxim – it was a very old maxim even in the time of Socrates – ‘Know Thyself.’”

Huxley is worth quoting at some length because his above statement closely resembles Esalen’s broad project. The themes that would dominate Esalen are all there: the desire to maximize potential; the desire, central to encounter group and gestalt therapies, to focus on immediate awareness and awareness of the body; the references to the divine; and, of course, the appeal to personal authenticity in “Know Thyself.” Huxley’s influences here represent a blending of humanistic psychology and Vedanta. From humanistic psychology, Huxley adopted

546 Ibid, 243.
an optimistic assessment of personal potential based on practices of self-awareness and free expression.\textsuperscript{547} From Vedanta, he adopted the idea that apprehension of the “true” self was not only a source of joy, but also the gateway to the divine, Brahma.\textsuperscript{548} His theories on human potential, therefore, dovetailed neatly with the education that Murphy and Price received under Spiegelberg at Stanford and under Chaudhuri, Spiegelberg, and Watts at the Academy.

**Establishing Esalen**

Murphy and Price agreed to become partners in the Esalen Institute and began firing off letters to a wide variety of people, including, of course, Huxley, who they thought might be interested in their project. What they initially had in mind was less a human potential spa than it was a center for academic conferences and seminars on topics largely drawn from humanistic psychology and Asian religious thought. Esalen, originally, was thus to be a sort-of clearing house of ideas around the concept of “human potential.” In response to their letter, Huxley urged the pair to move forward with their project and recommended that they visit Gerald Heard, then living in Santa Monica. When they did so, they found Heard to be highly enthusiastic for the idea of an institution to serve the goal of enhancing “human potential.” In fact, Heard, himself, had created a similar organization in southern California during the 1940s, Trabuco College, which he thought of as a “gymnasia for the mind.” Though Trabuco College failed to garner the support necessary to survive, Heard nonetheless believed that such an organization was essential

\textsuperscript{547} Eugene Taylor claims that Humanistic psychology was a “new experiential psychology based on the development of intuitions and the free expression of emotions, rather than relying primarily on reason or science.” Eugene Taylor. “The Foundations of Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology Learning Guide.” (San Francisco: Saybrook Graduate School, 2001), 5.

\textsuperscript{548} Vedanta is one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy that accepts the Vedas as its primary source of authority. The Vedantic system of Indian philosophy proposes that the only reality is Brahma, the transcendental source of all manifestation and that Brahma, the “universal soul” is identical to Atman, the individual soul. The
to, as Anderson writes, the “huge transformation of the human species that was, he was sure, trying to take place.”

When Murphy and Price arrived in Big Sur, in 1961, to scout out the property and lay their plans, they found that Murphy’s grandmother had hired a young, unknown writer by the name of Hunter S. Thompson to act as a guard for the property and to make sure that gays coming down from San Francisco to enjoy the hot springs did not abuse the privilege. By the time that Murphy and Price arrived in Big Sur, however, Thompson was not welcome in the small community and would soon be fired not only for his violent tendencies, but for sharply insulting his neighbors in print. In a letter dated August 4, 1961, Thompson complained to his friend Ann Schoelkopf, “I am about to be evicted for splitting a queer’s head with that billy club I got from Fred.” He also, in the same letter, complained about the quality of individuals that he was forced to endure during his stay on the Murphy property, where he worked on his first attempt at a novel, *The Rum Diary*, and did so in an early example of the writing style that would eventually bring him considerable literary success:

I am surrounded by lunatics here, people screeching every time I pull a trigger, yelling about my blood-soaked shirt, packs of queers waiting to do me in, so many creditors that I’ve lost count, a huge Doberman on the bed, a pistol by the desk, time passing, getting balder, no money, a great thirst for all the world’s whiskey, my clothes rotting in the fog, a motorcycle with no light, a landlady who’s writing a novel on butcher-paper, wild boar in the hills and queers on the road, vats of homemade beer in the closet, shooting cats to ease the pressure, the jabbering of Buddhists in the trees, whores in the canyons, christ only knows if I can last it out.

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material world, furthermore, the world of the senses, in the *Vedantic* system is considered *Maya*, illusion. See: Satischandra Chatterjee, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1984), 47 – 53.

549 Ibid, 12.


551 Ibid, 280.
Vinnie Murphy was disturbed by Thompson’s violence, but she was also deeply insulted at his portrayal of Big Sur in a piece he had written for the “men’s magazine,” *Rogue*, entitled, “Big Sur: The Garden of Agony.” In that article, his first to be published in a national magazine and for which he received $350 in payment, Thompson directly insulted a number of long-time residents of the community. He wrote:

People are always taking Emil White, publisher of the *Big Sur Guide*, for a hermit or a sex fiend; and Helmut Deetjan, owner of the Big Sur Inn, looks more like a junkie than a lot of hopheads who’ve been on the stuff for years. If you saw Nicholas Roosevelt, of the Oyster Bay Roosevelts, walking along the highway, you might expect him to flag you down, wipe your windshield with an old handkerchief, and ask for a quarter. Some of the local fags are easy to spot, but almost anyone could be a nudist or a lunatic – and some of them probably are.552

Thompson not only slandered certain individuals by name, but generally condemned the whole area as a “sinkhole,” though a sinkhole with great views and, nonetheless, “one of the finest places in the world to sit naked in the sun and read *The New York Times*.“553 Shortly after Murphy and Price arrived at Big Sur to begin setting up operations, however, Thompson left the area for good. He nonetheless, over the years, maintained friendly relations with Murphy and his brother, Dennis, and was even offered a leadership role, strangely enough, in a 1964 Esalen seminar on “White Liberalism and Black Militarism.”554

553 Ibid, 277.
554 Ibid, 459 – 460. During the early years of Esalen, Murphy was known for sometimes offering seminar leadership positions to people on a whim.
lack of expertise on race relations, seems a highly unusual choice for such a seminar, but during the early years of Esalen, Murphy was known for sometimes offering seminar leadership positions to people on a whim. Frederick Perls maintained, “Mike Murphy, over-anxious to give everybody an opportunity to ‘do his thing’ and because of the need to stay financially sound, has not shown enough discrimination to keep out the weeds. Untrained youngsters lead encounter groups.”

After Thompson moved off the property, Murphy and Price took control of the grounds and began the process of recruiting seminar leaders for their first series of programs, beginning in 1962, which they entitled, “The Human Potentiality.” This early period is known among Esalen insiders as the “Apollonian period.” During these years, before the media discovered the organization and before Esalen became associated with nude hot-tub bathing and psychedelic drugs and marathon encounter group sessions, Esalen’s primary focus was academic.

They wanted above all, at first, to lay the theoretical foundation for what Murphy and Price called the Vision. By “the Vision” they meant a revolution in consciousness of a kind very similar to that which Timothy Leary would later have in mind and that their friend and fellow Esalen leader, George Leonard, would describe in his book, The Transformation, as inevitable. Years prior to the formal development of transpersonal psychology or the public awareness of “hippies,” and certainly long before the so-called “New Age movement” arrived on the American cultural scene, Murphy and Price created the first formal institution through which such countercultural ideas could be developed and disseminated.

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556 Leonard wrote, “It is my thesis… that the current period is indeed unique in history and that it represents the beginning of the most thoroughgoing change in the quality of human existence since the creation of an agricultural surplus brought about the birth of civilized states some five thousand years ago.” See: George B. Leonard, The Transformation: A Guide to the Inevitable Changes in Humankind (New York: Delacorte Press, 1972.), 2.
The people involved in this ongoing project, some tangentially and some at the core, were often highly respected leaders in their particular fields of study. Though Murphy sometimes arranged for seminar leadership on impulse, as he seems to have done with Thompson, many of the people who led seminars were figures of national repute and almost all were well known and respected in their fields. Some, in fact, might be considered giants in their areas of study. Abraham Maslow, for example, regularly ran workshops at Esalen on encounter group. Carl Rogers debated B. F. Skinner at Esalen. Frederick “Fritz” Perls lived on the grounds for a number of years toward the end of his life as he attempted to establish Gestalt therapy. Christian existentialist, and former teacher of Spiegelberg, Paul Tillich led seminars. Rollo May, another friend of Spiegelberg, dropped in for workshops. Huxley, though he would die in 1963 not long after Esalen’s creation, gave conference papers there. Gregory Bateson, as early as the fall of 1962, gave a seminar entitled, “Individual and Cultural Definitions of Reality.” Watts and Spiegelberg, given Murphy and Price’s close association with the Academy of Asian Studies, were also regulars and Watts, in fact, gave the first conference paper at the fledgling organization before they had even thought of the name “Esalen.” In a 1985 Esquire magazine article George Leonard notes, “During the first five years at Esalen you might have spent an intimate weekend with any of the following: historian Arnold Toynbee, theologians Paul Tillich and Harvey Cox, chemist Linus Pauling, bishops John Robinson and James A. Pike, semanticist

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557 Many of the regulars at Esalen actually feared Perls, who was notorious for his blunt manner and withering commentary on most everyone around him. Perls, furthermore, maintained ongoing and ugly personal rivalries with Maslow and program leader Will Schutz, whom Perls, after the publication of Schutz’s Joy: Expanding Human Awareness in 1967, referred to sarcastically as a “Joy boy.” During one particularly notorious episode early in 1966, Perls attended a conference led by Maslow in which Maslow explored the idea that “self-actualized” individuals used language in a manner differing from non-self-actualized people. During the conference Perls began to harass and heckle Maslow. At one point, the elderly Perls got down on his hands and knees, crawled over to a particularly dry speaker and started clawing at the man’s legs. “Come down here with the rest of his,” he said, “get down with the common people.” When Perls continued his obnoxious behavior by hugging Maslow’s knees and whining, Maslow is said to have commented, “This begins to look like sickness.” Anderson, 133 – 137.

558 Anderson, 70.
(later senator) S.I. Hayakawa, writers Alan Watts, Carlos Castaneda, Ken Kesey, and Aldous Huxley, futurist Buckminster Fuller, and psychologists Abraham Maslow, Frederick S. (Fritz) Perls, Carl Rogers, B.F. Skinner and Rollo May.”

George Leonard and Look Magazine

Were it not for George Leonard and Look magazine, however, the Esalen institute may have remained a relatively unknown organization, even within the developing counterculture. The general circulation magazines of the period, such as Look, Life, and the Saturday Evening Post, were far more influential in the middle of the twentieth-century than the crop of similar publications at the end of the century. In 1960, Look had a circulation of 6.2 million subscribers, which grew to 7.7 million by 1966, with an estimated readership of about 34 million. Though by 1960, 87 percent of all American households contained television sets, television news was still limited to fifteen minute broadcasts and, in the words of Leonard, “all twenty top-rated programs for the 1959-60 season, from Gunsmoke to Maverick, fell in the entertainment category.” When Look magazine spoke, therefore, many people listened.

Leonard, who covered civil rights for the magazine in the 1950s, became, by 1961, convinced that California was at the forefront of American cultural change. Though in 1961, the polling of George Gallop suggested that young people were “unlikely to rebel or involve (themselves) in crusades of any kind” and that “the United States has bred a generation of nice little boys and girls who are just what we have asked them to be;” by the early 1960s, Leonard

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559 Murphy and Price named the organization “Esalen” after the indigenous Americans that populated the area prior to European settlement.
was certain that “we were living in what might be a watershed era in human history.” As early as 1961, furthermore, *Look* magazine published a special edition on “Youth of the Sixties: The Explosive Generation” in which the magazine emphasized the youthful desire for cultural change.

The focus of the article was international in scope and pointed to youthful uprisings in South Korea, Turkey, Japan, Britain, and throughout the world. “In Haiti and Cuba,” Leonard wrote, “in Poland and Hungary, in the Congo and South Africa, in India and Indonesia, throughout South America, in Berlin, Paris and Algeria, in places too numerous to list, on all sides of every question (but rarely on the side of the *status quo*), youth is on the march.”

Leonard, it should also be noted, pointed out that “today’s stirrings among young people” were not limited to the political left. Youthful right-wingers also organized around issues of importance to them.

Leonard was prescient. *Look* magazine, prior to almost everyone, recognized that youthful activism was on the rise and it may have been his coverage of the southern Civil Rights movement that alerted him to the fact. He recognized that although youth activism arose out of disgust toward social injustice, it also contained elements of the “mass society” critique explored by the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists in the 1950s. Citing Paul Goodman, a co-creator of Gestalt therapy whose *Growing Up Absurd* received significant

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563 Ibid, 166.
564 Ibid, 9.
565 Ibid, 17.
566 Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), for example, was organized in 1960, the same year as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and according to Rebecca Klatch the late twentieth-century backlash against 1960s social activism was led as much by younger conservatives as by their older colleagues. Rebecca Klatch, *A Generation Divided* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2.
attention during this period, Leonard argued that youth, particularly American youth, were searching for “meaningful goals in a mass-consumer society” and were criticizing the older generation for inauthenticity. “All through the fifties,” Leonard wrote, “U.S. teen-agers were being tarred with epithets ranging from ‘mediocre and conformist’ to ‘fat, dumb, and happy.’ Here, said the pundits, were the disenchanted sons and daughters of World War II. With their parents hell-bent for bigger and better tail fins, they put cars before careers. In an adult environment of phony good fellowship, they put popularity before proficiency. With no real goals, they put ‘security’ before everything. Under the shadow of McCarthyism, they found in nonthinking and nontalking not only safety, but a way of life.”

In the following year, 1962, *Look* followed up its special “youth edition” with a California edition that also seems prescient. Though one can argue against the centrality of California to the cultural changes of the 1960s, there seems little doubt that in the minds of millions of Americans California was, if not the source of those cultural changes, their predecessor. “Today’s Californians are modern-day pioneers of a new and often bewildering way of life. Their experiences can serve as guideposts for every American,” Leonard insisted.

It was, however, the June 28, 1966, edition of *Look* that brought Esalen to the attention of millions of Americans. This edition offered another special feature on changes in American culture foreshadowed in California, particularly the human potential movement, and *Look* congratulated itself in breathless prose. “We at Look invite you, our readers,” Leonard wrote in this issue, “to come along with us, far beyond our last California issue, on the boldest journalistic

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venture we have yet attempted. Come with us to a viewing of Act 1, Scene 1 of the future.”

With a gesture toward the sociological, Leonard suggested that changes in technology, transportation, and education were creating a new atomized generation that not only was no longer apart of any extended family, but for whom even the nuclear family was fast becoming an outmoded influence. Leonard, as an advocate, welcomed these changes with exuberance.

“Richness and diversity of human behavior will become a positive value. The age of conformity has ended,” he exclaimed. “Freed from survival worries by the abundance of our technology, propelled by its excitement, today’s young people already are shooting off in all directions with the flare and surprise of Roman candles.”

Though Mike Murphy and the Esalen Institute are only briefly featured, along with many others that Look believed represented the cutting edge of American culture, Leonard credits this issue with bringing Esalen into the forefront of American popular consciousness in its understanding of such things as the counterculture and the human potential movement. While much of the issue highlights the rise of California universities during this period, as well as scientific achievements derived from California, it is also infused with a religiosity typical of Esalen, the counterculture, and the human potential movement. Noting that “many” Californians were seeking “shifts in consciousness,” Leonard quotes a famous passage from William James’ The Varieties of Religious Experience:

Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have

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571 Ibid, 110.
their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.”\textsuperscript{573}

Though Leonard was practically giddy about the changes he saw in mid-1960s California, even going so far as to predict that “[t]elevision dramas of the future may treat as tragic any meeting of two people that does not quickly lead to deep and intimate understanding,” not everyone, nor even everyone at \textit{Look}, shared his enthusiasm or his commitment to group encounter. In a chapter of his memoirs entitled, “The Day I Was Drummed Out of the Establishment,” Leonard recalls that after this latest “California” issue hit the stands, the office of \textit{Look} magazine “was in an uproar… Everyone was outraged about the California issue.”\textsuperscript{574} Leonard was convinced that if other \textit{Look} editors and managers were embarrassed by June 28, 1966, California issue, it was out of an Eastern / New York disdain for enthusiasm, and a preference for irony over idealism. “Evangelism,” the critics called it, not journalism.\textsuperscript{575}

Like Murphy and Price, Leonard was heavily influenced by Watts and though not a student at the Academy of Asian Studies, he nonetheless listened to Watts on KPFA, began to visit the San Francisco Zen Center, and undertook his own search for an “essential, eternal truth.”\textsuperscript{576} He thus joined Murphy and Price, literally and figuratively, in a grandiose quest to discover the limits of human potential and to create a revolution based not in politics, economics, or social structural change, but in the potential transformation of individual consciousness.


\textsuperscript{575} Ibid, 244.
Esalen and the Radical Divide

1960s movement cultures are typically, and somewhat artificially, divided between political radicals of various stripes and dropout counterculturalists. Though both were radical in the sense of wishing to transform human consciousness, and thus human culture, into something more just, and despite a general alliance around hostility toward the cultural “mainstream,” political radicals generally considered drop-out counterculturalists unsupportive of their efforts to end the war in Vietnam or conquer the problems of institutional racism and sexism. The counterculturalists, for their part, often considered the political radicals as playing the same uptight “game” as mainstream politicians and were deeply suspicious of politics as a means of social transformation. Following Marx, political radicals, such as those in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), believed that in order to bring about a revolutionary alteration of consciousness it was first necessary to transform social and economic structures. The counterculturalists, however, believed that no political transformation of social or economic structures could bring about positive changes unless such efforts were grounded in the prior transformation of human consciousness. While political radicals, including young conservative libertarians, usually maintained countercultural styles and habits, they nonetheless

576 Ibid, 165.
578 Doug Rossinow argues that the New Left blurred the distinction between politicos and counterculturalists, as the New Left became a type of counterculture, one of many, that saw American culture as somehow not “natural.” See Doug Rossinow, The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 247 – 252.
579 It is interesting to note that Leary adopted a pseudo-Marxist framework in his philosophy. While Marx, of course, argued that consciousness is formed at the point of production, Leary argued that consciousness in the mid-
stared at the counterculturalists across a theoretical divide that, despite the best efforts of elder bohemians, such as Ginsberg and Snyder, was never bridged.\textsuperscript{580}

The Esalen Institute was generally thought of as an organization that represented the countercultural side of this division among young American radicals. The emphasis on mysticism or on “getting in touch with one’s true feelings” was often considered a self-indulgent and narcissistic turning inward at the expense of vital political engagements. This criticism, which echoes earlier criticisms of the Beat writers, was leveled at Esalen, and the human potential movement more generally, even from the organization’s admirers and proponents. In a July 12, 1968, \textit{Life} magazine article, writer Jane Howard, who would later write a book, \textit{Please Touch}, that advocated the human potential movement, lists the misgivings of the movement’s “enemies.” These misgivings included charges that the human potential movement was medically irresponsible, anti-intellectual, a “hotbed of Communists,” narcissistic, emotionally elitist, sexually promiscuous, a “massive invasion of privacy,” and both trivial and irrelevant. As Howard writes, “Many people object that they’d rather talk about Vietnam or assassinations than whether George is really jealous of Edith.”\textsuperscript{581}

Given the political intensities of the middle and late 1960s, many people felt that only stark choices were available: either revolution or withdrawal. Even academicians, such as William Thompson, sometimes believed this. After his stay at Esalen, Thompson made a decision. He wrote, “There are only two choices open to those who have discovered that society is a madhouse. In the tradition of Plato’s cave, they can withdraw and seek light elsewhere to twentieth-century, at least, was formed at the point of consumption, particularly the consumption of psychedelic drugs.\textsuperscript{580} The January, 1967, “Human Be-In” in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park was an attempt by older bohemians, such as Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Timothy Leary, and Michael McClure, to bridge the gap between politicos and counterculturalists. See: Todd Gitlin. \textit{The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage}. (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 208.; See also: Rossinow, \textit{The Politics of Authenticity}. 252–255.\textsuperscript{581} Jane Howard, “Inhibitions Thrown to the Winds,” \textit{Life}, 12 July 1968, 65, no. 2, 65.
discover the larger landscape in which the madhouse is located. Or, if the Platonic tradition of the Good seems merely an infantile fantasy, they can deny self-determination to the insane majority and burn the madhouse to the ground to force people out into the open. Looking at the Platonic and Marxist choices, I knew I would withdraw."

An examination of Esalen’s curricula and projects, however, reveals the artifice of this divide as an interpretive model. Though the organization emphasized the importance of subjective personal experience, in Gestalt therapy and encounter group, Esalen was never solely the domain of either hippies or middle age, upper-middle-class, upwardly mobile, hip white American “seekers.” Though hippies may have viewed Esalen as an allied organization, and though the hills of Big Sur may have, for awhile, became a hippie Shangri La, it is probably more accurate to interpret Esalen as standing on a cultural fault-line between the self and the social. Esalen, after all, did have a social conscience and advocates of “human potential” attempted to use their methods to engage issues of racism, the social construction of gender roles, and education, among other things. Furthermore, to view Esalen as primarily countercultural is to ignore the ways in which the organization served the business community, served the United States Army, and in later years, forged cooperative bonds between the United States and the Soviet Union. In an interview for Psychology Today conducted by Murphy’s

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582 Thompson, At the Edge of History, 37.
583 From the beginning Murphy was sensitive to charges that Esalen was socially irrelevant. In the first Esalen Institute Newsletter (undated), Murphy wrote that he wished to shatter the myth that “Esalen consists solely of encounter groups, hot baths and massage at Big Sur. Beyond the continually widening range of workshops and seminars in Big Sur, programs are now underway at Agnews State Hospital, in elementary and secondary schools in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, at Stanford, at the University of California at Santa Cruz and San Francisco State College, and in a variety of activities in San Francisco – including ongoing work with interracial confrontation. Esalen Institute Newsletter, Vol I, No. 1. Esalen Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara, California.
584 In the 1980s, Esalen organized its Soviet-American Exchange Program that was bankrolled by the Rockefeller Foundation, American Express, Apple Computers, the MacArthur Foundation, Pepsico Inc., Steve Wozniak and toy manufacturer, Henry Dakin. Dubbed “hot-tub diplomacy,” the program arranged for a number of cooperative efforts with Soviet political officials, scientists, and medical researchers. These efforts included an agreement with the Soviet Ministry of Health to work with American researchers on drugs and alcohol addiction; public discussions
old friend, George Leonard, Murphy states, in fact, “Most people who visit Esalen are highly active in public affairs. They’re people on the front lines of community service – schoolteachers, drug counselors, priests, psychotherapists, nurses and doctors.”

It is a premise of this work that the counterculture derived not merely from alternative cultural trends, such as Beat culture, with its emphasis on Eastern spirituality, or African-American jazz culture via rock ‘n roll, with its emphasis on hedonism and spontaneity, but that its widespread emergence in the middle of the 1960s is also due to the work and concerns of people very much at the “center” of American cultural life. Esalen emerged as a project from the American Academy of Asian Studies and the Academy, though stocked with a faculty of mystic intellectuals, was financed by people, such as Louis Gainsborough, Claire Giannini Hoffmann, and Richard Gump, who, though interested in Asian culture, also saw a practical, worldly advantage in introducing the United States to Asian culture.

The Curriculum

By the mid-1960s, Murphy and Price formalized Esalen’s curriculum into six more or less related areas of study and practice. In the Esalen catalogs of the early 1970s these are listed as psychosynthesis, the human body and structural integration, transpersonal explorations, gestalt, and interpersonal workshops (encounter group). Each of these broad categories address the concerns for personal authenticity that were central to the earlier criticisms of the social

critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists of the 1950s, while also consistent with the theories and concerns of the faculty of the American Academy of Asian Studies, as well as Sri Aurobindo. The development of these practices, therefore, can be understood as a way of addressing those criticisms, as outlined in earlier chapters. Though practices such as gestalt therapy or “psychosynthesis” never became day-to-day mainstays of the American middle-class, the spread of human potential ideas into American culture became widespread enough for critics, such as Lasch, to argue that the United States had become a narcissistic, therapeutic culture. To the extent that this is true, it due, at least in part, to the work of Murphy, Price, Leonard, and Esalen.

In the fall, 1972, catalog Esalen’s curriculum is described in the following ways:

**Psychosynthesis**

Psychosynthesis is an inclusive and positive conception of man that considers him dynamically as a being in a process of personal growth within an evolving universe. It includes the superconscious as well as the libido, the imagination as well as the complexes, the will as well as the instinctual drives. More than a theory, it is a way of looking at man; a practical working method which leads to greater unity, which can be used for harmonizing the many often conflicting elements of our inner life. Psychosynthesis is not limited to awareness, expansion or experience – it is also a way of pulling it all together, an approach which fosters the balanced development of body, feelings and mind and their harmonious integration around a unifying center of being and awareness, the Transpersonal Self. Psychosynthesis assists each individual in reaching toward this higher Self, and helps him use its energy and guidance to bring about a more joyful and effective actualization of the unfolding meaning and value of his life.

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587 Former California State historian, Kevin Starr, claims, “We’re all different because of Esalen.” According to a recent Los Angeles Times articles, Starr “particularly credits the institute for popularizing Eastern teachings and making them part of a California sensibility that would eventually influence the nation: a respect for mind-body connections, holistic health, explorations of interior spiritual and psychological landscapes.” Teresa Watanabe. “Esalen’s Identity Crisis,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 2004, 114.
588 Esalen Catalog, Fall 1972, Volume 10, Number 4, pg. 14. Graduate Theological Union archives.
Psychosynthesis chooses among a large number of methods and techniques those that are most appropriate to each existential situation.

**The Human Body**

AKIDO is a Japanese art of self defense with the emphasis placed on centering, harmony and blending. It is presented as a physical manifestation of energy and spiritual Laws of the Universe.

THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE is concerned with the integration of posture and movement. Alexander discovered that a basic correction of balance, and an accompanying reduction in stress occurs when that particular relationship of the head to the neck which permits ‘the greatest possible lengthening of the spine in each and every act’ is freely maintained. This re-education is not accomplished by physical exercises or self-manipulative positioning, but by means of a conditioning procedure which alters the body image and through it the capacity for postural stability.

BIOENERGETIC ANALYSIS attempts to understand the life of the body through its expression of vitality, gesture, emotion, feeling and relationship. The body is viewed as an energetic process that participates as the world in the world of instinctual, social, imaginative and creative realms. Bionergetics seeks to develop an individual’s range of expression by working through this energetic process.

MASSAGE at Esalen is seen and taught as a caring relationship between two people. Consideration is given first to the feelings and the sensory experience of both partners, and after that to technique. Workshops are attended by both couples and singles.

POLARITY THERAPY is an intensive pressure-point massage system similar in both theory and practice to Chinese acupuncture. Developed and synthesized by Dr. Randolph Stone from Oriental traditions many centuries old, its purpose is to realign posture and to release blocked energy throughout the body. Although advanced work in polarity therapy requires extensive training, a number of its more basic techniques are accessible to the interested layman.

SENSORY AWARENESS is Charlotte Selver’s name for the work she studied with Elsa Gindler in Berlin and brought to the United States in 1938. Workshops in Sensory Awareness aim at a state of intellectual quiet in which each activity can be fully felt and allowed to find its natural way, free of inhibitions, techniques and images. When ideas are stilled, sense perceptions coming from the entire organism enable the person to function authentically, according to his nature, in all situations. Closely akin, in its pure form, to the practice of zen, Sensory Awareness brings the essential character of meditation to every aspect of daily living.

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589 Ibid, pg. 12.
TAI-CHI CHUAN is an ancient Chinese exercise discipline practices for health, meditation, energy flow and self-defense. The slow, flowing movements of this ‘shadow boxing’ comprise the oldest and ‘softest’ of the Asian martial arts. Developed from the Chinese practice of nei kung, or inner exercise, it is part of the system of Taoist yoga. The term tai chi can be translated as ‘grand ultimate’ and is expressed by the familiar symbol of yang and yin. It is thus rooted in the Chinese philosophy of change as expressed in the I Ching.

**Structural Integration**\(^{590}\)

By realigning the body structure, the Rolf method of structural integration attempts to release excessive tensions so that the person may experience greater physical and emotional freedom and balance. The assumption is that a person’s body and set are a mirror of his emotional past as well as a result of physical trauma. Structural integration is a process of direct physical manipulation and deep massage; working with a trained practitioner, the process is usually completed within ten individual sessions.

**Transpersonal**\(^{591}\)

Transpersonal generally refers to transcendence, mystical experience, peak experience and parapsychological phenomena.

**Interpersonal**\(^{592}\)

The ground rules of encounter are that participants be open and honest in a group setting, that they avoid mere theorizing and instead talk about their feeling and perceptions. There is often an emphasis on eliciting emotions which lead to positive or negative confrontations rather than away from them. The focus of encounter is to explore interpersonal relations. Over the past years encounter, as practiced at Esalen, has evolved into a broad approach incorporating several related disciplines to achieve its aims.

\(^{590}\) Ibid, pg. 5.  
\(^{591}\) Ibid, pg. 9.  
\(^{592}\) Ibid, pg. 4.
Techniques and insights gained from gestalt, sensory awareness, bioenergetics, massage, movement and structural integration are all part of Esalen’s encounter groups today.

Though Murphy would later repudiate psychosynthesis, it must be noted how the language of this particular form, as well as the overall emphasis on the human body and forms of massage, such as rolfing, dovetail with Aurobindo’s notions of an “evolving universe” and the need for a harmonized approach to spiritual practice that emphasizes the body, the mind, and the emotions. In this way the Esalen approach is also fully consistent with the work of the American Academy of Asian Studies, where Chaudhuri, Spiegelberg, and Watts insisted on the importance of recognizing “the divine” within the material. The focus of both gestalt and encounter group therapy, furthermore, is consistent with the theme of personal authenticity that the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists of the 1950s complained was lacking in the Organization Man. The curriculum of the Esalen Institute, so closely associated with the counterculture, thereby displays a direct response to widespread criticism pointed at the middle-American mainstream in earlier decades.

**Finances, Government, and the Business Community**

Though it is difficult to gauge the degree to which the human potential movement of the 1960s and 1970s may still play a role in American culture, or in American business practice, it

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593 Murphy later complained to Walter Truett Anderson that psychosynthesis, like est and Dianetics, became destructive because it combined authoritarianism with psychological insight and thus became a form of spiritual tyranny. [Michael Murphy interview - audio] Anderson, Walter Truett, HPA Mss 2, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara, AS1816A/CS, Murphy, Michael, March 26, 1981.
nonetheless remains true that many American corporations continue to utilize motivational speakers and even some of the most unusual practices derived from this cultural trend. In a November, 2001, *Los Angeles Times* article, Roy Rivenburg discusses the ways in which companies, such as Burger King, Latitude Communications in Santa Clara, California, Genentech, and Adobe Systems, Inc., subject their employees to practices that derive from Esalen, the human potential movement, and even transpersonal psychology. Burger King literally had employees walk upon hot coals, Rivenburg claims, “in order to boost moral and teamwork.”\(^{594}\) Such a practice, which owes more to transpersonal psychology than to the human potential movement as derived from humanistic psychology, nonetheless demonstrates the enduring interest by corporations in the type of work that Esalen pioneered.

It cannot be overemphasized that the human potential movement, and in some measure the counterculture, derived from the work of the humanistic psychologists who, like the social critics and cultural critics of the 1950s, were responding to the widespread idea that large and influential American institutions, such as corporations, created emotionally quashed, fearful, and socially conformist individuals.\(^{595}\) As Regina E. Holloman writes, “A number of scholars view the development of the encounter movement as a response to the general problem of alienation in advanced industrial systems, and the desire of alienated individuals for involvement and interrelatedness.”\(^{596}\) In response to this alienation, or perhaps in response to being continually told by scholars that white-collar employees tended toward alienation, American executives, and sometimes their employees, underwent encounter group therapy at institutions such as Esalen.

In *Look’s* 1966 “California” issue, Leonard noted the following:

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\(^{595}\) See previous chapter.
Many scientists and administrators, reared in the older ways, did not know how to be open, how to own up to their own feeling. What to do? Several corporations, bent on productivity, set about the business of systematically teaching new modes of human relations. They engaged behavioral scientists to hold group sessions (modeled roughly after the T-Groups developed by the National Training Laboratory in Bethel, Maine), lasting up to a week. Here, corporation employees could actually practice openness, confrontation, admission of emotional states, then continue their learning back on the job.

During the sessions, hardened leaders often end up revealing more of their deepest, dreaded, most carefully guarded secrets to their colleagues than they have ever revealed to their own wives. Some shed tears of sadness over the essential loneliness of their lives; others weep with the relief and joy of being able to let go of long repressed hostility or anxiety. *And the sky does not fall in.*\(^{597}\) (His italics.)

From the beginning, Murphy and Price struggled against competing characterizations of Esalen as either hopelessly preposterous or dangerously subversive. When Esalen was not thought of as, in the words of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, a “touchy-feely new age spa and psycho-babble conference center on the Pacific known for bare buns and mind-body twaddle,” it was sometimes accused of being “the fountainhead of human potential values subversive to traditional social forms….”\(^{598}\) In fact, however, Esalen was a business that was taken seriously not only by corporations intending to use its methods to increase organizational efficiency, but even by the United States government which sent officers from the Sixth Army to Esalen, in the early 1970s, as part of a program to fight alcohol and drug abuse in the military. The people who frequented Esalen’s various workshops and programs were generally not “hippies” but, as noted

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in a 1967 *New York Times* article, professional people such as “doctors, social workers, clinical psychologists, teachers, students, business executives, (and) engineers…”

As the “innkeepers” of Esalen, Mike Murphy and Richard Price were business people. This is not to suggest that their primary objectives were economic; they were not and their poor administration of Esalen’s finances in the 1960s speaks to this. Murphy was primarily interested, as a former student of Watts, Chaudhuri, and Spiegelberg, in the practical transformation of human consciousness, and Price, as a formerly diagnosed schizophrenic, was devoted to creating a therapeutic institution. Nonetheless, even Leonard, who took such exception to the idea that *Look*’s 1966 “California” issue represented Chamber of Commerce-type public relations writing, noted in that very issue the importance of encounter group work and the human potential movement to the American corporate class.

The presence of business clients at Esalen, and of corporate and foundation grants to the organization, was vital to Esalen’s survival. Through most of the 1960s, Murphy and Price directly administered the organization’s finances and Esalen constantly bled capital. Though in the organizations first years, Esalen’s budget grew on a yearly basis, its debt and expenses grew

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600 In a rather informal book comprised mainly of semi-autobiographical and philosophical musings, Frederick Perls noted, “Esalen started out as an inn with the special attraction of the hot tubs. When I came to Esalen it was still a public inn with a number of lectures and seminars starting, the bar and restaurant open to the public. The innkeepers were Mike Murphy and Dick Price. Now we are an expanding private institute with the directors Mike Murphy and Dick Price.” (His italics.) See Frederick S. Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1972), 102.
601 As someone subjected to numerous sessions of electro-shock and insulin therapy, Price devoted himself to promoting Esalen as a place for alternative approaches to treating psychoses. One of the programs that Esalen organized toward this end was the Agnews Project, in cooperation with the National Institute of Mental Health. This was a three year research project designed to see how patients might recover without the use of such painful techniques as electro-shock, or even potentially, without medication. Though certainly inconclusive, its findings were written up in a study titled, “Schizophrenics for Whom Phenothiazines May Be Contraindicated or Unnecessary.” Anderson, *Upstart Spring*, 217 – 218. Also see: Wade Hudson. Richard Price interview, 1985. http://www.esalen.org/air/essays/dick_price.htm
This was due to the fact that although Murphy and Price were business people, they were not very good business people and could, thus, not manage to draw themselves salaries during the first five years. It should be noted, in fact, that when Frederick Perls arrived at Esalen in 1963 to, on the invitation of Esalen leader Bernard Gunther, participate in a workshop, the ailing old psychologist decided that he liked the area and that he intended, this time without invitation, to stay. In his memoir, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, Perls wrote, “The target Esalen scored a bull’s-eye with the arrow Fritz Perls. A landscape comparable to Elath; beautiful people on the staff as in Kyoto. An opportunity to teach. The gypsy found a home and soon a house. He found something else as well. A respite for a sick heart.”

Perls, however, did not exactly “find” his house. Murphy and Price, though they did not initially offer Perls a permanent position on the faculty, found Perls so compelling, and in fact intimidating, that they not only allowed the cantankerous inventor of Gestalt to give *himself* a faculty position, they even spent $60,000 building him a house. Though Murphy had much of the salesman in him, he and Price had little of the accountant. In a 1981 interview, Murphy acknowledged that they allowed Esalen’s finances to slip further and further into the “red” throughout the 1960s and that a Ford Foundation grant, in 1967, was responsible, at least in part, for keeping the organization afloat.

It was not until 1971, when Murphy and Price recruited retired millionaire, Andy Gagarin, to administer Esalen’s finances that the organization began to make money. Anderson notes that Gagarin was “a hard-nosed industrialist (who) made a tremendous difference in the

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602 [Michael Murphy interview - audio] Anderson, Walter Truett, HPA Mss 2, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara, AS1816A/CS, Murphy, Michael, March 26, 1981.
604 Perls, *In and Out the Garbage Pail*, 145.
605 [Michael Murphy interview - audio] Anderson, Walter Truett, HPA Mss 2, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara, AS1816A/CS, Murphy, Michael, March 26, 1981.
way things were run, a difference that not everyone found appealing.  

Ironically, Gagarin, with the help of psychologist and Esalen executive, Julian Silverman, created a business atmosphere utterly at odds with the egalitarian type of organizational theory, or “participative management,” that Esalen, and Abraham Maslow, promoted to the business community. Esalen encounter group leader, Will Shutz, in fact noted that Esalen, “looked like a 1932 Ford plant. Run in the worst possible way: very authoritarian, very arbitrary, very crappy.”

Nonetheless, Murphy credits Gagarin with saving the organization. Just as Gagarin did so, however, the New York Times accused the organization of unseemly profiteering.

“Organizing and leading encounter groups,” the Times pointedly argued, “has become fantastically profitable. It could even be regarded as the growth industry of the nineteen seventies.” This upset Murphy. Responding sarcastically in Esalen’s spring 1972 catalog, he complained that the New York Times article “then went on to speak of the great heaps of money that Esalen Institute is presumably making because it has more encounter groups than anyone else does. And then there are also the other fabulous business schemes for which we are famed: gestalt, rolfing, psychosynthesis, and that newest of financial bonanzas – lectures!” Murphy pointed out that in 1971, Esalen actually lost $125,822. By the next year, however, with

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606 Walter Truett Anderson, Upstart Spring, 244.
607 Ibid, 245.
608 [Michael Murphy interview - audio] Anderson, Walter Truett, HPA Mss 2, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara, California, AS1816A/CS, Murphy, Michael, March 26, 1981. In the 1998 edition of Maslow on Management, co-editors Deborah Stephens and Gary Heil note that “Michael Murphy doesn’t profess to understand the world of corporate America, yet he is an astute and successful businessman.” If so, Murphy clearly must have learned something from Gagarin on how to manage a for-profit organization. See: Maslow on Management, 193.
610 Ibid.
611 Ibid.
Gagarin in control of the finances, Esalen finally began to economically prosper and the organization earned a total of $229,635.  

By the early 1970s, Murphy was a “revolutionary of consciousness” developing, understandably enough, a sharp eye on “the bottom line.” Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, however, Esalen invited corporate executives to Big Sur for the purposes of teaching them “participative management” and encounter group therapy designed to increase organization efficiency and harmonize institutional relationships. The radical organization that supposedly subverted “traditional social forms” and helped foster the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, actually catered to a quite traditional social type, the American business person.

In order to facilitate this aspect of Esalen’s overall operations Murphy and Price put Bob Kriegal in charge of the Esalen Consulting Service. Kriegal, who was also director of Esalen’s fundraising activities in “Friends of Esalen,” had for a number of years served as a consultant to various businesses and management teams and had, as the spring 1972 Esalen catalog states, “lectured at schools and growth centers around the country.” He also ran his own Esalen workshops for executives along with his partner, Frank Rubenfeld, a clinical psychologist on the faculty of the New York Institute of Gestalt Therapy.

The purpose of the Esalen Consulting Service was to humanize personnel relations within various types of institutions, including corporations; a trend initiated by humanistic psychologists.

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612 Esalen Catalog. May – August, 1973. Vol XI, No. 3, pg. 4. Esalen Collection, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. In the undated, un-numbered Esalen Institute Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 1, presumably written in 1962, or perhaps 1963, Murphy already displayed a certain sensitivity to the question of financial profits. In that newsletter, under the heading “Some Myths We Want to Shatter,” the number one such myth is “That we are making money. We are not. Income pays for the basic cost of our seminar programs, but not for research, development, scholarships, or experimental projects described below.” Esalen Institute Newsletter, Vol I, No. 1. Esalen Collection, Department of Special Collections, University Libraries, University of California, Santa Barbara, California.

613 Esalen, in fact, even held workshops specifically designed for the “problems” of having great wealth and group therapy workshops designed specifically for millionaires (“On Being Rich”) was a part of Esalen’s curriculum. See: “Human Potential: The Revolution in Feeling.” Time, November 9, 1970, Vol 96, No. 19, pg. 55.
in the late 1950s and that, as part of a larger mid-late twentieth century cultural trend, also
infused the counterculture and movements of the 1960s. As early as 1957 the New York Times
announced that a “vogue” was developing for “personality schools for bosses.” Companies
that experimented with more humane personnel management techniques in the late 1950s
included the United States Steel Corporation, General Electric, as well as many smaller, lesser
known companies. Executives in these companies hoped that by creating a freer work-place
environment their employees would increase communication levels and apply greater initiative
and creativity to their work, thus potentially boosting profits. As the Times noted in 1957:

Thousands of executives are now taking courses in private management classes and at
universities in an effort to learn this ‘permissive’ approach. They are instructed by
psychologist-teachers on three progressively complex levels: first, how to encourage free
speech at staff meetings and conferences; second, psychological ways of improving man-
to-man communications, and third, the frankly psychiatric method of group therapy to
change the fundamental attitudes that may have made an individual executive feared or
disliked – or both – by his subordinates.

By the mid-1960s, with the Civil Rights movement in full swing, the Esalen Institute
offered interracial encounter group work for executives designed specifically to encourage
empathy among white executives toward employees of color. Though it is impossible to
determine the degree to which such efforts may have been successful, the attempt, at least, is
noteworthy. In such sessions white executives sometimes donned black masks (in a somewhat

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616 Eugene Taylor notes, “There has been a longstanding relationship between psychology and business dating back
to the early 1900s that has always been more pragmatic than experimental. Efficiency experts, aptitude, interest, and
ability testing, and the psychology of advertising have been some of the primary links. In the past fifty years the
themes have been quality control through better management strategies, a focus on the worker as a person rather
than a unit, the nature of relationships between people, how different types of people work in different
organizations, stress reduction in the work place, and how such topics as systems theory are applied to the
understanding of organizations. Numerous counter-culture psychotherapists are management consultants with
embarrassing echo of the minstrel show) in order to role-play black employees, while their
“Negro subordinates,” in the words of Jane Howard, “wore white masks, switching roles in an
effort to dramatize and thereby lessen office misunderstandings.\textsuperscript{618}

In the 1967 Esalen catalog, under the title, “Racial Confrontation as Transcendental
Experience,” George Leonard addressed the purpose of the interracial encounter group therapy
practiced by executives and employees at Esalen:

Racial confrontation can be an example for all kinds of human encounter. When it goes
deep enough – past superficial niceties and role playing – it can be a vehicle for
transcendental experience. Price Cobbs, a Negro psychiatrist from San Francisco, and
George Leonard, a white journalist and author born and raised in Georgia, will conduct a
marathon group encounter between races. The group will try to get past the roles and
attitudes that divide its participants, so that they may encounter at a level beyond race.\textsuperscript{619}

For the most part, however, the goal of encounter group work by executives at Esalen had
nothing to do with race, and everything to do with the importance of communication to
institutional efficiency and, therefore, to profits. Esalen’s interest in encounter group, in fact,
developed directly from American corporate engagement with the practice, not the other way
around. In 1963, only about a year into Esalen’s existence, Murphy attended a five-day
encounter group session sponsored by the American Management Association in Carmel,
California and, according to Anderson, “found the workshop as much of a mind-blower as
psychedelic drugs.”\textsuperscript{620} Be that as it may, American corporate executives were not interested in “a
mind-blower,” but in institutional success and encounter group therapy, or “sensitivity training,”
was viewed as a means toward that end. The 1960s, in fact, represented the high-water mark of

\textsuperscript{617} Ibid, 7.
\textsuperscript{618} Jane Howard, “Inhibitions Thrown to the Winds,” \textit{Life}, 12 July 1968, 65, no. 2, 57. See also: “Human Potential:
corporate interest in encounter group therapy and many corporate executives engaged such practices at Esalen.

It was not only American corporations, however, that worked with the Esalen institute, even the United States government worked with the organization. In 1972, Murphy and Price arranged for American Army officers to participate in the Sixth Army’s Drug and Alcoholic Abuse Control Program held in Big Sur under the auspices of Esalen. The symposium, developed jointly by Esalen and the military, not only included lectures on the medical and psychological properties of addiction, it also gave United States’ Army officers a sampling of gestalt therapy, sensory awareness work, meditation, massage, tai chi, yoga, and rolfing. According to the summer 1972 Esalen catalog, the program, which may or may not have actually helped reduce rates of addiction within the American military, was a great success, noting, “the energy was as high or higher than it has even been at Hot Springs. The “we” and “they” melted into a big “us,” and the tone was set for the whole week.”

Conclusion

Until fairly recently most historical interpretations of the “long” 1960s have focused on the rise of student activism, the counterculture, and the civil rights movement. The impression created by scholars such as Todd Gitlin, Terry Anderson, W.J. Rorabaugh, and others, is that the “real” stories of this period are the stories of left-leaning political activism and the counterculture, student dissent against the Vietnam War, and the struggle for civil rights. The

620 Anderson, Upstart Spring, 84.
622 Ibid, pg. 2.
1960s, in the view of these scholars, distinguished itself from the 1950s in a manner that suggests a cultural and political struggle between binary opposites. Nick Bromell, in *Tomorrow Never Knows*, Morris Dickstein, in *Gates of Eden*, and Ruth Rosen, in *The World Split Open*, repeat the conventional binary interpretation of the 1960s as a time of liberating political and cultural reaction against a conformist and repressed 1950s Cold War society. Bromell maintains that a “rigid, sexless self-control… prevailed during the fifties.” Dickstein notes that the “‘tranquilized’ fifties [was typified by a] stringent sense of decorum [and] political complacency.” It was, he argues, “an Age of Anxiety [in which] behind its material growth hovered a quiet despair.” Rosen claims, “the decade quarantined dissent and oozed conformity” and that just beneath the happy middle-class material culture of the fifties’ “wholesomeness, cleanliness, fecundity, and fidelity” lurked pervasive and widespread “anxiety and confusion.”

Theses scholars, and others, echo the original criticisms of the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists of the early Cold War period. Where they may be mistaken, however, is in interpreting the widespread 1960s liberatory ethos as a reaction against the supposed conformity of the 1950s derived from “alternative” cultures, such as the Beats. What scholars have tended to overlook are the ways in which changes in American culture in the 1960s owe something not just to the left-radical movements and the counterculture, nor even to the rise of the New Right, but the interplay between the radical and the “mainstream” during this period. The lines between the political left and the political right, or between the counterculture

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625 Ibid, 50.
and the “silent majority,” were never clean, never distinct, and the rise of the counterculture owes much not only to African-American urban culture, to rock ‘n roll, or the bohemia of the 1950s, but to the mainstream itself.

The Esalen Institute was not so much a product of the counterculture, as it was a product of middle-class concerns over the supposed conformity and inauthenticity of the “average” American. Although the theoretical influences of the Esalen Institute derive from Asian religious thinking and from humanistic psychology, the people attracted to the organization came primarily from the American professional class. To recognize this is to recognize that the counterculture was not only at odds with the mainstream, but that the mainstream, out of which the counterculture partially derived, was very much in tension with itself.
ARCHIVES

Esalen Institute Papers
Graduate Theological Union
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, California  94709

Humanistic Psychology Archives
Esalen Collection and Walter Truett Anderson Collection
Department of Special Collections
University of California, Santa Barbara
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Chapter 6
Traversing the Labyrinth:
The Human Potential Movement and the Episcopal Church in California

“In Christian mystical tradition, knowledge of self and knowledge of God are one.”
- Lauren Artress, Walking a Sacred Path (29)

The mid-century notion of a diminished American self influenced a variety of cultural sites in American society throughout the third quarter of the twentieth century and acted as a conduit through which notions of the human potential traveled. Rather than taking the idea of the conformist American, or the “empty self,” or “hollow self,” as a reason for cynicism, by the 1960s many humanistic psychologists and alternative religious theorists saw the presence of such human types as representing an incentive to promote positive cultural change. Humanistic psychologists, such as Abraham Maslow, proposed alterations in American business practice to foster the potential “self-actualization” of American workers.627 Other psychologists suggested that the American home was a place within which progressive child-rearing practices could foster the development of children that would be freer, more inquisitive, more self-confident, and more self-reliant, than earlier generations.628 The alternative religious thinkers at the American Academy of Asian Studies proposed a variety of religious practices designed to free the self from the supposedly conforming, or crushing, influences of mainline religions. They therefore suggested approaches to religion that were ecumenical, life affirming, and intending to bring

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about a mystical apprehension of the divine. The counterculture developed, in part, out of this project, as did the human potential movement as a religious movement.

This trend, however, toward a more authentic, more autonomous, liberated sense of personhood, also found its way into mainstream religious institutions, such as the Episcopal faith. Through James A. Pike, fourth bishop of the Episcopal diocese of California, many of the theoretical strands that fed into the counterculture and human potential movement, also traveled into the Episcopal faith. Pike’s theology, which was heavily influenced by his friend and teacher, Paul Tillich, contained many of the same ideas described earlier in this work. Pike, along with the social critics, cultural critics, and humanistic psychologists, believed in the idea of a diminished American self. He, along with the alternative religious thinkers, counterculturalists, and advocates of the human potential movement, also believed in a universal mystical truth at the heart of world religions, a synthesis of the sacred with the secular, and the significance of a mythological understanding of theological narratives. Although some would argue that Pike left his post at Grace Cathedral under a cloud of disgrace, his influence, nonetheless, is readily discernible within the Episcopate of California at Grace Cathedral.

The Episcopal faith, both in the United States and elsewhere, is ecumenical, catholic, apostolic, liturgical, and evangelical. It is ecumenical because it accepts the validity of other faiths, even while viewing its own theology as “universal” and, thus, catholic. It is apostolic

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because it views its priesthood and bishopry as representing a lineage, the apostolic succession, derived from the original apostles of Jesus. It is liturgical because at the heart of Episcopal religious practice resides the ceremony of communion, the ritual ingestion of the “body and blood” of Christ, and the participation of the laity, via the *Book of Common Prayer*, in regular religious service. It is evangelical because the “saving of souls” remains among its highest priorities.

Despite sporadic forays into the nineteenth and early twentieth century reform movements by Episcopal clergymen enamored of the Social Gospel, by the 1950s the Episcopal Church was complacent, comfortable, and firmly entrenched into the post-war American status quo. Its membership, while generally liberal, tended also to be wealthy, white, and uninterested in social change or movements for social justice. This view is confirmed by the trustees’ minutes of the third largest Episcopal cathedral in the United States, San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral. From the mid-1950s through the early 1960s, even in liberal San Francisco, the trustees’ minutes indicate nothing of exceptional concern. There is no reference to the Civil Rights movement, nor to juvenile delinquency, nor McCarthyism, nor poverty. There is no reference to “the social problem,” nor national political problems, nor even much reference to the ideological-theological mission of the faith. Mainly reflecting the financial intake and outlay of the Cathedral, the trustees’ minutes reflect day-to-day concerns over such things as salaries, purchases, and structural repairs. Murals needed to be purchased, as did additional hassocks for the priests and tapestries for the Cathedral walls and Christmas cards for the laity. A cracked bell in the tower needed repair. The Cathedral’s heating system needed repair. A nearby tennis court was converted into a parking lot.

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631 Grace Cathedral Trustees’ Minutes, Grace Cathedral Archives.
On the morning of May 15, 1958, however, James A. Pike walked into this rather tranquil atmosphere, becoming the fourth Episcopal bishop coadjutor of the California diocese, and thus taking responsibility for the development of Grace Cathedral and, in some measure, for the souls of the laity.\(^{632}\) Between that day and his departure from the position, in 1966, Bishop Pike presided over significant changes in the nature of the diocese and over the style of religious practice within Grace Cathedral. Throughout the early and mid-1960s, the Episcopalians of Grace Cathedral, like people throughout the rest of the country, struggled with a series of difficult choices over the role of women in the faith, over how to respond to the Civil Rights movement and the rise of black nationalism, over how the church should respond to the hippie counterculture, the war in Vietnam, and the problem of poverty in American society. None of this, of course, is surprising or unusual.

What is surprising, however, is the degree to which Grace adopted an outward style of faith reflective of the human potential movement and, in some measure, the counterculture. Today, if one rides the cable car up Jones Street from Market to the top of Nob Hill, and traverses the steps of Grace Cathedral to its elaborate and imported heavy European doors, one is confronted by a pair of rather unusual installations. Both just to the east of the Cathedral, as well as directly upon entrance, the administrators of the diocese of California placed a pair of “labyrinths” designed to facilitate meditation. Lauren Artress, who served as Canon Pastor to Grace in the late 1980s, and the person most responsible for the placing of these labyrinths at Grace, writes the following in her book, *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Practice*, “The labyrinth is a spiritual tool meant to awaken us to the deep rhythm that unites us to ourselves and to the Light that calls from within. In surrendering to the winding

path, the soul finds healing and wholeness… The labyrinth is a sacred place and can give us firsthand experiences of the Divine.”

Without putting too fine a point on it, it is clear that the labyrinths at Grace represent outward signs of the influence of the human potential movement, and the counterculture, within one of the most mainstream and prominent religious organizations in the United States. The cultural movement that found expression in humanistic psychology, in the 1950s, and the human potential movement, in the 1960s, and that flowed into various aspects of American life in the third-quarter of the twentieth century, such as the counterculture, progressive child-rearing practices, and participatory business management, also took its place in some prominent American religious institutions, such as the Episcopal diocese of California. It was Bishop Pike, however, who laid the groundwork for this transition to take place.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Pike, along with such figures as Billy Graham, Bishop Sheen, and Cardinal Francis O’Connor, was among the most high profile and influential religious figures in the United States. He was also among the most controversial. Pike supported Martin Luther King, Jr. and the movement for civil rights in the 1950s. In the 1960s, he advocated the ordination of women into the priesthood. He befriended Bay Area bohemians, such as Alan Watts. He was a regular at the Esalen Institute, where he befriended Michael Murphy, and held seminars with other reform-minded theologians, such as Harvey Cox. He opposed the war in Vietnam. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, he recommended LSD to the laity. And, through his skepticism towards certain religious dogmas, such as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the bodily ascension of Jesus, incurred the wrath of many of his co-religionists who endeavored, throughout the 1960s, to charge him with heresy in order to

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dispatch him from his post as diocesan bishop. By 1969, the year he fell to his death from a cliff in the Qumran region of the West Bank, Pike was alienated from the faith and pursuing two projects that he believed interrelated: a search for the actual philosophy of Jesus, which he believed to be gnostic, and an ongoing attempt to verify the reality of psychic phenomena. In short, Pike was an outspoken reformer, iconoclast, and radical theologian who sought to reform the Episcopal Church in order to prevent it from declining into what he considered well-mannered irrelevancy. Speaking to the New York Times in the spring prior to his death, he described the church as a “sick – even dying – institution.” “The poor may inherit the earth,” Pike claimed, “but it would appear that the rich – or at least the rigid, respectable and safe – will inherit the church.”

The Diminished Self

In considering the influence of Pike on the diocese it is probably best to begin with his friend and teacher, the famous theologian, Paul Tillich. David L. Holmes, in his history of the Episcopal faith, notes that Tillich represents one of the most significant influences on the Episcopal Church in the twentieth century. Certainly Tillich held enormous influence over Pike, whom he taught at New York’s Union Theological Seminary in the mid-1940s and with whom he developed a life-long friendship. In the late 1940s, while Pike served as the Chairman of the Department of Religion at Columbia University, he hired Tillich as a professor

634 Mary Crawford, “Pikes Parting Word to the Church” San Francisco Chronicle, September 5, 1966, 8.
637 Robertson, 47 – 48.
of theology for that university. Pike, in fact, held Tillich in such esteem that, during the reconstruction of Grace Cathedral in the early 1960s, he arranged for Tillich’s likeness to be installed in stained glass within the “Theological Reformers” window. Like Holmes, Pike also believed that Tillich held enormous influence within the faith. Pike wrote, “He was attracted by the philosophical, sacramental and mythological aspects of its heritage; but he was put off by its pretensions, its stuffiness and its staidness... he and Martin Buber were the most significant contemporary influences on thinking in the Episcopal Church.”

A comprehensive consideration of Tillich’s theology is far beyond the scope of this project, nonetheless it is important to note that in certain crucial ways Tillich’s criticisms of the diminished self reflected that of the social critics, cultural critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers discussed earlier. Tillich believed, along with those thinkers, that humanity in the twentieth century had nonetheless fallen into a state of inauthenticity, conformity, emptiness, and decline. In *The Courage to Be*, echoing the Marxist critique of the alienating nature of industrial capitalism, he wrote the following in 1952:

> “Participation in the productive process demands conformity and adjustment to the ways of social production. This necessity became stronger the more uniform and comprehensive the methods of production became. Technical society grew into fixed patterns. Conformity in those matters which conserve the smooth functioning of the big machine of production and consumption increased with the increasing impact of the means of public communication. World political thinking, the struggle with collectivism,

640 Ibid, 127.
641 Ronald H. Stone notes that while “welcoming technical development, Tillich feared the dehumanizing effects of modern technological society... He saw the existential movement in Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche as a protest against the reduction of a person to a thing... Tillich hoped for the development of groups that could resist the mass conformity in modern society that compelled people to surrender their personal creativity... He hoped that the humanistic elements in society would insist on values other than those simply residing in the drive to push as far as possible. The nonhumanistic forces in society were prevalent, but because they were not self-sufficient, rebellion against them could be expected. Tillich did not live long enough to see the beginnings of mass revolt by American young people against the technological system...” Stone, *Paul Tillich’s Radical Social Thought* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1980), 144.
forced collectivist features on those who fought against them. This process is still going on and may lead to a strengthening of the conformist elements in the type of the courage to be as a part which is represented by America. Conformism might approximate collectivism, not so much in economic respects, and not too much in political respects, but very much in the pattern of daily life and thought… The one point, however, in which all criticisms agree is the threat to the individual self in the several forms of the courage to be as a part. It is the danger of loss of self which elicits the protest against them and gives rise to the courage to be oneself…”

In a 1956 article for *World Christian Education*, an organ of the World Council of Churches, Tillich repeated his earlier claim:

Man is supposed to be the master of his world and of himself. But actually he has become a part of the reality he has created, an object among objects, a thing among things, a cog within a universal machine to which he must adapt himself in order not to be smashed by it. But this adaptation makes him a means for ends which are means themselves, and in which an ultimate end is lacking. Out of the predicament of man in the industrial society the experience of emptiness and meaninglessness, of dehumanization and estrangement have resulted.

Although such alarming criticisms were fairly commonplace among a variety of intellectuals in the United States in the 1950s, Tillich arrived at such views in Germany decades prior to the publications of works such as *The Lonely Crowd* or *The Organization Man* or Spiegelberg’s *Living Religions of the World*, in which he, another student and friend of Tillich, aired very similar sentiments, as noted in chapter four. Spiegelberg, for example, wrote:

When we turn over the brightly colored pages of *Life* or *The Saturday Evening Post* we see everybody in the advertisements riding in cars; cooing over washing machines; and exulting in sanforized shirts. Everyone is happy; everyone smiles; and everyone is fifteen to thirty years old, healthy, ruddy-cheeked, having a swell time, and preserved from grief by Monuments of Eternity and air foam mattresses… It is comfortable and snug. But it is

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not secure. A second look is enough to convince us that the happy life so advertised is sheer, unadulterated boredom.  

Notice, furthermore, the striking similarity to this statement by Rollo May:

The clearest picture of the empty life is the suburban man, who gets up at the same hour every weekday morning, takes the same train to work in the city, performs the same task in the office, lunches at the same place, leaves the same tip for the waitress each day, comes home on the same train each night, has 2.3 children, cultivates a little garden, spends a two-week vacation at the shore every summer which he does not enjoy, goes to church every Christmas and Easter, and moves through a routine, mechanical existence year after year until he finally retires at sixty-five and very soon thereafter dies of heart failure, possibly brought on by repressed hostility. I have always had the secret suspicion, however, that he dies of boredom.

Spiegelberg’s colleague at the American Academy of Asian Studies, Haridas Chaudhuri, also concurred:

“Today we are living in an age of mass culture. We find overpowering, gigantic structures and institutions in society. Everything is huge, wherever we go. Pretty soon we discover we seem no longer like individuals but like numbers that have been given to us from the records. We may feel lost and become reduced to faceless, anonymous units of existence. This can happen at a factory, university, corporation or anywhere in mass society.

Tillich’s criticisms, however, concerning humanity’s “emptiness,” “meaninglessness,” “dehumanization,” and “estrangement” may have derived from his early Marxism, his disgust at the presence of poverty in the German nation, and his witnessing of the rise of National Socialism. After World War I, Tillich joined the highly fractious Christian socialist movement, as well as a small Berlin group, the “kairos circle,” which viewed Germany’s defeat not as a

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disaster, but as an opportunity to create, as one biographer writes, “new conditions for international survival and self-governance.”

By 1932, then a professor of theology at the University of Frankfurt and a member of the Social Democratic party, Tillich came to believe that the only hope of avoiding a national descent in to barbarism was through an alliance of socialists with centrist parties as a bulwark against both communism and National Socialism.

In *The Socialist Decision*, published that year, and promptly banned the next, he presciently wrote, “Should political romanticism and warlike nationalism become victorious, the self-destruction of European peoples is assured. The task of rescuing European society from a return to barbarism is given into the hands of socialism.”

As an outspoken opponent of the Nazi regime, Tillich’s days as a university professor in Germany were coming to a close. On April 1, 1933, while visiting Jewish friends in Potsdam, the SA occupied the University of Frankfurt and arrested all Marxists and Jews among the faculty and student body. By the middle of that month, Tillich found himself listed among the first wave of purged academicians, an honor that he held with pride throughout his life. In May, he had the unique and obviously disquieting experience of witnessing *The Socialist Decision* set aflame at a Nazi book-burning rally in Frankfurt. By the end of the year, he and his wife, Hannah, left Germany for the United States where, on the invitation of theologian

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648 Ibid, 126.
649 Ibid, 126.
650 Ibid, 130; It might also be noted that Tillich generally maintained close friendships to the Jewish communities in both Germany and the United States. Ronald Stone notes, “Tillich, of course, had many of his closest friendships with Jewish philosophers and scientists. He worked with Jewish intellectuals in Frankfurt, and he shared the early dismissal from the University of Frankfurt with his Jewish colleagues. His wartime participation in the Council for a Democratic Germany had as one of its goals continuing support for persecuted Jews, and in New York he continually found himself allied with Jewish causes. He came to abandon as inappropriate, Christian attempts to convert Jews, but continued to engage in dialogue with them about the Christ as well as politics. As a member of the American Palestine Committee, he adopted a position that can be regarded as a form of Christian support for Zionism.” See Stone, *Paul Tillich’s Radical Social Thought* (Atlanta, George: John Knox Press, 1980), 78.
Rheinhold Niebuhr, he took up a teaching position at the Union Theological Seminary.\textsuperscript{653} It was here, about a decade later, that he would meet the young attorney, turned seminarian, James A. Pike.

Tillich’s vision of the diminished self, like that of Pike’s, was shared not only by the social critics, cultural critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers in the middle of the twentieth century, but also by advocates of the human potential movement in the 1960s. George Leonard later expressed it this way:

“We have been taught in school that increasing human control of the nonhuman world has brought us leisure and art and culture and freedom from want. We have not been taught that control over nature has also meant an equivalent control over individual human beings. We have not been taught that whatever we have gained in dominance has been paid for with the stultification of consciousness, the atrophy of the senses, the withering away of being.”\textsuperscript{654}

In his biography, \textit{In and Out of the Garbage Pail}, Fritz Perls noted that at the Esalen Institute, “there was in the beginning an intensity of longing for redemption and salvation. The mystic, the esoteric, the supernatural, the extrasensory perception seem to fit into the spirit of the place. Yoga-meditation to get to a higher level of existence seems to coincide with the dismay with the urban humdrum existence. The discarded soul was making a commercial re-entry.”\textsuperscript{655}

\textsuperscript{652} Pauck, 132.
\textsuperscript{653} Ibid, 133 – 138.
\textsuperscript{655} Frederick S. Perls, \textit{In and Out of the Garbage Pail} (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1970) 102. This notion of the diminished self as connected to a desire for “redemption and salvation” is also implied in Mircea Eliade who decried that because most modern homes are not ritually sacralized upon taking up residency they become merely “a machine to live in.” Hence it takes its place among the countless machines mass-produced in industrial societies. The ideal house of the modern world must first of all be functional; that it, it must allow men to work and to rest in order that they may work.” See Eliade, \textit{The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion} (New York: Harcourt, Incorporated, 1957), 50.
In the summer of 1977, Berkeley’s Graduate Theological Union launched its Program for the Study of New Religious Movements in America. The so-called “new religions” included all the various groups that flourished in the United States and Europe in the 1960s and 1970s which incorporated Asian religious philosophy into a western context, including such trends as Transcendental Meditation, westernized Zen practice and organizations, westernized Hindu groups practicing various forms of yoga and meditation, the numerous alternative religious communes sprinkled throughout the West, groups and individuals devoted to the psychedelic experience as a religious practice, and so forth. These “new religions” represented the religious/mystical side of the human potential movement and most of the people involved in the Program for the Study of New Religious Movements in America were people either directly involved in the human potential movement, like George Leonard, or those sympathetic toward it, like Robert S. Ellwood and Theodore Roszak.

Not surprisingly, many of these thinkers explicitly cite a sense of diminished selfhood as one cause for the rise of the new religions in the 1960s and 1970s. Langdon Gilkey speaks of the “loss of self in modern culture” and of the elusiveness of “identity and personal reality” as the fundamental impulses driving the popularity of the “new religions.” This sentiment is perfectly consistent with, if not identical to, the diminished self thesis of the social critics, cultural critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers of the 1950s who are among the subjects of this study. It is also a sentiment, as demonstrated above, expressed in various places by Paul Tillich. Frederick Bird, another member of the Program for the Study of New Religious

657 Langdon Gilkey, “Toward a Religious Criterion of Religion” in Needleman, 133.
Movements in America, connects this sense of a diminished self to the desire among devotees of the new religions for an expanded sense of human authenticity.\footnote{Frederick Bird, “Charisma and Ritual in New Religious Movements” in Needleman, 173 – 174.} Jack Boozer, writing on “Tillich and the New Religious Movement,” suggests that Tillich approved the new religions precisely because the dominant culture “belittles the human” within the system of production and consumption and transforms the self “into objects and things” resulting in personal “emptiness, meaninglessness, dehumanization and estrangement.” \footnote{Jack Boozer, “Tillich and the New Religious Movement” in Adams, 231.}

The rise of the human potential movement, therefore, with its attendant “new religions,” was due, at least in part, to a widespread sense, among intellectuals and others, of a diminished and declining American self in need of redemption in the middle of the twentieth century. It hardly needs emphasizing that counterculturalists in general, and not merely those who joined one of the “new religions,” also largely held to this view. Although the literature by, and about, counterculturalists abound with examples, and although the diminished self as a countercultural issue has already been discussed in chapter three, perhaps this pithy comment from the underground magazine, \textit{Corpus}, will suffice as evidence:

“In our own society, rotten, unfulfilling work and regimented, coercive schools are the order of the day. Such conditions create terror, frustration, anomie. There develops a desperate search for identity and meaning.” \footnote{Arnie Sachar, \textit{Corpus}, December 16, 1969. (Unpaginated.)}

This sense, countercultural to the core and shared by people such as Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, and Gary Snyder, was also shared by Paul Tillich and James Pike. Further indications of Pike’s sympathy with the counterculture include, by the late 1960s, his penchant for wearing ties festooned with peace symbols or, on occasion, buttons proclaiming, “Write Your
Own Theology Here,” with an arrow pointing to a tiny rectangle.\footnote{Robertson, \textit{A Passionate Pilgrim}, photo spread in center of book shows Pike with his peace symbol tie (no page number); George Dugan, “Theologist Cites Fun in Religion: Finds ‘Comic Elan’ Stressed by All Churches” \textit{New York Times}, April 20, 1968, 36.} In a 1961 issue of \textit{The Pacific Churchman}, Pike is even quoted as recommending beat terminology as a descriptive of God. “Speaking of the demands of the modern culture,” \textit{The Pacific Churchman} noted, “Bishop Pike said that the Church needs to find a new language to address a modern age. ‘Even the ‘beats’ should not be overlooked in this search,’ he said; ‘take that phrase ‘the most,’” he said. ‘It’s a wonderful way of describing God.’”\footnote{“Bp. Pike and ‘Horizons,’” \textit{The Pacific Churchman}, Jan, 1961, Vol 95, No 11, pg 2.}

the original philosophy of Jesus. She wrote, “The rediscovery of Jesus as a man and of the style of life which enabled him to stay free of false gods – idolatries – gave us new hope for a model for personhood in this era which would enable man to develop his full human potential. We saw this as hope for the Church too, if people still had ears to hear.” It was because Pike believed in the human potential movement that he offered the Esalen Institute the use of Grace Cathedral as a headquarters for its urban branch. Although the offer was never consummated, Pike allowed the Esalen folk to use Grace as the site to launch its San Francisco branch, with public lectures by Abraham Maslow and George Leonard on the evening of January 6, 1966.

**Kairos**

In his lecture that evening at Grace Cathedral, George Leonard used the occasion to suggest that the West was on the verge of a radical transformation of human consciousness, what Tillich called *kairos*, that would usher in a new period of psychological “growth,” of fulfillment of the human potential, and of a greatly enhanced apprehension of the divine. Although Fritz Perls looked across the chaotic American political and cultural landscape of the mid-1960s and feared the emergence of fascism in the United States, his friends at Esalen, in contrast, enthusiastically heralded the genesis of a new era. Mike Murphy, Richard Price, and George Anderson, *The Upstart Spring*, 148.


Leonard, for example, wrote, “It is my thesis… that the current period is indeed unique in history and that it represents the beginning of the most thoroughgoing change in the quality of human existence since the creation of an agricultural surplus brought about the birth of civilized states some five thousand years ago.” See Leonard, *The Transformation*, 2. Leonard also wrote the introductory statement to the 1965 Esalen brochure, claiming, “Within a single lifetime, our physical environment has been changed almost beyond recognition. But there has been little corresponding change in how we, as individual, relate to the world and experience reality. Such a change is inevitable, however – indeed, it is imminent. New tools and techniques of the human potentiality – generally unknown to the public and to much of the intellectual community – are already at hand; many more are presently under development. We stand on an exhilarating and dangerous frontier, and must answer anew the old questions: ‘What are the limits of human ability, the boundaries of the human experience? What does it mean to be a human
Leonard believed that the social upheavals of the 1960s were portents of *kairos*, of a tremendous swivel in the histories of consciousness and religion, and thus, unlike Perls, their vision of human destiny was essentially positive and optimistic. The dawning of the human potential was, they believed, at hand and the days of repressive political regimes, or the hegemony of large, soul-crushing, institutions of power, were concluding. The *kairos*, they were certain, would sweep away any and all “life-denying” institutions, any and all social injustices, under a great and gathering wave of altered consciousness and ecstasy.

This notion of *kairos*, of a life-affirming revolution in consciousness triggering a new historical and cultural epoch, was, they believed, thus at the heart of the human potential movement and of the counterculture. It was an idea promoted by both Tillich and Pike. Tillich, as has already been noted, was a member of an organization, the “kairos circle,” that sought a collective transformation of consciousness that would have positive and far-reaching personal and political consequences. Pike, likewise, spent much of his career in search of a theology that might hasten that history-transforming moment. If humanity in the middle of the

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670 Anderson notes, “It was a religious vision that harmonized with the themes of self-actualization, human potentiality, and transformation; it saw the coming cultural change as an awakening, a new phase in human evolution. There was much talk of evolution in the seminars; the source most often cited was not Darwin, with his bleak notions of survival of the fittest, but the scientist-theologian Teilhard de Chardin, with his ideas of the onward-and-upward spiraling of the human spirit.” Anderson, The Upstart Spring, 111. Perls, however, was less sanguine about the allegedly benevolent nature of this “awakening” or “revolution” or “evolutionary moment.” Anderson writes, “People told Fritz he was being paranoid. He told them he had been accused of being paranoid once before, in Germany in the 1930s, and that many people who had ignored the Nazis had ended up in concentration camps.” See Anderson, The Upstart Spring, 203.

671 Counter-cultural belief in the dawning of a new epoch is discussed in chapter three. Nonetheless, this quote from Timothy Miller will suffice as further evidence: “The hippies saw themselves as the people of zero, the vanguard who would build a new society on the ruins of the old, corrupt one. They defined their task as bringing to the world a radical change of outlook – one which not only featured ‘new ideas’ in some superficial sense... but which constituted a fundamentally new way of getting a living, at seeing the world. The hippies were getting at root matters when, for example, they questioned the very rationality upon which Western culture has been built. To the counterculturalists, reason had run its course; now it was time to return to the mystical and intuitive.” Miller, The Hippies and American Values, 4.

672 Robertson, 49; Tillich, of course, conceived of the *kairos* within a theological framework emphasizing the Christ. He wrote, “The Kairos which was fulfilled in him is the constellation of final revelation. But it is this only for those
twentieth century suffered from a devastating failure of selfhood, than the *kairos*, or so they believed, would transform the diminished self into, to use Maslow’s terminology, a self-actualized self; a superior being characterized by greater intelligence, greater accomplishment, greater potential, greater compassion, and a greater understanding of “eternal mystic truths.” This was Tillich’s enthusiasm. This was Pike’s enthusiasm. And this enthusiasm directed both the human potential movement and the counterculture in their quest for practices that might unleash that transformation.

It is, of course, common knowledge that the sixties’ counterculture considered itself on the cusp of a cultural revolutionary moment, but what is less well understood is what this idea meant to advocates of the human potential movement, per religion, and how it may have influenced “mainline” religions, such as the Episcopal faith. Among advocates of the human potential movement the idea of a mystical revolution of consciousness incorporated at least three significant tenets: that there is a universal mystical truth at the heart of world religions, that the secular and the sacred are not mutually contradicting realms of experience or knowledge, and that religious narratives should be viewed as mythological, rather than literal. It is here important to note that Paul Tillich and James Pike advanced each of these concepts throughout their careers and that some of James Pike’s troubles, such as the accusations of heresy that plagued his last years, can be traced to his belief in these tenets of *kairos*.

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who received him as the final revelation, namely, as the Messiah, the Christ, the man-from-above, the Son of God, the Spirit, the Logos-who-became-flesh – the New Being.” Remaining true to his ecumenical and catholic vision, Tillich then places this “final revelation” within the context of world religions. “The final revelation, the revelation in Jesus as the Christ, is universally valid, because it includes the criterion of all of them. The final revelation is the criterion of every revelation which precedes or follows. It is the criterion of every religion and of every culture, not only of the culture and religion in and through which it has appeared. It is valid for the social existence of every human group, and for the personal existence of every human individual,” he argued. See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 136 – 137.

673 Robertson notes, “The word revolution was becoming overused even by Episcopalians in 1964, but Pike seemed sincerely to have been convinced that the movement for New Theology was, like the Reformation, an instance of
A Universal Mystical Truth at the Heart of World Religions

This notion of a universal mystical truth at the heart of world religions has a history in the United States that goes back at least to the middle of the nineteenth century and represents a theological perspective often seeking common ground between western Christian religious views with Asian mystical teachings or western secular views with religious mysticism, more generally. This is a theme that found expression in the nineteenth century American Transcendentalists, such as Thoreau and Emerson. It was advanced by advocates of the Mind Cure, as well as by Sri Vivekananda at the 1893 World Parliament of Religions. In the early twentieth century both William James and Carl Jung bolstered the idea. In the middle twentieth century it was picked up by Aldous Huxley and his colleagues, Gerald Heard and Christopher Isherwood. By the late 1950s it was a mainstay of bohemian, or “beat,” religious beliefs. And in the 1960s, it flowed into the human potential movement, the counterculture, and humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Tillich advanced the idea. Pike believed in it. And it now has a presence in the Episcopal faith, in part because of that faith’s commitment to kairos, or a Godly precipitated revolutionary time for a spiritual change in history, as had been described by as experienced in 1919 by Paul Tillich.” Robertson, A Passionate Pilgrim, 130.


ecumenicalism, and in part because Pike, as bishop of the California Diocese, helped introduce the idea into the church.

In “The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian,” Tillich argued, among other things, in favor of this idea, which he conceived of as an apprehension of the “timeless moment.” He wrote:

“The universal religious basis is the experience of the Holy within the finite. Universally in every thing finite and particular, or in this and that finite, the Holy appears in a special way. I could call this the sacramental basis of all religions – the Holy here and now which can be seen, heard, dealt with, in spite of its mysterious character. We still have remnants of this is the highest religions, in their sacraments, and I believe that without it, a religious group would become an association of moral clubs, as much of Protestantism is, because it has lost the sacramental basis.”

This “sacramental basis of all religions,” which Tillich believed was a direct experience of the “Holy here and now,” is also what Watts, Spiegelberg, and Chaudhuri explored in their writings, as discussed in chapter four. Spiegelberg, for example, wrote:

“Again and again we shall return to this here-and-now in our study of the religions of Mankind, for, if we do not, we run the danger of becoming abstractionists, and hence out of touch with the immediate reality of that which has ever been the decisive object of every religion deserving the name.”

Watts agreed. He wrote, “We do not have to seek for God; he is already here and now, and to seek for him implies that he is not. We do not, in this sense, have to attain union with God; it is already given as an act of the divine love.” (His italics.)

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Although Tillich, along with Watts and Spiegelberg, feared that only “remnants” of this concept remained in the “highest” religions in the middle of the twentieth century, he nonetheless claimed that this experience represented not only the very basis of the Christian faith, but of world religions, more generally. He thus eschewed partisanship within religion, proclaiming “[t]here are revealing and saving powers in all religions.”

On the Asian side of the equation, the idea is found most prominently within Mahayana Buddhism, as represented by Zen in Japan and Ch’an in China, as well as within Hinduism’s Vedanta philosophy. In Mahayana Buddhist religious philosophy the individual, atomized self is considered illusory, or sometimes as merely an expression, or form, of an ineffable, transcendental Self shared by the entire manifest universe. In other words, according to Mahayana Buddhism, at the core of individual selves resides a common Self from which all forms emerge. This common Self, or “true” Self, or Mahatman, precedes experience, is beyond characterization, and is not bounded by time. This idea, whatever one may make of it, is very similar to, if not identical with, concepts found at the center of Hinduism’s Vedanta philosophy. Vedanta philosophers have proposed that not only is the individual “soul” (atman) identical to the “supreme soul” (Brahman), but that the only true reality is Brahman, from which all forms emerge.

The human potential movement included a variety of practices, such as massage therapy, sex therapy, gestalt therapy, encounter group therapy, dietary practices, and even sport, that held only a tangential connection, if any, to religious mysticism. However, in the part of the

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681 Satischandra Chatterjee and Datta, Dhirendramohan, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy (Calcutta: The University of Calcutta, 1984), 159.
human potential movement concerned with humanity’s mystic potential, as advanced by people such as Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, and Michael Murphy, not to mention James Pike, this notion of an ineffable, transcendental Self was fundamental and identified with what Tillich called the “ground of all being.” The purpose of the human potential movement, as a religious movement, then, was to explore and advance technologies, such as the various forms of meditation, yoga, and psychedelic experimentation, designed to orient, or reorient, the self toward that Self. It is also for this reason that Huxley defined the “perennial philosophy” as “the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being – the thing is immemorial and universal.”

Although beyond words, this “ground of all being” was thought of as something that could, under the proper circumstances, be experienced and explored. Inherent to the idea of *kairos* was the notion that not only could “the divine” be experienced, but that the coming “revolution of consciousness” would be characterized by an influx of that experience into the minds and hearts of more and more people.

Like advocates of the human potential movement, participants in the religious side of the counterculture also sought to access this supposed universal mystical truth at the heart of world religions. It was for this reason that counterculturalists could so easily incorporate a wide assortment of religious symbolism, particularly Asian, western shamanic, and occult, religious

682 Ibid, 48.
684 Ibid, 21. Huxley wrote, “Our starting point has been the psychological doctrine, ‘That art thou.’ The question that now quite naturally presents itself is a metaphysical one: What is the That to which the thou can discover itself to be akin?’” His answer: “The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances) susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being.”
symbolism, in their dress, jewelry, art, and music. From the mid-1960s though the mid-1970s, during a period when American religion seemed to be in decline, countercultural musicians often filled their lyrics with religious-mystical references from a mélange of different traditions and listeners sometimes used the music as a sort-of sexualized psychedelic-religious sacrament. It is for this reason, also, that the pages of the San Francisco Oracle brimmed with discussions of sex, music, psychedelics, and religion. These, furthermore, were generally discussed not as separate activities, but as interrelated elements pointing toward the potential for the “divine” experience that was held to be at the core of human identity and thus at the heart of world religions.

Pike, of course, also agreed that no particular religion held a monopoly on theological truth and he therefore maintained a healthy respect for the potential of other religions to express such truths and to provide a means for the faithful to experience them. He wrote, “We no longer think in terms of competing gods. We seek to know instead the One – the all-encompassing, unifying reality. We are more and more open to truth, no matter what its source, and most Christians today would not assert that Buddhists, Muslims or even animists worship a different god, but rather that they worship the Ground of all Being in a different way.” (His italics.) In an earlier article published in The Christian Century, “The Three Pronged Synthesis,” Pike put it in bald terms: “I no longer regard grace, or the work of the Holy Spirit, as limited explicitly to the Christian revelation.”

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685 Miller, The Hippies and American Values, 17.
687 James Pike, The Other Side, 284. Note also that the phrase “Ground of all Being,” or “ground of our being” or, simply, “ground of being,” is phraseology coined by Tillich to describe what is more commonly referred to as “God.” “The religious word for what is called the ground of being is God,” he wrote. See Tillich, Systematic Theology, Volume One (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 156.
In *The Other Side*, Pike’s attempt at arguing for the validity of psychic phenomena, he also suggested that the individuated ego, or the bounded self, is an illusion and that humanity’s true nature is that of a shared mystical reality preceding the individual self. In that work he hypothesized that “personhood really resides in the unconscious mind; that the conscious, sensory level of existence is a series (sometimes more like a scattering) of manifestations – momentarily, or of relatively short duration – of an abiding personality at the unconscious, extrasensory level; and that at the unconscious level all persons participate in, contribute to and share in one vast reservoir of reality which is common to all.”

What drove Pike to write this book, unfortunately, was the drug-induced suicide of his eldest son, James, Jr., on February 4, 1966, in a New York City hotel room, at the age of twenty. At the time of his death, James Jr. was a “hippie,” a denizen of the Haight-Ashbury, a student at San Francisco State College, and a deeply depressed young man with a highly problematic drug habit. When, in the summer of 1965, Pike received funding for a six month sabbatical in Cambridge, England, he asked James, Jr. to join him in the hopes of removing him from this drug infested environment. What Pike failed to realize was that London in the mid-1960s was hardly a place free from hippies and psychedelic drugs.

One evening, upon returning to the London flat he shared with James, Jr., Pike found his son in the midst of an LSD session. James, Jr. asked the elder Pike to see him through the “trip” and Pike, seeing little in the way of alternatives beyond, perhaps, calling the local hospital, agreed to

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689 James Pike, *The Other Side*, 375.
690 Ibid, 4 – 5. After the death of his son, Pike became convinced that James, Jr., as well as Paul Tillich, sought contact from “the other side” and underwent a series of séances, one of which was televised on Canadian television, for the purpose of establishing such contacts. It was these experiences that inclined him to study psychic phenomena and to write up his thoughts in *The Other Side*.
691 Pike wrote, “We were all going on the rather naïve assumption that acid and pot would not be available in Cambridge. In fact, we doubted that such would have been so much as heard of there. It was only after Jim’s death that we learned that much of the impetus of the psychedelic movement had come from England anyway. Had we
do so. During the course of his experience, James, Jr. told his father, “I feel connected to the ground, yet I can move. I don’t feel small now. And I feel one with everything around. I’m separate, yet I’m one. I’m one, The One. I’m God.” The literature on the psychedelic experience is replete with many such statements and the potentially religious nature of the experience, whether faux or not, has been attested to for decades. What is significant here, however, is Pike’s reaction, as an Episcopal bishop, to the claim by his psychedelic-influenced son that “I’m God.” He wrote, “I knew this wasn’t megalomania, or even arrogance. This was a reported experience of what millions of perfectly sane, modest Buddhists see as the shape of reality… everyone and everything is separate, yet continuous with the grounding of the All – which is the One, is God.”

The Secular and the Sacred

Pike’s belief in a universal mystical truth at the heart of world religions, as well as the idea that religious truths are mythological in nature, rather than literal, would throughout the 1960s cause him to face the possibility of heresy charges by his more conservative co-religionists within the Episcopal church. However, it was his belief in the non-exclusivity of the sacred and the secular, as well as his commitment to a humanitarian ethic, that spurred him to fight for civil rights, the ordination of women as priests, and against the war in Vietnam, and that encouraged him, furthermore, to speak out against both communism, abroad, and conservative anti-communism, at home. In a November, 1960, issue of The Pacific Churchman, the official organ of the Episcopal Diocese of California, Pike made his argument for the necessity of combining a

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known, we would have been less cheerful about the prospects of escaping the hallucinogenic influence of Haight-Ashbury and Berkeley. Ibid, 16.

692 Ibid, 31
love for the sacred with a concern for the secular and did so while condemning both communism and conservative anti-communism. It is worth quoting at some length:

“Not long ago there was a short but bitter controversy over the distribution of an Air Force manual on security and subversion which warned its young readers to beware certain Protestant churches and church groups as being ‘card-carrying Communist’ pastors and being otherwise infiltrated by Communist sympathizers…

The last time this was to the fore was during the reign of the late Senator McCarthy where a ‘no politics from the pulpit’ cry was coupled with charges concerning ‘the infiltration of the Protestant Churches by communism…’

But history repeats itself. Once again there is a widespread challenge to the right of the clergy to say anything about the major issues of our time. The link is the habit of conservatives to identify liberalism or even a desire for reform as ‘Communist’ or ‘pink.’ But in fairness it must be said that, while most of those who articulate this objection (at least judging from my mail) are conservative, reactionary, or even Fascist-minded…

In the basic Christian Creed we describe God as ‘the Maker of heaven and earth.’ We affirm that He is the Lord of all life, and concerned for all aspects of it. The things He is concerned for, we must be concerned for. He is concerned for all that touches the weal of the sons of men; as creatures made in His image we can be concerned with no less. If we are to eliminate our concern as to the institutions and mores of our common life, then we are seeking to close God out of His own universe; in fact, we are seeking to lock Him in the church building. But the God that many of us believe in is too big for all that. Thus those of us who would serve Him as His ministers refuse to be confined to the ‘ecclesiastical...’ (His italics.)

It is the church which nurtures man in the desire and practice of freedom, and the love of those things which communism and any other form of authoritarianism basically hates. Destroy the effectiveness of our churches and you have destroyed the main bulwark against communism.”

That Tillich believed in the ecumenical nature of theological truth is demonstrated above. Tillich however, like Pike, also believed that secular rationalism did not contradict faith. Faith, he argued, was not a type of knowledge based on scanty evidence and enforced by religious authorities. It was not, therefore, mistaken belief. Faith he insisted makes no claims concerning

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the truthfulness of scientific knowledge and, likewise, scientific knowledge can make no claims regarding the meaning of faith as an experience of the divine.\footnote{695}{James Pike, “Should the Pulpit Be a Rostrum?” \textit{The Pacific Churchman}, Nov, 1960, Vol 95, No 7, pg. 10.} From 1960, with the publication of his article in \textit{The Christian Century}, through 1966, with his departure from the Episcopal Church, Pike continually faced the prospect of heresy charges.\footnote{696}{John E. Smith, “The Impact of Tillich’s Interpretation of Religion” in Adams, \textit{The Thought of Paul Tillich}, 247.} At the root of these charges was Pike’s oft stated beliefs that Christianity held no monopoly on theological truth; that the nature of theological narratives is mythological, rather than literal, and that secular rationalism could compliment, rather than contradict, the tenets of faith. Pike’s belief in each of these proposals led him to continually make statements that challenged Episcopal orthodoxy and that angered many of his co-religionists.

Tillich sought to rescue religion from possible assaults by reason by arguing for a classical reason (Logos) that contains “technical reason,” but that is not limited to technical reason. “According to the classical philosophical tradition,” he wrote, “reason is the structure of the mind which enables the mind to grasp and to transform reality. It is effective in the cognitive, aesthetic, practical, and technical functions of the human mind. Even emotional life is not irrational in itself.”\footnote{697}{Tillich believed that technical reason, a mere part of the Logos, may undermine that which is inessential within religion, but it cannot touch, or has nothing to say about, that which is of ultimate concern, i.e., the divine. Technical reason, rather than undermining religious faith, actually serves religion through ridding it of unnecessary or counterproductive superstitions. “[T]heology,” he wrote, “is not perturbed by the attack on the...”} Tillich believed that technical reason, a mere part of the Logos, may undermine that which is inessential within religion, but it cannot touch, or has nothing to say about, that which is of ultimate concern, i.e., the divine. Technical reason, rather than undermining religious faith, actually serves religion through ridding it of unnecessary or counterproductive superstitions. “[T]heology,” he wrote, “is not perturbed by the attack on the...”

\footnote{694}{James Pike, “Should the Pulpit Be a Rostrum?” \textit{The Pacific Churchman}, Nov, 1960, Vol 95, No 7, pg. 10.} \footnote{695}{John E. Smith, “The Impact of Tillich’s Interpretation of Religion” in Adams, \textit{The Thought of Paul Tillich}, 247.} \footnote{696}{For a thorough discussion of Pike’s heresy problems see: William Stringfellow and Towne, Anthony, \textit{The Bishop Pike Affair: Scandals of Conscience and Heresy, Relevance and Solemnity in the Contemporary Church} (New York: Harper & Row, 1967). Spraggett notes that “Stringfellow interpreted the get-Pike drive as part of a concerted attempt by the Episcopalian right wing to seize and subvert the church’s apparatus of leadership. The right wing detests Pike for espousal of causes such as civil rights and peace in Viet Nam...” Spraggett, 104.}
Christian message made by technical reason, for these attacks do not reach the level on which religion stands. They may destroy superstitions, but they do not even touch faith.”\textsuperscript{698} Furthermore, Tillich argued, attempts to use reason for the purpose of discovering gaps in scientific knowledge, with the intention of inserting God into those gaps, is equally egregious and representative of poor theology.\textsuperscript{699}

Religion and rationality, or the sacred and the secular, are, in both Tillich and Pike, not competing forms of knowledge, but complimentary ones.\textsuperscript{700} Pike agreed with Tillich that reason could serve a positive function in religious understanding through paring non-essential elements away from that understanding and it is for this reason that Pike doubted the Trinity, the literal ascension of Jesus, and the Virgin Birth. Non-essential dogmatics, according to Pike, represented a form of idolatry, furthermore, that undermined the ecumenical movement, of which the Episcopal Church was a part. In \textit{A Time for Christian Candor}, he wrote, “Is a conceptualized doctrine of the Trinity in fact needed in order to preserve the essentials of the Christian Faith? If the answer is No, then it is evident that the Church’s mission would be relieved of a heavy piece of luggage. The traditional formulation – no matter how ‘explained’ on the one hand, or shrouded in mystery on the other – is as a plain matter of fact a barrier to \textit{rapprochement} with several groups. With the Jews… with the Muslims, and indeed with many

\textsuperscript{697} Tillich, \textit{Systematic Theology, Vol. 1}, 72.
\textsuperscript{698} Ibid, 74.
\textsuperscript{699} He wrote, “An especially weak and disgusting form of apologetics used the \textit{argumentum ex ignorantia}; that is, it tried to discover gaps in our scientific and historical knowledge in order to find a place for God and his actions within an otherwise completely calculable and ‘immanent’ world. Whenever our knowledge advanced, another defense position had to be given up; but eager apologetes were not dissuaded by this continuous retreat from finding in the most recent developments of physics and historiography new occasions to establish God’s activity in new gaps of scientific knowledge. This undignified procedure has discredited everything which is called ‘apologetics.’” Ibid, 6.
\textsuperscript{700} “There can be no true conflict between science and religion, the Right Rev. James A. Pike told graduating seniors of the University of California at Baccalaureate services today.” \textit{New York Times}, June 6, 1960, pg 4 “Science and Religion: Bishop Pike Sees No Real Conflict Between Them”
non-Church people who at least vaguely assume a theistic universe.”

Non-essential dogmatics, according to Pike, also represented a “roadblock” for rationally-minded people who refused to sacrifice their reasoning faculties at the altar of faith. He wrote:

“What is this roadblock? It is hard to discern, harder to state: but in the end it is churchmen’s well-intentioned idolatry. What is historically conditioned is presented as eternal, what is relative is presented as absolute, what is ‘packaging’ is presented as the product, what are mores is presented as morals, what is fallible is presented as infallible, what is contingent is presented as ultimate, what is secondary is presented as primary, what is nonessential is presented as essential, what is custom and ‘machinery’ is presented as final reality; the notions of men are presented as the mind of God, the words of men are presented as the will of God.”

It was because Pike subjected the dogmatisms of his faith to sharp criticisms that he insisted on stripping Christianity of what he considered the non-essentials and thus, in his 1960 *Christian Century* article, cast doubt on the Virgin Birth, on the Trinity, and even wrote in favor of agnosticism and atheism as necessary antidotes to the supposedly idolatrous non-essentials. He thereby stirred up controversy within the Episcopal faith and gave an opening to those who already reviled him for his stands on civil rights and other social issues, such as birth control.

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702 Pike was determined to strip the non-essentials from the Christian faith, in part, out of a desire to promote ecumenicalism by emphasizing what the various church bodies, and world religions in general, had in common. He wrote, “Perhaps the most important block in the mind of church people at the grass roots is the assumption that there are important differences between the respective church bodies. Differences there are. But essential differences? Perhaps not. And the only way we can know the answer is to seek to distinguish what is essential and what is nonessential…” See: Pike, *What Is This Treasure: The Essentials of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 10.
704 James Pike, “The Three Pronged Synthesis” The Christian Century, Dec 21, 1960, Vol 77, No 51, 1496 – 1500. He wrote, “I have preached more and more in the past decade on the values of atheism and agnosticism. Atheists debunk the small god. I have found that in almost every case the atheist is opposing a concept of God which I myself disbelieve. As to the agnostic, he often has doubts about things I have doubts about. There has to be a large measure of agnosticism in true religion; as to most questions people ask about religion, the only answer is ‘I don’t know…’” Ibid, 1497.
705 Stringfellow and Towne note, “In the days of the Inquisition, heresy charges were sometimes used to cover the pursuit, persecution, and condemnation of those whose nonconformity was, in reality, political, social or ideological rather than doctrinal, dogmatic, or theological.” They go on to suggest, though not definitively, that Pike’s harassers were often motivated by the former set of reasons, rather than the latter. See Stringfellow and Towne, The Bishop
Robertson argues that had Pike been somewhat less contentious in his rhetorical style he might have avoided alienating many of his co-religionists and thereby also avoided the charges of heresy. Because skepticism over the literalness of the Virgin Birth was not particularly uncommon among liberal Episcopalians, it was accepted as within the boundaries of church thinking. Part of what made Pike an acceptable target, however, was his stridency and the delight he sometimes took in questioning Christian dogmatics.  

In January, 1961, Pike’s critics, therefore, responding to *The Christian Century* article, began publicly questioning Pike’s suitability to be an Episcopal bishop and also began the process of bringing about charges of heresy, a process that never came to fruition. “Episcopalian for the Faith,” an ad hoc group of conservative Episcopalians in Oakland, California, sent out a thousand flyers to dioceses around the country asking, “Is Bishop Pike undermining our Christian faith?… Is James Pike presuming to be a prophet and bringing us a new word that Joseph is the human father of Jesus?” At the end of the month a Georgian *clericus*, or local convocation, asserted that Pike’s article “calls into grave doubt his suitability for exercising jurisdiction as a bishop of this church” and, as Robertson notes, the “Georgia clericus specifically objected to Pike’s expressed ‘disbelief in the Virgin Birth of our Lord’ and his denial of ‘the necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ.’”  

What is significant here, however, is not the calls for charges of heresy, but the fact that it was Pike’s devotion to balancing reason with religion that led him to question Episcopalian orthodoxy, that this devotion was something that he shared with Tillich and the alternative religious thinkers at the American Academy of Asian Studies, and that this attempt to balance, or

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707 Ibid, 111.
synthesize, reason with religion was also a central concern of the human potential movement. This, of course, is not to argue that such attempts were new, but rather that in the middle of the twentieth century these attempts held specific consequences for both the human potential movement, as well as for the Episcopal church.

The human potential movement, in general, and the Esalen Institute, in particular, devoted itself to a synthesis of the sacred with the secular, or the mystical with the rational, in an ongoing and optimistic effort to transmute individual human ways of knowing and ways of being. It was within humanistic psychology, furthermore, that advocates of the human potential movement believed they had located a practical field of knowledge that could, potentially, help formulate that synthesis. Leonard notes that it was in an early 1960s meeting with Michael Murphy that Murphy made the connection explicit. Showing Leonard his personal journals, Murphy, Leonard writes, “had listed similarities between the new humanist psychology, as represented by Maslow and Rogers, and the main line of Eastern philosophy. Maslow’s concept of the peak experience (an episode of egoless delight and heightened clarity during which all things seem to flow in perfect harmony) was similar to the Eastern ecstatic experience of samadhi or satori. Maslow’s notion of self-actualization was similar to the Eastern notion of yoga or tao, the lifelong path of mastery that involves self-development and good works but that is not narrowly competitive or goal-oriented. Both the humanistic psychologists and the Eastern sages were open to a wide range of mental and spiritual experiences. Both agreed that consciousness was not, as hard-line scientists would have it, a mere epiphenomenona, but rather a vast terra incognita, a rich territory for exploration. Both agreed that human nature was not

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708 Ibid, 111 - 112.
fixed and flawed, as Freud would have it, but multidimensional. And given the right environment, it was essentially good.”

Maslow’s thesis, in *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* concurs with Murphy’s analysis and it was the purpose of that book to, as he wrote in the introduction, “demonstrate that spiritual values have naturalistic meaning, that they are not the exclusive possession of organized churches, that they do not need supernatural concepts to validate them, that they are well within the jurisdiction of a suitably enlarged science, and that, therefore, they are the general responsibility of all mankind.” Maslow believed that because the “peak experience,” which he identified with moments of mystical clarity, was found in the “natural world,” that is, the “natural world” of the human mind, it could therefore be subjected to rational inquiry. At the Esalen Institute they sought not only ways of subjecting the mystical experience to rational inquiry, but methods to engage that experience. It is for this reason that along with encounter group therapy or body work, the Esalen program contained a series of workshops devoted to the mystical experience under the general heading “Transpersonal,” defined as “transcendence, mystical experience, peak experience and parapsychological phenomena.”

This blending of the sacred with the secular, in Pike’s view, also meant embracing the material world. In a February, 1962, article for the *Pacific Churchman* Pike argued for the “goodness of the material order.” He wrote, “In some world religions ‘spiritual’ and ‘material’ are correlated with ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ While this tendency has sometimes manifested itself in

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711 By the early 1970s, such workshops included “Dreams, Creativity, & Altered States of Consciousness,” a “Weekend Workshop with Claudio Naranjo” who taught an esoteric mystical practice allegedly handed down from the Sufis, a “Workshop for Religious Professionals” with Robert Nadeau who hoped to “clear the misunderstandings which cloud one’s personal experience as a spiritual being,” as well as yoga, meditation, and other practices. Esalen Catalog, Fall, 1972, page 9.
Christendom, the characteristic attitude of our tradition is world-affirming, rather than world-denying. We regard the physical world as good in itself, and as capable of expressing and effecting spiritual purposes.” For Pike these “spiritual purposes” included the various movements for social justice, such as the movements for women’s and minorities’ rights that marked the 1960s. A Pacific Churchman article, reprinted from the San Francisco Chronicle, notes that “Bishop Pike is a churchman who believes that a churchman must concern himself not only with God but also with people, and that a church must be more, in his words, than ‘a separate holy place in which separate holy people do separate holy things.’” He has cried our for churchgoers to involve themselves with the world and for the church to become something other than ‘a haven for the respectable’ and a site for ‘throwing water on the status quo.’”

Mythology and Literalism

The religious issue of the sacred and the secular is closely related to another issue that Tillich, Pike, the counterculture, and the human potential movement, each in their own way, worked with: that of the mythological versus the literal within an understanding of religion. Religious language, of course, is the language of mythological symbolism, of metaphor and analogy, and it is through engaging religious symbolism that, according to both Tillich and Pike, the religious practitioner allegedly and potentially gained some apprehension of the divine. The problem that Tillich identified, and that Pike seems to never have resolved, however, is that because religious symbolism is always in danger of falling into literalism, or into the “idolatrous,” it can be difficult to know which mythological symbols are still properly

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713 Ibid, 11.
functioning, which have outlived their usefulness, and which have become so objectified through the literalist tendency as to be rendered useless. For the counterculture, a project absolutely rife with mystico-religious symbolism and mythology, as well as mythological literalism, this was never an institutional problem because, of course, counterculturalists were not responsible for composing a coherent theology and rarely worked within formal religious institutions. In the human potential movement, likewise, people were free to pick and choose the myths and religious symbols that resonated with them and did so with the help of experts such as Joseph Campbell, another Esalen regular, as well as Pike, himself. Pike, however, as bishop of the Episcopal diocese of California, held the formal responsibility of determining what worked, and what did not, within the religious culture of the Episcopal Church. When Pike started stripping the “non-essentials” from his understanding of the Christian faith he began a process that not only led him away from the church entirely, and that exposed him to charges of heresy, but that also opened the church to the influence of religious symbols, such as the labyrinth at Grace Cathedral, derived from places beyond traditional Episcopal theology and practice.

Tillich argued, following Jung, that religious symbols and religious narratives, or mythologies, served a specific function for the faithful. They, potentially at least, brought the practitioner into an epistemological relationship with the “ground of being” or the divine. “Religious symbols,” he wrote, “do exactly the same thing as all symbols do – namely, they open up a level of reality, which otherwise is not opened at all, which is hidden. We can call this the depth dimension of reality itself, the dimension of reality which is the ground of every other dimension and every other depth, and which therefore, is not one level besides the others but is the fundamental level, the level below all other levels, the level of being itself, or the ultimate power of being. Religious symbols open up the experience of the dimension of this depth in the
human soul.” This was Tillich’s rather torturous way of saying that religious symbols, and the mythologies of which they are comprised, are vehicles pointed toward the “ground of being.”

Tillich recognized, however, that religious symbols, and the mythological narratives that contain them, face three fundamental challenges that could potentially threaten their effectiveness: science, literalism, and religion, itself. The goal of science, Tillich suggested, is a non-mythical worldview and toward that end science can, potentially, rob the sacred of its divinity. A limit exists, however, because within everything there is the element of “being” that may always shine through. Although science represents a threat to religious symbolism and mythology, it has nothing to say about that to which religious symbolism and mythology point, the “ground of being” which “still shines forth despite the most rational penetration.”

Literalism, according to Tillicha and Pike, mistakes the symbol, or the myth, for the reality to which the symbol and myth point. Tillich, and Pike thought of this tendency as the meaning of idolatry and considered it a fundamental theological error. Tillich put it this way: “Religious symbols point symbolically to that which transcends all of them. But since, as symbols, they participate in that to which they point, they always have the tendency (in the human mind, of course) to replace that to which they are supposed to point, and to become ultimate in themselves. And in the moment in which they do this, they become idols. All idolatry is nothing else than the absolutizing of symbols of the Holy, and making them identical with the Holy itself.” Finally, religion itself could potentially undermine religious symbols and mythology because in “genuine” religion the myths are recognized for what they are,

representations of the transcendent.\footnote{Adams, 246.} For this reason, perhaps oddly, even atheism may have a religious function because, as Tillich writes, “It is the religious function of atheism ever to remind us that the religious act has to do with the unconditioned transcendent, and that the representations of the Unconditioned are not objects concerning whose ‘existence’ or ‘non-existence’ a discussion would be possible.”\footnote{Tillich quoted in Adams, \textit{Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion}, 247.} This religious form of atheism is not a denial of the existence of “God,” but a denial of the objectification of the transcendent.\footnote{Adams, 249.}

At the Esalen institute perhaps the primary figure, and certainly the most popular one, working toward an understanding of the existential meaning of mythological symbolism was the Sarah Lawrence professor, Joseph Campbell, who later gained national fame in his televised interviews with Bill Moyers, \textit{The Power of Myth}, and who, through his middle years, was a close, personal friend of Alan Watts.\footnote{Campbell’s biographers, Stephen and Robin Larsen, notes that Watts was one of Campbell’s main intellectual influences in the middle part of his life. See: Stephen Larsen and Robin Larsen, \textit{A Fire in the Mind: The Life of Joseph Campbell} (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1991), 357.} His biographers, Stephen and Robin Larsen, even suggest that it was out of conversations between Murphy, Price, Watts, and Campbell that Esalen came into being.\footnote{They write, “It would be out of some inspiring discussions with Alan Watts and Joseph Campbell that Michael Murphy and Richard Price would develop the plans for the California institution that would set the standard for a new kind of learning, centered on the growth and development of the individual person: Esalen Institute, where Watts and Campbell would later become frequent lecturer.” Ibid, 359.} In any case, according to Murphy, “Joe just seemed to fit in… people loved him, and he was invited back again and again.”\footnote{Ibid, 469 – 470.} Campbell’s presence at Esalen was, in fact, so significant that the opening sequences of a film devoted to his life and thought, \textit{The Hero’s Journey}, was filmed at Esalen and each year, on the occasion of his birthday, a celebration continues to be held there along with seminars devoted to his thought.\footnote{Ibid, 546, 519.}
It should come as no surprise that Campbell, a student and translator of Heinrich Zimmer, concurred with Tillich and Pike that mythological symbolism pointed to the divine and that literalism meant a misapprehension of the significance of religious-mythological narratives.\textsuperscript{725} Campbell suggested that mythology serves four interrelated functions.\textsuperscript{726} It offers a cosmology, or “image of the universe.”\textsuperscript{727} It establishes and bolsters the moral order and it centers the individual within his or her own culture.\textsuperscript{728} However, the first function of mythology, as understood by Campbell, is metaphysical and mystical. He wrote, “The first function of a living mythology, the properly religious function, in the sense of Rudolf Otto’s definition in The Idea of the Holy, is to waken and maintain in the individual an experience of awe, humility, and respect, in recognition of that ultimate mystery, transcending names and forms, ‘from which,’ as we read in the Upanishads, ‘words turn back.’”\textsuperscript{729}

This “recognition of that ultimate mystery, transcending names and forms,” however, is thwarted when the symbol is mistook for that toward which the symbol points or when it is thought of not as metaphorical, but as representing objective fact or historical truth. Campbell was blunt on this point. He wrote, “Every myth, that is to say, whether or not by intention, is psychologically symbolic. Its narratives and images are to be read, therefore, not literally, but as metaphors.”\textsuperscript{730} Literalizing mythological symbols and narratives therefore, according to Campbell, undermines the symbolic nature of those symbols and narratives, turning a metaphor

\textsuperscript{725} Campbell also argued that the distinction between religion and mythology is arbitrary and that what is sometimes called “mythology” is merely another way of saying, “other people’s religion.” Quoted in Larsen, 503.  
\textsuperscript{727} Ibid, 611.  
\textsuperscript{728} Ibid, 621, 623.  
\textsuperscript{729} Ibid, 609. It should probably be noted that Mircea Eliade also conceived of mythology, and also following Rudolf Otto, as having a fundamentally “sacred” function. “Everything that the gods or the ancestors did,” he wrote, “hence everything that the myths have to tell about their creative activity, belongs to the sphere of the sacred and therefore participates in being.” (His italics.) See: Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion (New York: Harcourt, Incorporated, 1957), 96.
into what Tillich and Pike called “idols.” This fundamental misunderstanding of mythology, Campbell maintained, consists “in the interpretation of mythic metaphors as references to hard fact: the Virgin Birth, for example, as a biological anomaly, or the Promised Land as a portion of the Near East to be claimed and settled by a people chosen of God, the term ‘God’ here to be understood as denoting an actual, though invisible, masculine personality, who created the universe and is now resident in an invisible, though actual, heaven to which the ‘justified’ will go when they die, there to be joined at the end of time by their resurrected bodies.”731

This, of course, was the crux of Pike’s difficulties. He insisted, in print and in public, that religious language and narratives are mythological and metaphorical and, therefore, not to be taken literally. It is not a coincidence that Pike, Tillich, and Campbell offered seminars at the Esalen Institute because it was at Esalen, foremost amongst all such “growth” institutions, that this distinction was forcefully articulated. In a 1961 interview for the San Francisco Chronicle, Pike made the case for a mythological, or metaphorical, understanding of religion that allows for, and encourages, a certain degree of agnosticism, however contradictory that may seem, within religious understanding among the faithful.732 In A Time for Christian Candor, he therefore boldly pronounced, to the discomfort of many of his co-religionists, “preoccupation with the literal hides the depth meaning in a mythological narrative and dims its relevance for today. This is particularly evident in the case of the Edenic myth. Taking the narrative as literal history results in an absurd and incredible explanation of man’s problems of getting right with God: the

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731 Ibid, 55.
punishment of each individual in the human race because two members of the race violated an arbitrary fiat of the Maker by eating an apple.”  

**The Hippie Priest, the Underground Church, and the Labyrinth at Grace**

Although the first labyrinth at Grace Cathedral was not installed until 1991, long after Pike’s departure, its presence nonetheless suggests that the style of worship there contains significant elements that dovetail with the human potential movement and countercultural religious perspectives that Pike advocated. Those elements include, as discussed throughout this chapter, the assumption of a universal mystical truth at the heart of world religions, a willingness to formally incorporate the secular within the sacred as an aspect of religious faith, and the recognition that religious symbolism and narratives are mythological, and thus metaphorical, in nature. Although the Episcopal faith tends to be more liberal-minded than most American Christian denominations it was in the 1960s that the Episcopal Diocese of California most fully underwent the process of incorporating these elements into its broader style of worship.  

In November, 1959, Pike and his priests issued a “Preamble To By-Laws of Grace Cathedral.” In that statement they alerted the Episcopal community of California of their intention to promote a policy of ecumenicalism, as well as a commitment to broadmindedness, in their execution of the business of the church and in their interpretation of faith. They wrote, “We purpose… that in its pulpit there may be full liberty in the prophetic preaching of the Word… We desire further that the Cathedral may in a true sense be hospitable to Christians of every

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734 Note that this is not to argue that the Episcopal Diocese of California is limited to a Pikean, or human potential movement, view of faith, but rather that these aspects of faith are incorporated into the diocese.
name, a symbol of the underlying unity of faith in Christ and a means by which that unity may be made increasingly visible.”

The ecumenicalism of this statement only goes so far. It is still an ecumenicalism that is limited to the Christian faith. The current mission statement of Grace Cathedral, however, is considerably more expansive in the universality of its view. It reads, in part, “We believe in one God, known to us in Jesus Christ, also known by different names in different traditions.” The current Bishop of the Episcopate of California, William Swing, concurs in his “Bishop’s Statement” for the same publication. “We believe that God is the Alpha,” Swing writes, “so in the beginning all aspects were in unity with God. Now in the meantime, this unity exists in the brave hope of those who worship God. Grace seeks to keep this hope of ultimate unity alive. So we are called to extravagant hospitality ‘to all sorts of conditions’ in the confidence that a gracious welcome is central to a cathedral’s purpose. And, yes, we are part of a specific religious tradition (Episcopal Church of the Anglican Communion). But we are so, not because one religious tradition exclusively contains all truth, but because when one goes on a long journey toward ultimate unity, one has to depart from one specific place.”

By the middle of the 1960s, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Pike already came to accept a universal mystical truth at the heart of world religions and it was this belief that gave him additional reason to seek unity with other Christian denominations. The attempt to

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736 See: Grace Cathedral (San Francisco: Smith Novelty Company, undated), 1
737 Ibid, 32.
738 It should not be overlooked that Pike’s advocacy of ecumenicalism was based, as well, on his desire to promote church participation in the civil rights movement. In the fall of 1962, following the bombing of four African-American churches in Atlanta, the Episcopal National Council participated in the National Conference on Religion and Race in Chicago, bringing together representatives from forty Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic organizations to discuss the role that religion and religious institutions have to play in removing racial segregation and securing acceptance for all Americans.” See: “National Council Backs Clergy Demand for ‘Responsibility’ in Mississippi” The Pacific Churchman, November 1962, Vol 97, No 17, pg. 7. For a discussion of Pike’s role in the civil rights movement see Robertson, 139 – 143.
maintain a unified Christianity, of course, is as old as the faith, itself. However it was early in the twentieth century, with the convening of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, in 1910, that official cooperation between various denominations in international missionary work was established.\textsuperscript{739} Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the movement toward Christian fellowship in the United States expressed itself in the formation of numerous organizations devoted to foreign missions and Christian education, culminating in the establishment of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, in 1950.\textsuperscript{740} With increasing church attendance in the United States following World War II, and despite theological differences concerning, for example, the veneration of Mary within Christian doctrine, by the time Pike took up his position as Bishop in California the Episcopal Church regarded ecumenicalism as a central feature of the faith.\textsuperscript{741}

In the 1960s and 1970s American Christian ecumenism also found advocates within the so-called “underground church movement,” a movement within Christianity that closely paralleled the counterculture and the movements for social justice and peace.\textsuperscript{742} Like their counterparts throughout American society during this period, and like the critics of mass culture before them, young radical seminarians and priests castigated American culture and American religious institutions for their alleged tendency to crush, or warp, the human self in favor of “machine-like” institutional prerogatives, requirements, or needs. Echoing the language of Roszak, youthful seminarians complained that organized religion fostered “technocratic values,”

\textsuperscript{740} Ibid, 35.
\textsuperscript{742} Malcom Boyd, a leading figure of the underground church movement is explicit concerning the importance of ecumenism. “The Ecumenical movement and the dynamism of John XXIII and Vatican II provided the impetus for the Underground Church; it would clearly not have emerged as a movement at this time in history with them,” he writes. See: Boyd, “\textit{Ecclesia Christi}” in The Underground Church, ed Malcolm Boyd (New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc., 1968), 3.
drained of the transcendental or mystical dimension of faith, thus turning the laity into a legion of “cheerful robots.”  

Coming directly on the heals of the Pike bishopry, members of the Episcopal Diocese of California squabbled over the direction of the church with some in favor of continued liberalization and some opposed. Those who opposed sometimes bitterly evoked the name of Pike. In a 1968 letter to the Pacific Churchman, entitled “Parade of Idiocracies,” for example, an angry parishioner wrote the following:

You have allowed scorn to be heaped on our church as you allow the act of communion to be desecrated at the ordination of Richard York. God, my Fathers, will not be mocked!

Now, you allow James Pike, once again, to continue his crusade to destroy our church, as you let him hold a mass to commemorate the birth of Karl Marx, enemy of God.

Before you ask, I am not a member of the John Birch Society, or any other group. I am just a mother who has taught my family to love the church, and has no answers when the children took to me to explain her foolish antics. Do you then expect me to be able to respond with any enthusiasm when I am asked to sacrifice to help with her financial problems only to see the money used for her destruction?

I hope to hear more of God, more of His son, and less about politics, and the misfits of this world in our churches.

As the letter infers, the “misfits of the world” included Richard York, the “hippie priest” of Berkeley, California. On March 9, 1968, York was ordained into the Episcopal priesthood in a ceremony, accompanied by music from a rock band named Martha’s Laundry, at St. Mark’s church in Berkeley. The San Francisco Chronicle described the event as follows:

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The congregation of about 500 people overflowed the pews and spilled onto the floor in front of the altar. They were a happy if diverse group made up of staid, elderly individuals, young jingling, jangling hippies, clergymen, old bohemians, left over beatniks, young, clean-cut, crew-cut types and roving children holding gas-filled balloons on strings… As the Rev. Brown compared President Johnson’s Administration to the rule of Caesar, an elderly gray haired woman stalked out of the church muttering, “filth.”

*Time* magazine also took note of the ordination:

St. Mark’s was decked out with gas-filled balloons and banners, children wandered along the aisles at will, and the sermon by the Rev. John Pairman Brown was entitled “God Is Doing His Thing.” When the congregation was invited to “donate something which has meaning to you,” the collection plate yielded little money but plenty of beads, marbles, a draft card and even a package of morning-glory seeds. Later, Father York distributed communions to his turned-on friends.

York went on to head the Berkeley Free Church with the purpose of ministering to the needs of young Bay Area counterculturalists and did so with funding from the National Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church, as well as from the Episcopal Diocese of California.

The essential goals of the ministry, which closed in the early 1970s, were as follows:

This program should be conceived as *experimental* and subject to the honest evaluation of all concerned persons.

It must be *ecumenical*, both in terms of strategy for service and mission…

It must be *cooperative*, embracing in its planning and program the insights and concerns of as many facets of this complex community as can be brought together…

It must be *flexible*. Its structured program must have as little formal structure as possible…

It must have a *spiritual dimension* with depth --- depth of commitment by leadership; depth of insight theologically; depth of character that breathes integrity; the capacity to love in Christ, to speak for Christ, and to point to Christ…

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The **ultimate purpose** of the ministry shall be to serve the total needs of people as they are made known and as lives respond with the hope that in this context of meaningful dialogue and relationship insight can be shared, help given and received mutually, and Christ discovered as active in the midst of many hearts and many lives. **Communication is the key.** And communication outside of the warming Spirit of Christ is hardly adequate or in the fullest sense mature.

It shall be redemptive in its intent and thrust, with the understanding that God will show all who relate through this program where life and hope can be found in a world of confusing movement and tension.\(^{749}\)

At the time, the Berkeley Free Church, as well as the underground church movement, more generally, was radical in their support for the revolutionary movements of the late 1960s and conceived of the figure of Jesus as, himself, a radical revolutionary.\(^{750}\) What is significant here, however, are the ways in which the ideas of York, and the underground church movement, dovetail with the ideas of Pike, and the human potential movement, as well as how those ideas influenced the Diocese of California. In their decision to install the labyrinths at Grace, the Episcopal Church of California made implicit what Pike and Tillich argued explicitly in earlier decades. The Church accepted the notion of a universal mystic truth at the heart of world religions.\(^{751}\) It sought a synthesis of the sacred and the secular in its understanding of religion.\(^{752}\) And it understood that religious symbolism is mythological in nature, rather than literal.\(^{753}\) In these ways the labyrinths at Grace reflect the concretization of ideals that wound their way in

\(^{749}\) Stalmach, 46.


\(^{751}\) Artress writes, “The labyrinth is a spiritual tool meant to awaken us to the deep rhythm that unites us to ourselves and to the Light that calls from within. In surrendering to the winding path, the soul finds healing and wholeness.” Artress, xxi.

\(^{752}\) Artress writes, “The (labyrinth’s) broad archetypal nature reaches beyond any faith tradition into the secular world. Often this is not understood. The labyrinth can be used as a path of prayer in a church, a tool to reduce stress in a hospital, or as a team-building activity in a corporate setting.” Artress, xii.

\(^{753}\) Artress writes, “Labyrinth walking supports flow, not force; cooperation, not competition. The symbolic takes precedence over the literal and the web of relationships is strengthened.” Artress, xvi.
various directions in the third-quarter of the twentieth century and that owe something to Pike, Tillich, and the human potential movement.

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Chapter 7

Conclusion: A Summing Up

The human potential movement was born in the United States during the heady days of early 1960s California.\textsuperscript{754} Sandwiched in time between the demise of the Beat movement of the late 1950s and the rise of the hippie-counterculture a few years later, the human potential movement received withering criticisms from numerous sources in American public life. Often associated with dubious quasi-psychological practices, such as primal screaming, or the sheer hedonism of marijuana-enhanced nude midnight hot-tubbing, the movement was, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, regularly castigated as unserious, narcissistic, self-indulgent, pseudo-scientific, and hopelessly apolitical. Some critics therefore characterized it as the frivolous whimsy of white, upwardly mobile, middle-aged, middle-class, California professional people who liked to think of themselves as “hip” and who had the economic resources and leisure time to indulge themselves in such things as marathon group-therapy sessions or hours of dream-like reverie in a sensory-deprivation tank.\textsuperscript{755}

Other critics, however, were even less generous in their characterizations. Conservative religious folk throughout the United States also did not appreciate what they saw coming out of “wacky” California. Tales of people blending strange Asian mystical practices with various

\textsuperscript{754} Stephen A. Applebaum defines the human potential movement as “a loose, informal term that refers to a wide variety of activities, all resting on the belief that there is more to most of us than meets the eye, that we have much unrealized potential. It further rests on the assumption that individual change can be brought about through self-help. Primarily one merely needs to be open to the possibilities of change, to be educated about some of these possibilities, to experiment with them, and to be determined to have them make a difference. Practically any activity or interest can be entered into under the aegis of human potential beliefs: sports, dance, nutrition, astrology, graphology, meditation, mysticism – and psychotherapy.” Applebaum, \textit{Out in Inner Space: A Psychoanalyst Explores the New Therapies} (New York: Anchor Press, 1979), 47. More recently, Olav Hammer makes a connection between the human potential movement and “the history of gnosia and Western esotericism…” by relating its intellectual foundations to 19th century Mesmerism and New Thought. Hammer, “Human Potential Movement,” in Wouter J. Hanegraaff et al., eds., \textit{Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism} (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
forms of occultism, all while under the dangerous influence of psychedelic drugs, led many of them to believe that the movement was, if not Satanic, then at least dangerous to one’s immortal soul, not to mention the immortal souls and well-being of one’s children.\textsuperscript{756}

Some political observers, meanwhile, saw something else, but something equally nefarious, in the human potential movement: communism. On January 19, 1970, Democratic Congressman, John R. Rarick of Louisiana, stood on the floor of the United States House of Representatives and proclaimed that such practices as “sensitivity training,” a mainstay of the human potential movement, actually represented a communist plot designed to weaken America’s will, and effeminize its men, during its struggle with the Soviet Union in the Cold War.\textsuperscript{757}

In truth, of course, this thing, which we are calling the human potential movement, is far different from its early mischaracterizations. The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to outline the main ideas that went into the movement, why it appeared when it appeared, and to suggest some ways in which those ideas may have influenced American social life, more generally. My argument is this: the human potential movement, with its blending of humanistic psychology and Asian religious theory emerged in the 1960s, at least in part, from social-scientific criticisms of a newly developing, but deeply flawed, American personality-type in the 1950s. It did so, furthermore, through a blending, or synthesis, of the sacred with the secular, the physical with the spiritual, the therapeutic with the mystical. The values of liberty, autonomy, and human authenticity, furthermore, that characterize both the counterculture and the human


\textsuperscript{757} \textit{Congressional Record}, January 19, 1970, 228.
potential movement, migrated into various other aspects of American social life such as the work-place, with progressive management techniques, the home, with progressive child-rearing, and the religious mainstream, as demonstrated by an examination of Bishop Pike.

In the middle of the twentieth century, social scientists such as David Riesman, C. Wright Mills, and William H. Whyte, Jr. suggested that white, middle-class Americans suffered from a diminishing sense of autonomous self-hood. Large institutions of power, they alleged, were creating a new and troubling human type, what Whyte dubbed the “Organization Man” and what Reisman identified as the “other-directed” personality. Humanistic psychologists, meanwhile, such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, and many others, advanced practices such as non-directive group therapy and gestalt therapy designed to release these Americans from their alleged dependency, conformity, lack of self-awareness, and failure of will. During the same period, and not coincidentally, Asian religious theorists of western background, such as Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, and others, likewise suggested that “mainstream” organized religious institutions furthered this unfortunate cultural trend by eroding the creativity, independence, and spiritual potential of their parishioners and adherents. They therefore advocated practices such as sitting-meditation, and the various forms of yoga, designed to liberate the self and bring forth, in the words of Watts, the “practical transformation of human consciousness.” To advance this agenda they opened, or attended, Asian influenced alternative religious educational institutions, such as the Vedanta Society of Southern California,

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Gerald Heard’s Trabuco College in Los Angeles, and, most importantly to this study, the American Academy of Asian Studies (AAAS) in San Francisco.\footnote{For a discussion of these first two educational institutions see Timothy Miller, “Notes on the Prehistory of the Human Potential Movement: The Vedanta Society and Gerald Heard’s Trabuco College” in On The Edge of the Future, 80 – 98.}

In 1962, two students of the AAAS and of Stanford University, Michael Murphy and Richard Price, united Asian religious ideas and practices with the insights and practices derived from humanistic psychology under the umbrella of what Huxley dubbed “human potentialities.” In Big Sur, California, they opened the Esalen Institute and invited intellectuals, artists, scientists, and religious figures to give seminars and join them in this project. With the assistance of numerous well-known scholars from a large variety fields, Esalen quickly became a popular think tank, or clearing house, for such methods as encounter group therapy, gestalt therapy, primal screaming, deep body massage, yoga, tai chi, and a whole host of other methods, from the sacred to the secular and from the spiritual to the physical, designed to free the individual from his or her social, psychological, or “spiritual” malaise. Advocates of the human potential thus joined the work of humanistic psychologists with those of alternative religious thinkers in a quest to liberate the diminished self, or the conformist American, from his or her alleged personal and spiritual stagnation. Liberation of the self and a utopian transformation of western culture were the expressed goals.\footnote{George Leonard, The Transformation: A Guide to the Inevitable Changes in Humankind (New York: Delacorte Press, 1972), 2.}

Within the human potential movement, generally, and within the Esalen Institute, in particular, this latter 1960s’ trend toward practices of personal “liberation” represented responses to the earlier notions of human diminishment advanced by social critics, humanistic psychologists, and alternative religious thinkers in the 1950s. At the American Academy of

\footnote{Watts, In My Own Way, 247.}
Asian Studies, in the late 1950s, Mike Murphy and Richard Price studied under countercultural theologian and Zen-devotee, Alan Watts, Stanford professor of Asian religious thought and culture, Friedrich Spiegelberg, and Hindu religious philosopher, Haridas Chaudhuri. Within the religious side of the human potential movement, Watts, Spiegelberg, and Chaudhuri, along with others such as Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard, served as bridges between the social critics and humanistic psychologists of the 1950s, who warned of this diminishing sense of autonomous self-hood, and the practitioners of the human potential of the 1960s who sought methods of liberating the self from that alleged diminishment. They, in effect, offered religious, or mystical, solutions to psychological and social problems.

The human potential movement, it should be noted, however, was not just a religious movement. In every area of human endeavor, from athletics to marital relations and sexuality, to race relations, to corporate productivity, to the physical health of the body, and even to international diplomatic relations during the Cold War, Murphy, Price, and others at Esalen, sought practicable methods toward nurturing the human potential. However, the religious side of the human potential movement, or perhaps more properly, the mystical side of the human potential movement, was the well-spring for the broader project and it was out of their concerns of diminished religious selves that Spiegelberg, Watts, and Chaudhuri inspired Murphy and Price to seek, and experiment with, liberatory techniques.

Spiegelberg and Watts, in particular, agreed that mainstream religion, as generally practiced in the middle of the twentieth century within the United States and Europe, crushed the human mystic potential through desiccated, dull, and lifeless ritualism, as well as through the literalization of religious metaphors. Not only did Spiegelberg and Watts agree, along with such notable theologians as Paul Tillich, and mythologists such as Joseph Campbell, that literalizing
religious metaphors undermined the mystical potential of religious practice, but they also agreed that mainstream religious ritualism was empty, lacking the power to evoke an experience of the mystical. 764

So, in response to this alleged diminishment of the mid-twentieth century American self and, in particular, the alleged diminishment of the mid-twentieth century American religious self, as caused by the empty ritualism, literalism, and authoritarianism, of mainstream religious organizations, Spiegelberg, Watts, and Chaudhuri recommended various Asian mystical practices, such as yoga or Zen meditation (zazen). Despite the fact that the president and founder of the American Academy of Asian Studies, exporter-importer Louis P. Gainsborough, opened the school, in 1950, specifically as a practical and worldly project designed to ease Pacific Rim tensions following World War II, through educating students about Asian cultures, the faculty and students were far more interested in the transformation of human consciousness, particularly their own. 765 Spiegelberg, Watts, and Chaudhuri, along with other faculty members, such as southern Californian Theosophist, Judith Tyberg, had no particular interest in training young businesspeople or diplomats in the ways of Asian culture, as Gainsborough desired. What they wanted, ultimately, was spiritual liberation, for themselves, and the promotion of methods designed to bring about the spiritual liberation of their students. They saw themselves, therefore, not as detached scholars of Asian cultures or metaphysical philosophies, but as revolutionaries of consciousness.

765 “New University in S.F., School to Teach Americans about Asia.” San Francisco Chronicle, 2/27/1951, pg. 5. In his autobiography, Watts however noted, “Spiegelberg and I had no real interest in this nonetheless sensible idea of an information service about Asian culture, nor was this what really concerned Chaudhuri, Aiyar, and Tyberg. We were concerned with the practical transformation of human consciousness, with the actual living out of the Hindu,
If social critics, such as Riesman, Whyte, and Mills, warned that mid-century Americans suffered from a diminishing sense of autonomous self-hood, the alternative religious thinkers at the American Academy of Asian Studies offered practicable religious solutions to what were essentially social and psychological problems. At the Esalen Institute, however, Murphy and Price approached the religious and metaphysical, which, of course, were the primary areas of interest of their teachers at the American Academy of Asian Studies, but did it, through the worldly, the scientific, the material, and through the human body, itself. As Wouter Hanegraaff writes, “If a detailed history of Western esotericism from the perspective of the human potential is ever written, it will likely illustrate how perceptions of the ideal human being have slowly moved on a scale from otherworldly to this-worldly.” Indeed, Murphy and Price were never religious ascetics, shunning the pleasures of the physical world, nor were they, as they have sometimes been accused, merely self-indulgent hedonists seeking nirvana through group sex in a hot tub. Instead, the key concept at Esalen was “synthesis.” From the beginning the idea was to reconcile the religious with the rational, the sacred with the scientific, as well as the metaphysical with the material, in pursuit of the transformation of human consciousness as inspired by Spiegelberg, Watts, and Chaudhuri.

For Murphy and Price the most important influences in this synthetic ideal derived from the mystical philosophy of the Hindu sage Aurobindo Gosh, who borrowed the idea of biological

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Buddhist, and Taoist ways of life at the level of high mysticism: a concern repugnant to academics and contemptible to businessmen, threatening to Jews and Christians, and irrational to most scientists.” Watts, In My Own Way, 247.

766 One aspect of the genealogy of the human potential movement that I have not covered here is the somatic. Both Jeffrey Kipral and Don Hanlon Johnson demonstrate that Esalen’s concern for regimes of the body, such as the form of deep body massage developed by Ida Rolf known as Rolfing or the sensory awareness techniques taught by Charlotte Selver, owe much to the nineteenth century German Lebensreform movement which included vegetarianism, nudism, natural medicine, abstinence from alcohol, clothing reform, and sexual reform. See Kipral, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 222 – 246; Don Hanlon Johnson, “From Sarc to Soma: Esalen’s Role in Recovering the Body for Spiritual Development” in On the Edge of the Future, 250 – 267.
evolution, married it to the quest for religious enlightenment, and thus encouraged the notion of “spiritual evolution.”

One must not underestimate the significance of Aurobindo in the development of the human potential movement. Both Spiegelberg and Chaudhuri devoted themselves to the philosophy of the Indian sage and introduced his writings to the young Michael Murphy. In 1949, Spiegelberg, while a professor at Stanford University, traveled to India on a Rockefeller grant where he received *darshan*, or spiritual transmission, from the guru at his ashram in Pondicherry, claiming that moment as decisive in his own spiritual development.

Chaudhuri wrote his doctoral dissertation for the University of Calcutta’s department of philosophy on Aurobindo’s so-called “integral” philosophy and was among the foremost experts on Aurobindo in the United States. Murphy, himself, spent about two years studying Hinduism at Aurobindo’s ashram just prior to the establishment of Esalen and he asserted, “My reasons for starting Esalen were rooted in the evolutionary world-engaging vision of Sri Aurobindo…”

Aurobindo’s influence on Murphy, and therefore on Esalen and the human potential movement more broadly, derives from the fact that his religious philosophy was an “integral” philosophy that sought to recognize the unity underlying apparent separateness, that posited the inevitability of human spiritual evolution, and that saw the divine within the physical. For Aurobindo, matter and spirit were not distinct, but rather, as he wrote, “Matter is a form of Spirit.” For Aurobindo, likewise, as a Vedanta philosopher, the agitated, individual self or soul (*atman*) is fundamentally identical to the “spaceless, timeless, immobile and immutable

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769 Transcript of Spiegelberg speech on anniversary of Aurobindo’s death, August 17, 1958. Haridas Chaudhuri Archives, Cultural Integration Fellowship, San Francisco, CA.
Although, furthermore, disparate religions seemed to offer distinctive messages, at the core of each, according to Aurobindo, (as well as according to the Hindu sage Vivekenanda before him, and the Hindu sage Ramakrishna before him), is a common ineffable metaphysical reality. In the same vein, science and theology are, in Aurobindo’s integral system, not mutually exclusive systems of thought, which have nothing to do with one another, but necessarily different approaches to differing aspects of the same underlying Supreme Reality. Although Aurobindo was certainly no scientist, it was his respect, as a religious figure, toward the world of matter, toward the world of the flesh, and thus also toward the physical sciences, that inclined him to take the biological idea of evolution and apply it to his religious philosophy. He argued, in the words of Chaudhuri, that “the whole march of evolution is a drama of increasing self-manifestation of the Spirit in conditions provided by Matter. Inorganic matter, organic life, the animal kingdom, the human species, etc., represent different grades of this self-manifestation. They are milestones in a gradual progression towards an era of unveiled manifestation of the Spirit on earth.”

The field of scientific knowledge most amenable toward the human potential movement and Asian mystical thinking is, needless to say, psychology. It is therefore no surprise that both Murphy and Price majored in psychology at Stanford and that, aside from programs inspired by Asian religious practice, the catalog at Esalen was dominated by psychologists and various psychological programs, such as encounter group and gestalt therapies, among others. The field

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772 Ibid, 583.
within psychology that fit best was, of course, humanistic psychology and the humanistic psychologist most influential at Esalen in the 1960s was Abraham Maslow.774

Sometime in 1961, or thereabouts, as Murphy and Price were organizing Esalen, Murphy met with George Leonard, a journalist for Look magazine. Murphy showed Leonard his personal journals within which he, as Leonard writes, “listed similarities between the new humanist psychology, as represented by Maslow and Rogers, and the main line of Eastern philosophy. Maslow’s concept of the peak experience (an episode of egoless delight and heightened clarity during which all things seem to flow in perfect harmony) was similar to the Eastern ecstatic experience of samadhi or satori. Maslow’s notion of self-actualization was similar to the Eastern notion of yoga or tao, the lifelong path of mastery that involves self-development and good works but that is not narrowly competitive or goal-oriented. Both the humanistic psychologists and the Eastern sages were open to a wide range of mental and spiritual experiences. Both agreed that consciousness was not, as hard-line scientists would have it, a mere epiphenomenon, but rather a vast terra incognita, a rich territory for exploration.”775

As Murphy wrote in his journals, and as Leonard later recounted, Maslow’s work on “self-actualization” and the “peak experience” were the concepts that bridged Asian metaphysics and mysticism with secular western psychology. Much of Maslow’s work, therefore, was devoted to the development, as he wrote in Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences, of a “psychology of the higher life or the ‘spiritual life,’ of what the human being should grow toward…”776

774 Kipral notes, “there is probably no psychologist who was more influential on the early Esalen vision than Abraham Maslow. The influence seems to have gone both ways, Esalen was clearly an example – perhaps the example – of what Maslow imagined as Eupsychia (roughly ‘good souled’), his term for a small community of individuals whose social lives are more or less synergistic with the physiological, psychological, and spiritual requirements of self-actualization.” Kipral, Esalen: American and the Religion of No Religion, 135.
This blending of the secular and the sacred, of Asian mysticism with western psychology, would come, throughout the last decades of the twentieth century, to have a significant influence on American, and perhaps European, culture, more generally. By the end of the 1960s an entirely new field of psychological inquiry, transpersonal psychology, developed out of the project.\(^{777}\) To Maslow’s chagrin it also gave the imprimatur of rational authority to the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, which he loathed, as well as to the so-called “psychedelic revolution” of Allen Ginsberg and Timothy Leary. The New Age Movement of the 1970s and 1980s, with its romanticism of non-western and allegedly pre-Christian shamanic practices, developed, at least in part, out of this work.\(^{778}\) Furthermore, the free-wheeling nature of the human potential movement, with its emphasis on personal experimentation, human autonomy, liberation, and “spontaneous self-development,” neatly dovetailed with, if not directly encouraged, such developments as the “sexual revolution” and the rise of holistic and alternative medicine. Maslow even took his basic premise of “self-actualization” into the corporate world where he encouraged “participatory management” techniques; techniques devised not only to increase worker efficiency and autonomy, but to promote the work-place as an important site for the “self-actualization” of the worker.\(^{779}\)

Finally, the example of the Esalen Institute, and of the human potential movement, is significant to the history of the human sciences in several ways. It demonstrates how some humanists following World War II went about creating optimistic ideals of human subjectivity through an untidy integration of secular psychology with claims of mystical potential. It


illustriates ways in which efforts of psychological self-improvement were not limited to scientific and clinical projects within formal university or medical institutions, but were sometimes conducted *ad hoc* within relatively informal institutions. And, finally, it bolsters the argument made by others, such as Harry Oosterhuis, that regimes of mental health in the third-quarter of the twentieth century broke away from earlier, more formal, hierarchical relationships in favor of what Oosterhuis dubs “spontaneous self-development,” a trend which emphasized concerns for personal freedom, individualism, and a search for an “authentic” sense of self.780

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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