

James Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*  
Chapter Eight:  
A Separate Universe:  
The New Age

Check out the new age online:

- LinkLight: <http://www.linklight.com>
- Blue Ridge Spirit: <http://www.blueridgespirit.com/>
- The Wanderer Community: <http://www.wanderercommunity.com>
- Life Positive: <http://www.lifepositive.com/>
- Center for Western New Age Spirituality:  
<http://www.neika.org/pages/1/index.htm>
- New Age Spirituality: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/newage.htm>

Introduction:

While EPM provides a possible way of escape from Western nihilism, it is nevertheless a strange and in many ways forbidding alternative. For many it is just too much to so die to the West and be born in the East.

Isn't there an easier, less costly, more familiar, way to a new consciousness that can capitalize on some Eastern ideas and yet retain some Western advantages? The answer to this query lies in what has become known as the NAM. The NAM is a relatively recent WV that has gained considerable notoriety in the last three decades or so.

## I. Key NA Concern: The Radical Transformation of Human Nature

A. There is the NA hope of the coming of a new human being and a new age

1. Jean Houston of the Foundation for Mind Research
2. Sociologist George Leonard
3. Shirley McClain
4. Andrew Weil, MD
5. Technoshamanism

B. With this ambition at its core, the NAM has invaded just about every major academic discipline and field of inquiry.

1. Psychology

2. Sociology and cultural history
3. Anthropology
4. Natural sciences
5. Medicine and health
6. Politics
7. Science fiction
8. Movies (perhaps read page 143 on Spielberg and Lucas)
9. Sports

### III. What is the relationship of the NAM to other WVS?

- A. Like naturalism, the NAM denies the existence of a transcendent God.
- B. Like both theism and naturalism, and unlike EPM, the NAM places great value on the human person
- C. Like EPM, the NAM centers upon the importance of mystical experience in which time, space, and morality are suspended and transcended
- D. NAM shares much in common with animism
- E. The NAM has its roots in at least four other WVS: theism, naturalism, pantheism, and animism.

### III. Basic Tenets of the NAM

- A. Whatever the nature of being (idea or matter, energy or particle), the self is the kingpin--the prime reality. As human beings grow in their awareness and grasp this fact, the human race is on the verge of a radical change in human nature; even now we harbingers of transformed humanity and prototypes of the New Age.
  1. What is the objective evidence for this allegedly giant step forward in human evolution and development? Is it just a pipe dream, a figment of the imagination, wishful thin king?
  2. Isn't there in all this the great danger of tremendous self deception?
- B. The cosmos, while unified in the self, is manifested in two more dimensions: (1) the visible universe, accessible through ordinary consciousness, and (2) the invisible universe (or Mind at large), accessible through altered states of consciousness.

1. First of all, then, with the self at the center of the universe, there is the regular natural, physical, 3d world that we have access to via the five senses.
2. But there is a second, invisible universe (MIND AT LARGE) which is accessed only by means such as drugs, meditation, trances, biofeedback, acupuncture, ritualized dance, certain kinds of music and other methods.

Shirley McClains description of the Mind at Large:

“I was learning to recognize the invisible dimension where there are no measurements possible. In fact, it is the dimension of no height, no width, no breadth, and no mass, and as a matter of further fact, no time. It is the dimension of the spirit.”

Aldous Huxley has also described this realm is ways:

1. The first characteristic is its color and luminosity.
  2. The second characteristic is that it is populated by a variety of special beings—higher selves, allies, helpers, guardians, and entities of the night.
- C. The core experience of the New Age is cosmic consciousness, in which ordinary categories of space, time and morality tend to disappear.
- timeless bliss
  - higher consciousness
  - peak experience
  - nirvana
  - satori
  - cosmic consciousness
  - altered states of consciousness
  - cosmic vision
- D. Physical death is not the end of the self; under the experience of cosmic consciousness, the fear of death is removed.
1. Near death, out of body experiences proved to the 20th century’s premier student of death, Eliz. Kubler Ross, that death is just a transition to another stage of life.

2. Past life recall is the second kind of evidence that death does not end all, but is just a transition to the next stage of existence.
3. The third basis for the New age view of death is that consciousness is more than one's physical manifestation; if the self is the prime reality, and in a sense god, then death can pose no threat or fear.

E. Three distinct attitudes are taken to the metaphysical question of the nature of reality under the general framework of the new age:

1. The occult version, in which the being and things perceived in states of altered consciousness exist apart from the self that is conscious.

In short, the new age movement is rooted in and contact with the independently existing spirit world.

2. The psychedelic version, in which these things and beings are projections of the conscious self.

The reality perceived under altered states of consciousness is spun out by the self, even if it is assisted with drugs like LSD.

3. The conceptual relativist version, in which the cosmic consciousness is the conscious activity of a mind using one of many nonordinary models for reality, now of which is any truer than any other.

Altered states of consciousness then allow people to create a reality symbolically, to substitute one symbol system for another, one version of reality for another.

#### IV. Criticisms of the New Age

- A. The new age view of God as pantheistic--God is just the structure of the universe and yet this destroys distinctions and makes real ethical values impossible.
- B. The second criticism has to do with the new age affinity with animism-- borrowing a host of demigods, demons, and guardians who inhabit the separate reality or inner spaces of the mind. This has reopened the door to the dangerous world of the occult.
- C. The final criticism has to do with the new age view of reality and truth that comes about by placing the self at the center of things.

Conclusion:

The kingpin issue of the new age movement hinges on one issue: whether or not human beings are god. If yes, well and good; we need a change in consciousness But if not, then what? Where do we turn? Postmodernism?