

# **SPIRITUALITY AND CULTS: AN EXPERIENTIAL ANALYSIS\***

**Elliot Benjamin, Ph.D**

**June 2005**

\*Also published under the title “**SPIRITUALITY AND CULTS: AN INTEGRALLY INFORMED ANALYSIS**”

## **INTRODUCTION**

The motivation for writing this paper was initially related to my involvement with Ken Wilber’s think tank “Integral Institute,” for possible use in the study of what has been referred to as “new religious movements” (c.f. [1]). Ken Wilber’s Integral model is described in detail in most of his more recent books [2]. I will be incorporating some of Wilber’s basic ideas in my analysis of four modern religious movements that I have personally experienced, while making use of the analysis of new religious movements given by Dick Anthony and Bruce Ecker, referred to as the Anthony Typology, and described in their 1987 book “Spiritual Choices“, which is edited by Dick Anthony, Bruce Ecker, and Ken Wilber [1]. I will also be utilizing the Cult Danger Evaluation Frame rating scale given by Isaac Bonewits in his 1971 book “Real Magic“ [3], which will serve as a quantitative comparison of all the religious groups that I will be discussing. However, although these philosophical research tools will be made use of, the basis of my analysis will remain my own subjective experience with the new religious movements that I am writing about. I believe that there is a rich and meaningful kind of learning about both the beneficial as well as the dangerous ingredients inherent in religious organizations that is available only thru delving into one’s personal experiences. As I have been a longtime explorer of new religious movements as my own personal journey of spiritual seeking, my main purpose is to convey to people what I have learned thru my personal experiences, via a more comprehensive analysis.

The new religious movements that have had the most impact upon me, and which I will be discussing in this paper, are Scientology, Avatar, Neopaganism, and Conversations With God, all of which were initiated in the twentieth century. I would like to make it clear that all statements expressed in this paper regarding the new religious movements that I am writing about are merely my own opinions; based primarily upon my experiences in these organizations. When I use the term “cult“ I am referring to a gradient scale of a number of different characteristics, as described by many authors, and I am specifically using the description by Isaac Bonewits in “Real Magic“ (please see Figure 2). It is not a matter of whether a particular new religion is or is not a cult, but rather where this new religion places in what I will refer to as the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale. In what follows I will briefly describe the three models that I will be using: the Anthony Typology, the Integral model, and the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale.

## **THE ANTHONY TYPOLOGY**

The Anthony Typology is an eight cell matrix that represents interaction amongst three dual characteristics of new religious movements (in the terminology of Anthony, Ecker, Wilber; see Figure 1). These three dual characteristics are Monistic/Dualistic,

Technical/Charismatic, and Multilevel/Unilevel. A brief summary of these terms are as follows (c.f. [4] for more information). “The distinction between monistic and dualistic world views corresponds to a distinction between Eastern and Western religions. In Monistic world views, all individuals are inherently one with the Godhead and will ultimately enjoy that condition consciously. Dualistic world views, however, maintain that not all individuals ultimately achieve salvation; one must qualify by surviving a competitive salvational ordeal or selection process. Those who do not will receive eternal damnation.” In regard to the Technical/Charismatic dimension, Anthony and Ecker describe the distinction as follows: “These categories indicate the nature of a group’s practice. In Technical groups, techniques--any repetitive mental or physical processes that can be taught through explicit articulation and instruction--are the basis of seeking spiritual transformation. Common examples include most forms of meditation (such as mantra meditation and visualization meditation), chanting, hatha yoga, and pranayama (breath yoga). In charismatic groups, spiritual attainment is sought primarily through direct, personal relationship with the leader. Because the leader is regarded as a direct link with or embodiment of divine authority, knowledge, and love, contact with such a person is itself considered transformative, particularly sustained contact involving devotion, love, remembrance, attention, and obedience.” Regarding the Multilevel/Unilevel dimension: “These terms describe a group’s sensibilities regarding the nature of spiritual transformation and attainment...Unilevel groups err toward trivializing and misreading the nature of genuine spiritual transformation....groups with unilevel sensibilities confuse the attainment of authentic spiritual transcendence or realization with the attainment of mundane psychological satisfaction, inducement of special inner sensations or moods, commitment to a certain set of beliefs.....Multilevel groups do not confuse mundane and transcendental consciousness and so foster genuine spiritual inner development-----even the lower levels of true spiritual transformation involve a radical, permanent change in the sort of being that one perceives and feels oneself to be. One experiences that one’s existence is independent of the physical body, for example.” For Anthony and Ecker, the most serious cult dangers are in the cell which represents Unilevel/Dualistic/Charismatic, in which they include Unification Church, Synanon (authoritarian anti-drug program popular in the 1970s), and People’s Temple (Jonestown tragic mass suicide/murder in the 1970s). On the other end of the spectrum, they expect generally favorable characteristics to be most common in the cells Monistic/Multilevel/Charismatic and Monistic/Multilevel/Technical. It is interesting that a number of the gurus in these categories (for example Da Free John, also known by Adi Da and other names), Chogyam Trungpa, Baba Muktananda, Meher Baba, Sri Chinmoy, etc.) have been the source of much negative publicity regarding both their authentic spiritual practices as well as their ethical practices, especially in the cases of Trungpa and Da Free John/Adi Da [5]. It is also interesting that both Anthony and Ecker are devotees of Meher Baba, and the Charismatic dimension is considered by them to be of the highest context if an authentic guru can be found. Suffice it to say that I do not agree with them on this point, as I believe there are numerous problems and pitfalls with the Charismatic dimension, but I still find the Anthony Typology to be both informative and useful, especially in context and combination with other schemes.

MULTILEVEL MONISTIC TECHNICAL	MULTILEVEL DUALISTIC TECHNICAL
MULTILEVEL MONISTIC CHARISMATIC	MULTILEVEL DUALISTIC CHARISMATIC
UNILEVEL MONISTIC TECHNICAL	UNILEVEL DUALISTIC TECHNICAL
UNILEVEL MONISTIC CHARISMATIC	UNILEVEL DUALISTIC CHARISMATIC

Figure 1: THE ANTHONY TYPOLOGY

### THE INTEGRAL MODEL

Certain concepts within the Integral model and the Anthony Typology are quite similar in describing the cult dangers of new religious movements. In particular we see from the definitions and descriptions of Anthony & Ecker’s concepts of Monistic and Dualistic that we essentially are talking about Wilber’s vertical spiritual dimensions of pre-rational and trans-rational (c.f.[1], [6]). In regard to Anthony & Ecker’s concepts of Multilevel and Unilevel we can see a direct parallel with the Integral model’s concepts of transformation and translation (c.f. [7]. The Multilevel dimension is an interior movement to a higher level of authentic spiritual experience whereas the Unilevel dimension focuses upon the more mundane psychological, social, and economic aspects of the religion (c.f. [1]). The primary relationship of the Integral model to a description of the cult dangers of new religious movements can be simplified by a generalization of three general categories: pre-rational, rational, and trans-rational. The generalization I have in mind is to add a fourth category in-between pre-rational and rational, which I will call “pseudo-rational.” This category is essentially what the Integral model sometimes refers to as the mythic level of consciousness, which occurs between the magical level and the rational level, and would include the popular forms of our dominant religious institutions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc. (c.f. [2], [6], [7]). I would particularly like to be able to describe the new religious movements that I have experienced as engaging in this kind of mythic thinking, though in a seemingly modern--or even “scientific” manner. However, the level of consciousness I am referring to is anything but scientific; in some cases it can be considered “pseudo-scientific,” and in general I will refer to it as “pseudo-rational.” Wilber discusses his ideas about confusing the pre-rational and trans-rational levels of consciousness in his essay “The Pre-Trans Fallacy” in “Eye To Eye” [7], and he describes in much more detail the specific stages of archaic, magical, mythic, rational, and transpersonal in many of his books (c.f. [2], [6]). Wilber also describes in his essay in “Spiritual Choices,” as well as similar ideas in “A Sociable God,” the likelihood that a positive authentic group will anchor its “legitimacy” in a tradition as opposed to a sudden rise to power and prominence, and has an authority that is “phase-specific,” meaning that the guru is a guide and mentor and has the goal of transferring his/her authority to others, once the appropriate higher level of consciousness is achieved by others [7].

### THE BONEWITS CULT DANGER SCALE

We now come to what will be the most useful scheme in describing the cult dangers of the new religious movements that will be discussed, which is Isaac Bonewits’ Cult Danger Evaluation Frame, or the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, as described in his book

“Real Magic” [3] (see Figure 2). This is a rating scale from 1 to 10 (1 is lowest and 10 is highest) for 15 characteristics of cults, including internal control, dogma, recruitment, sexual manipulation, censorship, endorsement of violence, etc. There have been numerous articles and books written in the field of cult studies in the past 30 years [8], and many rating scales have been utilized to engage in research about cults. However, I find Bonewits’ cult danger scale to be simple to use, and I believe it will be extremely useful in giving us an organic and concrete illustration of the cult characteristics of these modern religions. As a result, I will tally for each one of these new religious movements the average rating number across the 15 cult characteristics on this scale.

- 
- INTERNAL CONTROL: amount of internal political power exercised by leader(s) over members
  - WISDOM CLAIMED: by leader(s); amount of infallibility declared about decisions.
  - WISDOM CREDITED: to leaders by members; amount of trust in decisions made by leader(s).
  - DOGMA: rigidity of reality concepts taught; of amount of doctrinal inflexibility.
  - RECRUITING: emphasis put on attracting new members, amount of proselytizing.
  - FRONT GROUPS: number of subsidiary groups using different name from that of main group.
  - WEALTH: amount of money and/or property desired or obtained; emphasis on members’ donations.
  - POLITICAL POWER: amount of external political influence desired or obtained.
  - SEXUAL MANIPULATION: of members by leader(s); amount of control over the lives of members.
  - CENSORSHIP: amount of control over members’ access to outside opinions on group, its doctrines or leader(s).
  - DROPOUT CONTROL: intensity of efforts directed at preventing or returning dropouts.
  - ENDORSEMENT OF VIOLENCE: when used by or for the group or its leader(s).
  - PARANOIA: amount of fear concerning real or imagined enemies; perceived power of opponents.
  - GRIMNESS: amount of disapproval concerning jokes about the group, its doctrines or leaders(s).
  - SURRENDER OF WILL: emphasis on members not having to be responsible for personal decisions.

RATING SCALE

	LOW									HIGH
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Figure 2: THE BONEWITS CULT DANGER SCALE

But both the Anthony Typology and Integral model give us useful ways of studying the cult dangers of new religious movements. Used in conjunction with a model such as the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, we have a dynamic interplay of criteria to assess the cult dangers of new religious movements, as well as their more favorable aspects.

AN INTEGRALLY INFORMED ANALYSIS OF NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

SCIENTOLOGY

I will now analyze Scientology, the religion created by L. Ron Hubbard based upon its precursor of “Dianetics” in 1950, in regard to the measurement vehicles of the Anthony Typology, the Integral model, and the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, based upon what I have learned about Scientology from my own experiences with them in the 1970s, as described in my book “Modern Religions: An Experiential Analysis And Expose” [9]. The interested reader can easily find out more information about Scientology (c.f. [10]).

To begin with, in the Anthony Typology Scientology is placed in the Monistic/Unilevel/Technical cell, with overlap into the Monistic/Unilevel/Charismatic cell. However, based upon my own experiences with Scientology I do have some concerns about both of these classifications. This classification scheme does become rather vague and not especially illustrative for a number of reasons. Scientology claims to be open to all people, and they certainly proselytize to the world--quite successfully for that matter. But they also very much belong in an Us vs. Them category of Scientology vs. non-Scientology, one illustration of which can be seen by their term "wog," an abbreviation meaning "wise old gentleman," used as a derogatory condescending label for a non-Scientologist [11]. Scientologists all have the potential to go "Clear" and "OT" (Operating Thetan) [12], whereas non-Scientologists are doomed to live their lives governed by their "reactive minds" and chained by their "engrams." Does this not seem like the makings of a new religion that smacks of Dualistic in the extreme? Which is it--Monistic or Dualistic?

Perhaps the choice of category itself is the problem here, as Anthony and Ecker concede when they initially place Scientology in the Technical cell--stating that there is also overlap in the Charismatic cell. And they are quite correct, as along with the overpowering and overwhelming amount of Scientology technical materials there is the awe inspiring continuous presence of Scientology founder and guru L. Ron Hubbard, whose picture is all over the Scientology surroundings, constantly watching over each and every Scientologist in his/her Scientology endeavors. Until his death in the mid 1980s, Hubbard would furnish the whole Scientology organization with continuous detailed memos full of instructions about how a Scientologist should behave in both personal as well as Scientology ways. Yes--extremely high technology and extremely high charisma--these are the hallmarks of Scientology. And I certainly do agree in general with Anthony and Ecker that Scientology belongs in the cell of Unilevel as opposed to Multilevel, signifying that what one experiences from Scientology is not authentic spirituality, but rather a psychological catharsis that is on a lower level than true spiritual realization. However, although I would not argue with this general classification, in all fairness I must question exactly where one can draw the line here. As much as I have written about the dangers of Scientology (c.f. [9]), I cannot honestly claim that it is not possible for someone experiencing a cathartic release of engrams in the process of "auditing" (Scientology growth therapy) [13] to experience a more spiritual state as well. My main point is that at least for the case of Scientology, something more concrete and revealing than the Anthony Typology is needed to accurately describe its cult dangers.

In examining the Integral model, the first question is where exactly is Scientology in the pre-rational/pseudo-rational/rational/trans-rational continuum? Does Scientology, for example, allow free logical/ rational inquiry among its members? My experience is that Scientology does not allow differing ideas to be expressed, and that these ideas are even monitored by the Hubbard E-Meter, a type of Scientology lie detector and auditing physiological machine [14]. Although rational up to a point, Scientology seems to go backwards to primitive mythic. Some of the descriptions of the OT.post-Clear levels do sound to me like quite far-fetched science-fiction accounts of stories of other galaxies, but unfortunately many people spend thousands of dollars to gain these levels of experience [15]. As I understand it, the essential way to distinguish between pre-rational

and trans-rational is to determine if the rational mind is fully engaged and “transcended” [16], or instead bypassed and regressed into a lower level of consciousness. I contend that it is this lower regression quality that Scientology practices, but to be generous and give Scientology the benefit of the doubt for its undeniably strong focus upon the mind, I shall put Scientology in the pseudo-rational category and not the pre-rational category. The overwhelming success which Scientology has experienced throughout the world may be substantial evidence that many people do not view Scientology as a pre-rational level of consciousness. But for any free mind who has been through and out of Scientology, I believe it is quite evident that Scientology is a very obvious example of what I have defined to be a pseudo-rational level of consciousness. In regard to Wilber’s other criteria, I believe the picture is even more clear. In my opinion, the legitimacy of Scientology is something that was invented by L. Ron Hubbard and not part of any continuing tradition. The name “Scientology” itself suggests modernism in its very core. And Wilber’s category of phase-specific authority is quite obviously completely violated in the case of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology. L. Ron Hubbard’s writings are the gospel of Scientology, beginning with his 1950 book “Dianetics: The Modern Science Of Mental Health.” (c.f. {10}). Hubbard died in the 1980s, but he is now worshipped as an enlightened guru, in the company of Jesus and Buddha [17].

When we examine Scientology in regard to the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, the picture finally becomes quite concrete. As I promised in the Introduction, we shall emerge with an actual mathematical number to describe the cult dangers of Scientology and to compare it to the cult dangers of the other new religious movements that I am writing about. Of-course this is based upon my own ratings of Scientology, which is based primarily upon my subjective experiences with them in the 1970s, but it will at least give us a sense of how a more objective description of the cult dangers of a religious organization can be made. Based upon my own experience and knowledge of Scientology, here are my ratings; once again the ratings are from 1 to 10 with 1 the lowest and 10 the highest; see figure 2 for a verbatim description by Bonewits of his “Cult Danger Evaluation Frame” listed in “Real Magic” (page 215).

Internal Control	10
Wisdom Claimed	10
Wisdom Credited	10
Dogma	10
Recruiting:	10
Front Groups	8
Wealth	10
Political Power	7
Sexual Manipulation	5
Censorship	10
Dropout Control	8
Endorsement Of Violence	5
Paranoia	10
Grimness	10
Surrender Of Will	7

TOTAL	130
AVERAGE	8.67

(our average ratings will all be approximated to two decimal places)

I thus have my first numerical cult danger score. Scientology comes in at the extremely high cult danger rating of 8.67, though a few words of explanation may be in order for how I rated Scientology in some of the categories. All the “10” ratings clearly demonstrate my perceptions of Scientology in these categories. The “8” rating for Dropout Control refers only to those dropouts who do not publicly voice their complaints about Scientology; for dropouts who go public with exposes, the rating is 10+. In regard to the “5” rating on sexual manipulation, although I am not aware of any blatant sexual manipulations in Scientology, it is drilled into Scientologists that a non-Scientologist needs to be converted, especially one whom you are married to (once again from my own experiences with Scientology). In regard to Endorsement of Violence, actual physical violence is not something that has been concretely linked to Scientology, only alluded to and investigated. However, mental violence in regard to lawsuits, harassment, spreading of false rumors with the intent of destroying a person’s reputation as well as mental health, etc. (from my own experiences as well as readings about Scientology) would be a 10+. Surrender Of Will is also a tricky category, as Scientology certainly supports its celebrity stars in continuing and extending their careers, such as John Travolta and Tom Cruise, as this strongly serves to benefit Scientology. However, the common practices of Scientology in my involvement in the 1970s was to encourage Scientologists to join staff and serve 2.5 and 5 year contracts, in which surrender of will to Scientology and L. Ron Hubbard was very much at the crux of what transpired (c.f. [9]) (once again from the perspective of my own experiences). In regard to the “8” rating for Front Groups, Scientology does have a number of front groups, such as Hubbard business colleges and the Scientology take-over of the Cults Awareness Network (from what has been reported in ICSA (International Cultic Studies Association)), but there are new religious movements that I believe promote the front group orchestration even more fully, such as the Unification Church (c.f. [9]). I would make a similar statement comparing the Unification Church to Scientology in regard to Political Power (c.f. [9]); however, there are forms of political power, such as Scientology’s attacks upon the profession of psychiatry, in which they most certainly deserve a 10+ rating (in my opinion).

From my analysis utilizing the Anthony Typology, Integral model, and Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, it seems quite clear to me that Scientology is in the “high” cult danger category. But enough said about Scientology, as we shall now proceed to our second new religious movement for relatively objective analysis, which is Neale Donald Walsch’s Conversations With God organization, founded in the early 1990s.

#### CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

Conversations With God was originated by Neale Donald Walsch in the early 1990s as a popular new age book of the same title, followed within the next few years by the remaining two books in the initial Conversations With God trilogy [18]. Walsch has written a number of “With God” books since then [19] and has established a worldwide

Conversations With God organization with a number of different subsidiary organizations [20]. After having read Walsch's major books I experienced being with Walsch in a Conversations With God conference in Oregon that included nearly a thousand people. I ended up having quite mixed views of Walsch himself, but I concluded that Conversations With God was not a dangerous cult [20]. Let us now see how my experiences and views of Conversations With God translate into our current analysis of some new religious movements.

The essential messages of Conversations With God are that all your answers are "within," and that "you" can "choose" what you want to experience in life through looking deeply into your own self, which for Walsch takes the form of having a literal conversation with God. In my Conversation With God essays in "Modern Religions" (c.f. [9]) I do give Walsch the benefit of the doubt to being sincere in his beliefs. Therefore when we examine Conversations With God in the context of the Anthony Typology, I would place Conversations With God in the Multilevel cell, representing the assumption that this new religious movement is based upon high level authentic spiritual realizations. In regard to the Technical vs. Charismatic dimension, once again the category becomes rather blurred. Certainly there is much technical advice by Walsch in his books regarding going deeply inward, the idea of there being no right or wrong, individual choice and intention, highly evolved beings from other planets, God being within you, etc. However, after attending the Humanity's Team conference (a subsidiary organization of the Conversations With God Foundation) and seeing Walsch in action with large groups of people and his effect upon them, I must place Conversations With God in the Charismatic cell [20]. In regard to the Monistic/Dualistic dichotomy, it is clear that Conversations With God belongs in the Monistic cell, as its whole current emphasis is upon transforming the world through eliminating hierarchies in religious beliefs of right and wrong [21]. In summary, we see that Conversations With God, being placed in the Multilevel/Charismatic/Monistic cell, is in a generally favorable cell regarding potential cult dangers. However, the Charismatic cell in which we placed Conversations With God may very well be a red flag that needs to be addressed in our other two perspectives.

For the Integral model, based upon our analysis for the Anthony Typology, we will give Conversations With God the benefit of the doubt and place it in-between the rational and trans-rational levels of consciousness. However, in regard to anchoring its legitimacy in a tradition, Conversations With God has virtually no tradition whatsoever to fall back upon. Walsch makes the statement that traditional religious beliefs and practices are not only irrelevant but also can be quite dangerous and destructive [21]. Walsch advocates forming a completely new perspective in understanding and experiencing God, a perspective that is not based upon any historical religious traditions [22]. As far as phase-specific authority is concerned, once again we see that there is no phase here. Walsch runs the Conversations With God organization in what I consider to be a benevolent authoritarian manner. He is most definitely a guru figure to his followers, and he does not appear to have any intentions of phasing out his total authority in the Conversations With God organization. I will also say that in my opinion, he has not abused his power and authority in any kind of serious negative way, but of-course this kind of abusive guru danger is always present, and is an obvious cause of concern [20].



I shall now give Conversations With God my ratings on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, based upon my 2003 experience at the Conversations With God Humanity’s Team conference in addition to my previous learnings about Conversations With God.

INTERNAL CONTROL	2
WISDOM CLAIMED	8
WISDOM CREDITED	7
DOGMA	8
RECRUITING	4
FRONT GROUPS	4
WEALTH	4
POLITICAL POWER	5
SEXUAL MANIPULATION	2
CENSORSHIP	2
DROPOUT CONTROL	2
ENDORSEMENT OF VIOLENCE	1
PARANOIA	3
GRIMNESS	1
SURRENDER OF WILL	3
TOTAL	56
AVERAGE	3.73

I come up with a relatively moderate score on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, much more favorable than that of Scientology. We also see that there are no ratings for Conversations With God greater than “8.” The two ratings of “8” are for Wisdom Claimed and Dogma, representing the fact that although Walsch does have strong powerful beliefs in the validity of his ideas being told to him personally by God, he is also somewhat flexible in his interpretation of these ideas [20]. The trust and admiration for him from his followers is quite high, but my “7” rating for Wisdom Credited shows that this trust and admiration does not go past reasonable limits in regard to listening to everything Walsch says without thinking for oneself. There are a number of intermediate ratings of “4” for Recruiting, Front Groups, and Wealth, and “5” for Political Power, representing that there is a fair amount of emphasis in these categories, but does not reach inappropriate or excessive proportions. For example, there was a definite push when I was at the Humanity’s Conference for people to seriously consider signing up for the Leadership program, the “fast track” option being done in three months for a cost of \$12,500. In my opinion this is an exorbitant sum of money for three months of training, but there was not undo pressure put upon us to sign up for the Leadership training or any of the other Conversations With God workshops or retreats, which was in marked distinction from both Scientology and Avatar [23]. The remaining categories all have relatively low ratings of “1,” “2,” or “3.” Although much of the Conversations With God philosophy is based upon taking responsibility for your actions and for your life, there is also the aspect of surrendering yourself to your higher power or “God.” Walsch is quite

the theatrical comedian on stage, and my rating of “1” for Grimness reflects this lightness and humor which Walsch brings to his retreats as well as to his writings. There is no endorsement of violence whatsoever, and no obvious sexual manipulations, though the Walsch philosophy of complete individual freedom could have sexual overtones regarding being bi-sexual or even multi-sexual in romantic relationships. Walsch also displays some serious concerns about the dangers of traditional religions that do not share his views of non-hierarchy and openness, reflected in my “3” rating for Paranoia. However, all things considered, from my perspective we seem to have a new religious movement here that is in Neutral territory regarding being susceptible to cult dangers vs. being a “favorable” religious organization.

As I concluded in my last Conversations With God essay [24], Neale Donald Walsch does have a strong ego and charismatic personality, but Conversations With God is not a dangerous cult. However, it is important to not forget the dangers that we have seen from both the Anthony Typology and the Integral model. This time the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale does not adequately reflect the red flag of the guru phenomenon dangers, since in comparison to other gurus and leaders of religious organizations with serious cult dangers, Neale Donald Walsch cannot be considered to be a serious threat to individual freedom and ethics. However, the Charismatic cell placement in the Anthony Typology and the lack of anchoring of its legitimacy in a tradition and phase-specific authority in the Integral model do remind us that Conversations With God is run in an authoritarian charismatic new age way by one powerful magnetic person, and it is important to monitor this one person’s continued presence and activity in Conversations With God. We shall find that it is even more important to keep this kind of careful monitoring in mind as we examine our next new religious movement, whose philosophy is very similar to that of Conversations With God and began a few years earlier; I am referring to Avatar.

## AVATAR

Avatar is a new religious movement founded in the late 1980s by Harry Palmer, and has a somewhat similar philosophy to Conversations With God in regard to a person being able to “choose” what he or she wants to experience in life. Avatar successfully markets itself by promising to enable people to learn how to actualize their dreams and gain a heightened experience of being alive. I had reached the level of “Assistant Avatar Master” and spent over \$8,000 to gain this dubious honor [25]. As I describe in my Avatar and Conversations With God essays in “Modern Religions,” Avatar gives much more cause for alarm regarding cult dangers than does Conversations With God. Thru my analysis I shall see which of my perspectives most accurately reflect these cult dangers.

In the Anthony Typology, I would once again have to utilize the Multilevel cell placement. I do believe that there is a bona-fide spiritual experience available in Avatar, described as going into “source,” from where the inner power to make substantive changes in your life is cultivated. The “Feel-Its” exercises, Creation affirmations, and Dis-Creation initiation [25] are all dealing with authentic spiritual states that belong in the Multilevel cell. There are a number of deep impactful techniques learned in Avatar that are fairly simple to apply [26]. Although Avatar founder Harry Palmer is certainly viewed as a guru to Avatar members, and through his personal charisma induces people

to spend exorbitant sums of money on Avatar [27], I would still place Avatar in the Technical cell because of the enormous focus of the primary spiritual drills and exercises. In regard to the Monistic/Dualistic choice, clearly Avatar does not discriminate in an Us. vs. Them mentality, and is open to all people doing the Avatar training. I would place Avatar in the Monistic cell on this basis, which puts Avatar in the most favorable cell in the Anthony Typology: Multilevel/Technical/Monistic. However, I contend that as we have seen before, there is something missing in this Anthony Typology placement, and hopefully we will discover what is missing as I go through my two other perspectives.

In the Integral model, once again based upon the Multilevel placement in the Anthony Typology we seem to have a level of consciousness that is in-between the rational and trans-rational levels in Wilber's continuum. Some of the exercises and drills may be less than totally authentic for some people, but all things considered I do find Avatar's techniques that are designed to bring forth an authentic spiritual state to be quite effective [25]. However, when it comes to anchoring its legitimacy in a tradition we have a similar situation to what we had in Conversations With God. There is no tradition to fall back upon; Avatar is Harry Palmer's creation from new age bits and pieces that he experienced in life (especially Scientology). Similarly, there is no phase-specific authority, as Palmer takes on a similar benevolent authoritarian guru role to his Avatar followers as Neale Donald Walsch does to his Conversations With God followers. There are no plans to phase out Harry Palmer's complete control of the Avatar organization. We thus see that in the Integral model the cult dangers picture for Avatar is not quite as rosy as it appears to be in the Anthony Typology. However, we still very much need to see the specifics of the cult dangers of Avatar, and hopefully we shall see this thru the perspective of the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale.

My ratings on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale are based upon my involvement in Avatar from 1997 thru 2001.

INTERNAL CONTROL	5
WISDOM CLAIMED	9
WISDOM CREDITED	9
DOGMA	10
RECRUITING	6
FRONT GROUPS	1
WEALTH	10
POLITICAL POWER	1
SEXUAL MANIPULATION	2
CENSORSHIP	5
DROPOUT CONTROL	5
ENDORSEMENT OF VIOLENCE	1
PARANOIA	7
GRIMNESS	5
SURRENDER OF WILL	5
TOTAL	81
AVERAGE	5.40

Avatar's score of 5.40 on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, from my perspective, can be viewed as a mild to moderate cult danger score, certainly much lower than that of Scientology, but it clearly gives us cause for concern. On this basis it certainly does appear to me that Avatar presents at least a mild degree of cult danger concerns, in a somewhat similar capacity to that of Divine Light Mission, est, and Gurdjieff (c.f. [9]). Avatar has ratings of "10" in two categories: Dogma and Wealth, and ratings of "9" in two categories: Wisdom Claimed and Wisdom Credited. There is no deviating from the exact ways that Palmer set forth for his exercises to be done [26], and no differences of opinion tolerated regarding Palmer's philosophical views. However, Palmer does not claim to be an all knowing "perfect master" and his followers do not see him in this totalistic way either; rather he is a more human guru, therefore deserving of ratings of "9" rather than "10" in the Wisdom Claimed and Wisdom Credited categories. However, when it comes to Wealth there is no doubt in my mind that Avatar deserves the top score of "10." All roads lead eventually to the Avatar "Wizards" course in Florida, a 13 day course that costs \$7,500 plus all the extras for hotels, food, and transportation. And the expensive prices of the Avatar courses (the cheapest is the first 9 day course for \$2,300 plus the above extras) is heavily marketed to anyone who shows preliminary interest in Avatar or who graduates from the initial Avatar training course or the Avatar Masters' course [28].

Relatively high scores of "6" or "7" and intermediate scores of "5" were given in the categories of Internal Control, Recruiting, Censorship, Dropout Control, Paranoia, Grimness, and Surrender Of Will. When you complete the Avatar Masters' course you are required to sign a lengthy contract stating, among other things, that you will not divulge any Avatar secrets. Avatar does take legal action against ex-members who make public their negative views of Avatar. Recruiting is a full-fledged business activity, and Palmer's book "The Masters' Handbook" is primarily a marketing tool for Avatar Masters who want to find their own paying Avatar students [27]. When one appears to drop out of the Avatar scene, both personalized mailings and phone calls are made to try to bring this person back to Avatar. Influence and control of Avatar members' lives is frequently done for the purpose of persuading Avatar members to sign up for their next level Avatar courses (each course has a course fee of at least a few thousand dollars plus the extras (c.f. [25])). Questioning of financial Avatar matters or disagreeing with particular Avatar exercises is looked upon with suspicion by Avatar leaders and is grounds for not granting a successful completion certificate of higher level Avatar courses [28]. Although taking personal responsibility for life is focused upon in Avatar, surrendering your will to "source" is considered to be of fundamental importance. A major part of the Avatar drills involves much joking and laughter as part of the drill, but this joking and laughter must stay in its proper place and not be addressed toward disagreeing with the Avatar structure or philosophical principles, in order to be successful on an Avatar course. Avatar is run completely as a business, and Harry Palmer makes no pretenses about covering up his marketing strategies and course prices. I am not aware of any Front Groups in Avatar, endorsement of violence, or interest in political power (all of which received ratings of "1"). Sexual Manipulation received a rating of "2," as the focus upon individual choice and freedom may have an effect upon decisions in regard to one's

romantic and sexual involvements.

All things considered, we can see from my ratings on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale that Avatar's cult dangers cannot be ignored. We have here a very expensive new religious/psychological organization with a highly organized and effective recruitment and marketing strategy. Although the leader/guru has not gone over the edge in terms of blatantly destructive practices for his followers, the dogma, recruitment focus, and high prices of Avatar courses are in themselves enough reason to be very much on guard with this organization. The philosophy of Avatar may be in some ways similar to that of Conversations With God, but the similarity ends there. Avatar has been described as "the new est," and there is truthfulness in this description. From my analysis we see another LGAT (Large Group Awareness Training Program) at work here, similar in this way to est (c.f. [9]) and one that also focuses upon individual freedom and choice, but has no reservations about charging big bucks for their courses right away. What is alarming is how successful Avatar has been in getting people to pay these big bucks for their courses, myself included. But it is also true that there is a world of difference between Avatar and Scientology or the Unification Church in terms of degree of cult dangers (c.f. [9]). However, our next and last new religious movement that we will examine, Neopaganism, is much closer to heart for me personally, and may very well prove to be a new religious movement that we can legitimately place in the "Favorable" category.

## NEOPAGANISM

As I have described the nature of my integral analysis in the Introduction, my goal is not to give a comprehensive objective portrayal of the groups that I am writing about. The current analysis that

I have embarked upon is my way of organizing, analyzing, and quantifying my own personal experiences in four new religious movements. It is in this spirit that we will apply our analysis to Neopaganism, i.e. based upon my own experiences with Neopaganism from 1997 thru 2004. My Neopaganism essay in "Modern Religions" [29] captures the gist of my experience, but there have been other Neopagan workshops and festivals that I have attended, and they have not all been as positive as the Starwood festival which I wrote about in my essay. However, most of my experiences with Neopaganism have been personally fulfilling and engaging while being free of manipulation and coercion. I do believe that Neopaganism belongs in the "Favorable" category, clearly on the other side of cult dangers, and we shall now see how this bears out as we begin our analysis of Neopaganism.

There are numerous philosophies and perspectives in the earth based spirituality Neopagan movement [30], and my own definition of Neopaganism refers simply to "people in modern times who consider themselves to be practicing Paganism with present day adaptations" [31]. My experience of Neopaganism is taken primarily from all the workshops, rituals, and bonfires I have attended thru the Starwood, Rites Of Spring, and Twilight Covening festivals and workshops. There was one other weekend Pagan gathering, near where I live in Maine, that I participated in. This weekend gathering was not a positive experience for me, as I found it to be rather crass and lacking depth, not at all what I consider to be an authentic spiritual experience. Thus when it comes to

deciding whether to put Neopaganism in the Multilevel or Unilevel cell in the Anthony Typology, it is not an automatic or easy decision to make. The truth is that it can go in either direction, based upon what a person is seeking and which particular Neopagan group a person experiences. There is plenty of worldly fun and entertainment at the Starwood Pagan festival ([29], [31]) but there is also opportunity for deeper spiritual experience. For me, the dancing around the nightly bonfires had all the ingredients to furnish me with an altered state of consciousness, as did a number of the rituals of Starwood, Rites Of Spring, Twilight Convening, plus a few afternoon and evening Pagan events that I attended in California with my son. Putting all this together, I feel justified in placing Neopaganism in the Multilevel cell in the Anthony Typology, with the understanding that the Multilevel potential is there for those who are seeking it. In regard to the Technical vs. Charismatic choice, this is much easier. I have found very little guru directed activity in my exploration of Neopaganism, and the practices of meditation, dance, drumming, yoga, massage, breathwork, etc. clearly place Neopaganism in the Technical cell. Similarly, there is no doubt in my mind that Neopaganism belongs in the Monistic cell as opposed to the Dualistic cell. Neopaganism is open to all people and all religions, and does not alienate itself or act condescendingly toward those who think differently. Of-course not every Neopagan lives up to these standards completely, but for the most part this has been the crux of my experience with Neopaganism for the past seven years. We thus see that Neopaganism is in the most favorable cell in the Anthony Typology: Multilevel/Technical/Monistic.

As more organizations are analyzed in my integrally informed analysis, it becomes clear that the level of consciousness that accompanies the Multilevel cell in the Anthony Typology is likely to fall in-between the rational and trans-rational levels of Wilber's continuum. In the case of Neopaganism, the variety of worldly vs. spiritual kind of experiences available certainly give this in-between rational and trans-rational placement appropriate justification. In regard to anchoring its legitimacy in a tradition, once again this is not an easy question to answer. Some Neopagans very clearly trace their heritage back to the Celts or Druids or other early Pagans. On the other hand, some Neopagans make no pretenses about their religion being made from scratch in the 20th century, such as the Church Of All Worlds, founded by Oberon Zell, being based upon Robert Heinlein's popular science fiction novel :”Stranger In A Strange Land” [32]. There is no clear answer here, and once again I can only say “it depends on who you are asking.” In regard to phase-specific authority, here I can comfortably say that whatever authority is exercised in the Neopagan community is quite phase-specific. There is no central guru or authority figure in Neopaganism, and the local authority figures in Pagan covens and gatherings, i.e. the priests and priestesses, generally alter their leadership based upon which rituals are being done. I thus find quite a loose flexible social structure for a new religious movement; certainly the most flexible and least authoritarian group that I have thus far explored.

I now give my ratings for Neopaganism on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, based upon my experience with Neopaganism from 1997 thru 2004.

INTERNAL CONTROL	3
WISDOM CLAIMED	1
WISDOM CREDITED	4
DOGMA	2
RECRUITING	2
FRONT GROUPS	2
WEALTH	1
POLITICAL POWER	1
SEXUAL MANIPULATION	3
CENSORSHIP	1
DROPOUT CONTROL	1
ENDORSEMENT OF VIOLENCE	1
PARANOIA	5
GRIMNESS	1
SURRENDER OF WILL	3
TOTAL	31
AVERAGE	2.07

Clearly we have a horse of a different color here. The Bonewits Cult Danger Scale has furnished me with a good deal of certainty that Neopaganism belongs in the “Favorable” new religious movement category, clearly on the other side of cult dangers. This is reinforced by the Anthony Typology as well as the Integral model, and Neopaganism’s score on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale puts it strikingly in a class by itself in comparison to the other new religious movements that I have explored. There are no ratings above “5,” the highest rating of “5,” for Paranoia, reflects the realistic danger that Neopagans feel in our society at the way their religion is misrepresented and negatively thought of, being unfairly linked with Satanism, etc. The next highest score of “4,” for Wisdom Credited, reflects the general respect and trust that many Neopagans do feel toward their workshop and ritual leaders, though this is a respect and trust that is realistic and earned. The ratings of “3” for Internal Control, Sexual Manipulation, and Surrender Of Will demonstrate a degree of influence of Wiccan and Pagan priests and priestesses in covens, a not uncommon occurrence of Polyamory, i.e. having more than one sexual partner as a way of life, and a temporary surrender of will to nature and ancestors in the context of an altered state of consciousness. The remaining scores are all “1”s and “2”s, and it is noteworthy how different these ratings are for Neopaganism compared to all the other groups we have explored, in the categories of Wisdom Claimed, Dogma, Recruiting, Wealth, Political Power, Censorship, Dropout Control, and Grimness. Yes--I finally have encountered a new religious movement that i can safely say is free of cult dangers, at least in regard to the context of my own experiences with Neopaganism over the past seven years.

#### SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Wilber defines science in general as encompassing the three strands of instrumental injunction, direct experience, and communal confirmation (or rejection) [33]. What Wilber means by these strands is first the actual practice or experiment, second the direct

experience or apprehension of the data, and third the checking of the results with others who have adequately completed the injunction and apprehension strands [33]. Thus a scientific experiment must be capable of duplication with identical results before it is regarded as scientific knowledge. A proof in mathematics must be corroborated by a community of capable mathematicians before it is accepted into the mathematical literature. And the crucial point for the prospective merger of science and religion is that the same must hold true for spiritual experience. In other words, spiritual experience needs to go through these three strands of generic science formulation, and if and only if it succeeds in doing this it can be construed as “deep science.”

It is in this context of “deep science” that I have embarked upon an integrally informed analysis built upon my own personal experiences in these four new religious movements. Each of the three rating scales that I have utilized in my analysis have its strengths and weaknesses. For example, in the Anthony Typology, Scientology has quite an ambiguous classification in terms of the categories of Monistic, Dualistic, Technical, and Charismatic, while from the pseudo-rational level of consciousness classification in the Integral model and the extremely high cult danger score on the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale, from my own experiences Scientology possesses a very high degree of cult dangers. However, The Bonewits Cult Danger Scale does not give any cause for serious concerns in regard to Conversations With God having cult dangers, whereas from the Charismatic dimension in the Anthony Typology and the lack of anchoring its legitimacy in a tradition and phase-specific authority in the Integral model, there does seem to be at least some potential cult dangers in regard to the egocentric personality characteristics of its founder and guru, Neale Donald Walsch. With the exception of Scientology, I have placed all the groups I have analyzed in-between the rational and trans-rational levels of consciousness in the Integral model; however we have seen that the Bonewits Cult Danger Scale does distinguish quite different levels of cult dangers vs. favorable characteristics amongst Avatar, Conversations With God, and Neopaganism. However, used in conjunction with one other, I believe that these rating scales are quite useful and informative in regard to its potential of helping to make sense of one’s own experiences in new religious movements. And based upon the data of my presentation, it seems clear to me that from my own experiences I can describe these new religious movements in the four generic categories of High Cult Danger, Mild to Moderate Cult Danger, Neutral, and Favorable. With this in mind, here is a simple summary of the results that I have found.

Scientology:	High Cult Danger
Avatar:	Mild to Moderate Cult Danger
Conversations With God:	Neutral
Neopaganism:	Favorable

Of-course these classifications are not airtight, but in my experience there is a sharp differentiation regarding the cult dangers of these new religious movements.. Who are the winners and losers in this analysis? The data speaks for itself; we can see the extreme cult dangers that I have experienced in Scientology vs. the highly beneficial spiritual support network that I have experienced in Neopaganism. I believe that one should be able to explore new religious movements in the context of authentic spirituality with an



openness to spiritual experience and higher levels of consciousness. However, it is extremely important to be aware of the cult dangers that unfortunately are all too common in many of these new religious movements. It is in this context that I think an integrally informed analysis that utilizes a variety of theories and rating scale may be extremely useful in helping someone decide how serious are the dangers of cult characteristics vs. the favorable beneficial aspects of a new religious movement, based upon one's own experiences in this new religious movement. In my own case, all the data and interpretations that I have formulated for these religious movements are based upon my own personal experiences in them, accumulated over roughly 30 years. This is the first and second strands of "deep science." I welcome the third strand of deep science in the context of further experiential research to open up discussion about the effectiveness of the particular integrally informed analysis that I have utilized [34].

#### NOTES

1. Dick Anthony, Bruce Ecker, Ken Wilber (editors), "Spiritual Choices" (New York: Paragon House, 1987).
2. See for example "Sex, Ecology, Spirituality" (Boston: Shambhala, 1995), "Integral Psychology" (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), "A Brief History Of Everything" (Boston: Shambhala, 2000), "The Eye Of Spirit" (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), "A Theory Of Everything" (Boston: Shambhala, 2001).
3. See Isaac Bonewits, "Real Magic" (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weisner, 1971, 1989).
4. See "Spiritual Choices:" "Part I: The Anthony Typology: A Framework for Assessing Spiritual and Consciousness Groups," by Dick Anthony and Bruce Eckder.
5. See Geoffrey Falk, "Stripping The Gurus" ([www.angelin.com/trek/geoffreyfalk/blog/blog.html](http://www.angelin.com/trek/geoffreyfalk/blog/blog.html), 2005) for a particularly scathing expose of these groups and many others.
6. See for example all of the books mentioned in [2], and in addition "Up From Eden" (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 1981, 2002).
7. See Wilber's books "A Sociable God" (Boston: Shambhala, 2001) and "Eye To Eye" (Boston: Shambhala, 1983, 2001); (in particular "The Spectrum Model" chapter in "Eye To Eye") for more explanation regarding the meanings and distinctions between "legitimacy" and "authenticity," "translation" and "transformation," etc.
8. See for example Margaret Singer & Janja Lalich, "Cults In Our Midst" (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), Steve Hassan, "Combating Cult Mind Control" (Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 1988, 1990), Nori Muster, "Betrayal Of The Spirit (Chicago, University Of Illinois Press, 1997, 2001), Michael Langone (editor), "Recovery From Cults"(New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993).
9. See Elliot Benjamin, "Modern Religions: An Experiential Analysis And Expose" (Swanville, Maine: Natural Dimension Publications, 2005; available by contacting the author at [ben496@prexar.com](mailto:ben496@prexar.com)). Chapter 1 of "Modern Religions," which is the current analysis in this paper applied to 17 new religious movements, is also available in the form of an article I have written that is entitled "Spirituality And The Cults: An Experiential Analysis" at The Ground Of Faith Journal website

- ([www.groundoffaith@hug.co.nz](http://www.groundoffaith@hug.co.nz)).
10. See for example Paulette Cooper, "The Scandal Of Scientology" (New York: Tower, 1971); Robert Kaufman, "(Inside Scientology)" (New York: Olympia, 1972); Russell Miller, "Bare Faced Messiah: The True Story Of L. Ron Hubbard" (Great Britain: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987); Bent Corydon & L. Ron Hubbard Jr., "L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah Or Madman" (Sebaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1987); Joe Atack, "A Piece Of Blue Sky: Scientology, Dianetics, And L.Ron Hubbard Exposed" (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1990); plus current Scientology news and materials at various cults awareness websites; in particular American Family & Friends (AFF): [www.csj.org](http://www.csj.org), and Freedom Of Mind Resource Center: [www.freedomofmind.com](http://www.freedomofmind.com). There are also generic Scientology books by L. Ron Hubbard that are readily available at local bookstores; for example "Dianetics: The Modern Science Of Mental Health" (Los Angeles: The American Saint Hill Organization, 1950, 1975); "Scientology: The Fundamentals Of Thought" (Los Angeles: Bridge, 1983, 1999), "Scientology: A New Slant On Life" (Los Angeles: Bridge, 1988, 1997), etc.
  11. See "A Comparison Of Scientology And Judaism" in "Modern Religions", as well as any of the books listed in [10].
  12. See Chapter 4 in "Modern Religions" and/or the books listed in [10] for detailed descriptions of all the Scientology terms used here.
  13. See my essay "Sample Dianetic Auditing Process And Concluding Statement" as well as "Excerpts From "The Maturation Of Walter Goldman"" in Chapter 4 of "Modern Religions" for illustrative accounts of preliminary level Scientology auditing.
  14. See my essay "The Misunderstood Word" in Chapter 4 of "Modern Religions" for a rather humorous account of this.
  15. See "A Piece Of Blue Sky" and "Inside Scientology" (book information listed in [10]) for some particularly vivid accounts of past-life far out auditing experiences.
  16. See any and all of Ken Wilber's writings on transcending and including lower "holons" into higher holons, and in particular his essay "The Pre/Trans Fallacy" in "Eye To Eye" (book information in [7]).
  17. See my essay "Scientology In The 21st Century" in Chapter 2 of "Modern Religions."
  18. See Neale Donale Walsch, "Conversations With God: An Uncommon Dialogue: Book 1" (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1995); "Conversations With God: An Uncommon Dialogue: Book 2" (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Co., 1997); Book 3 published by same company in 1998.
  19. See for example "Friendship With God: An Uncommon Dialogue" (New York: Putnam & Sons, 1999); "Communion With God" (New York: Putnam & Sons, 2000); "The New Revelations: A Conversation With God" (New York: Atria Books, 2002); "Tomorrows' God: Our Greatest Spiritual Challenge" (New York: Atria Books, 2004); "Conversations With God For Teens" (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Co, 2001) "The Little Soul And The Sun" (a children's book) (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing Co., 1998).
  20. See my Conversations With God essays in Chapter 2 of "Modern Religions" and my essay "On Conversations With God" in ICSA E-Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2004, <http://cultinfoobooks.com>

21. See in particular “The New Revelations” (book information in [19]).
22. See “The New Revelations” as well as “Tomorrow’s God” (book information in [19]).
23. See my Scientology essays and Avatar essays in Chapters 4 and 2 of “Modern Religions.”
24. See my essay “Humanity’s Team: Part II” in Chapter 2 of “Modern Religions.
25. See my Avatar essays in Chapter 2 of “Modern Religions.” and my essay “On Avatar” in ICSA-E-Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2005, <http://cultinfobooks.com>
26. For some examples of these techniques see Harry Palmer’s books “Living Deliberately” (Altamonte Springs, Florida: Stars’ Edge International, 1994) and “Resurfacing” (Altamonte Springs, Florida: Stars’ Edge International, 1994).
27. See Harry Palmer’s book “The Avatar Masters’ Handbook” (Altamonte Springs, Florida: Stars’ Edge International, 1997) for an illustration of Avatar’s business promotion practices
28. See in particular my Avatar essay “Assistant Avatar Master” in Chapter 2 of “Modern Religions.”
29. See also my essays “On Neopaganism” and “Spirituality, Cults, And Neopaganism” in Paganet News Journal, Beltane editions 2004 and 2005, Virginia Beach, VA: [www.paganet.org](http://www.paganet.org)
30. Some of my own favorite books about Paganism and Neopaganism are the following: Isaac Bonewits, “Real Magic” (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1971, 1989); Starhawk, “Spiral Dance: A Rebirth Of The Ancient Religion Of The Great Goddess” (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1979, 1989); Margot Adler, “Drawing Down The Moon” (New York: Penguin Group, 1979, 1986); Marion Zimmer Bradley, “The Mists Of Avalon” (New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1981, 2001); Donald Michael Kraig, “Modern Sex Magic” (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1988); Gavon Frost & Yvonne Frost, “The Magic Power Of White Witchcraft (Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999); Phyllis Curot, “Book Of Shadows: A Modern Woman’s Journey Into The Wisdom Of Witchcraft And The Magic Of the Goddess” (New York: Broadway Books, 1998); Phyllis Curot, “Witch Crafting: A Spiritual Guide To Modern Magic” (New York: Broadway Books, 2001).
31. See my essay “On Neopaganism” in Chapter 2 of “Modern Religions.”
32. For information about the Church Of All Worlds see <http://www.caw.org>
33. See Ken Wilber’s books “The Marriage Of Sense And Soul” {New York: Broadway Books, 1998) and “Eye To Eye” (book information in [7]).
34. See the Integral Institute website ([www.integralinstitute.org](http://www.integralinstitute.org)) for Ken Wilber’s current efforts in regard to bringing the merger of science and religion into the realm of possibility in our society.