

New age spirituality, quantum mysticism and self-psychology: changing ourselves from the inside out

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I propose that Heinz Kohut's notions of the selfobject and transmuting internalization can be applied specifically to spiritual elements emerging out of a distinct interpretation of quantum physics. I focus particularly on the film *What the Bleep Do We Know!?* and argue that the philosophy espoused by the film and several of the scientists portrayed—which I interchangeably call “quantum mysticism,” “quantum psychology” and “quantum philosophy”—presents a worldview, which may aid in bringing about important goals outlined by Kohutian self-psychology, namely the need to update earlier internalizations by consciously bringing them in contact with an individual's changing experience of reality

Keywords: Heinz Kohut; self-psychology; selfobject; What the Bleep; quantum; quantum physics

Introduction

The question of whether New Age spirituality has any cultural significance is garnering increased scholarly attention (Aupers & Houtman, 2006; Dawson, 1998; Heelas, 1996; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Lewis & Melton, 1992; Wuthnow, 1998). The discussion has been tied to issues of heightened individualism in America (Bellah, Madsen, Swidler & Tipton, 2008; Putnam, 2000) as well as conversations around the commodification of religion (Miller, 2003; Carrette & King, 2006; York, 2001). However, the question of whether adherents to New Age spirituality gain any psychological benefit has been relatively neglected (Carr, 2000; Miller & Thoresen, 2003; van Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006). I am not concerned in this article with whether New Age spirituality presents a challenge to the secularization thesis (Bruce, 2002; Heelas & Woodhead, 2005; Main, 2008). Instead, I attempt a preliminary examination of whether practitioners of New Age spirituality receive any psychological benefits from their adherence to these beliefs. I use Heinz Kohut's concepts of the selfobject in particular and self-psychology in general as interpretive tools because they have proven somewhat useful for others embarking on similar explorations (Hedayat-Diba, 1997; Julian, 1992).

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I propose that Kohut's notions of the selfobject and transmuting internalization can be applied specifically to spiritual elements emerging out of a distinct interpretation of quantum physics. I focus particularly on the 2004 film *What the Bleep Do We Know!?* because it succinctly and clearly portrays this philosophy, bringing together scattered writings and ideas of scientists into a single venue (Arntz, Chasse, & Vicente, 2004). It should be stated from the outset that the film has received criticism from many angles with one of the individuals portrayed in the film (David Albert) even stating publicly that he was misrepresented. Quantum physicists have criticized it for making huge leaps in logic, infusing quantum mechanics and several of its inherent uncertainties with New Age elements and unfounded spiritual significance.

These criticisms, of course, have done little to stifle the growing popularity of the film and the principles it espouses. In fact, the recent popular culture phenomenon *The Secret* features many of the same individuals interviewed in *What the Bleep* and puts forth an almost identical message (Amarasingam, 2007–2008; Bruce, 2007). Oprah, Larry King, and Ellen DeGeneres devoted shows to *The Secret* and the film and book have sold millions of copies. For the purposes of this paper, I am little concerned with the criticisms that the film and its philosophy/psychology have received and more concerned with the psychological significance such an outlook has for the practitioners. In other words, even though I believe that there is much to disagree with in the worldview espoused by quantum psychology, I believe it is more important to understand how it functions for those who follow its message. I argue that the philosophy espoused by the film and several of the scientists portrayed—which I interchangeably call “quantum mysticism,” “quantum psychology,” and “quantum philosophy”—presents a worldview, which may aid in bringing about important goals outlined by Kohutian self-psychology, namely the need to update earlier internalizations by consciously bringing them in contact with an individual's changing experience of reality. I will first provide a description of quantum mysticism and then examine the philosophy in light of several elements of Kohut's self-psychology.

What the Bleep Do We Know!?

What the Bleep Do We Know!? was released to widespread intrigue and controversy. It had great grassroots success and has since been distributed to over thirty countries. The *Bleep* website is equipped with an online store selling posters, Dr Quantum magnets, stickers, and hats. It is rare for a low-budget independent documentary to become such an underground phenomenon. The film has several elements to it—it is part fiction, part documentary, and part inspirational treatise. Its fictional character is Amanda (played by Marlee Matlin), a deaf photographer who is on an adventure of self-discovery. Interspersed with her wanderings are interviews with fourteen scientists and mystics who “act as hosts who live outside the story, and from this Olympian view, comment on the actions of the characters below” (*What the Bleep Do We Know!?*, 2004). Many of these scientists and mystics are followers of Ramtha's School of Enlightenment. Ramtha is a 35,000-year-old Lemurian warrior who Judy Z. Knight claims to be channeling (Ramtha's School of Enlightenment, 2006). Knight started the School of Enlightenment to bring the teachings of Ramtha to the modern world.

The film, influenced by Ramtha's School, makes four interrelated arguments:

- (1) Quantum mechanics is about possibilities. The wave-particle duality has shown that electrons can behave as waves or as particles depending on whether or not they are being observed.

- (2) This essentially means that individuals are creating their daily reality as they choose moment-to-moment one among the countless possibilities available to them.
- (3) Individuals keep creating the same realities for themselves because they fail to recognize that they can create something better.
- (4) By envisioning something better and by maintaining a healthy attitude, individuals can rewire their neural nets in ways that allow them to create new realities for themselves. Better choices will lead to a better life.

Quantum world of possibilities

The film begins with text flashing onto the screen: “In the beginning was the void, teeming with infinite possibilities, of which you are one” (Arntz et al., 2004). This is the quantum vision of the universe that the film lays out. As physicist Amit Goswami states “Quantum physics, very succinctly speaking, is the physics of possibilities” (Arntz et al., 2004). This belief rests on the wave-particle duality, which is one of the primary characteristics of quantum mechanics. Electrons may behave as waves or as particles. As waves, they have no locality but exist in a “probability field” or as possibilities. When electrons are not observed, they exist as waves in these fields of possibility. When they are observed, the probability field collapses and takes on the form of a particle with a solid existence in space and time. As Jeffrey Satinover points out in the film, “A particle, which we think of as a solid thing, really exists in a so-called superposition, a spread out wave of possible locations. And it’s in all of those at once. The instant you check on it, it snaps into just one of those possible positions” (Arntz et al., 2004). In other words, for followers of quantum mysticism, it is the mind that exerts power over nature; the mind is more than a passive recipient of signals sent from the outside world. Quantum mystics repeatedly attempt to reform our thinking in relation to the world around us. As Goswami states

We all have a habit of thinking that everything around us is already a thing existing without my input, without my choice. We have to banish that kind of thinking. Instead, you really have to recognize that even the material world around us, the chairs, the tables, the rooms, the carpet, the camera included. All of these are nothing but possible movements of consciousness. And I’m choosing moment to moment out of those movements to bring my actual experience into manifestation. (Arntz et al., 2004)

For followers of quantum mysticism, this “paradigm shift,” this new way of thinking about the nature of reality, creates the possibility of a self-empowered existence where individuals have enormous influence over their lives.

Re-creating our reality

For adherents of quantum psychology, the observer, presumably the soul or spirit, cannot be ignored because it is fundamental in selecting present reality from the probability field. Quantum mysticism adds a new element to the notion of free will and, in turn, personal responsibility. Past ideas of free will posited a duality between the material world and those interacting with it. Human beings have the freedom to make choices but the outside world was still separate and objective. According to quantum mysticism, there is no objective, material reality outside individuals, the observers. Individuals are literally, moment to moment, creating reality.

It seems that some of the uncertainties built into quantum mechanics have been thoroughly spiritualized. For example, Nick Herbert candidly notes, “The basis for most quantum theories of consciousness is that mind enters the material world via the leeway afforded by Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. To the extent that matter is uncertain, mind can have a say in the motion of matter by selecting which quantum possibilities are realized” (Herbert, 1993, p. 171). In other words, consciousness creates our reality. As Fred Alan Wolf states in the film, “There is no out there out there, independent of what’s going on in here” (Arntz et al., 2004).

The view that individuals are continually creating their reality at every instant is fundamental to the self-empowering psychology posited by quantum mystics. As Ramtha devotee Joe Dispenza notes in the film

Why do we keep recreating the same reality? Why do we keep having the same relationships?...In this infinite sea of potentials that exist around us, how come we keep recreating the same realities? Isn’t it amazing that we have options and potentials that exist but we’re unaware of them? Is it possible that we’re so conditioned to our daily lives, so conditioned to the way we create our lives that we buy the idea that we have no control at all? You’ve been conditioned to believe that the external world is more real than the internal world. This new model of science does just the opposite: It says what’s happening within us will create what’s happening outside of us. (Arntz et al., 2004)

In other words, individuals are responsible for the life they create for themselves regardless of how fulfilling or depressing it turns out to be. They create the same realities for themselves because their experiences and judgments limit what they think they are capable of and what they believe to be possible. Dispenza cites some scientific experiments to make his point. Certain individuals were hooked up to PET scans and asked to *look at* various objects as scientists examined the areas of the brain that became activated. These same individuals were then asked to *imagine* these objects. What scientists found was that the same areas of the brain “light up” regardless of whether the individual is looking at something or simply imagining it (Arntz, Chasse, & Vicente, 2005, pp. 45–46). This experiment is also cited in *The Secret* as strong support for the message of quantum mysticism. Dispenza argues that if individuals allow themselves to imagine new realities, they give themselves the permission to accept that they are possible. As neuroscientist Candace Pert states in the film, with “the way our brains are wired up, we only see what we believe is possible. We match patterns that already exist within ourselves through conditioning” (Arntz et al., 2004).

According to quantum mystics, there are about 400 billion bits of information coming in through our senses per second and “only about two thousand get through to our consciousness” (Arntz et al., 2005, p. 46). The content of this fraction of reality that is perceived is determined by life experiences and the emotional importance they have for individuals. Quantum mystics note that since people perceive a vast array of things through their senses at any particular moment, it is the emotional weight they place on certain “bits” of reality that make it “perception-worthy.” When our eyes open to the things around us, “it is not ‘the world’ that I see, but the world [that] my human sensory equipment is able to see, the world my belief system allows me to see, and the world that my emotions care about seeing or not seeing” (Arntz et al., 2005, p. 49). According to quantum mystics, the key to perceiving more of the world, more of reality, is to obtain new knowledge and new experiences.

Breaking addictions

Since individuals create their own reality, they have the power to re-create it if they are unsatisfied. Quantum mysticism bases this belief on the concept of neural nets and how they are formed. As Dispenza explains in the film:

The brain is made up of tiny nerve cells called neurons. These neurons have tiny branches that reach out and connect to other neurons to form a neural net. Each place where they connect is integrated into a thought or a memory. Now the brain builds up all its concepts by the law of associative memory. For example, ideas, thoughts and feelings are all constructed and interconnected in this neural net and all have a possible relationship with one another. The concept and the feeling of love for instance is stored in this vast neural net. But, we build the concept of love from many other different ideas. Some people have love connected to disappointment. When they think about love, they experience the memory of pain, sorrow, anger and even rage. Rage may be linked to hurt which may be linked to a specific person which then is connected back to love. (Arntz et al., 2004)

Since the idea that “nerve cells that fire together, wire together” is the foundational principle of quantum psychology, it proposes that individuals can essentially change the behavioral patterns to which they have become accustomed. One way individuals make choices is through conditioned responses to certain stimuli when their brains react to their environment. Quantum psychology proposes that there may be another way to make choices: Individuals can stand back from their habitual responses and do something new. *What the Bleep* argues that we are “so addicted to the external world and so addicted to the stimulus and response in the external world that the brain is beginning to work out of response instead of out of creation” (Arntz et al., 2005, p. 155).

Quantum psychology contends that most people are unable to recreate their lives because they are emotionally and chemically addicted to it. According to this view, if I get angry with my wife on a daily basis, the neural net between “anger” and “wife” is strengthened, making it easier for me to become angry next time. If emotions are designed to chemically reinforce something into long-term memory, then it follows that every time “we interrupt a thought process that produces a chemical response in the body, every time we interrupt it, those nerve cells that are connected to each other start breaking the long-term relationship” (Arntz et al., 2004). According to quantum mysticism, individuals will start breaking their addictions when they become conscious of their attachments to certain emotions and behavioral patterns. They must become addicted to better emotions—like love and compassion. Individuals must rewire their neural networks into positive, self-sustaining ones. As Dispenza states in the film, “If I change my mind will I change my choices? If I change my choices will my life change? Why can’t I change, what am I addicted to? What will I lose that I’m chemically attached to? And what person, place, thing, time or event that I’m chemically attached to that I don’t want to lose because I may have to experience the chemical withdrawal from that. Hence the human drama” (Arntz et al., 2004).

Quantum psychology and God

By embracing free will and the ability to alter one’s way of life, quantum mystics present nothing less than a way to influence human evolution. Quantum mysticism also argues that individuals are not separate from each other, and they are not separate from God. As former Catholic priest and Ramtha devotee Michael Ledwith points out, the belief that “God is a distinct separate being from us to whom I must offer worship, whom I must

cultivate, humor, please and hope to attain rewards from at the very end of my life” is nothing less than blasphemy (Arntz et al., 2004). Quantum mysticism, and New Age spirituality more generally (Heelas, 1996), puts forward three notions concerning God and humanity: (1) individuals are all gods; (2) people are all fundamentally connected and (3) their purpose on earth is to perfect their godliness. According to quantum mysticism, it is by strengthening their ability to create new patterns and new life experiences that individuals become perfected and the very fact that they have this ability to create, to influence others as well as material properties, is what points to their godly nature. As Stanford professor emeritus William Tiller states in the film, “Our purpose here is to develop our gifts of intentionality and learn how to be effective creators” (Arntz et al., 2004).

Quantum mysticism in light of Kohut’s self-psychology

Having explored some of the key concepts of quantum mysticism, I now turn to an examination of it through the lens of Kohut’s self-psychology (1971, 1977). As will become clear, I argue that quantum mysticism and the worldview it puts forth may help individuals meet some key goals outlined by Kohut’s self-psychology. I admittedly take some of Kohut’s concepts out of context when applying them to quantum mysticism. However, my purpose here is not strict psychoanalysis but a preliminary examination of the ways in which followers interact with, experience and perhaps benefit from the tenets of quantum mysticism and contemporary New Age spirituality.

Reality, God and selfobjects

Like Freud before him, Kohut’s ideas start at the stage of the infant’s “primary narcissism.” Primary narcissism, according to Freud, is the stage where the infant experiences self-love and has not yet developed knowledge of the objective reality. The infant thus believes itself to be the center of the world. However, this primary narcissism does not last very long. Because no parent is perfect, the breast may not be present when needed, the diaper may go extended periods of time without being changed and the helpless child may experience discomfort without receiving immediate relief. Even though the child’s primary narcissism is under attack by the imperfect parent, Kohut argues that the child attempts to hold onto this experience by constructing two internal realities: “those who respond to and confirm the child’s innate sense of vigor, greatness and perfection; and those to whom the child can look up and with whom he can merge as an image of calmness, infallibility and omnipotence”—the mirroring selfobject and idealized parent imago, respectively (Capps, 2001, p. 250). Kohut introduced the idea that this acknowledgement and confirmation must exist in infancy, as well as in maturity for the self to fulfil its full potential.

For followers of quantum mysticism, I argue, reality functions as a mirroring selfobject. Kohut defines selfobjects as objects “which we experienced as part our self; the expected control over them is closer to the concept of the control which a grown-up expects to have over his own body and mind than to the concept of the control which he expects to have over others” (Capps, 2001, p. 250). The mirroring selfobject must confirm and validate the child’s feelings of grandiosity. Reality, according to quantum mysticism, is created by individuals through their consciousness. It exists as waves of possibility and promises to collapse into a specific reality of their choosing. As Rachel Julian argues,

God functioned as a selfobject for Teresa of Avila because God “encourages self worth and the recognition of our gifts” (Julian, 1992, p. 90). Similarly, reality, by collapsing itself according to the conscious choices of individuals, recognizes their gifts of creation.

Along with the mirroring function of selfobjects is the child’s need for an object of idealization. “The most crucial function of the parent at this stage is to allow the idealization to unfold and to be able to respond to the child’s needs with calmness, strength, and acceptance” (Hedayat-Diba, 1997, p. 216). The child wants to believe that it is part of a greater entity and needs to be “accepted by, and merge into a stable, calm, powerful, wise, protective, selfobject that possesses the qualities the person lacks” (Julian, 1992, p. 91). In quantum mysticism, this object of idealization is God. The nature of God propounded by quantum mysticism, which is unlike the anthropomorphic kind put forth by non-mystical religions, is that God is a “presence,” supremely transcendent and ineffable. Individuals must train themselves to be similar to God, the quintessential creator. They are all gods-in-training, learning to be “effective creators.” Such a worldview may function to foster an individual’s psychological development by modifying earlier internalized structures.

In 1984, Kohut elaborated on a third kind of transference known as “twinship” or “alter ego.” He viewed the twinship manifestation as a characteristic of later childhood when the child needs to feel a sense of similarity with the selfobject.

Whereas in early life, when the self is not yet developed, the infant needs an experience of ‘oneness’ with his human environment, later in childhood, when the self is more or less established, this is replaced by a need for “sameness,” a sense of “we.” (Hedayat-Diba, 1997, p. 217)

For a child, this would include being a part of family gatherings or working side-by-side with a parent on certain projects. In quantum mysticism, this feeling of likeness is taken to extremes to the point that there is a fundamental unity among all human beings. As John Hagelin states in the film, at the “sub-nuclear level, you and I are literally one” (Arntz et al., 2004). According to Kohut, this experience of likeness centers on “an identity of significance, a similarity of function” (Kohut in Hedayat-Diba, 1997, p. 217). In quantum mysticism, the choices individuals make influence the people around them as well as the material world. Fred Alan Wolf states, “Are people affecting the world of reality that they see? You bet they are! Every single one of us affects the reality that we see!” (Arntz et al., 2004). In other words, reality, again, serves as the selfobject, which according to quantum mysticism, is created moment to moment by the contribution of all of humanity. If the alter-ego selfobject is meant to help the individual feel less alone in the world, the belief that they are contributing to the creation of *reality itself* may effectively alleviate this loneliness and foster a sense of belonging.

Transmuting internalization and cosmic narcissism

In order to perpetuate the feeling of primary narcissism, the child begins to idealize itself as well as its parents. As reality begins to intrude on these notions of perfection, the idealizations slowly begin to crumble. However, they must give way gently in order to save the child from trauma and psychological scarring. The child needs to slowly understand and alter the view of itself and its parents in a gradual, healthy manner. Kohut argues that this slow process of “disappointment and increasingly realistic assessment leads . . . to the internalization of the psychological capacities that the parents previously provided. For example, the experience of being joined to an idealized parent gradually becomes

internalized as the capacity to choose one's own values and goals and commit oneself to them" (Jones, 2002, p. 19). Kohut calls this reality-checking process, "transmuting internalization." As the child slowly becomes aware of parental deficiencies, it begins to develop the ability to make choices in values and morals. Also, as the falsehood of one's own lavishness is laid bare, the child settles into a healthy state of self-esteem.

If the idealized parent is traumatically removed from the child, then the transmuting internalization cannot happen and the child never develops that capacity to choose. The child, and then the adult, dwell in a state of "object hunger," needing external objects to maintain a sense of self-worth and connection to the outside world. Thus, there exists a case of arrested development. "However, if a therapist or other caring person provides just the right balance of narcissistic supplies (like support and affirmation) and an "optimal frustration," the process of development can begin again. Transmuting internalization can finally take place in which the idealization of the therapist and the therapist's acceptance of the patient's narcissism can be transmuted into self-structures like the capacity to choose or realistic self-esteem that failed to develop earlier" (Jones, 2002, pp. 20–21).

When applied to quantum mysticism, the notion of transmuting internalization takes on bizarre qualities. As individuals become aware of parental deficiencies, they ideally begin to develop the ability to make choices. One's own grandiosity and the idealization of the selfobject should be alleviated. However, it appears that quantum psychology is calling for a return to primary narcissism. After setting aside our infantile feelings of narcissism, individuals are told that it is a sign of spiritual maturity. They must move from believing that they are the center of the universe to recognizing that they are valued, participatory parts of it. Spiritual maturity is recognizing that individuals are all creators with the power to influence and alter reality.

This seeming incompatibility may be reconciled when we examine Kohut's notion of cosmic narcissism. If narcissism is a fundamental driving force in our personality, how can individuals come to terms with their own mortality? For Kohut, a suppression of narcissism in the face of death is not the answer. Genuine acceptance of mortality "must arise out of a transformation of narcissism . . . 'a shift of narcissistic cathexis from the self to a concept of participation in a supraindividual and timeless existence'" (Kohut in Jones, 2002, p. 27). A life focused on the individual self becomes transformed into one centering on the "supraordinate Self." Cosmic narcissism is, in essence, "seeing life from the perspective of eternity" (Jones, 2002, p. 28). It is the clear understanding and visualization of every individual as a significant drop of water in the cosmic ocean.

Quantum mysticism comes very close to Kohut's notion of cosmic narcissism. It is certainly not a regression back to primary narcissism where individuals believe themselves to be the center of the universe simply because they have not learned otherwise. It is a learned recognition that they are an integral thread in a wider tapestry. It is a more mature version of primary narcissism because, as Kohut states, "a genuine decathexes of the self can only be achieved slowly by an intact, well-functioning ego; and it is accomplished by sadness as the cathexis is transferred from the cherished self to the supraindividual ideals and to the world with which one identifies" (Kohut in Jones, 2002, p. 29). Kohut hints at the idea that religion—a practical spirituality founded on a "constructive mysticism"—may in fact serve as the primary force towards the graduation from individual narcissism towards a more cosmic one (Jones, 2002, p. 30).

According to quantum mystics, individuals are creators of their reality and masters of their own destiny. For Kohut, narcissism is healthy and necessary, as it maintains the individuals' interest in reality. Equally, for Kohut, reality checks are necessary to keep

narcissistic motivations grounded. The harsh nature of reality keeps individuals from becoming too pretentious. Quantum mysticism espouses a new system of checks and balances. It envisions reality as a product of ourselves and thus individuals have a vested interest in how it is constructed. Reality checks serve simply to notify individuals of their addictions and bad behavioral patterns in order that they may begin to construct their reality differently. According to quantum mystics, this dialectic propels the individual forward in their evolutionary path towards a healthy synthesis.

Conclusion: Is new age spirituality healthy?

For Kohut, the three selfobject experiences of idealizing, mirroring, and twinship are “necessary for a cohesive sense of self, the *sine qua non*” of mental health (Jones, 2002, p. 22). These selfobjects are not only present during infancy; they serve a vital function throughout an individual’s life to foster a sense of membership and oneness with the world around them. However, the nature of these selfobjects does indeed change with the maturing of the individual. As James Jones notes, “Rather than being emotionally driven and compulsively dependent, mature selfobject relationships are characterized by freedom, spontaneity, and realism” (Jones, 2002, p. 23). With maturity, the self becomes skilled at choosing selfobjects that are particularly self-sustaining. One of these selfobjects is indeed religion. A healthy choice in religion must fulfil the self’s need for strong psychological structures and support its selfobject relationships. Unhealthy religion would “recapitulate a state of object hunger, or reinforce an addictive dependence, or denigrate the self in its search for its own unique goals and ambitions” (Jones, 2002, p. 25).

If, in our discussion of quantum mysticism as self-psychology, we are to go beyond what Jones calls “a rather facile self-psychology of religion which simply describes the selfobject functions of religious beliefs and practices,” we must attempt to discover whether quantum mysticism can serve as a healthy and long-lasting form of self-psychology for its followers/practitioners (Jones, 2002, p. 25). Most new selfobject experiences are transformative, viewed as having the potential to provide a new way of life. According to Jones, if a religion is to be healthy, it must honestly and willingly acknowledge its shortcomings and limitations in order for it to provide “genuine transformation towards maturity” (Jones, 2002, p. 65). If the selfobject projects itself as infallible and without error, then the devotees are kept in a state of developmental arrest or infancy. Reality checks and transmuting internalizations cannot occur if the selfobject (i.e., religion) presents itself as flawless.

When we ponder quantum mysticism with this caution in mind, it seems that it might be irrelevant. When reality itself provides the selfobject experience, and it is seen as a product of an individual’s creative energies, then reality will naturally possess their flaws and shortcomings. Of course, this argument only holds if individuals specifically focus on the philosophy/psychology of quantum mysticism instead of, for instance, Ramtha’s School of Enlightenment. If quantum mysticism were solely mediated through the teachings of Ramtha, then, as a new religious movement, it indeed has the potential to present itself as infallible. However, the practice of quantum mysticism presented in cultural phenomena such as *What the Bleep* and *The Secret* is not a patented product of Ramtha’s School but may be practiced by everyone.

Jones also utilizes Gordon Allport’s distinction between immature and mature religion in diagnosing whether certain religions lead to “terror or transformation.” However, my purpose here is not to discern whether or not quantum mysticism will lead to terrorism

(which I believe is highly unlikely), but to understand why it is appealing and whether or not it has the characteristics of a mature religious viewpoint. According to Allport, a mature religion possesses three characteristics: (1) it promotes self-control, (2) self-criticism and provides (3) a workable philosophy of life (Jones, 2002, p. 68). Quantum mysticism indeed possesses all three characteristics, sometimes at extreme levels. Through the realization that (1) individuals are responsible for their own reality and are creating it at every moment, they can (2) make better choices and break free of their addictions to negative behavioral patterns. The (3) workable philosophy of life is precisely this dialectic of creation and re-creation, of weeding out the negativity and reforming one's life.

Quantum mysticism propounds a new experience of God, a chance to partake in the very act of creation. According to quantum mystics, humanity honors God by becoming better creators and by making choices centered on love and compassion. I have argued that quantum mysticism has the potential to function as a healthy form of self-psychology for its followers. By positing that individuals create their own reality, it forces self-interest and empathy to coexist in the same sphere. Quantum mysticism, and perhaps New Age spirituality more generally, may serve as the answer to Kohut's call for 'a "new religion which is capable of fortifying man's love for its old and new ideals." This religion will enable individuals to transcend their egoism in order to participate "in a supraindividual and timeless existence"' in which the individual becomes one with the "supraordinate Self" (Jones, 2002, pp. 119–120). According to quantum mystics, choices have cosmic significance and individuals must begin to see themselves as integral, participatory inhabitants of a world they are continually remaking. If, however, quantum mysticism turns out to be unsatisfactory for its followers, they can, keeping in line with its tenets, always choose something better.

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