Demystification and Transmutation:
Neo-Pagan Witchcraft in the 21st Century

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Abstract

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This paper will explore the origins and progression of the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement, as well as provide the teachings, beliefs, practices, social structure and definition of this New Religion. This paper will also deal with the relationship of Neo-Pagan witchcraft and technology, that has given rise to the Techno-Pagan, the latest addition into the Modern Witchcraft fold. The Techno Pagan serves as the ideal example of the spiritual movement into Cyberspace and highlights the increasing trend of artificial technologies, animism and the social implications of this environment.

Part I
Chapter One
Introduction

In the first decade of the 21st century, Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and Satanism are still

seen as synonymous by Christian fundamentalists and the misinformed as reflected in the

media. Today, the assumption being the movement still carries the stigma associated with

Satanism, that Modern or Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is a form of devil worship. This study is

not a comparison of Neo-Paganism and Satanism, nor is it an introduction to occult or

esoteric topics, but a focus on the Neo-Pagan or Modern Witchcraft movement. This thesis,

based on empirical data, will explore the emergence of Neo-Pagan witchcraft and its

evolution into the 21st century, finding its way into the most scientific sectors of society.

Characterized by many as a spirituality through the medium of nature, Neo-Pagan

Witchcraft draws its inspiration from pre-Christian sources and cultures. In the 21st century,

Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is moving further away from the old stereotypes and has developed

into a unique modern New Religious Movement that combines modern technology. Some

Neo-Pagan Witches use modern technology to enhance their practices and techniques. A

movement within Neo-Paganism known as the Techno-Pagans, are attempting to unite

technology with animism. In their world view, all animate and inanimate objects possess

a life force or energy of their own. The rationale behind the Techno-Pagan is that the

material creation is an expression of divinity, through which the divine is seeking to

understand and know itself by manifesting in as many forms as possible.

Section one of this work will explore the growing popularity of Neo-Pagan

witchcraft, a faith characterized by its fluidity, and lack of any central authority or

organizational structure, as well as an absence of any written texts. Beginning with the Gardnerian and Alexandrian[1] origins of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, I will examine the beliefs, teachings and practices within the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement. I will further analyse the social organization of Neo-pagan witchcraft groups as it fits into categories of esoteric, exoteric and inter-polar categories, and will comment on the appeal and significance of these groups and their practices.

This first section will also deal with the more popular forms of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft that emerged in the late 1960's, when interest in the movement assumed diverse forms. The feminism of the 1960's and 1970's produced the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft groups known as the Goddess (Dianic) worshipping sects.[2] The rise of Dianic groups, which altered the role of the God in Neo-Pagan practices, paved the way for the eclectics[3] of the 1980's and 1990's, groups that countered basic coven tradition by practising self-initiations and solo rituals. Within the eclectic branch of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft arose the Techno-Pagans,[4] who have also modified the basic tenets of Neo-Paganism by replacing nature with technology. The evolution of Neo-Paganism, and the diversity of adherent groups are products of the flexibility that is characteristic of the movement.

Without a comprehensive understanding about the origins of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft,

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[1] These traditional or hereditary Wiccans are quite evasive. Even though I knew many of them, my attempt to buckle a few down for an interview was long and tiring. Many of them do not feel right in publicising Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and sometimes seemed uncomfortable when I tried to break Neo-Pagan Witchcraft down into sub categories.

[2] I have come close to some Dianics who tentatively agreed to an interview, but at the last minute backed out. I suspect this animosity or reluctance is due to the plain fact that I am a male. Therefore, what follows on Dianics was compiled from various textual sources rather than from the practitioners themselves.

[3] This was an easy group to contact and work with. Eclectics attend many public rites, open celebration of festivals where circle is conducted for the public. For the most part, they were enthusiastic about revealing what their practices entail, but unreliable in keeping appointments.

[4] Even though this study was first conducted in 1998, it was in my best interest to redo the survey in the summer of 2003. This proved beneficial as it supported what I had suspected from the start. That there is a fine line between the rise of technology and NRM as Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. Being open and very public about their religious dealings, Techno pagans were easily accommodating to my inquiries.

the integration of technology and religion embodied by the Techno-Pagan cannot be explained. While Techno-Pagans form a small marginal group under the Neo-Pagan umbrella, they exemplify a more general interest in techno animism among Neo-Pagans.

The second part of this thesis will explore the theories of some classical sociologists on the re-emergence of animism in the modern context of Cyberspace and Artificial Intelligence, supported by articles from *Wired* magazine. The selection of *Wired* as a source for Techno-Paganism was suggested by one of my research subjects, encountered in 2003 while I was surveying the Neo-Pagan community in Montreal. Seeking reliable sources on Techno-Paganism, I purchased a *Wired* magazine and discovered that back issues, as early as 1994, exist online. Selecting *Wired* as a source seemed a reasonable option, even though it is a journal of qualitative data rather than hard, scientific fact. *Wired* is a scientific journal, concerned with cutting edge developments in popular science that reflect the changing relationship between religion and technology today. The final part of this chapter will outline the correlation between technology and magic, examining new animistic tendencies within the field of artificial intelligence. The last chapter of Part Two will explore the many facets of Techno-Paganism and its relationship to the broader movement of Neo-Paganism. This section will provide an in-depth look at the world of the Techno-Pagan in its many forms, as the term Techno-Pagan is an umbrella term in itself.

This thesis will address the following questions: Is Neo-Pagan Witchcraft a New Religious Movement? Is Neo-Pagan Witchcraft associated in any way with Satanism? What are the major beliefs, teachings and practices of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft? What are the major divisions of gender in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft? What is the a link between technology and

Neo-Pagan Witchcraft? How pervasive are animistic beliefs among (ICT) information computer technologists, and why is this ancient form of religion appearing in the most 'rational' and scientific sectors of society? How has technology become the catalyst for the resurgence of magic and animism? Why does magic continue to have a strong appeal in our rational and scientifically advanced society? To best understand the patterns of integrations within Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, I have placed field research results in the appropriate sections throughout this dissertation rather than in just one place.

Methodology

Before beginning my Master's Program at Concordia University, I spent years observing and participating in Neo-Pagan practices. I spent two years working within a traditional coven, after which I became involved with an eclectic group where the rules of practice were far less stringent than in a traditional setting. This 'insider' experience and the contacts I made many years ago, allowed me to gain entry into and survey groups that are normally secretive. My experience with Neo-Pagan initiations and repeated attendance at public grove rituals, enabled me to been seen as a familiar and trust worthy person. Thus, I elicited more responses, more honest in quality, than an outsider to Neo-Paganism would have.

My initial questionnaire was given to 100 random participants. My questionnaire was first distributed to the Concordia Pagan Society[5], my questionnaire was presented during a

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[5]The Concordia Pagan society (CUPS) concerns putting out public information at both educational institutions and at human resources, but at the same time functions much like a grove. The head of writing skills, Willow, writes the public information and gives workshops and classes on Neo-Pagan witchcraft.

class given by Willow, the head of writing skills at C.U.P.S.. The second time my questionnaire was given out during a public grove rite sponsored by the Montreal Pagan Grove[6] in 1998. Responses to my survey contributed to my understanding of Neo-Pagan theology, history, ideology and practice. The survey results of my questionnaire have been validated, through research conducted by various scholars over the years, and responses to my survey were triangulated through an examination of both the emic[7] and etic[8] views of the subject. Therefore my results to my questionnaire can be considered scientifically legitimate, as responses were analyzed, assessed and then validated through a comparison with responses garnered from verbal interviews and various textual sources.

The ranked questions, eight in total, were designed to yield averages and percentages. Each choice is assigned a value or score. For instance, if there are ten options to assign a score the range would be 1-10, with 1 as the highest, 10 the lowest. The overall rank was determined by calculating the rankings from each respondent. The lowest overall rank and the highest frequency distribution of all respondents' first choice determined the most popular option.

Further validating and updating the results of the 1998 survey, I conducted an additional survey in 2003. The later study allowed the tracking of some Techno-Pagans. It is important to note that I was unsuccessful in isolating more then a few Techno-Pagan. In

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[6]The Montreal Pagan Grove is geared toward educating newcomers, and also offers the option of getting them in touch with an group, either esoteric, exoteric or inter-polar, depending on what they are looking for. Grove circles are rituals geared for the public where anyone (Wiccan or otherwise) is allowed to attend. The grove is a relatively new phenomenon in the Montreal scene, starting in 1990. Today, there are many of groves in the Montreal area, serving every pagan interest.
[7]The emic denotes the believer's point of view. Researchers believe that an accurate presentation of the religion under study as expressed by the believers themselves must be the basis of research. On the part of the researcher, the reconstruction of the emic perspective requires an attitude of empathy, which excludes personal biases as much as possible.
[8]The etic or scholarly perspective entails types of language, distinctions, theories and interpretive models, which are considered appropriate by scholars on their own terms.

the 1998 survey, only 1 respondent indicated that they follow the path of Techno-Paganism. During the 1998 questionnaire, I did not even list 'techno-paganism' as an option, the respondent indicated the term under the option of 'other'. I never took the term 'techno-paganism' seriously, thinking that it was irrelevant to my study, until 2003 when it was suggested that the 'Techno-Pagan' is indeed relevant to the study of Neo-Paganism as a whole. After researching the Techno-Pagan through the Internet, the latest addition to research methodologies, I realized that not only was the Techno-Pagan an important development of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, but it was also exemplary in the evolution of religion, technology and magic. The survey results of 2003 indicated that elements of Techno-Paganism have emerged. Luckily, I also met a cyber enthusiast, Branwin, during the 2003 survey of the Montreal Pagan Grove, who regards himself as a Techno-Pagan and provided insider information and external sources necessary for research validation.

During my survey study, the Concordia Pagan society was very receptive to my requests. Here there were forty participants, and every individual filled out a questionnaire. This accommodation to my questionnaire was aided by Willow; the head of writing skills at C.U.P.S. I presented my questionnaire at a class on Witchcraft given by Willow. Many in this class were newcomers and did not appear to be older than 25. The fact that this was a class given by Willow who endorsed the questionnaire, and encouraged all to fill one out, and all participants did.

In the Montreal Pagan Grove about 150 members were estimated present. It was more difficult eliciting responses to my questionnaire at the Montreal Pagan grove. Not having any back up as I did at C.U.P.S. only sixty of those (slightly more than one third)

participated in filling out a questionnaire. With the much broader demography of ages and languages at the Montreal Pagan Grove, individuals were formed in cliques, and some cliques as a whole did not participate in my questionnaire. Even though I announced that these questionnaires were anonymous, a participant explained that many are not willing to fill out questionnaires about their beliefs, as many prefer to stay unidentified, even to a researcher, and adhere to the traditional oath of secrecy.

PART I
Chapter 2
Precursors to Neo-Pagan Witchcraft

This section will discuss the evolution and progression of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft from

the 1950's to the twenty first century. The following diagram will give a clear view of the

historical developments of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft.

Gardnerian Alexandrian	1954 1962	British	Merged in N. America as one tradition (Algard)
Goddess sects Dianics	1960's 1970's	American	Radical, loosely structure, Goddess oriented
Eclectics	1980's Early 1990's	British/N. American	Loosely structure, new age type
Techno-Pagans	Late 1990's	World wide	Rely on World Wide Web

Jeffery Russell, who has written a comprehensive history of Witchcraft in 1980

explains: "Neo-Pagan Witchcraft has its roots in the historical tradition of Michelet, who in

1862 argued that European witchcraft was the survival of an ancient religion."[9] The ideas

of Michelet largely influenced the works of late 19th and mid 20th century Folklorists like

James Fraser,[10] Charles G. Leland[11] and Robert Graves[12] who helped to pave the way for the

Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement in the latter 20th century. However, this thesis will address

Margaret Murray, Gerald Gardner and Alex Sanders, as many regard Neo-Pagan Witchcraft

as an 'Old Religion' due to the influences of these individuals.

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[9] Russell, Jeffrey. *A History of Witchcraft.* 1980:148

[10] Anthropologist, classicist, and author of *The Golden Bough*, James Fraser wrote the first book to make available for European readers a vast range of primitive custom. All modern anthropologists and folklorists (as well as those, brave enough to try to understand the beginnings of many contemporary religious practices) owe an immense debt to Frazer's pioneering work. *Famous Frasers*, http://www.fraserofwesthill.com/Famous_Frasers.html

[11] American author who devoted himself to traveling and studying languages and folklore. Leland wrote more than 50 books, including *The English Gypsies* (1873), *Algonquin Legends* (1884), *Legends of Florence* (1895–96) and *Aradia: The Gospel of the Witch's.*(1899) *The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition.* 2001. Leland, Charles Godfrey http://www.bartleby.com/65/le/Leland-C.html

[12] The author of *The White Goddess*, a key book for modern Neo-Pagan Witches. Subtitled '*A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*', Robert Graves explores the homogeneity of poetry, mythology and the worship of the Goddess. The White Goddess had a great influence on Gerald Gardner.

Margaret A. Murray

Anthropologist and Egyptologist Margaret Murray (1863-1963) theorized in two

of her works, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) *and The God of the Witches* (1933)

that witchcraft could be traced back to pre-Christian times. She says:

> *"The evidence proves that underlying the Christian religion was a cult practised by many classes of the community. Chiefly however, by the more ignorant or those in the less thickly inhabited parts of the country. It can be traced back to pre-Christian times and appears to be the ancient religion of Western Europe."*[13]

Conserved through the centuries by practising witches, Murray affirmed that

medieval witchcraft was once the 'Old Religion,' or the ancient pagan Mother Goddess

religion of the Indo-Europeans. Russell (1980) takes the following critical position about

Murray's theory as he explains:

> *"Modern historical scholarship rejects the Murray thesis with all its variants. The fact remains that the Murray thesis overall is untenable. The argument for the survival of any coherent fertility cult from antiquity through the Middle Ages into the present is riddled with fallacies."*[14]

Murray believed medieval witchcraft was a vestige of a cult centred on the Mother

Goddess Diana and the Horned God Janus or Dianus; Diana being the virgin huntress of

Roman mythology and Janus being a Roman prototype of the Greek God Pan.   Murray

claims that due to eradication attempts of the Christian Church in the first millennium of

Christendom, these ancient practises were forced underground, and there survived, in

scattered hearths or groves.

Arguably, Murray's research methods were questionable; since she based much of

her theoretical conclusions from confessional accounts of the late medieval witch trials,

which in most cases were forced through torture. However, of all her erroneous theoretical

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[13]Murray, Margaret. *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* 1921:36
[14]Russell, Jeffrey. *A History of Witchcraft.* 198 0:41

claims, Murray was correct in her one conjecture of the vestige of an Agrarian fertility cult, as there is no doubt that some pagan beliefs persisted and evolved throughout the middle ages, largely in rural areas where these practises persisted.[15] Many peasants in the rural lands of Europe unknowingly preserved what the clergy or the elite termed 'devilish' or 'occult' beliefs and practices through well established agricultural/fertility traditions and superstitions.

The history of ancient and medieval witchcraft is a complex subject, and one argument attests that historical witchcraft never existed, except in the minds of those who perpetuated ideas of hags on broomsticks, riding to meet Satan at the black mass. Historically, the elitist courts had always based their accounts of witchcraft on hearsay, and never from first person accounts. Never given a chance to prove any innocence, the accused were already guilty of the charge of Witchcraft and until admitting a confession to its practice, were condemned to torture procedures. Since the confessions from the witch-hunts, were in most cases extracted under torture, one can only conclude that those accused were not witches but innocent individuals, most likely a desired scapegoat, forced to admit to the charge of practising witchcraft.

Nonetheless, Murray assessed the confessions of those accused and formulated that witchcraft predated Christianity, and these medieval remains of pre-Christian paganism were the vestiges of a Mother Goddess mystery religion. Murray's ideas held sway for some time. Until the 1950's, Murray had written the entry of Witchcraft in the *Britannica Encyclopedia*

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[15]Ginzburg, Carlo. *Ecstasies, Deciphering the Witch's Sabbat.* 1991:9

and affirmed her theoretical conclusions under its account. Thus, Murray's ideas managed

to be a sort of pre-cursor for the modern Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement.

Gerald Gardner

Contemporary witchcraft owes its shape and form to Gerald Gardner (1884-1964).

Gardner was a British civil servant spending much of his life in Ceylon and throughout the

Middle East, India and the Far East. An amateur anthropologist and archaeologist, Gardner's

interests were in the world's religions, and religious paraphernalia of indigenous societies.[16]

In his lifetime, Gardner was part of many occult networks. Not only a member of a Witch's

coven, Gardner was also a member of Freemasonry,[17] the Rosicrucians,[18] and of the Ordo

Templi Orientis (O.T.O.).[19] He also was acquainted with Mabel Besant-Scott, who

introduced Gardner to the Craft and of Aleister Crowley.[20]

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[16]Melton, Gordon, J. *Biographical Dictionary of American Cult and Sect Leaders.* 1986: 96.

[17]Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory, illustrated by symbols. It is not a religion but religious in character, it is a philosophy of ethical conduct, which imparts moral and social virtues and fosters brotherly love. The purpose of the Ancient Craft of Freemasonry is to unfold a message where "truth abides in fullness," invoking greater understanding of the inward life and spirit of fellowship in which every Mason can also lead a better outward life. *Freemasonry,* http://religion-cults.com/Secret/Freemasonry/Freemasonry.htm

[18]Members of an esoteric society or group of societies, who claim that their order has been in existence since the days of ancient Egypt and has over the course of time included many of the world's sages. Their secret learning deals with occult symbols—notably the rose and the cross, the swastika, and the pyramid—and with mystical writings containing cabalistic, Hermetic, and other doctrines. *Rosicrucians,* http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/society/A0842439.html

[19]Although officially founded at the beginning of the 20th century, O.T.O. represents a surfacing and confluence of the divergent streams of esoteric wisdom and knowledge. It draws from the traditions of the Freemasonic, Rosicrucian and Illuminist movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, the crusading Knights Templars of the Middle Ages and early Christian Gnosticism and the Pagan Mystery Schools. Its symbolism contains a reunification of the hidden traditions of the East and the West, and recognizes the true value of Aleister Crowley's revelation of The Book of the Law. *Ordo Templi Orientis,* http://www.stephenbailey.com/thought/philosophy.html

[20]Aleister Crowley, born in Victorian England to a life of financial privilege and religious bigotry, rebelled against his upbringing in every way possible. He became a mountaineer, a bohemian, a writer of sensuous poetry, and a practitioner of what detractors called "the black arts." In reality, he was an uninhibited explorer of global spiritual traditions combining ritual magic with spiritual ecstasy. His winding path intersected ceremonial magic, Buddhism, Hinduism, Cabala, sex, drugs, poetry and music. And what he offered mankind was a manifesto for a new age: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." Richard Kaczynski *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley:*2002

Upon his returned to England in the 1930's, Gardner joined the Corona Fellowship of Rosicrucians. While settling in England, Gardner contacted a number of occultists and allegedly, some witches. Amongst these people was a Dorothy Clutterbuck (Old Dorothy), who initiated him into the 'Old Religion.' Until the 1950's, Witchcraft was still a crime in the English law books, and revealing the 'Old Religion' as witchcraft would have been ruinous, so Gardner wrote a fictional account of a Witch's religion in 1949. Entitled *High Magic's Aid,* Gardner wrote this fictional narrative under 'Scire' his magical name. In it he disclosed some of his coven's secrets, masked under the guise of fiction.

After the witchcraft laws in England were abolished in 1951, and with the approval of 'Old Dorothy',[21] Gardner publish a type of auto biographical account of the 'Old Religion' in *Witchcraft Today,* published in 1954. Gardner based *Witchcraft Today* on his

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[21] Dorothy Clutterbuck is the most elusive and secretive of the witches to have figured in the rise of the modern witchcraft. Old Dorothy as she was known, was the witch who initiated Gerald B. Gardner into the Old Religion during September 1939. It was alleged that she was then the head of an old time witches coven, the last remains of a coven directly descendant from one of the famed "Nine Covens" founded by Old George Pickingill. This has been known about Old Dorothy, and many believed that Gardner had invented her to justify his belief that there were practicing witches of the Old Religion. In 1980 Doreen Valiente a great friend and colleague of Gardner's, set out to disprove these allegations. After two years of research she succeeded, and was able to prove through birth and death records that Old Dorothy was indeed a real person and she was able to establish Dorothy's parents, and to find a record of Dorothy's birth. It began in India were one Capt. Thomas St Quintin Clutterbuck, aged 38, was married to Ellen Anne Morgan, aged 20, at Lahore, India, in 1877. Three years later, Dorothy was born, in India, in Bengal on the 19th January 1880. Nothing further is known of Dorothy until 1933. Through her researches, Doreen was able to corroborated most of Gardner's claims of the events leading up to his initiation. She had collated records showing that Gardner and his wife Donna lived in the same area of Highcliffe, as did Dorothy. His official biography states that the initiation took place in Old Dorothy's home "a big house in the neighborhood", Dorothy's "Mill House", was also a big house in the neighborhood. Dorothy's death certificate stated that: "Dorothy St Quintin Fordham died at Highcliffe in the registration district of Christchurch on the 12 January 1951, the primary cause of death being "cerebral thrombosis", a stroke". It also described her as "Spinster of independent means, daughter of Thomas St Quintin Clutterbuck, Lieutenant Colonel, Indian Army (deceased). After her death and upon an examination of her personal effects, no evidence was found to indicate her involvement in witchcraft. Once again, Doreen Valiente refuted these claims. During her research she had come across an old pamphlet entitled "The Museum of Magic and Witchcraft: "The story of Famous Witches" Mill at Castletown, Isle of Man. This was a guidebook of the famous museum, written and published by Gerald Gardner during his tenure as its director. While its not proof positive, we can surmise from the time era and from many of Gardner's writings, that Old Dorothy was a witch of the old school, and to her secrecy was paramount. During her time witchcraft was still illegal and disclosure of its practice fraught with difficulty and danger. Indeed, it was she who restricted Gardner from going public. Not until near her end, did she relent with misgivings, and allow him to write about the craft, but then only in fictional form (High Magic's Aid, published in 1949). From: http://www.controverscial.com/Old%20Dorothy%20Clutterbuck.htm

own coven practices, and where he felt adequate material lacked he compensated with his own personal occult experiences such as Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, Western ritual/sex magic, and magical texts as the *Greater Key of Solomon*.[22] Where blanks remained within his system, Gardner also filled in with his travels and experiences with the philosophies of the Middle and Far East. Combining these various occult subjects and Eastern traditions as well as using the writings of Murray, and the help of Aleister Crowley, Gardner revealed his own creation of a religion based on a Mother Goddess in *Witchcraft Today*. Thus, Gardner began the generation of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft in *Witchcraft Today*.

When writing *Witchcraft Today*, Gardner believed he was exposing a Goddess religion that was on the verge of extinction, as all those who termed themselves as witches were, as Gardner was, along in years. When Gardner revealed a dying Goddess religion in *Witchcraft Today*, he also revived or started a form of Goddess worshiping. The year 1954 is the starting point of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, as it was after *Witchcraft Today* when people came flocking to Gerald Gardner requesting an initiation into the 'Old Religion.' Wanting to preserve and pass on what 'Old Dorothy' gave him, Gardner began the new generation of modern witchcraft.

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[22]The Key of Solomon is a grimoire, a book on magic attributed to King Solomon. The book contains many paragraphs and its terminology is inspired by Talmudic texts and the Jewish Kabbalah. The Key of Solomon is divided in two books, and contains the conjurations and invocations to summon spirits. The book details how to prepare the ink to draw the magic symbols necessary for the experiments to be performed. All materials needed for the magic drawings and amulets are stipulated as are the plans to purify and prepare them, and all magical tools required to execute the operations is detailed.Conceding to the text, the book seems to have been written during the Middle Age and not before. It is believed that the creation of the book was due to the impact of the Crusades and what they impoted from contact with Jewish Cabalists and Arab alchemists.

Post Gardner

By 1964 Gerald Gardner passed away and Modern Witchcraft or Wicca lost its founding father. After Gardner's death entered Alex Sanders who wanted to attain a status and thus, styled himself to be the next King of Witches. Thus, Contemporary Neo-Pagan Witchcraft developed from the two schools of Gardnerian (Gerald Gardner) and Alexandrian (Alex Sanders). The Alexandrian tradition is very similar to Gardnerian, both are oath bound, have three tiered initiation systems, and based on patriarchal and matriarchal mysteries. Heavily influenced by Gardner, the Alexandrian system differs only slightly. The main distinction being that Sanders combined Cabalistic[23] practices with Gardner's 'folksy' form of Witchcraft. Alexandrians are also more ceremonial, due to the fusion of the Cabala and thus, use different color associations; tools are also connected to different elements, as will be demonstrated in the next section of teachings.

When Sanders first appeared on the Witchcraft horizon in the mid 1960's, he had claimed to have come from a lineage of Witchcraft that went back generations. Sanders alleged that all those on his mother's side were Witches, and he received initiation by his Grandmother at seven years old. However, this account turned out to be false as Sanders came to confess that he had always been an initiate of the Gardnerian Tradition. Sources on the Internet agree: "Alexandrian Witchcraft began to down slide with the discovery of Sanders' dishonest allegation of being a hereditary Witch. Some covens broke away from the Tradition but others remained loyal to him as their founder."[24] Why Alexandrian Witchcraft

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[23]The Cabala is literature from Medieval Jewish mysticism, extensively adopted by Western occultists.
[24]*The Alexandrian Tradition.* http://www.cog.org/wicca/trads/alex.htm

survived is not a complex question. Already having a Gardnerian initiation, Alex Sanders was a Witch, albeit one who modified Gardner's material and passed it as his own. However, many overlooked this event due to those changes he made to the system as a whole. People obviously found his mélange of folk practices and ceremonial ritual appealing. It made the experience of ritual more theatrical, dramatic and precise for many, so that by the late 1970's, a trend developed toward blending Gardnerian and Alexandrian systems. Today, many North American covens and contemporary witches base their practices on this blend, so termed 'Algard' (Al) for Alexandrian and (gard) for Gardnerian. Due to this symbiosis, followers may use the Gardnerian scale of colors and symbols and others use the Alexandrian, either style not better than the other.

At about the time of Alex Sanders' debut as a Witch in the mid 1960's, Raymond Buckland[25] exported Neo-Pagan Witchcraft into North America. The prominence of the Goddess in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft made it attractive to some feminists, giving rise to Dianic Witchcraft or Goddess spirituality. The Dianic movement in the 1960's featured masculine/feminine deities. One of the first Dianic covens founded in 1968 by Morgan Mcfarland and Mark Roberts maintained the traditional rule of God/Goddess, male/female polarity/complimentary and maintained a mixed gender membership.

As women's issues escalated in the early part of the 1970's, American Wicca begot Feminist Witchcraft, and within the feminist spiritual movement, the feminine "Craft"

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[25]Buckland was born in London, England, on the 31st August 1934. He is best known as an agent of Gerald B. Gardner. Buckland was responsible for introducing Gardnerian Witchcraft into America in 1964. He is also the founder of his own tradition of Witchcraft called Seax Wica, and for a time operated his own Museum of Witchcraft in America. He has been a leading spokesman for the Craft in America for more than three decades. *Seax Wicca*, http://www.coven-of-cythrawl.com/Seax.htm

emerged. Z. Budapest, founder of the first feminist Dianic coven in 1974, took Dianic witchcraft in radical directions, rejecting the Wiccan traditions of hierarchy, initiation and sexual polarity/complimentary roles. This radical stance attracted some censure for disregarding the balancing of male and female energies through polarity that is central in the more traditional forms of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft.[26] Neo-Pagan Witchcraft remained underground in North America until 1975 when the *Covenant of Goddess*[27] brought the movement and its literature into public view. This event was the first attempt to bring Neo-Pagan Witchcraft out of hiding to establish new identities and definitions away from the popular concepts of Satanism.

The eclectic groups emerged during the new age revolution of the 1980's. Self proclaimed New Age guru Shirley MacLaine, and Buddhists Tina Turner and Richard Gere paved the roads for all genres of New Age beliefs to thrive, including Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. Authors like Starhawk and Margot Adler published their books on Modern Witchcraft. The predominance of the Goddess in these works made the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement palatable to those who were nature lovers, environmentalists or those who were always attracted to witchcraft but knew very little on the subject.

By 1987 Sanders died, yet by this time, the number of people practicing Neo-Pagan Witchcraft had grown exponentially and in many different directions due to the main streaming of human potential beliefs. The late 1980's saw the widespread publication of new

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[26]Marron, Kevin. *Witches, Pagans and Magic in the New Age.* 1991:132

[27]Founded in 1975 to increase cooperation among Witches and to secure for Witches and covens the legal protection enjoyed by members of other religions. The Covenant publishes a newsletter; issues ministerial credentials on request to qualified persons; sponsors a national festival each summer; and encourages networking nationally, as well as regionally through local councils. http://www.cog.org/general/pamphlet.html

books encouraging the practice of Witchcraft individually or in a group, leading the majority of contemporary witches to adopt a more eclectic orientation. The Modern Witchcraft movement had changed by becoming less secretive, more public and thereby attracting many followers who were not affiliated with any fixed group or coven.

By the mid to late 1990's, the Internet became a factor in the growth of Witchcraft around the world. Fifty years previously, the way of becoming a witch was to find a coven for initiation. Twenty years ago, books had become a vehicle for one's guided journey into witchcraft. Today, one only needs to open one's mind and an Internet browser to find a fountain of information on the practice of contemporary witchcraft. Not only did the Internet make learning about Neo-Pagan Witchcraft easier, it also provided a new medium for practice. Thus a new breed of pagan was born, the Techno-Pagan. Researchers into the Neo-Pagan movement have found a high percentage of subjects working in computer–related fields. Erik Davis quotes Margot Adler, in *Drawing Down the Moon* (1985) explaining that Adler:

> "Surveyed the Pagan community and discovered that an amazingly high percentage of followers were employed in technical fields and by the computer industry. Respondents gave many reasons for this curious affinity, everything from "computers are elementals in disguise" to the simple fact that the computer industry provided jobs for the kind of smart, iconoclastic, and experimental folk that Paganism attracts."[28]

Davis has also observed the Techno-Pagan world and has surmised that Neo-Paganism has mainstreamed and entered the high tech realm, integrating technology in ways that other Neo-Pagans do not. They do not see new technology as demystifying but as a tool of illumination, accessing hidden powers to expand the mind, otherwise inaccessible anywhere

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[28] *Wired.* Davis, Eric. *Technopagans: May the Astral Plane be Reborn in Cyberspace.* Http://www.wired.comJuly 1995

else. Neo-Pagan Witchcraft had always been receptive to scientific pursuit, thought and the technologies that have their root in science. The home computer and its offspring, Cyberspace and Virtual Reality are appreciated by many Modern Witches as another form of creativity and self expression. This mirrors the pantheistic world view that all material creation and living matter is an expression of the divine.

Is Wicca a New Religion?

Although contemporary Neo-Pagan Witchcraft evolved from the traditions of both Gardner and Sanders, opinions are still divided in the movement when it comes to defining witchcraft as a new or old religion. Scholars consider Neo-Pagan Witchcraft to be a new religion, finding origins with Gardner in the 1950's. We know that ideas of 'Old Religion' clearly originated with Gardner, who incorporated Murray's theory of an 'Old Religion' into the movement. In contrast, some contemporary Neo-Pagan Witches believe in the authenticity of Murray's theories, that theirs is an ancient faith.

My sample questionnaire given to participants at both the Concordia Pagan Society and the Montreal Pagan Grove indicated that the majority of respondents (68/100) believe Wicca or Neo-Pagan Witchcraft to be an 'Old religion.'[29] Only a small segment of this population appears to be aware of the recent developments in the research of historical witchcraft.

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[29]From the etic stance Wicca can be labelled a new religion. Yet, aside from the evident differences between Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and other NRMs, there are many similarities between the two that can be narrowed in with Roy Wallis' types of religious movements. Wallis gives three types of new religious movements, these are: World Rejecting, World Affirming, World Accommodating, as all new religions fit within one or two of these categories, Wicca fits in world affirming and world accommodating; and is not world rejecting.

Is Wicca a New Religion?

Concordia Pagan Society   **Montreal Pagan Grove**

        Yes   18%   Yes   35%

        No   72%   No   64%

The results of the Montreal surveys are in direct opposition to Adler's survey in *Drawing Down the Moon* (1986), which indicated that: "many Neo-pagans consider the concept of 'Old Religion' to be more of a metaphor rather than a fact."[30] This variance in practitioner attitudes toward Neo-Pagan witchcraft is limited to the region of Montreal, but is in keeping with the ideological diversity of those who call themselves Neo-Pagan witches today.

The Montreal survey indicates that followers (53%) understand Neo-Pagan Witchcraft as essentially beginning with Gardner; and as such is labelled a new religion. Yet, many prefer to call it old. Some will argue that historically, Christianity exercised its autonomy by proclaiming to be the only truth, and anything deviating from the 'truth' was heresy, punishable by death. Many Neo-Pagans will argue that in the Middle Ages, the 'Old Religion' lingered in the rural parts of Western Europe amongst those who were uneducated, illiterate and in many cases unable to define, defend or explain their practices. Therefore, when elitist clergies encountered these pagan practices, and recognized its heresy according to Church doctrine, they subsequently moulded these practices into a demonology. As one respondent said:

> "*First of all it depends on who is defining Wicca. Personally, Wicca is both new and old. Some believe Wicca started with Gerald Gardner in the 50's, but he was building on something that was much older. Whether he inherited the information from or picked up bits and pieces from all over the world, he saw a connection in different cultures. He may have started with something raw*

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[30]Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon.* 1985:84

Even though from the etic (scholarly) stance, there is no factual evidence to support the belief of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft as an 'Old Religion,' Murray's otherwise discredited theory is validated to those in the movement as many choose to believe it is an 'Old Religion.' Dreamweaver, a hard-core traditional witch, and a co-founder of the Montreal Pagan Grove, explains that Witches are compelled to uphold Murray's theory of Wicca as a vestige of ancient culture driven underground in the Middle Ages because:

> "This belief is really the start of modern witchcraft. Gardner vindicated the ideas of Leland and Murray so we like to believe that Witchcraft is an "old religion" as opposed to new; it gives a sense of history or roots. To alter this conviction would imply changes to the structure of the craft in the traditional sense, which has already happened and many of us do not want changes."[32]

This response is not a surprising one. Whether one is involved in a new or mainstream religion, a response such as Dreamweaver's would be typical regardless of which movement or religion one is involved in. Due to the maintenance of continuity, many adherents in various religions, new or otherwise, feel secure in having a point of antiquarian origin to justify and uphold their sets of beliefs and religious practices.

The Link to Satanism

Despite any progress Neo-Pagan Witchcraft has made over the last five decades, many will still associate Satanism and Witchcraft as one and the same. James T. Richardson (2003), writing on the differences of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and Satanism believes that the two movements are seen as the same. Basing his theory on W. I. Thomas' sociological

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[31]Personal Communication
[32]Personal Communication

maxim: 'If People define something as real, it is real in its consequence,'[33] indicates that, though two very different and separate paths, Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and Satanism are defined by many as one movement. This allegation has its roots in the conflict between early Christianity and Paganism, with Christianity winning over this clash. Eventually, explains Richardson, an association linking Witchcraft to Satanism was established. Today, due to misunderstandings between Satanism and Witchcraft or to fundamental Christian beliefs, and by those who see the working of any kind of magic as demonic will still define Witchcraft as Satanism when this could not be further from the truth. This stereotype typically embodies Middle Age notions of the witch as a devil worshiper, practicing ritual murder and so on. Consequently, this negative and false conviction of Neo-pagan Witchcraft renders it as anti-religious or anti Christian. Highly desiring to change this sensationalist stereotype, contemporary witches now use the words 'witch', 'witchcraft' or 'pagan' in an attempt to reclaim these terms and generate new and positive meanings. Like many Human Potential groups who attempt to educate and bring to fore, new cultural paradigms, many Neo-Pagan Witches have similar passions about elucidating interpretations of words like "witch" "witchcraft" and "pagan". Neo-Pagan Witches will readily admit and demonstrate that they are not what the historical stereotype makes them out to be. This stance is for the sake of educating and bringing to the fore what a witch or pagan is and practices in the era of post modernism

Neo-Pagan Witches will claim their ties to Pre-Christian days and not to Christianity, nor with the trials of the Middle Ages. Neo-Pagan Witches believe that Satanism is an

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[33]Richardson, James T. *Satanism and Witchcraft: Social Construction of a Melded but Mistaken Identity*. 2003:87

inverted form of Christianity. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains* (1993)[34] explains: "they do not worship or believe in Satan, or the Devil. Modern witches do not revile the Bible. They simply regard it as one among many of the world's mythic systems, less applicable than some to their core values, but still deserving just as much respect as any of the others."[35] To the Neo-Pagan Witch, the Christian and Jewish traditions or any other religion for that matter is another path to the same Truth or Source. Defiling or Revolting against other religions really goes against the Neo-Pagan rule of allowing others to follow their own free will. Thus, to Neo-Pagan Witches, following one of the major world religions is respected as long as those beliefs or values are not imposed upon them.

In all truth, Satanism and Witchcraft do share some features, the most evident being that both movements draw some of their terminology from the records of the witch hunts. Being an influence of Michelet, Murray and Gardner both Modern Witchcraft and Satanism share the terms 'coven', 'sabbat' and 'witch', words that subsequently confuses the two to be perceived as one.

Another similarity is the famous pentacle (star in circle) or pentagram (star alone), commonly used in both movements. Much misunderstanding arises with the pentacle. The official symbol of Satanism is a reversed pentacle, with a double circled perimeter enclosing the head of a goat, known to be Baphomet, within the 5 points of the pentagram. Due to this

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[34]This guide has been prepared for supplying useful information to chaplains concerning the beliefs, practices and social organization of certain 'religious' groups.The Handbook is written as a guide for chaplains and, where appropriate, for commanders within the U.S. army. Although it accurately reflects the positions of each group in general, chaplains are urged to consider the religious needs of each member individually. J. Gordon Melton, Project Director. James R. Lewis, Senior Research Associate. *TheReligious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains*. 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro

[35]Melton, J. Gordon. Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains*. 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro

symbol of Satanism, people misconstrue the upright pentacle, and surmise that it is a Satanic symbol. To Neo-pagan Witches, the upright pentacle is a dominant symbol, symbolizing the Goddess, the first degree initiation and focuses on spirituality, purity and enlightenment. The reversed pentacle is also used in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft as a symbol by 2nd degree witches to represent the God and the material world. Unlike the Neo-Pagan Witches, Satanists will reverse the pentacle to indicate its opposite meaning, as they do the Christian cross. Thus, to the Satanist the reversed pentacle represents the material world, but more in terms of earthly desires, and carnal lust.

The third similarity is the Horned God. The Satanist's Horned God is Baphomet, the Goat of Mendes, a symbol of fertility and lust, representing the Satanic focus of carnal lust and desires. To the Neo-Pagan Witch, the Horned God has many aspects and faces, as will be discussed in the next section, but Baphomet is the figure of the Dark Lord of the underworld, the God in his darkest phase which begins at Halloween and ends at the Winter Solstice. In this aspect the God is an hermaphrodite signifying wisdom and a self actualization, as he awaits to be reborn as the sun child during the Winter solstice. Due to the graphic depiction of Baphomet[36] many Neo-Pagan Witches may chose not to use him as a Godly representation. The fluidity inherent in the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement allows one to use an image that is meaningful, as well as comfortable to the user, as long as the concept represents a wise, old hermaphroditic symbol.

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[36]Baphomet is a sphinx like creature, with the head of a goat, cloven hooves, and the torso of a nude woman. Baphomet was the alleged God of the Templars, a medieval order of Crusader Monks accused of heresy.

The final similarity is the act of magic. It has long been upheld by many Neo-Pagan Witches that magic itself is neither black nor white. Good and evil exist in the individual user. A Satanist would use magic from a dark place, attempting to serve his own self interests and worldly desires. Contradistinctly, the Neo-Pagan Witch is discouraged from using magic to serve selfish purposes, as will be discussed shortly. The potential of using selfish magic is always present, but it largely depends on how the Witch wants to work her magic.

Chapter 3
What is Witchcraft

To define what Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is, this section will explore the various beliefs, teachings, practices, and types of experiences associated with the movement. This study will further discuss the social organization of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft as a multiple entity, broken down into its esoteric, exoteric and inter-polar components.

At first glance, Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is a consumer movement, as much of the movement is based on factors that are quite popular in today's culture. The popular manifestations of consumerism include women issues, self-awareness, and nature worship incorporating feminine, environmental and ecological concerns, magic and finally technology.

To validate the consumer character of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, respondents to the Montreal survey were asked to list in order of preference those features that attracted them to the Neo-pagan movement. Results indicated that the majority were attracted to the movement for personal growth (50%), while (18%) were drawn to the mystique of magic of ritual, and (13%) to the central role played by nature and the environment.

Concordia Pagan Society
List in order of preference those features that attracted you to the Neo-pagan movement.

Reverence for dual divinity	Reverence for nature	Personal growth	Concepts of creating a new world approach	Spirituality based on sensuality and self expression
9%	13%	50%	4%	9%
Mystic of magic and romance of ritual	Simplicity in life	Political and social action	Escape from conventional modes	Sense of community
18%	4%	4%	0%	9%

Survey results from the Montreal Pagan Grove differed slightly. Although again, personal

growth was the main attraction for (39%) of majority in this group, (36%) were attracted to

practice by the reverence for nature. A minority of respondents (22%) cited the reverence

of the divine feminine principle as their main attraction.

Montreal Pagan Grove
List in order of preference those features that attracted you to the Neo-pagan movement.

Reverence for dual divinity	Reverence for nature	Personal growth	Concepts of creating a new world approach	Spirituality based on sensuality and self expression
22%	36%	39%	1%	2%
Mystic of magic and romance of ritual	Simplicity in life	Political and social action	Escape from conventional modes	Sense of community
12%	4%	0%	10%	8%

The only similar and highest response to the question of initial attraction to Neo-

Paganism is the issue of personal growth. This choice is a strong indication of people's needs

to enrich their inner and personal life by recognizing the inherent Divinity in oneself and

others. Another factor contributing to the consumerism of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is its

increasing exposure in pop culture. Movies and television shows are more openly displaying

the Neo-Pagan Witch. More young people are finding themselves upon a pagan path as they

seek a self actualizing religion that speaks to their spiritual needs and approaches everyday

concerns as global warming and the rape of nature and the inclusion of the feminine divine.

The following discussion will cover the general structure of beliefs, teachings,

practices of the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement. Neo-pagan Witchcraft relies heavily on

pre Christian sources for its inspiration. The variation of pre-Christian sources range

anywhere from Siberian Shamanism, to Celtic, Saxon or Norse to ancient Greek, Egyptian

as well as Hindu pantheons. Today the terms paganism and witchcraft are used

interchangeably, as paganism and witchcraft have more in common than not.

IBeliefs
Cosmology

To Neo-Pagan witches the inner dimension (spiritual worlds, the Collective

Unconsciousness, or inner planes) is just as substantial as the outer (daily life, the external

environment). All in the movement uphold that inner and outer dimensions and their

interaction is the base of paranormal phenomena and magical operations. Thus, Neo-pagan

Witchcraft upholds all four worldviews. It relies on nature worship (animism), dictating that

all Gods (polytheism) spring from one essential Source (monism), inherent and present in

all living matter (pantheism). Not all Neo-Pagans practise or believe in all world views.

Some will abide by only one or two of these world views, while others will believe in all.

Russell (1980) explains that:

> *"Some Neo-Pagan Witches will virtually ignore all other Gods and Goddesses; others*
> *are more actively polytheistic, worshipping the whole pantheon though giving the horned*
> *God and Goddess pride of place. Many Neo-Pagan Witches take their cosmogonies in*
> *a serious manner. For some, the Gods are metaphors or symbols of power that lie in the*
> *human unconscious mind, and are metaphors for the power of nature. For others*
> *they are superhuman powers created by human belief in them. For yet others they are*
> *eternal forces that are transcendent as well as immanent."* [37]

As monists, Neo-Pagan Witches' concept of 'God' can best be called the Life Force of the

universe. According to the Farrars (1984), a British Witch couple, Neo-Pagan Witches

believe the Life Force to be "benign and at the same time destructive and terrible. It is a

force of supreme wisdom because of the wonder and beauty manifested in its myriad

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[37]Russell, Jeffrey. *A History of Witchcraft.* 1980:159

forms."[38] There is only one ultimate Creative/Life force, and Neo-Pagan Witches personify

the different aspects of this Creative force symbolically.

As polytheists, many believe that the ultimate Creative/Life Force manifests through

the inherent polarity of the universe, as masculine and feminine. This polarity of

male/female forces supports each other and has equal value and status. *The Religious*

Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains explains

that Neo-Pagan Witches:

> *"Worship the sacred as immanent in Nature, often personified as Mother Earth and Father Sky.*
> *They will often choose Goddesses or Gods from any of the world's pantheons whose stories are*
> *particularly inspiring and use those Deities as a focus for personal devotions."*[39]

Represented as one genderless form of energy in the monist world view, the Life

Force in the polytheistic stance anthropomorphizes into various deities from different ancient

cultures, so practitioners use many names for these deities. Personifying the divine relies

upon the practitioner and his/her pantheon of choice. For example, the Goddess or the God

is more popularly represented in the Celtic tradition as Ceridwen for the Goddess and

Cernnunos for the God. Similarly, God and Goddess embodiments can be Roman figures

such as Diana for the Goddess and Dianus for the God. For the same reason, many will also

mix pantheons as the Celtic Cermunos for the God and the Greek Aphrodite for the Goddess.

The inherent fluidity and flexibility in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft does not dictate that deities

must be from the same pantheon, but it is essential that the divine images reflect the

'wild/tame' or 'light/dark' polarity. Therefore, in the polytheistic world view Neo-Pagan

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[38]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:309
[39]Melton, J. Gordon. Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains.* 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro

Witches will address prayers and rituals to different deities from different ancient religious traditions.

As pantheists, Neo-Pagans believe that everyone and everything is a product of the universe, all containing that quintessential spark of that same universe, Guiley (1989) explains: "Witches believe that Divinity is immanent and transcendent. Rather than praying to some form out there, Neo-Pagan Witches view all living things as sacred."[40] In the pantheistic view, nature (animal, vegetable and mineral), is alive and holy since everything is as offspring of the Goddess and the God, energies believed to be a diffuse and immanent force in the universe, but present mostly within oneself. Therefore, Neo-Pagan Witches approach life as sacred and interconnected and seek to be in harmony with the rhythms of life and the forces of the elements (earth, air, fire, water). The divine is seen as pre-existing the universe and its creation, but it is also indwelling in matter and permeates all living things. Therefore, Neo-Pagans view the living elements (earth, air, fire, water) as forms of elementals, alive and able to provide means to magic. Exemplified in the pantheistic world view is the idea of the magic circle as a created sacred space. In 'circle' participants attempt to link microcosm with macrocosm, or the individual with the Universal Life Force.

As animists, Neo-Pagans believe that all objects contain a Life Force since they are products of the universe. Essentially, everything, animate and inanimate, contains a soul or a specific power. To the Neo-Pagan Witch belief in animism is meant to bring the inner child to life, many in the movement indicate that the use of the inner child is essential to any type of magic or ritual working. The Neo-Pagan Witch seeks to find their inner child, that part

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[40]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:242

of their psyche that believes in the power of magic. On animism, Guiley (1989) states that at some level:

> "*Neo-Paganism is an attempt to reanimate the world of nature; or perhaps more accurately, to re-enter the primeval worldview to participate in nature in a way that is impossible for most after childhood. Animism in Neo-Paganism enables the practitioner to feel like an integral part of a greater whole of nature and of the cosmos.*"[41]

Belief in animism is therefore, illustrated in the working of magic. For example, a witch may create a sachet bag filled with specific herbs or plants, believing that this will attract a particular outcome. Similarly, many may create a waxen doll of someone, fashioned with the subject's hair or nail clippings to represent the life force of that particular person. The logistics behind this view relies upon the belief that things like fingernail clippings or hair, clothing etc have their own particular energy that resonates its carrier. By finding the inner child, Neo-Pagan Witches enforce the act of magic by reinforcing their belief in the act in much the same way as children will believe in the power of magic.

Magic

To Neo-Pagan Witches magic is possible and real because, as mentioned, the outer or physical world, fathomed with the five senses, is only a part of reality. The other aspects of reality to Witches, the inner dimensions are realms in which the witch attempts to work magic. The Farrars (1984), explain that: "in magic the levels interact and affect each other all the time by working on the interaction of the mental, astral and physical planes. The more one understands their laws, the more one can make them interact to one's advantage."[42]

There are few reasons why or how magic works according to Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and these are all explained within the context of different world views, so again many Neo-

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[41]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*. 1989:242
[42]Farrar & Farrar, *The Life and Times of a Modern Witch*. 1989:106

Pagan Witches will believe in one or all of these reasons. The first reason relies on the pantheistic view, that the working of magic depends upon one's awareness of his or her innate psychic abilities, believed to be inherent in everyone. Hawkins (2001) says: "Some either has more of these natural gifts than others do, or else they have developed them to a greater degree. Others may not even realize they have them. But they are nonetheless inherent within us all."[43]

The second reason revolves around the monist worldview, for those who uphold the belief that the Goddess and God are derived from the monist Life Force. Hawkins (2001) says: "it holds that magic works much like tapping into an electrical "current" which is the monistic energy. Since this primal energy composes, interconnects, and flows through all, one has to learn how to "plug into" and harness its power for their purposes."[44] Plugging into and getting in tune with the Life force is not always the easiest thing to accomplish. A magical task such as this one would require much preparation and ceremony, and would in, most cases be done within a ceremonial rite.

The final reason highlights the animistic world view, that magic works through the influences "of inter dimensional entities such as gods and goddesses, higher life forms, spirit guides and so forth."[45] Animism within Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is vast. All plant, mineral forms, colors, elements, times of the month, days of the week, and hours in the day, have correspondences that list their magical uses and affinities such as Gods, Goddesses, the zodiac, planets of the solar system, and words of power. Similarly, many will believe that

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[43]Hawkins, Craig. *The Modern World of Witchcraft.* http://www.apologeticsindex.org
[44]Hawkins, Craig. *The Modern World of Witchcraft.* http://www.apologeticsindex.org
[45]Hawkins, Craig. *The Modern World of Witchcraft.* http://www.apologeticsindex.org

certain objects will also contain their own power or energy, as previously explained in the

animistic belief of used objects containing the residual energy of its owner.

Reincarnation

Many Neo-Pagan Witches believe in the doctrines of reincarnation, derived from

either Hindu and/or Buddhist concepts. Guiley (1989) explains:

> *"Some lean toward the Hindu concept of reincarnation in which the personality remains intact
> and a soul's spiritual advancement is tempered by karma. Other modern witches believe
> the Buddhist concept of rebirth, in which the individual personality disintegrates at death,
> sending off sparks that re-ignite in new incarnations.* "[46]

The Farrars (1984) explain that: "reincarnation as a doctrine of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft

most likely came from Gardner, who was exposed to and influenced by the cosmologies of

the Far East."[47] In describing her belief on reincarnation, Garinda, one of the grove

attendants says:

> *"To me reincarnation occurs as it happens in nature. In autumn, we see the withering and
> decaying of nature. Its death is experienced during winter. But then there is a rebirth of
> nature, which has been given life again from its original source in spring and summer.
> So if we all are living organisms as animal, vegetable and mineral, then why should we as
> animals be singled out in the death/rebirth process?* "[48]

The strong belief in reincarnation allows many Modern Witches to believe that there

is a way to recall past lives through a series of hypnotic techniques. The Farrars (1984)

explain that: "There are techniques, as hypnotic regression, for attempting recall. More than

one professional psychotherapist using hypnotic regression to childhood to uncover a buried

trauma, has been surprised to find the patient going back farther, apparently to an earlier

life."[49] Believed to be part of nature's process, reincarnation is the medium of learning for

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[46]Guiley, Rosemary E *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:280
[47]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:111
[48]Personal Communication
[49]Farrar & Farrar, *The Life and Times of a Modern Witch.* 1989:58

all souls. Aligned with the doctrine of reincarnation is karma, which denotes that every action has a reaction, in the present life or in a future life. Good acts beget good karma and bad acts beget bad karma and slow the soul's progress. Many Neo-Pagan Witches deem that becoming an initiated witch means that they will go through their karma at a much faster pace than a 'regular' person will. The logic behind this implicates that one's karma is determined or resolved in a rapid manner, thereby indicating fewer or no further incarnations of the soul, as its karma has been resolved. What this means is that any retribution for the Witch returns at a quicker pace in the current lifetime than it would for others. Thus, the individual soul will pay fewer dues for its karma after bodily death, as it has been resolved at a quicker pace and reconciled by the buildup of good karma in the current life of being a Witch.

Initiation

In some Neo-Pagan Witchcraft circles, initiation in the traditional sense is essential. This means that one need be initiated by another of the opposite sex with all the trappings of a traditional rite as emphasized by Gardner. Guiley (1989) explains that initiation:

> "*Marks the follower's crossing of the psychological threshold into new territories, knowledge and abilities. The central themes of initiation are suffering, death and rebirth. The initiate undergoes an ordeal, symbolically dies and is symbolically reborn as a new person, possessing new wisdom. In traditional forms of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, initiation marks entry into a closed and traditionally secret society. It opens the door to the learning of ritual secrets, magic, and to the development and uses of psychic powers.*"[50]

In the evolution and the changing face of the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement, initiations have taken new forms, all legitimate, valid, and accessible to the individual practitioner. Even though traditional forms of coven initiations still occur, eclectics practice

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[50]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:168

initiation individually or in a group. The process of initiation for the eclectic can be an elaborate affair or simply accomplished with a meaningful afflatus from a dream or by meditating. Some will make a ritual out of a bath and initiate themselves with the use of water. Others will form rites of pledges to serve and to suffer in order to learn. Thus, those many Witches practicing as solitaries do not believe that they need to join covens in order to be Witches.

Overall, divided are the opinions of self-initiation among traditionalists. This division is due to the traditional law[51] stating that no one can be a witch alone as there is power in numbers. Consequently, some traditionalists believe that group initiation is the only way of becoming a witch. Dreamweaver, my hard-core traditionalist subject explains that:

> *"While self initiation is a good way to make any kind of pledge or dedication to the Craft, it by no way makes a witch. The title of priest and witch must be given by those who are capable and privileged to bestow that virtue."*[52]

Traditionalists as the Farrars (1984) believe that at this stage in the movement's history, self-initiation should be admissible and protests against it as unrealistic. The Farrars (1984) claim that a large "segment of modern witches were either self initiated or initiated by those who initiated themselves."[53] Therefore, even though there is that segment of the traditional branch that opposes the idea of becoming a witch through self-initiations, it is feasible that most do not. The diversity and no fixed autonomy so characteristic of this movement reflects this tolerance and openness to self-initiations.

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[51]The craft laws were compiled by Gardner who claimed that these laws are vestiges from the Witchcraft in the Middle Ages. There are 172 laws, which pertain to secrecy, ritual conduct and coven ethics.
[52]Personal Communication
[53]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:244

The Dawning of Aquarius

Ray Kurzweil(1999) in *The Age of Spiritual Machines* explains the 'new age' as "the

marriage of human sensitivity and artificial intelligence, coming together and fundamentally

altering and improving the life of humanity."[54] Alleged to be the 'golden age' of man, the

'Age of Aquarius' appears to be encapsulated as a new age of communication, enabling the

fusion of heaven and earth, at the same time creating a type of fifth dimension within the

context of technology. Centered on technical mechanics, Kurzwell's spirituality is finding the

right program for Virtual Reality or localizing the correct nerves for neural stimulation.

About the Age of Aquarius, Garinda, an eclectic witch I encountered at the Montreal Pagan

Grove says:

> *"Aquarius is an air sign and that means an evolution in anything involving our emotions*
> *and our rational thoughts, and with opposite fire sign Leo ruling as the undercurrent, indicates*
> *dramatic and rapid advancement and knowledge that concurs with our emotions and rationale. "* [55]

Consequently, many contemporary witches believe themselves to be by-products of

the emerging "Aquarian"[56] culture. Marilyn Ferguson (1980) in *The Aquarian Conspiracy*

refers to the Aquarian mentality and says: "after a dark, violent age, the Piscean, we are

entering a millennium of love and light, in the words of the popular song, 'The Age of

Aquarius' the time of the mind's true liberation."[57] This "Aquarian"[58] mentality is linked to

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[54]Kurzweil, Ray. *The Age of Spiritual Machines.* 1999:Backcover
[55]Personal Communication
[56]Theories as the Age of Aquarius or of astrological cycles are unclear and extremely complex to validate.
[57]Ferguson, Marilyn. *The Aquarian Conspiracy.* 1980:19
[58]Ferguson never links the Piscean-Aquarian progression with a broader, socio-cultural paradigmatic shift. However, astrological forecasters explain that zodiac ages last approximately two thousand years, and that the present age characterizing Christendom is Pisces, the symbol of the fish. Theoretically, this made some sense since much of early Christian art depicts two fish positioned at opposite ends, the exact portrayal of the zodiac sign of Pisces. Furthermore, the Greek word for fish, *ΙΓΘΥΣ,* is a cipher for *Iησου Xριστο Θεον Γιο Σοτηρ,* 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour' and that once this identification was established in the early Christian community, the fish became a standard Christian symbol. The symbol of the fish in the zodiac symbolizes opposing dual opposites, and brings to mind the founding dichotomies of patriarchal Christianity: good versus evil, man against woman, and man distinct from God. Thus, many New Age and Neo-Pagan believe that era of Christendom took the essential meaning of Jesus and lumped it under Christian dichotomies with conflicting dual opposites, while gradually annihilating all vestiges of ancient days. Weinstein, *Positive Magic.* 1981:20

much of both the New Age and Neo-Pagan[59] philosophies. The symbol of Aquarius is the water bearer in the zodiac, which Ferguson (1980) claims: "symbolizes flow and the quenching of an ancient thirst."[60] Allegedly, the Age of Aquarius is a time for equality and oneness of all life without the dualistic complications imposed by the current age. Weinstein (1981), a popular spokesperson and writer on New Age theory explains:

> "Duality is not an issue, neither is the polar concept of higher versus lower or inner versus outer. The "Aquarian" god is all-inclusive, existing in literally every cell, bit of matter and in all living beings. The "Aquarian" mentality emphasizes individual responsibility, and posits that the intercession of clergy or saints is not required to reach God, because God is already within everyone and everything."[61]

Garinda explained that an astrological age lasts approximately two thousand years and the ruling sign dominates while influenced by the opposite sign. This got me to thinking that in the case of Christendom supposedly influenced by Pisces meant that Virgo, the opposite sign, was also an influential factor. So as much as the Christian religion took on the qualities of Pisces in the form of conflicting dualisms, as mentioned by Wenstein (1981), it also took on the attributes of Virgo, reflected in the Christian virtues of chastity, cleanliness, moderation, orderliness, obedience and anxiety. Characteristic of the monastic orders and the Christian lifestyle are these 'virtues', as the dictates of Christendom do include these features of chastity, order, obedience, cleanliness and the practise of moderation, as well as the subsequent anxieties associated with such practises.

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[59] Many Neo-Pagans believe that the current time is a *cusp* period referring to the transitional phase where the old gives way to the new, when new ideas are continually grafted onto the prevailing old attitudes and forms or vice versa. Examples are found in the Human potential movement. The spiritual ideas found in the HPM are new ideologies that have surfaced in our culture. The old ideologies would be any rigid, structured and/or commercial organization dispensing meditation and other spiritual techniques for a fee. Thus innovations are grafted onto old forms is what indicates the cusp, or overlap. Weinstein, *Positive Magic.* 1981:22
[60] Ferguson, Marilyn. *The Aquarian Conspiracy.* 1980:19
[61] Weinstein, Marion. *Positive Magic.* 1981:19

Technology and the advance of various communication media are also allegedly 'Aquarian.' Branwin the Techno-Pagan I met at the Montreal Pagan Grove explains:

> "The key characteristics of Aquarius is much like the song says: union, love and harmony; but it left out one key feature, that is technology and its offspring, communication. The flower children of the sixties were one of the first to oppose technology, so maybe that's why they left it out in the song; but they were also the first to become aware of the influence of Aquarius. Incidentally, Aquarius first began with the advent of the printing press in the 16th century, the first major means of communication. There has been a slow but steady development of Aquarius since then but began to accelerate in the 19th century with the industrial revolution, the Dictaphone, telephone and the introduction of electricity. The 20th century saw rapid advancement with the invention of the radio, television, the microchip and now with the home computer, that is the tool for unity. More of Aquarius will also unfold in the 21st century at a quicker pace. With the evolution of nano- technology, neural transmitters and Virtual Reality we will be able to unite with the Gods in Cyberspace."[62]

Thus, some Pagans believe the Divine will eventually be reachable through new technology. If God will be reachable through Cyberspace, then it is safe to say that notions of the divine are born out of the everyday experience of people. Historically, in the autonomy of Christian monarchies, many spoke of God as a King. As a result, the prevailing image of God was a white bearded man on a throne with courtesans of angels. Similarly, in the growing autonomy of technology, the divine is becoming analogous to technology, finding its home in networks like Cyberspace and VR.

Similarly, Margaret Wertheim[63] (1999) in *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet,* explains that:

> "A connection between Cyberspace and the New Jerusalem has been spelled out explicitly by Michael Benedikt. Cyberspace, Benedikt explains is that like Eden (which humanity experienced at the beginning of time), the New Jerusalem (which the virtuous will experience at the end of time), is a place where man will walk in the fullness of God's grace. But there is a fundamental difference between these two poles of the Christian universe. Where Eden (before the Fall) stands for our state of innocence, and indeed ignorance. The Heavenly City stands for our state of wisdom and knowledge. The New Jerusalem, then, is quintessentially a place of knowing, a place that, like Cyberspace is rooted in information. In the Book of Revelation, this key feature of the Heavenly City is signalled by its highly structured geometry, which is glimpsed in the repeated use of twelves and fours and sevens in its description. In this sense, the City suggests a glittering numerological puzzle that in contrast to the wilderness of Eden is rigor and order incarnate. According to Benedikt, the Heavenly City is laid out like a beautiful equation, and can come into existence only as a Virtual Reality. Indeed, he says, it is nothing less than a religious vision of Cyberspace. While Benedikt sees

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[62] Personal Communication

[63] An American physicist and mathematician.

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the New Jerusalem as a Christian prevision of Cyberspace, reciprocally he suggests that Cyberspace could be a digital version of the Heavenly City."[64]

To Wertheim (1999) Cyberspace has the potential to be a space of heaven where the living will not have to die to access the pearly gates of St. Peter. Instead, heaven will eventually be accessible through Cyberspace, creating the space of the divine, or the heavenly city, in a virtual form. Therefore, like Neo-Pagan Witches, others believe that "God" will be accessible through technology, a trait that is reputed to be "Aquarian" in origin, as technology does not require the intercession of clergy, or anyone else except the user.

II. Teachings

Relayed through various methods, teaching in the Craft depends on how one becomes involved into Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. If one is involved in a coven, the High Priest and High Priestess decide how to convey the teachings of the Craft. This may occur in weekly group sessions and workshops or the High Priest or Priestess give the individual teachings written out by either to read on their own. If one is not involved in a coven, self-learning through books and other resources prevails. Whether one studies the Craft independently or follows the teachings of a High Priest or Priestess, the main teachings are similar, as follows.

The Threefold Law

All Neo-Pagan Witches generally believed that The Threefold Law came from Gardner who derived the idea from the Eastern concept of Karma. The threefold law holds that the return or outcomes of our thoughts and actions will not be equivalent in measure, but amplified three times. Consequently, employing magic for good or evil will return that good

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[64]Wertheim, Margaret *The pearly gates of Cyberspace: a history form Dante to the internet* 1999:169

or evil thrice. Dreamweaver explains:

> *"It is taught that it is a threefold return of any and all actions. One for the act, two for the energy raised and three for the intended subject or victim who is the target."*[65]

In Neo-Pagan circles, The Threefold Law is an incentive to not use selfish forms of magic. Instances of selfish magic may involve a curse or the manipulation of another's will. The teachings strongly encourage those who dabble in magic to focus on good or altruistic forms of magic. For example, healing or protection rituals are a kind of magic that truly benefits the doer and the subject.

Respect for Nature

Due to the worship for and central role of nature in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, following the animist and pantheist world views, many in the Modern Witchcraft movement consider everything as holy or sacred. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains* (1993) explains that they "show a special concern for ecological issues. Rather than seek dominance over the environment, they work to live as a part of nature, finding a balance between the self, the biosphere, and society."[66] *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains* (1993) further verifies that this search for balance and accord with the environment may translate into pacifism in the political arena. Yet, since nature's way includes self-defense, others may feel that they should participate in wars that they scrupulously consider to be just. Both ends of the spectrum are permitted in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. While this reverence for nature may transform some witches into vegetarians,

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[65]Personal Communication

[66]Melton, J. Gordon. Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains.* 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro

the Neo-Pagan movement is flexible enough again to allow others to remain omnivores, as this is also part of the balance of nature, provided that humane methods of meat production are used.[67] Thus, to Neo-Pagan Witches, any behavior that is detrimental to the well being of nature is a sacrilege, as the earth is seen to be an extension of Mother Nature.

The Wiccan Rede

Braided in with respect for nature and the threefold law is the Wiccan Rede, which stresses *an it harm none, do what you will,* and follows the same principle as the 'Golden Rule' for Jews and Christians, and the karmic laws for Eastern traditions. The Wiccan Rede is a statement of individual, social and ecological ethics. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains* (1993) explains that Neo-Pagan Witchcraft stresses the individual "responsibility to avoid harming others and practice the widest extent of personal autonomy in victimless activities."[68] Range of 'personal autonomy' is evident in the witch's *Charge of the Goddess,* an address given by the Goddess to her worshippers through her intermediary, the coven High Priestess. This part of the Charge says:

> *"And therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and empathy, honour and humility, mirth and reverence within thee. And thou who seekest to know me, know that all thy seeking and yearning will avail thee not unless thou knowest the mystery: that if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee, then thou shalt never find it without thee. For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the ending of all desire."* [69]

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[67]Melton, J. Gordon. Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains.* 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro
[68]Melton, J. Gordon. Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains.* 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro.
[69]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:136

To the Farrars (1984), this passage is an ethical statement: "self development and the full realization of one's unique yet multi-faceted potential is a moral duty."[70] The Farrars (1984) maintain that what helps evolution advance is good, and what thwarts it is a transgression.

> " It is believed that one owes it not only to oneself, but also to the rest of mankind and the world to look within oneself and to discover and release that potential. This connection with the cosmic process is founded on the concept of the Earth as a living organism. To the contemporary witch, all living substance serves as the lungs and the sense organs of Mother Earth, while the mineral kingdom is her living body tissue and skeleton, the seas and rivers her bloodstream, and the envelope of atmosphere is the air that she breathes as all humans do."[71]

The essential meaning of this ethic is that the individual can embark upon any practice or act, as long as no harm (mentally or physically) is imparted upon oneself or other living creatures, including organic matter. Hence, when a Witch attempts to pick vegetables for food or chops down a tree for wood, they are ever mindful that they are exploiting Mother Nature's land. Due to this awareness, Neo-Pagan Witches do return the favour by giving thanks with libations to the earth or they can even plant trees or new vegetation in order to compensate the earth for what they have already taken from it.

Another lesson in the Wiccan Rede, explains Guiley (1989), has to do with a deep respect for the freedom of one's free will, and "should not interfere in that free will, as violators will suffer a karmic boomerang effect and bring negative or evil upon themselves."[72] Previously explained in the threefold law of return, the unethical use of magic to harm or manipulate will return triple in strength. Frowning upon behavior or magical acts deemed as unethical, many in the Neo-Pagan community believe that there is no excuse for the deliberate harm of another human or animal. Therefore, this ethic concerns itself with the state of humans and of the surrounding environment including society. The

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[70]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible*. 1984:136
[71]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible*. 1984:137
[72]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:364

fundamental significance in the Wiccan Rede reveals that the source of everything in the world is due to everyone's small contribution of himself or herself.

The Wiccan ethic implies that the source of suffering, disabilities and unhappiness stems from oneself rather than in the external structure. So, with positive or negative actions or the use of good or bad magic, the witch is ensured that he will receive his due karma in that lifetime, as explained in the section on reincarnation. Being ever mindful of the implications assimilated into the Wiccan ethic, many Neo-Pagans will strive to maintain its moral principles and take heed of the Threefold Law.

The ethics conveyed in the Rede, indicates that it is also immoral to cast spells against those who cause harm. The Wiccan Rede relays that a witch should not even attempt to stop or thwart a wrongdoer magically because that would be a manipulation of that individual's free will. Those Neo-Pagan Witches who are right-winged will instead do magic to influence the outcome and instead manipulate events rather than another's free will. For example, spells can be done to protect victims or for the criminal to be apprehended by authorities, or even for the criminal's life to go array. In a similar vein, if one wants love it is advised that they should focus their magic on attracting the power of love into their lives, instead of channelling the magic on trying to change a particular person's will.

The Witch's Tools

The Neo-Pagan Witch learns to work with many different tools.[73] To the Neo-Pagan Witch these tools are personal, only to be used by their possessor and only for ritual purposes. Even though the tradition of Modern Witchcraft emphasizes that ritual tools be

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[73]Examples of how these tools are used are given in the discussion of the ritual circle under practices.

constructed by the Witch, many tools will be store bought and personalized through consecrations. Believed to possess its own particular 'energy,' the Witch's tools are other examples of the animistic worldview. The tools also serve as psychological props, representing the elements in their use in ritual and magic. More importantly, the witch's tools are essential to any rite of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft serving to harmoniously link lower self or child (visual) with higher self or adult (knowledge or wisdom).

Typical ritual tools include an earthen of salt (for the element of earth representing the North), a copper disk with an etched drawing of symbols and a pentacle (another element of earth representing psychic and intellectual authority). The pentacle is used to place consecrated cakes, talismans, herbs or any other items to be consecrated in a ritual. A bowl of water (for the element of water representing the west), and a censer with incense (for the element of air representing the east). Many in the movement believe that burning incense during ritual moves one to the inner levels of the subconscious mind required for ritual purposes. Also important are candles (for the element of fire representing the south) and some type of image of the Goddess and God in the form of a drawing, statues or simply as an acorn or pinecone for the God and a flower for the Goddess. Furthermore, the Neo-Pagan Witch will possess an athame, a chalice, a wand, a sword, cords and a Book of Shadows.

The athame, a black handled, double-edged blade is used to cast the ritual circle, and for any kind of invocation to the Gods and Goddesses, and when calling fourth the elementals or watchtowers. Guiley (1989) explains that: "Some traditions call for using the athame as much as possible as it is believed that its power increases the more it is used. The athame is associated with the element of fire, (in some traditions with air) and with the power

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of the will."[74] The chalice or cup holds the wine used in ritual. Always representing the

element of water and linked to the power of the emotions and intuition, the chalice is the

feminine symbol of receptivity.

A phallic symbol, the athame in many rituals serves as the symbol of the male, and

the cup of red wine, a symbol of the womb, represents the female. Many perform the 'Great

Rite' in ritual workings by symbolically by dipping the athame into the cup or chalice of

wine, epitomizing the fusion of male and female polarities, or the hieros-gamos. Sexual

metaphors in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft indicate the power of fertility, conception, and the means

for life, so Neo-Pagan Witches learn, as Russell mentions: "that their use of sexual symbols

is not pornographic or lewd but embedded in the Pagan love for the earth and its growing

things, and in the powerful symbol of sexual union as cosmic integration."[75]

Used for carving other tools or inscribing runes, is another blade with a white handle

termed a bolline. The wand or staff another phallic emblem is symbolic of coven authority,

representing the element of fire (but in some cases air). Swords are employed by covens, but

normally there is a single sword for the entire coven. In cases where there is no sword, all

will use the athame instead. So like the athame, the sword serves to banish negative

influences, but has a stronger symbolism for defence and strength and commanding forces.

The sword is usually associated with the element of fire (but in some cases with air).

Cords are also common tools used by Modern Witches. For instance, cords are used

to symbolize or represent a Witch's obtained initiation (a red cord for first degree, black for

the second and Gold/silver for the third). Many will also use cords for various magical

[74]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:386
[75]Russell, Jeffrey. *A History of Witchcraft.* 1980:166

endeavours, by knotting or braiding cords, alone or in a group, while some particular intent is being projected or braided into the cord. Also for many, cords are used as an instrument of measurement in traditional initiations and for circle rituals. Ideally, the circle should be 9 feet in diameter and a cord functions in making the magic circle precise in size.

One of the most important possessions of the Witch is the Book of Shadows. Written by hand, Guiley (1989) explains that the Book of Shadows contains:

> "*The Witch's beliefs, rituals, laws, ethics, spells, magical working methods, Sabbat rites and miscellaneous topics. It may be as simple as a blank book purchased in a shop, so there is no definitive book of shadows for Neo-Pagan Witchcraft in general. Each tradition has its own model book of shadows, which may be added to or adapted by separate covens.*"[76]

The Book of Shadows serves as a type of recipe book, containing all the workings of the Witch and/or the coven. The book and its contents are kept secret and according to traditional law, as put fourth by Gardner, must be destroyed at the time of one's death. When Gardner compiled the 'Craft Laws', he most likely did so at the time before 1954 when witchcraft was still a crime in the English law books. In destroying the Witch's Book of Shadows at the time of one's death was meant to prevent the book from falling into the hands of authorities in order to avoid the suspicion, implication and persecution of the practice of witchcraft. Today, many will still destroy the Book of Shadows after the death of a Witch to prevent the material from falling into untrained or uninitiated hands.

The Circle

The Neo-Pagan Witch learns to cast the nine-foot circle[77] with her tools. Russell (1980) explains:

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[76]Guiley , Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:35
[77]Examples of what occurs in a circle are given under the ritual circle in practices.

The Witch believes her circle is a sacred space between two realities, otherwise recognized as the inner and outer dimensions, as previously mentioned in cosmologies and magic. Therefore, to the Witch, the circle represents the separation of the sacred and profane, the circle being the 'holy' space while anything outside its boundaries is 'unholy'. It is this reason why many Witches will usually not allow outsiders into their rituals, fearing that an unknown stranger may bring with him unwanted energy that will generally hamper the rite and ruin any flow of energy needed to accomplish a successful ceremony.

The Elements

The Neo-Pagan Witch must also learn about the elements and the elementals. Neo-Pagan Witches seriously consider the four elements of nature, known as earth, air, water and fire. As previously seen each element has a correspondence with the Witch's tools and is a reflection of the animistic world view. Any type of meditation, spiritual or magical workings begin with the elements. Each element has its own particular correspondence that begins with each cardinal direction of East, South, West and North and with the phases of the sun and moon: (Air/East/sunrise/waxing moon, Fire/South/sun-peak/full moon, Water/West/sunset/waning moon and Earth/North/night/dark moon). The seasons: (East/Spring, South/Summer, West/Autumn, North/Winter), and the phases of life (Air/East/birth/early life, Fire/South/mid-life, Water, West/old age, Earth/North/death), as well as basic human emotions: (Air/East/intellect, Fire/South/will, Water, West/emotion,

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[78]Russell, Jeffrey. *A History of Witchcraft.* 1980:169

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Earth/North/physical).   The elements are ruled by the Elementals.   About elementals,

Morwyn (1988) explains:

> *"As the story goes the elementals have a finite existence; they are not reborn or transformed into other types of energy as we are. As they develop, they begin to dimly understand their mortality and are attracted to us. They are willing to help because they perceive that in one way or another, we can unlock the secrets of everlasting life for them."*[79]

Each of the four elements also has an elemental form (East/air/sylphs,

West/water/undines, South/fire/salamanders and North/earth/gnomes.) Regarded as sentinels,

the elementals are the Guardians of the Watchtowers of the consecrated circle.   The

elementals are less developed than humans, approximating the level of more intelligent

animals and as explained above, they welcome interaction with humans as they benefit from

this kind of association.

The Goddess and the God

With the exception of most Dianics, Neo-Pagan Witches emphasize the equality of

the God and Goddess according to the myth.   In the myth, the God, through his force of

fertility, lends his powers to the Goddess and allows for the creation of life; so essentially,

all life begins from him. The God, more popularly known as the Horned God from the

ancient Celtic god Cernunnos, has a threefold nature: God of the Light, worshipped in the

annual phases of the sun. The second is Lord of the woods representing the facet of nature

that is wild and strong. The third feature is ruler of the Underworld, as the opener of the

gates of life and death.   Subjugated to the figure of the Goddess, the God still holds a

paramount position in the Neo-Pagan pantheon, as he portrays forceful power yielding to the

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[79]Morwyn, *Secrets of a Witch's Coven.* 1988:170

Goddess' weight for love and the desire to create life. Thus, the God represents the ideal balance of strength and force with the Goddess aspect of gentleness and love.

According to Wiccan tradition, the Goddess is better known as the ancient Celtic Goddess Cerridwen. Worshipped as the living force and the origin of all creation, the Goddess is the moving force of the seasons, and the giver of birth, life and death. For the Neo-Pagan Witch, the Goddess also has a three-fold nature; she is Earth Mother, fertility Goddess and Moon Goddess, as well as Maiden, Mother and Crone. The Maiden corresponds to the waxing moon, the Mother as the full moon and the Crone as waning phases of the moon. Symbolizing the moon, the Goddess naturally governs the tides of human emotion and cycles according to the phase of the moon. The Goddess also has three faces: she is virgin/warrior maid ruling the earth, mother ruling the skies, and hag or crone of darkness and rebirth ruling the underworld.

With the exception of Dianics, Neo-Pagan witches will worship both the Goddess and her consort, the Horned God, according to the seasons. In accordance with the myth, each season will emphasize the primacy of worshipping either the God or the Goddess. The Goddess is worshipped through the enacting of the myth during the Spring and Summer, while shifting at the Autumn equinox to worship the God for the Fall and Winter.

III. Practices

Many acts of ritual in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft reflect what Bird (1995) describes in *Ritual as a Medium of Communication*. In this study Bird (1995) asserts that all ritual acts have an innate message, he explains: "depending on the particular ritual, they communicate feelings, recognitions, codes of conduct, beliefs, legends, myths, philosophies and so

fourth."[80] Bird (1995) calls this form of transmission as 'invocative communication', that some rituals and practices invoke Gods, spirits, powers or other sacred realities to reach desired states of being.[81] Bird's examples are shamanistic rituals (1995), though the Neo-Pagan rituals of singing and dancing, beating on drums or reciting incantations, all highly stylized activities, similarly can invoke healing spirits. Bird's definition of 'invocative communication' (1995) is therefore, illustrated in the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft practices of the Esbat, the Sabbats[82] and the circle rituals. Additionally, the circle rituals of Neo-Pagan witchcraft also communicate the particular time of the year or season they are held, as well as the time of the month. At the same time, the rituals of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft represent the purification of ritual space and human body. These rites of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft also have what Bird (1995) calls: "Marks of excellence when ritual performance engages people as participants, not observers, who have deliberately and satisfactorily chosen to take part."[83] Neo-Pagan Witches regard themselves as priests and priestesses, so normally all participate in the working of ritual, under the leadership of the High Priest or Priestess.

Esbats

The Esbat is the monthly and/or bi weekly meeting of a witch's coven. Depending on the coven or group, most Neo-Pagan Witches will hold Esbats at the time of the full moon, and/or the new moon, others will meet weekly. At these holdings, esbat rituals occur which is a circle rite dedicated to that phase of the Moon Goddess. Any particular magic that needs to be done also happens at the Esbat. Since the full moon is considered as the height

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[80]Bird, Frederick.. *Ritual as Communicative Action.* 1995:36
[81]Bird, Frederick.. *Ritual as Communicative Action.* 1995:36
[82]Since inquisitors of the Middle Ages called the witch's meetings Esbats and Sabbat, Gerald Gardner, through the influence of Margaret Murray, coined the same term for these ritual festivals.
[83]Bird, Frederick. *Ritual as communicative Action.* 1995:44

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psychic powers, many will purposely do some type of divination, or perform their magic at this time. The rites of the Esbat do vary from coven to coven, but they chiefly consist of rituals geared toward the Goddess' current phase of the month. At the new moon, the Goddess is worshiped as a maiden; and at the full moon, she is revered as the mother. The new moon is a deliberate time to focus on working something into you life and the full moon indicates the most proficient time of the month for any type of working.

Identified in the Esbat are Bird's criteria of 'ritual communication'. (1995) The Esbat conveys the ebb and flow of psychic powers in accordance with the new (start of psychic tide) and full moons (peak of psychic tide). For Neo-Pagan Witches, the new moon symbolizes the growth or development desired in one's life. The full moon symbolizes the power and height of all psychic powers, and the waning represents all that one wants eliminated from their lives.

The moon phases also represents the triple aspect of the Goddess. Guiley (1989) explains: "Diana or Artemis, the virgin/warrior, ruling the new and waxing moons as well as the earth, Selene as the matron who rules the full moon and the skies, and Hecate the crone who rules the waning/dark moon and the underworld."[84] The time of the new moon and the waxing phase, symbolizes the Goddess as the giver of all things. The psychic peak is reached at the full moon when the Goddess is symbolized as the Great Mother, and the Hag as the destroyer of all things in her waning phase. The horns of the waxing and waning moons also represent the horns of the God.

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[84]Guiley , Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:141

The Myth of the Goddess

Though practices may vary, most sects of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft have much in common. One common practice is the eight festivals, called 'Sabbats.' These rituals attune followers with the cycles of the sun, moon and seasons, the rhythms of Nature, and especially the God and the Goddess. Neo-Pagan witches hold these festivals sacred as they incorporate the myth, the lessons, and the different faces of the Goddess and God.

To Neo-pagan Witches, the Sabbats form the Wiccan wheel of the Year, what Whitcomb (1996) calls "the closest thing to a logical symbol system"[85] within Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. Whitcomb exlains: "The Wheel of the Year is like a map, structuring the greater and lesser Sabbats. By practicing Sabbat rituals and understanding the process of the wheel, Neo-Pagan Witches are attuned to the natural rhythms of the life forces as symbolized by the Goddess and the God."[86] Neo-Pagan Witches believe that the Sabbats are derived from ancient European festivals celebrating seasonal/agricultural changes. Neo-Pagans pride themselves on the fact that modern, Christian festivals, as Halloween, Christmas and Easter have been modelled after old, pre Christian holidays.

Bird's criteria of 'invocative communication' are recognized in the Sabbat, when the myth of the God and the Goddess is re-enacted by followers through a varia of corresponding symbols, rituals and items. To understand the enacting of myth within ritual, one must first understand the Wheel of the Year.

The Wheel of the Year includes the four greater and lesser Sabbats that represent the role of God and Goddess. The term Greater refers to the stirring of light or dark and their

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[85]Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion*. 1996:146
[86]Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion*. 1996:146

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dominant periods. These greater Sabbats are: Imbolc/Candlemass (February eve- first stirring of light) Beltane (April 30/May 1-light dominant) Samhain (October 31-dark dominant) Lugnassade (Aug 1-first stirring of dark).

The four lesser Sabbats are the solstices and equinoxes. Here lesser refers to the balance of light/darkness and the depth of darkness as well as the peak of light. These are Ostara (March 21-dark/light polarity), Litha (June 21-peak of light), Mabon (September 21-light/dark balance) and Yule (December 21-dark dominant).

The rituals of the eight festivals surrounding the myth of the Goddess and the God are practised as a method of staying in tune with Mother Earth's natural cycle on a spiritual a well as a psychological level. Some Neo-Pagan groups find it acceptable to meet for ritual within a few days before or after the precise date, while others require that the ritual occur on the exact date.

The Sabbats
December 21 Yule or Winter Solstice:

From the Norse word IUL, meaning wheel, Yule is the shortest day of the year and is affiliated with death and rebirth of the sun. Indicating the start of winter, Yule is a time when the waxing sun conquers the waning sun. According to the myth, the Goddess awakens and gives birth to her son. The Holly King (ruler of the waning part of the year) is now reborn as the infant of light, the Oak King (ruler of the waxing part of the year) or the divine son/child. The Goddess falls asleep until Imbolc to awaken again as a young maiden.[87]

Some Neo-Pagan Witches will hold a Celebration or Festival of Light to observe the Goddess as Mother giving birth to the Sun God. Others will celebrate the triumph of the Lord

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[87]Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:147

of Light (Oak King) over the Lord of Darkness (Holly King). In both instances, Yule indicates that the days will lengthen. In applying Bird's model of 'invocative communication,' Yule conveys the time when individuals conclude the year and prepare for new beginnings in life. Being the start of the waxing year, Yule symbolizes fresh awakenings by followers attempting to leave old woes behind and starting new goals.

January 31 Imbolc, Brigit, or February Eve:

From the Celtic word meaning 'in the belly,' indicating that though still weak, the light is waxing and increasing in strength. Imbolc is a festival of light and signifies new beginnings, and of nature yet to be reborn from winter's shroud of death. In the myth, Imbolc marks the day that the Goddess awakens as a young maiden and the newly born Sun God is growing into the aspect of the young forest (Oak) king, named and armed by the goddess.[88]

Imbolc communicates renewal and preparation for the coming months; so many decide what is needed for the coming year. Imbloc communicates the same kind of message as Yule; Neo-Pagan witches will attempt to eliminate all that holds them back and start fresh.

March 21 Ostara or Spring Equinox:

Ostara is the festival of Spring and rebirth, indicating when the length of day is equal to the length of night, so it is a time of balance. Ostara marks the official end of winter and the start of Spring. The myth celebrates the warrior aspect of the young God. The Horned God, as he grows to maturity is the leader of the hunt and resumes his place as the young forest (Oak) King.[89]

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[88]Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:147
[89]Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:148

Ostara signifies a time for witches to cast spells for new beginnings in careers or love. As a time of rebirth, Ostara signifies the time for imagining new ideas, and focusing on good health, good fortune, with the aim of eliminating anything that is holding one back.

April 30 Beltane or May Eve:

The festival of Beltane welcomes back the sun. A time of fertility, Beltane celebrates the union of god and goddess. According to the myth, at Beltane the God reaches manhood and becomes enamoured with the Goddess. They unite and she becomes pregnant of him.[90]

Beltane communicates a time of the planting season, and the start of warm summer months ahead. Thus, Beltane is a time of self discovery, love, union and developing one's potential for personal growth.

June 22 Midsummer, Litha or Summer Solstice:

The festival of mid summer indicates the power of the sun God at its peak. It is the longest day of the year. Litha marks the start of the decline of the Oak King God and the fertility peak of the Goddess. According to the myth, the king and queen marry during Midsummer.[91]

Litha communicates transformation as the season marks the start of the waning year, or the passing of the waxing Oak King to the waning Holly King. The message of Litha conveys that one should focus outward, experience the joys of life in all its many forms.

July 31 Lunasa or Lammas or Lughnasadh:

Lammas is the start of the crop season, so it is a celebration of the first harvest. According to the myth, Lammas indicates that summer is passing and the God begins to age

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[90]Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:148
[91]Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:149

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and decline.[92] Lammas communicates that now is the time to practise what one preaches, and to share one's experience with the world.

September 21 Harvest, Mabon or Autumn Equinox:

The second harvest festival, the Autumn Equinox is a time of harvesting and storing for the coming of winter. This festival signifies purification and preparation. In the myth, Mabon indicates the time the Goddess begins to mourn the God and prepares for sleep, as the God is in his last aspect of the forest king, and in his last days.[93]

Mabon is a time of giving thanks for the years bounty, and is deliberated as a time of balance, as night is equal to day at this period, and the hours of daylight will decrease. Thus, it is a time of introspection and deeply examining one's motives for life. It also represents the best time for rededications and initiations.

October 31 Samhain, Sowyn or Hallows:

Samhain symbolizes the end and beginning of the Celtic year, and is the third and final harvest Sabbats. Samhain is also known as the feast of the dead. This period is believed the time when a window is opened between the spiritual world and the physical world, so many will conduct rituals to honour the dead or those they lost during the past year.[94]

According to the myth, on Samhaim the god dies and resides in the underworld until he is reborn at Yule. During Samhaim, the goddess descends into the underworld, faces death and falls into her winter sleep. Samhain represents the best time to communicate with those who have passed on to the other side, and is an optimal time for Divination.

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[92] Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion*. 1996:149
[93] Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion*. 1996:149
[94] Whitcomb, Bill. *The Magician's Companion*. 1996:149

Preliminaries

A prerequisite for any Neo-Pagan Witchcraft ritual is the rite of circle casting. Nine feet in diameter, the circle is a deliberate attempt to consciously link, harmonize and mediate between magician and universe, microcosm to macrocosm. However, before circling, Neo-Pagan witches have a system of steps aimed to 'cleanse' the individual of spiritual and mental impurities in order to best focus on the implementation of ritual.

The first step is a purification in the form of a vigil or fast. The second step is centering, a formal way of composing oneself and establishing stability. In other words, during this step the followers find their centre and ground themselves. There are eight paths or ways to the centre, compromising a rough catalogue of Hermetic,[95] Mystic[96] and Orphic[97] routes to achieving altered states of consciousness. In addition, there are five essentials, which are pre requisites or conditions required for the performance of a successful rite. The following[98] will elucidate this concept.

Path	Practice	Style
Meditation/Concentration	Visualization/concentration	Mystic
Trance	Path working, astral projection and other trance work	Mystic
Rites	Spells, charms, runes, chant and other ritual practices	Hermetic
Opening the Gates	Use of drugs, wine, incense and all things that arouse the kundalini	Orphic
Dance	Dancing or other ecstatic movement oriented practices intended to raise a cone of power	Orphic
Control	Of breath, blood and posture. All physical forms of yoga	Mystic
Discipline	Various practices to refine and channel the energies of the will	Hermetic
The Great Rite	The union male and female, either symbolically or literally	Hermetic

[95] Ancient metaphysical works dealing essentially with the idea of the complete community of all beings and objects. Authorship of the books was attributed to the Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth, whose name was sometimes translated into Greek as Hermes Trismegistus *The Columbian Encyclopedia.* http://www.bartleby.com/65/he/Hermetic.html

[96] Refers to both methods and practices of the Eastern and Western esoteric traditions.

[97] Religious cult of ancient Greece, prominent in the 6th cent. B.C. The Orphics affirmed the divine origin of the soul, but it was through initiation into the Orphic Mysteries and the process of transmigration that the soul could be liberated from its inheritance and could achieve eternal blessedness. Orphism stressed a strict standard of ethical and moral conduct. Initiates purified themselves and adopted ascetic practices as abstinence from eating animal flesh for the purpose of purging evil and cultivating the Dionysian side of the human character. *The Columbian Encyclopedia.* http://www.bartleby.com/65/he/Hermetic.html

[98] Both tables of preliminaries are taken from Bill Whitcomb, *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:549

The five essentials that compliment any ritual working are as follows:

Intention	Knowing what one wills and be unwavering in determination
Preparation	Be prepared and possess all needed material
Purification	Avoiding anything that will cause mental and physical disturbances before a rite
The circle	Have a secure place of working for casting circle
Consecration	All tools and ritual materials used are to be consecrated to their magical function

All ceremonies have their preliminary first and last steps. With the beginning of any ritual, the temple is set up. It may be in a corner of a living room or bedroom, or in a closed room used solely for this purpose and no other. An altar is set up at the Northern point of the circle's compass. An altar can be anything from a cardboard box to a coffee table or trunk. The layout on the altar varies from coven to coven but usually holds all of the witch's tools. The setup is as follows:

The pentacle in the centre   A small bowl of salt
The ritual candle   The cords
A pair of altar candles   The white handled knife
The chalice of red wine   Burner with incense
The wand   A small hand bell
The scourge of silken cords   A dish of cakes
A small bowl of water

A candle is placed on each of the east, north, south and west points of the circle, signifying the four elementals which burn throughout the ritual. The incense and six candles (two on the alter and one for each of the four elements) are lit to signify the beginning of the ritual. [99]

The Circle ritual

The Circle in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft reflects the belief in the pantheistic world view, in the belief and action of creating sacred space and harmonizing the microcosm to macrocosm. When beginning the ritual, the High Priestess, and at her right the High Priest

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[99] Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:35

kneel before the altar, while the rest of the coven stand outside the northeast part, outside the boundary of the circle. Depending if the season is spring or summer, the High Priestess will lead the ritual as the representative of the Goddess, and the High Priest as the God in the autumn or winter. As I have taken an oath of secrecy and cannot directly reveal circle casting according to coven tradition, the following discussion of circle casting and dismissing is taken with modifications from the Farrars (1984) in *The Witch's Bible*, mixed in with my observations of the circle ritual. The Farrars (1984) use the High Priestess as ritual leader. The high priestess lays the bowl of water on the pentacle, and puts three measures of salt into the water, measured by the point of her athame. After this action the High priestess dips the point of her athame in the saltwater and says: 'I exorcize thee, o creature of earth and water, that thou cast out from thee all impurities and uncleanliness of the spirit. In the names of (God and Goddess).' The High priestess then lights the incense and recites: 'Air and fire, I exorcize thee, that thou cast out from thee all uncleanliness and impurities. In the names of (God and Goddess).' This act of purification reflect Bird's model of 'innovative communication' (1995) where the participants employ the belief and the code of conduct in the purification of the props representing the elements. By preforming this code of conduct, the Witch ensures that her tools for purification of sacred space have been blessed. The salt, water, flame and incense are meant to purify the sacred space and combine the four elements of earth, water, fire and air in preparation of calling fourth the elementals.

With the High Priest in the center of the circle, the high priestess proceeds to trace the circle with the sword or athame but leaves an opening in the northeast part by raising her sword or athame over the coven members as she passes them. In casting the circle, the High Priestess walks slowly in a clockwise direction, from North to North, around the perimeter of the circle, the Farrars (1984) explain, while saying:

> *"I cast thee o circle of power that thou be a boundary between the world we know and the realms of the Mighty Ones. A guardian and protection that shall preserve and retain the power that we shall raise within. Therefore, do I bless and consecrate thee in the names*

of (God and Goddess)."[100]

With the High Priest now at her side, the High Priestess lays down the sword and admits the

first male worshiper into the circle with a kiss, as the Farrars (1984) say:

> *"The high priest admits a woman in the same way; that woman admits a man, and so on*
> *until all are in the circle. The high priestess picks up the sword and seals the gateway by*
> *drawing that part of the circle in the same way as she did the rest of it. Following this, the*
> *high priestess names three participants to reinforce and purify the circle."* [101]

After this point of the ritual, others in the coven complete the purification of the sacred

circle. Elaborating on Bird's criteria of 'marked excellence' (1995) when the participants

actually are involved and engage in the rite. In this case, the first witch carries the bowl of

consecrated water round the circle clockwise from north to north sprinkling the perimeter as

she or he goes saying: 'water and earth, where you are cast, no spell nor adverse purpose

last, not in complete accord with me. As my word, so mote it be.'

After consecrating the circle with the elements of earth and water, the selected

member proceeds to also sprinkle each member of the coven in turn. The Farrars (1984)

explain: "if it is a man, he ends by sprinkling the high priestess who then sprinkles him; if

it is a woman, she ends by sprinkling the high priest who then sprinkles her."[102] The

salt/water bearer then returns the bowl on the altar, and the second witch carries the smoking

incense burner, representing the elements of air and fire, censing the circle, from north to

north saying: 'air and fire this charge I lay, let no phantom in thy presence stay, hear my

word addressed to thee, and as my will, so mote it be.'

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[100]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:38
[101]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:38
[102]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:39

The rationale behind these actions of strengthening and purifying the circle are all reflective of the animistic world view, and shows Bird's model of 'invocative communication' (1995) in the recognition, conduct and belief of their ritualistic actions. The use of salt (earth), water (water), and incense (burning coal/fire and smoke/air) are believed to hold the power of their element. By purifying the circle with the elements of air, fire, water and earth reinforces the protective barrier of the 'encapsulation of energy' as explained earlier by Russell (1980). The process of this purification will generally involve visualizing each element all around the perimeter of the circle, acting as a protective wall, keeping unwanted influences out while strengthening the circle and establishing the purification of sacred space.

After purifying with the elements, all pick up their athames and face the east with the High Priestess and the High Priest in front and call the elementals of the four quarters. The Farrars (1984) say: "as the High Priestess ends her summons, she draws the invoking pentagram of earth with her athame in the air in front of her. After drawing the pentagram she kisses her athame blade and places it on her heart for a second or two."[103] Everyone copies these motions with the High Priestess, using their own athames. These actions of 'calling fourth' are repeated in all four quadrants of the circle. This is another instance of what Bird (1995) calls 'marked excellence' in community rituals, or the participation of the congregation in the act of ritual performance. In this particular act, all participate in calling fourth the elementals in the form of guardians or watchtowers as previously discussed in the elementals section. The whole point of summoning the elementals is to again reinforce,

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[103]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:40

ensure and maintain the protection and purification of the sacred circle. It is extremely important in Neo-Pagan rites that sacred space be purified in a proper manner. It has been known that not properly purifying the sacred space for ritual can, at times, prove hazardous. In many cases, problems would arise after the event. In one instance, a member uncertain in his manner of purifying his circle with water found, a few days later, that a major pipe burst in his apartment leaving more than five inches of water everywhere. It is examples as this one that indicates how a witch must be conscious of the elements and to ensure the proper use them in circle casting.

After the purification and the summonsing are complete, the participants stand around the perimeter of the circle facing the altar, or they can all gather to the south of the circle as the Farrars (1984) suggest. The High Priestess then begins the process of drawing down the moon. She does this by "dancing, singing, meditating or doing whatever is most effectual to open herself to divine power. She alters her consciousness and receives into herself the power and being of the Goddess, in a sense becoming the Goddess."[104] Here is where we find the another instance of Bird's model of 'invocative communication' (1995) where the High Priestess attempts to alter her consciousness through the means known to her in order to invite the Goddess into her body, or as is commonly said: 'the body becoming a vessel for the divine.' The Farrars (1984) explain that in a coven rite:

> "It is normally the high priest who proceeds to draw down the moon on the high priestess. He kneels before her as she stands with her back to the altar with the wand in her right hand and the scourge in her left held against her breasts in the Osiris position. The high priest gives the high priestess the five fold kiss, kissing her on the right foot, left foot, right and left knee, womb, right and left breasts and lips. Kneeling before the high priestess, the High Priest then invokes and summons the Goddess to enter the High Priestess. This part of the rite is called drawing down

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[104]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:40

the moon."[105]

The Farrars (1984) explain that throughout the invocation, the High Priest first touches the High Priestess with "his right forefinger on her right breasts left breast and womb, the same three again, and finally the right breast."[106] After this point, the High priest will take the censor of incense and draw an invoking pentagram of earth on the High priestess. The High Priest does this by first touching her forehead, left hip, right shoulder, left shoulder, right hip, and back to forehead, drawing the invoking pentagram of earth. The High Priest then steps back and allows the High Priestess with the wand, to draw the invoking pentagram of earth in the air between both of them, completing the rite of drawing down the moon.

The High Priest kneels with the rest of the coven stead while the High Priestess begins to recite the charge of the Goddess. As mentioned earlier Spring and Summer are Goddess oriented while Autumn and Winter are predominantly geared to the God. Therefore, in case of the latter, as in the Farrars' example (1995), the High Priestess would proceed to invoke the God onto the High Priest. In this instance, the rite is known as 'calling down the sun', and the High priest would then recite the charge of the God. The whole process of drawing down the moon or the sun is claimed to be an exercise in channeling divinity into the human body. This rite expresses and reinforces the belief in the pantheistic world view, that the divine is inherent in human kind and therefore able for easy contact.

At this point, everyone in the coven prepares for raising a cone of power. The Farrars (1984) explain that the cone of power: "is the combined will of the group, intensified through

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[105]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:40
[106]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:40

ritual and meditative techniques, focused toward an end collectively agreed upon."[107] Done in many ways, raising a cone of power may involve chanting each appropriate vowel (A,I,E,O) in each one of the element quadrants. Some may play bongo drums or do anything, within reason, that will awaken the senses.

Performed by most traditional circles is the witch's rune. This can be done simply by linking hands, left palms up, right ones down, man/woman alternately, and dancing around the altar. As the ring dance proceeds, the whole coven chants the witch's rune in a low voice, dancing around the altar, first at a slow pace that increasingly quickens to the point of shouting and running as the rune is completed. In completing the witch's rune the whole coven drops to the ground and still in the form of a circle, focus their will with their desire.

Keeping in line with Wiccan Rede and the Threefold Law, the cone of power is, as the Farrars (1984) mention: "directed towards a spiritual and general end or towards a quite specific earthly purpose as healing the sick or to achieve some other good mutually willed by the coven."[108] Thus, Raising a cone of power is another example of Bird's model of 'marked excellence' (1995). All participate in this part of the rite, and really give it all they got, in order to raise a cone of power for manifesting the desire of the group. The cone of power ends the opening ritual. The circle is cast and the High Priestess now begins the appropriate ritual.

After completing the Sabbat work or whatever the purpose for casting a circle, the consecration of the wine and cakes occurs. A male witch kneels before the female witch in

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[107] Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:42
[108] Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:42

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front of the altar. He holds up the chalice of wine to her; she holds her athame point downwards and plunges the point into the wine as the man says: 'As the athame is to the male, so the cup is to the female and in their union there is great joy and blessedness.'

After this point, the cakes are blessed in the same manner, the Farrars (1984) explain, with the words: "o queen most secret, bless this food into our bodies; bestowing health, wealth strength, joy and peace and that fulfillment of love which is perfect happiness."[109] The High Priestess takes the first sip of the wine, kisses the High Priest who is still kneeling, and passes the chalice to him. He sips the wine, kisses the next woman and passes the chalice to her. She sips, and passes the chalice to the next man with a kiss. The Farrars (1984) mention that: "the chalice is passed in this way around the whole coven, man to woman and woman to man, each time with a kiss, until everyone has sipped the wine. The ritual of passing and kissing the chalice is necessary only for the first time round."[110]

Usually refilled with wine, the chalice is placed on the altar for any to drink. At this point, 'cakes and wine' begins, which refers to the point in the ritual where the work has been done and it is now time to unwind with fellow coveners within the circle. This happens with everyone sitting on the floor eating cake and drinking wine. Throughout this time the chalice is refilled with wine, though not re-consecrated. It is also customary for the coven stead to leave a bit of the wine and a small piece of the cake; the purpose for this is to offer a libation to the earth after the ritual is over. As reflected in the Pantheistic world view and as explained under the Wiccan Rede, this act is a form of returning thanks to the earth for what it has provided, and recognizes that all matter is innately divine.

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[109]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:47
[110]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:47

The closing

Neo-Pagan Witches stress that once a magic circle is cast, it must always and without exception be banished when the occasion or purpose for which it was cast is finished. The Farrars (1984) explain: "it is unsuitable not to dismiss what one has called fourth; and bad psychology to have so little belief in its reality and effectiveness that one assumes it will disappear once one stops thinking about it."[111] The banishing ritual begins with the whole coven holding their athame facing east with the High Priestess in front. The Farrars (1984) explain that the High Priestess begins dismissing the elements by reciting the Closing of the Watchtowers, and then draws the banishing pentagram of earth with her athame directly in front of her. After drawing the banishing pentagram, the High Priestess kisses her athame blade, salutes the quarter then blows out the elemental candle; this procedure is repeated to the Watchtowers of the south/west/north.[112] The banishing rite is another example of Bird's description of 'marked excellence.' Throughout the whole banishing rite the whole coven stead will follow the banishing gestures of the High Priestess, and assist her in dismissing the elementals. The banishing part of the ritual is highly necessary according to Wiccan tradition. Banishing not only dismisses the elementals and any energy that has been raised but also shows respect and acknowledgment of the elementals that are essential to any ritual working in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft.

Magic

Most people think that magic is part of our past, when in truth; magic has never been more popular than it is today. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain*

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[111]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:55
[112]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984:56

Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains (1993) explains that most Neo-Pagan Witches

practice magic: "by which they mean the direction and use of psychic energy, those natural

but invisible forces surrounding all living things."[113]   The view of magic supports the

predominant animistic worldview in Neo-Pagan witchcraft.   Guiley (1989) explains that:

> "The magic of Neo-pagan Witchcraft is a blend of theurgy and goetia. It contains elements of
> folk magic, and/or ceremonial magic. The witch works within a magic circle and uses the
> four primary magical tools (athame, cup, censor, and disk of pentacle), which correspond to the
> elements. Many spells are derived from pagan sorcery and folk magic, based on Frazer's
> Law[114] of Sympathy."[115]

Folk magic also does not require any elaborate preparation or technique in its use. It involves

the use of herbs, stones or other natural properties deriving from the earth. In doing folk

magic many do not necessarily cast a circle. Instead, they will focus their intent upon items

with their personal energy, using their tools, and every available emotion to manifest their

desire. For example, if one buys a talisman of Jupiter to improve their luck, they will

consecrate that item with the four elements using tools that represent the elements. In this

case, after being consecrated over the censor (air and fire), dabbed with a magical oil (water)

it may be laid upon the pentacle disk and covered with 2 or 3 herbs that correspond with

Jupiter and for improving luck. Then they will project their intent into the talisman through

visualization, emotion and will. Some Witches will regard folk magic as 'low' or 'kitchen'

magic, as many items which correspond to elements can come from a kitchen pantry.

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[113]Melton, J. Gordon Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains.* 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro
[114]James G. Frazer, in The Golden Bough, theorized that all magic was based on the Law of sympathy, which holds that all things are linked by invisible bonds. Frazer divided sympathetic magic into two types: Homeopathic magic which holds that like produces like, and Contagious magic which holds that things once in contact can continue to exert influence on each other even at a distance.
[115]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:217-218

Also believing that the power of language has some magical effect, however small, another form of folk magic is the use of incantations. Whitcomb explains that practitioners of folk magic believe that in "describing, naming or otherwise create an image of a thing or event, resonates with all other things or events that bear a similarity of form. Like meditative mantras, incantations or affirmations are repeated until the consciousness is saturated."[116] Performed not only with words, Neo-Pagan Witchcraft teaches that magic must be combined with the use of one's senses. With the repeated use of the words, one sees, hears, smells and feels the outcome of the desired event.

On another scale, there are also forms of ritual magic that are ceremonial and can be more technical and complicated than folkloric spell castings. Classified as high magic, ceremonial magic, is also divided into its own context of 'high' (invocative) and 'low' (evocative) magic. Ceremonial magic involves the use of God names for invoking angelic forces or evoking demonic ones, and normally occurs within a consecrated circle suited for this type of operation. In these more complicated systems of ceremonial magic, Whitcomb(1996) explains:

> "Modern witches refer to this form of magic as evocation and invocation, while psychologists might refer to it as dissociation. A magical being, embodying a particular energy, concept or facet of existence is employed to make the changes one desires in his/her life. Evocation is performed by causing some aspect of the outer world or one's inner self to manifest as a personified entity, often demonic. Traditionally, evocation uses words of power to call forth a lower spirit or elemental to visible manifestation. Invocation uses divine names or words of power to summon an angel or god for a purpose. Invocation is sometimes viewed as interactions with beings within or part of oneself."[117]

Some Witches will refer to evocative magic as 'low magic' since it does involve calling up lower forms of energy, usually for some self-interest or nefarious purpose. In Neo-Pagan

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[116] Whitcomb, Bill *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:549
[117] Whitcomb, Bill, *The Magician's Companion.* 1996:550

circles, low ceremonial magic is highly discouraged, as there have been accounts of improper

banishing and residual energy from evoking lower astral forces.

Invocation is referred to as 'high magic' since it deals with higher and cleaner forms

of energies. Known to be much safer, invocative magic does not involve evoking legions of

fallen angels or demons. Many witches will practice ceremonial magic independently from

their usual rites since the technique and the order is different. Properly trained to perform

these advanced techniques of higher and lower magic, long-time members of the Neo-Pagan

Witchcraft movement will usually attempt this type of advanced magic.

Based on the Western esoteric tradition, one common type of 'high magic' is the

Cabala. Adopted by Western occultists, the Farrars (1988) explain that the Cabala is an

ancient Hebrew system that is not used by "all witches, and those that do, tend to do so in a

fairly simplified form, mainly to guide their meditation and magical working."[118] Central to

the Cabala is the concept of the Tree of Life. Its "ten Sefiroth or spheres represent the basic

categories, concepts, and modes of manifestation of the cosmos."[119] The magic worker or

spell caster correlates their desire with a specific Sefira on the diagram of the Tree of Life,

and would thus link up the interactive correspondents with the specifics of their desire. For

instance, if one wanted love they would focus on Netzach, the seventh Sefirah on the tree of

life correlated with the planet Venus, Goddess of love. Here the correspondents refer to the

divine name of God, the ruling angelic force and the magical affinities existing between

certain things, concepts or qualities. In this example, the correspondences of Netzach refer

to the color green and the various plants, stones, numbers, metals, and perfumes associated

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[118]Farrar & Farrar, *The Life and Times of a Modern Witch.* 1988:114
[119]Farrar & Farrar, *The Life and Times of a Modern Witch.* 1988:118

with the Netzach of Venus. The user forms a talisman with all these articles combined, or can use a variety of talismanic seals for that sephiroth. The individual then consecrates the talisman in a magic circle dedicated to the divine name and angelic forces of Netzach.[120]

Scholars as Hanegraaff (1996), who has written a scholarly account of New Religious movements says that magic, as practised in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft: "functions as a means of invoking and reaffirming mystery in a world that seems to have lost it. Neo-paganism is regarded as a magical religious movement based on ritual practices, which expresses a comprehensive world view presented with emphasis upon rite."[121] Hanegraaff (1996) implies that the ritual acts of Neo-paganism are magic. Similarly, practitioner Starhawk (1984) vindicates that "craft ritual are magical rites."[122] The purification of the circle with the elements, calling fourth the elements as watchtowers, as well as the purification of the sacred circle all require visualizations along with the interaction of senses and props (tools) to unite the spiritual with the material. To the Neo-Pagan Witch these acts are considered as forms of magic.

These rites are considered magic from both the emic and the etic perspectives, largely due to the formal method of establishing what Eliade calls sacred space and sacred time, in other words the circle or circling. Believing that one can use esoteric means to control outcomes and divine the future, the acts performed in circle are magic to the Neo-Pagan. Not all Neo-Pagan Witches practice magic in the sense that they wish to effect events in their own lives or the lives of others. Many simply practice magic to separate the sacred from the

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[120]What has been mentioned does suffice of a spell craft working but can be carried to more technical extremes referring to the astrological day, hour and minute.
[121]Hanegraaff, *New Religions and Western Culture*. 1996: 84
[122]Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*. 1984:27

profane or the inner and outer dimensions to tap into a greater power necessary for self-realization. This may not sound like magic to an outsider but to Neo-Pagan Witches any thoughts or actions that are focused upon in a sacred circle, is an act of magic, as is the act of performing ritual for establishing sacred space.

Another outsider perspective of magic and its role in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft are revealed in field research findings. Newcomers appear to be misled by the popular misconception of magic. Many believe that spell casting or hexes are central to Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, whether within ritual or without. Initially, many newcomers to the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement will have difficulty understanding magic, as it is a peripheral rather than a central focus of the movement. The responses to my sample questionnaire given to the participants of the Concordia Pagan Society reflect the popular view of magic.

Asking what they believe are the most common features of Neo-Paganism, (31%) responded the workings of magic and the development of psychic powers. A significant minority (27%) responded that reverence for nature was the most common theme of Neo-Paganism, while a minority (22%) cited the duality of worship (male-female) as the central theme.

Concordia Pagan society
What is the prime feature of Wicca?

Worship of the feminine	Workings of magic and development of psychic powers	Male and female dual worship	Focus on nature	Ethics and the threefold law	Undecided
9%	31%	27%	2%	4%	4%

At the Montreal Pagan Grove, the majority (35%) believe that the essential features

of Neo-Paganism are the reverence for nature, followed by the duality of worship (32%), and

a minority (17%) citing ethics and the threefold law as the essential features.

Montreal Pagan Grove
What is the prime feature of Wicca?

Worship of feminine	Workings of magic and development of psychic powers	Male and female dual worship	Focus on nature	Ethics and the threefold law	Undecided
18%	20%	32%	35%	17%	9%

There is some variance of beliefs amongst followers, depending on how long they

have been involved with the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement. Newcomers, such as those

belonging to C.U.P.S., tend to sensationalise the role of magic in Neo-Pagan witchcraft,

while those who have been involved for a longer period, such as Montreal Pagan Grove

members, do not. This discrepancy may explain why outsiders also believe that magic plays

a more central role in witchcraft than it actually does.

The second survey of 2003 shows that at C.U.P.S, (40%) the participants had only

been involved with the Neo-pagan movement for less than a year, with another (40%) of the

participants being involved less than five years. Only (11%) of C.U.P.S. respondents had

been practising Neo-Pagan witchcraft for more than five years.

Concordia Pagan Society
How long have you been Practicing?

0-1	1-5	5-10	10-20
40%	40%	9%	2%

Results of the Montreal Pagan Grove survey show that of those voluntarily responding to my

questionnaire, 25% have been involved in Neo-Pagan witchcraft less than one year, 35%

have been involved less than five years, and a significant 31% have been involved in the movement for more than five years.

Montreal Pagan Grove
How long have you been Practicing?

0-1	1-5	5-10	10-20
25%	35%	17%	14%

One might draw several conclusions from the results of my surveys, especially given such a variety of attitudes between the groups. C.U.P.S. a Concordia university based group draws its membership from the student population, the majority of whom would be younger, and therefore less likely to have been involved in a new religious movement for a long period of time. The well-established and long-lived Montreal Grove Society would draw membership from general society, more of those who are older than university students are therefore more likely to be involved in a religious movement for a longer period.

The results of this survey also indicate that magic still has tremendous appeal for many people. Despite technological and scientific advances, magic still fascinates many. Similarly, many followers of Neo-pagan Witchcraft do not see spell casting as being central to Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, Dreamweaver my hardcore traditionalist at the Montreal Pagan Grove explains:

> "*Of course in certain rituals, when it is desired for a certain purpose, the power of magic can be manipulated through certain practices. But Wicca is more of a way of life than anything else and magic is only something that is embraced by us and only represents a fraction of the mysteries.*"[123]

Magic, although an important aspect of paganism and in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is only of peripheral interest to long-term practitioners, the primary attractions being the duality

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[123]Personal Communication

of the divine, reverence for nature, ethics and the three fold law. For newcomers, ethics and

the three-fold law are peripheral, lagging behind magic as the main attraction.

As explained according to the Wiccan Rede, using magic to heal or psychological

benefit oneself or another is acceptable. Since more manipulative and selfish forms of magic

are contrary to the Rede, long time practitioners are more aware of the downfalls of such

forms of magic than newcomers would be. The more familiar and well entrenched the

teachings are in the follower, the less likely they will place primary importance on magic.

Many long-term practitioners emphasize that the use of magic for manipulative or selfish

purposes be used as a last resort, if used at all. Dreamweaver explains that:

> *"If one cannot accomplish the task through normal resources (through the physical and rational world), then perhaps the task at hand is not meant to manifest for the individual at the present time, and compelling the issue through the force of magic may result in unwanted consequences."* [124]

As been explained in the previous section, the use of magic is acceptable when focussing on

a healing or protection, as this kind of magic will produce little to no backlash.

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[124]Personal Communication

Chapter 4
Defining Neo-Pagan Witchcraft

Based on my eight years of experience as a follower, participant, observer and student of contemporary Witchcraft, I can comfortably define Neo-Pagan witchcraft as spiritual movement of many facets. In its organizational structure, Wicca or Neo-Pagan Witchcraft is subdivided into three extreme, sometimes opposing philosophical categories.[125] The social structure of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft ranges anywhere from traditional (esoteric), to Dianic (exoteric), to eclectic traditions (inter-polar). Most modern Neo-Pagan Witches will fall within the Inter-Polar category, so named because it is spread in between the two extreme poles of esoteric and exoteric.

In discussing these Neo-Pagan Witchcraft categories, the use of Susan Palmer's[126] model of gender roles in New Religious Movements will provide the framework for understanding these new groups. Palmer (1994) describes 7 New Religions and uses a typology of sex identities as: sex unity, sex polarity and sex complimentary. In the sex unity model, groups believe the body and its sex is irrelevant, as it is only a outward layer of individuality, albeit a false one. In this model fall the eclectic or inter-polar groups, as they do not place any importance on the male/female exchange of complimentary roles. Inter-polar groups may be all male or female groups and place importance on the individual spiritual quest not on sex differentiation or complementation for spiritual enlightenment.

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[125]These three distinctions or categories of esoteric, exoteric and inter-polar are the attempt to elucidate the boundaries inherent in Neo-pagan Witchcraft. This definition does not, by any means, take the position that these boundaries are clear cut. On the contrary, these three groups are inter related and have a common core which ultimately is the figure of the Goddess.
[126]Dawson, L. Lorne, ed. *Cults in Context*. Palmer, Susan, J. *Women's Cocoon Work in New Religious Movements*. 1996:407

In the sex polarity model, groups believe the male and female sex differs in spirituality and hinder each others ability to achieve salvation or enlightenment. Dianics or exoterics exemplify the sex polarity model. Most Dianic groups do not believe that the male sex plays any significant spiritual role. In their rituals the male will take the role of a child, believing that the bond between mother and son is significantly more spiritually meaningful than the bond between man and woman.

The final model of sex complimentary, groups believe that each sex has its own unique spirituality and psychological qualities. The union of these male and female polarities play a larger role in forming the whole individual. This model is exemplified in the traditional or esoteric groups, as this unity of opposites is the goal in the traditional forms of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft.

Social Organization
Esoteric Witchcraft

Esoteric Witches are better known as the traditional groups, that follow a specific guideline in all their rituals and in their conduct as Witches, believing that these conditions will lead to their salvation. In best describing Esoteric Witchcraft, we can use Robert Elwood in *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*. Elwood (1973) explains that these are the: "mystical groups deeply influenced by the model of the Order of the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley's O.T.O. These groups are antiquarian, as they love to discuss editions of medieval grimoires, and the history of groups and lineages."[127] Esoteric witchcraft is regarded as Gardner's form of witchcraft. They participate in "precise

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[127]Ellwood, Robert. *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America.* 1973:189

ritualism"[128] where the aim is the physical and psychological construction of sacred space. They tend to be secretive in their undertakings and in most possibilities associated with a group. This branch refers to the more ordered, mystical, authoritarian and polytheistic groups. Believers are particularly concerned with lineage and conduct their rituals in a fashion much like the magicians of the Western mystery tradition.

Many Esoteric Witches meet with a coven, a small group of people, who attempt to form and maintain a close bond. Each coven is autonomous and normally would not exceed the maximum number of 13 members, though concessions and allowances are made when groups reach that limit. In a traditional coven, the leaders in rituals, teachers and counsellors for coven individuals are the High Priestess and High Priest. However, the High Priestess has the final say in all coven matters.

For these traditionalists, the coven is a necessity, and newcomers are formally introduced with a Neophyte ritual and then properly initiated. The traditional groups are certain that their coven members consist of both sexes. It is believed within traditional circles that to deviate from this format of male/female polarity within ritual disrupts the balance and union of these polarities. Thus, traditional groups will adhere a set liturgy and rules and will not deviate too far from that norm.

Some Neo-Pagan witches will argue that esoterically structured Witchcraft is the real or true form of Modern or Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. Esoterics worship both a Goddess and a God. Based on the Jungian integration of conflicting aspects of the human psyche, many Neo-Pagan rituals attempt to join macrocosm with microcosm through ritual. Russell (1980)

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[128]Ellwood, Robert. *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America.* 1973:189

explains: "the worship of both Goddess and God represents the principle of duality that the cosmos is divided into doublets. The sexual union of the God and Goddess represents the principle of unification. This great rite is seldom taught or practised by many modern witches."[129] However, as previously mentioned, many will instead use the athame and the chalice to perform the Great Rite. Russell (1980) says that the union of the Goddess and God depicts the fusion of dualities inherent in human kind. He says:

> "The symbiosis of polar forces within us reflects the Jungian process of individuation, when the human mind begins in a state of indifferentiation identified as chaos and flux. Gradually the chaos is resolved into opposites, which struggle against one another. This state of tension is painful and many people never fully adapt to it. Some are able to bring the opposites together in harmonious union and thereby achieve full individuation. This evolutionary process in the human soul or psyche is represented in mythology onto the gods and the cosmos."[130]

Therefore, in many ways, esoteric Witchcraft acts as a type of individuation therapy aimed at resolving the chaos inherent in man by stabilizing polar opposites of the psyche. A basic tenet in Neo-Pagan circles emphasizes that Modern Witchcraft is not for everyone. This is one reason Witches do not proselytise or seek converts. This caution is prevalent for tthree reasons. First, Neo-Pagan Witches believe that there is no one ultimate truth, but rather many truths. To many in the movement, proselytizing suggests that there is only one ultimate truth. Secondly, to proselytize implies trying to convince people to join a religion, and thereby may play against their will. To Neo-Pagan Witches this act goes against the basic lesson in the Wiccan Rede of respecting the will of others. Thirdly, not all individuals are capable of achieving the state of Jungian individuation as mentioned by Russell (1980). To force this process of individuation upon a psyche not yet able or ready to bring the

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[129]Russell, Jeffrey. *A History of Witchcraft*. 1980:158
[130]Russell, Jeffery. *A History of Witchcraft*. 1980:159

opposites into harmony, especially in the context of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, is ruinous as it has the potential of opening the doors to much instability for all parties involved.

Though implicitly evident, Jungian psychology prevails in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. Truly recognized and understood in Esoteric Witchcraft, it is at times not explicitly relayed at length through its followers. It is noteworthy to mention that the three degrees of initiation reflects Jungian dogma. The first degree initiation symbolizes the ego assimilating the shadow, Jung's first archetype above the persona. The second degree initiation represents the ego's encounter and assimilation of the anima/animus. The third degree initiation is concerned with the fusion of the ego and the self, Jung's highest attainable state of the psyche. Discussing Jungian psychology to much extent within covens, will in most likelihood, reveal the mysteries of the initiations, topics which remain to be discussed only at or after their time of implementation.

Prominent Australian Neo-Pagan author, Cassandra Carter, comments on the significance of Pagan ritual in terms of its capacity to explain Jungian models of psychic development.

> *"In Jungian terms the descent of the Goddess teaches the need for a woman to go on her own quest in the need to make her own choices, but going to confront the Dark Lord and solve his mysteries. Going of her own choice and will into the Kingdom of the Unconscious mind. For a man, he has been successful, with the help of the Goddess, his anima, in exploring and winning the battles within his own unconscious, and he and she are happily reunited in the underworld of the unconscious."* [131]

The student-teacher relationship in Esoteric witchcraft also reflects these Jungian notions of gender in an implicit manner, as a male-female exchange. These relationships are normally associated with the gender of the initiate, so the roles are traditional but complementary, as

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[131]Carter, Cassandra, *The Old religion in the New Age*. Lecture Given to the C.G Jung Society. 1992:6.

exemplified in Palmer's model of sex complimentary (1994). Women mediate the Goddess, men mediate the God; women initiate men and vice versa; sex complimentary, symbolized in the Neo-Pagan world view through the Goddess and the God, manifests between student and teacher. Thus, the High Priest or the High Priestess of a coven will convey the workings and traditional laws of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft on a newcomer of the opposite sex. It is within this student-teacher relationship that the student learns about "inner teachings," subjective spiritual experiences that aid the individual in reaching their full potential as a Witch and especially as a human being.

The inherent polarity in Neo-pagan Witchcraft does not suggest that there need be a sexual relationship between student and teacher or between High Priest and High Priestess. As previously seen, sex and sexuality is sacred, and any abuse or misuse is a sacrilege. The Farrars (1984) explain: "copulation is considered to ground the power raised during a ritual, and is only performed by mutual consent in the presence of love between the High Priest and the High Priestess, the two individuals who lead the ritual."[132] Believed to be the uttermost metaphor of unified polarity, the act of copulation is symbolically performed, as we have previously seen, by the High Priest and High Priestess with the athame and the cup, which have gender connotations. Similarly, rituals that are performed "skyclad"[133] are done so to symbolize the shedding of ego driven desires and fears, not to exhibit any form of sexuality. Although many participants do perform in the nude with familiar coven members, the choice to be robed is always a respected option.

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[132]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's bible.* 1984:158
[133]Is a Neo-Pagan term referring to nakedness.

Esoteric Witches do encourage a disciplinary curriculum upon newcomers. At first, new members undergo a 'Neophyte' initiation, which is almost like being on probation. During the 'Neophyte' stage, the candidate decides whether the path of witchcraft is for them. At the same time, the leaders of the coven decide if the Neophyte is an ideal candidate for initiation. This disciplinary structure will ensure that the student will do what he/she must in order to earn the first, second and third degree initiations.[134] Based on a hierarchal structure, the initiation of degrees endeavors to imitate the Dionysian mysteries of the ancient world. These degrees of initiation offer the mysteries used to trigger personal transformation, and are made available in the progressive periods of the adherent's psychological and spiritual evolution.

The First Degree

In the first degree initiation the initiate adopts a magical name, used only in the magic circle. The first initiation presents a challenge for the candidate to put his trust in his initiators, who test him/her by blindfolding, and tying with cords. Guiley (1989) explains that the initiate is then "asked outside the magic circle if he has enough courage to continue. He responds that he with "perfect love and perfect trust" to suffer, to be purified and learn."[135] After entering the circle, the candidate stands in front of the altar while he is ritually scourged, in lightly manner of course, and carried through the motions of initiation. Guiley (1989) explains that the initiate is then presented to the "Goddess and God, the guardians, mighty dead and sisters and brothers of the Craft."[136] After the initiation ritual

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[134]The time period between these initiations are normally a maximum of a year and a day.
[135]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:170
[136]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:170

is completed, the initiators measure the initiate with a cord tied in knots to mark the measure of each arm, leg, shoulder, height and width. Subsequently, the initiate is administered an oath and vows to "guard and protect the craft, the secrets of the Craft, and the brothers and sisters of the Craft. In some traditions, the initiate must also vow to render aid to said brothers and sisters."[137] Declared a Witch after this point, the old persona has altered and the initiate is assumingly reborn into the magical persona he has chosen.

In the movement's history, the measure used in the first degree initiation was normally given back to the witch in the Alexandrian tradition. However, in the Gardnerian tradition, the initiators kept the measure. Guiley (1989) explains that: "according to Gardner, the measure serves as a sort of insurance policy that the oath will be kept...punishment for breaking the oath of secrecy was burying the initiate's cord with curses so that it would rot, symbolically rotting the initiate along with it."[138] Yet, today with the inherent tolerance and flexibility, the measure is normally given back to the initiate to represent the ideal of perfect trust in one's oath.

Communicative Action of The First Degree Initiation

Fred Bird (1995) in his theory of 'ritual communication' describes 'invocative communication' as expressing the legends, myths and philosophies of the ritual to reach a desired state of being. This theory applies to all three degrees of initiation within Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. The primary task of initiation is to cast aside the persona, in non-technical language that means the face one shows to the world. Symbolizing exposure, the act of being bare is a necessity in initiations. Derek and Julia Parker (1992), who have written about

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[137] Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft..* 1989:170
[138] Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft..* 1989:170

historical and contemporary magic, explain that by entering initiation naked reinforces the act of shedding the persona and entering the circle with "innocence and vulnerability. This symbolic act supports the theory that nudity protects one from evil and that nudity puts one in direct contact with the universe."[139] Being a need of the persona, clothing would interfere with the initiate's desire to connect with the cosmos. In the first degree initiation, one's journey into themselves, means that they must detach themselves from their usual defense mechanisms and enforce 'perfect love and perfect trust.' The Farrars (1984) explain that the main lesson in the first degree is to overcome the fear of the unknown, in this case the exposure of oneself, and to know thyself by first facing the frightening shadow of fear, and probe the mystery, which is found within."[140] After the first degree initiation, the individual becomes a priest/tess and witch.

The Second Degree

After a time span of a year and a day, having studied on the elements, magic and casting circles, the postulant undergoes the second degree intiation, where he takes on a new magical name. The second degree initiation ritual is similar to the first degree. The witch is again blindfolded, bound and also renews the oath to suffer in order to learn and be purified, and is subsequently ritually scourged lightly. Following the Jungian cycle of individuation, a major figure of the second degree in a Jungian context is the archetype of the anima for a man and the animus for a woman.

Where the postulant encounters the Goddess and the shadow, or overcome the fear of exposure in the first degree, in the second degree initiation, he encounters the dark Horned

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[139]Parker & Parker, *The Power of Magic, Secrets and Mysteries Ancient and Modern.* 1992:164
[140]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984: 13

God, and must overcome the fear of death. Crowley (1990) explains that in the second degree, the initiate enacts the legend of the Goddess. According to the myth explains Crowley, "the God awaits the coming of the Goddess into the underworld, the land of death where she meets with the God as the unknown dark lord of death."[141] The legend is an ancient narrative in which the Goddess goes searching for the answer to death and ends up in the underworld, encountering the Dark Lord of Death or the Unknown. In the ritual, the unknown is a forceful figure, and is symbolized as the deity of the opposite sex, represented in Jungian dogma as the anima for a man and the animus for a woman. During the ritual, either the High Priest or Priestess represents this forceful figure.

Communicative Action of The Second Degree Initiation

The lesson of the second degree emphasizes that in order to find the higher self; the initiate must get in touch with the opposite gender within himself or herself. If the initiate is a male, he must let go of male stereotypes and find the woman inside of him in order to develop spiritually. For a female initiate, the second degree lesson is similar. Handicapped by her social conditioning, she is to detach herself from stereotypes and discover within herself, the inner man.

Crowley (1990) indicates that images of death are dominant throughout the second degree initiation. These portray death and the underworld and the darkness within the psyche. Crowley (1990) says that the myth narrates: "the Goddess' descent into the underworld to seek the answer of death. The Goddess learns that death is a necessary part of the life cycle but that it is only a stage in incarnation."[142] The Goddess' entry into the

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[141]Crowley, Vivian. *Wicca as a Modern Day Mystery Religion.* Article in *Pagan Pathways.* 1995:90
[142]Crowley, Vivian. *Wicca as a Modern Day Mystery Religion.* Article in *Pagan Pathways.* 1995:90

underworld indicates the realization of both good and evil and teaches the initiate to overcome the fear of death, no matter how unsettling that may be. Crowley (1990) indicates that: "on one level, it is a fear of physical death, but on another level, it is the death of the ego, of what we think we are. From the perspective of the ego, giving up its central position in the psyche to the self is a form of death. The annihilation of ego was seen by Jung as a crucial stage in the individuation process, by which we become a truly unique individual."[143]

The Third Degree

The third degree initiation is a symbolic sexual union that Guiley (1989) explains as the: "culmination of the mysteries, and involves the Great Rite, a sexual ritual that is normally done symbolically, with magical tools."[144] Reflecting Palmer's model of sex complementarity (1994), the third degree initiation represents the unification of male and female polarities in the human psyche. It is usual for the third degree ritual to have two witches, both a man and woman initiate. In some instances the initiates may be married or 'hand fasted' or lovers, making the Great Rite actual rather than symbolic. In a coven stead, the third degree initiation indicates that the initiate is now able to begin a coven stead of his or her own.

Crowely (1990) indicates that: "the goal of the third degree is for the initiate to integrate the self and the ego through a symbolic unification of dualities. Feelings of ego inflation and inferiority must be eliminated to allow a synthesis of the conscious and unconscious."[145] The aim of the third degree initiation is to resolve the conflict between ego

[143]Crowley, Vivian. *Wicca as a Modern Day Mystery Religion.* Article in *Pagan Pathways.* 1995:90
[144]Guiley, Rosemary E. *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft.* 1989:170
[145]Farrar & Farrar, *The Witch's Bible.* 1984: 32

and self. The notion being that the clash has been resolved with the joining of the Anima and Animus, as the center of personality shifting from the ego to the self, resulting in a self-actualized initiate. After the third degree initiation, the candidate is deemed a High Priest/ess, and is encouraged to branch out on his or her own and begin a sister coven.

Communicative Action in The Third Degree Initiation

In the third degree initiation, the reconciliation of Anima and Animus should lead to a synthesis, which Jung termed 'the birth of the Self,' for which to occur, must be a symbolic union. Crowely indicates that in the third degree initiation the initiate represents the "Goddess or the God, and enacts the Great Rite, sacred marriage, or sexual union with the deity. This is the end of the initiate's journey, and signifies the final bridge between self and other, I and thou."[146]

Exoteric Witchcraft

So far I have described the rituals of esoteric Witchcraft. Dianic groups however, fall into the category of exoterics, so termed due to their external participation in the quest of equal rights or affirmative action for women. The proliferation of feminist movements and ideologies in the 1970's resulted in the rapid growth of women's pagan groups. One might say that these groups are a manifestation of 'affirmative action' in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, and move beyond the equalization of leadership (High Priest and High Priestess), to the negation of the notion of leadership per se. Unlike traditional or esoteric branches of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, Dianic or exoteric witchcraft draws more upon the experiences and energies of the practitioners. Like traditional covens, Dianic covens try to maintain a 13

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[146]Crowley, Vivian. *Wicca as a Modern Day Mystery Religion.* Article in *Pagan Pathways.* 1995:91-92

member group, but lack the hierarchy that exists within traditional groups. Within Dianic groups, a more liberal attitude amongst its members prevails. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains* (1993) explains: "leadership is shared amongst the members more equally."[147] Dianic groups conform to Palmer's model of sex polarity (1994). Palmer explains that in sex polarity male and females are not equal and held as different in abilities and spiritual potential. Unlike most sex polarity New Religious Movements, Dianics or exoterics hold females as superior. Dianic groups usually maintain an all female membership, as the focus on many of their rituals are only Goddess oriented and on women empowerment; though membership exceptions can be made depending upon group consensus.

Dianics or exoteric Witches are often socially and politically motivated, interpreting the symbols of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft differently. Marron explains that exoterics participate in the more "conventional rites of passage associated with marriages, births and deaths."[148] Exoteric witchcraft is less rigidly structured than its esoteric counterpart, with more liberal policies regarding secrecy and ritual conduct. Exoteric Witches do not perform any initiations or inner transformation rituals.

Ellwood (1973) describes Dianics or Exoterics as being influenced by Robert Graves *The White Goddess* (1946):

> "They are less concerned with evocation than the with celebration of the Goddess whom they believe is everywhere. Their rites are spontaneous rather than precise. A forest setting, close to Mother Nature is preferred, or a location where imagination reigns rather than incense, altars and the intellectual ideas of magic and its history."[149]

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[147] Melton, J. Gordon Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains.* 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro
[148] Marron, Kevin. *Witches, Pagans and Magic in the New Age.* 1993:87
[149] Ellwood, Robert. *Religious and Spiritual Groups n North America.* 1973:190

Thus, for exoterics, practices do not embody the serious and intellectual approach of the Esoteric. Many rituals can be ad-libbed, as long as the rite is focused more on the Goddess than on the God. Dianic groups are more attracted to the psychological, social and political aspects of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft rather than the mystical aspects, and their emphasis on social, political and psychological issues does not include the mystical framework, characterized in esoteric Witchcraft by ceremonial work, inner teachings and initiations of degrees. Rather, their ritual goals are for feminine empowerment. Though open to women of all orientations, there is a strong lesbian attendance in the Dianic movement. Like the esoteric branch, exoteric witchcraft also serves as a type of therapy, but rites in Dianic witchcraft are usually aimed toward women to find independence, empowerment, and the Goddess within themselves.

Like the esoterics, Dianics adhere to the Wiccan Rede. They acknowledge the existence of magic, revere the earth, accept reincarnation, and do not proselytize. The main difference within Dianic Witchcraft is the emphasis placed on the Goddess and the relegation of the God to a secondary role. Another crucial difference is in the monist world view. For Dianics:

> *"At the point of creation there is only One source of energy, the mother ready to give birth.*
> *She requires no male at this point, as she has already been impregnated. All life stems from*
> *the mother, and since we can only trace our roots back to her, not the father, she is the principle*
> *deity.* "[150]

Most other Neo-Pagans traditions believe in the Life Force or Creative Power, as a nameless and genderless source of energy impossible for human minds to grasp. Dianic Witchcraft

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[150]Hawkins, Craig. *The Modern World of Witchcraft.* http://www.apologeticsindex.org

defines the Life Force as feminine and believes that the male plays a peripheral role in ritual, reproduction and creation.

As an exclusive feminist ideology, Dianic ritual only invokes the Goddess. However, the God would be present if it there is a particular festival where his presence is necessary. An example would be in the celebration of Beltaine, known as the time of fertilization and conception. In such cases, Dianics would assimilate the figure of the God into ritual, but he is not given a prominent role. Since the Goddess is seen as the giver of life, love and earthly goods, then the figure of the God is a secondary role, if considered at all, as he plays no part in the process of nurturing. [151]

Inter-Polar Witchcraft

Situated between esoterics and exoterics is the bulk of the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft practitioners, best be described as inter-polar. This group falls between the range of the two extreme poles. They are pseudo traditional because this group borrows traditions and philosophies from traditional sources and use them in their non-traditional rites. These inter polar individuals vary in their approach to ritual and practice, and may worship one or both deities, alone or in a coven. Kevin Marron explains that these: "Wiccans describe themselves as eclectic, and draw from both traditional and non-traditional Wicca."[152]

Eclectic or inter-polar groups can be an all male or female membership or a combination of either sex. Like Dianics, eclectic groups cultivate informality and spontaneity in their worship. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains* (1993) explains that while traditionalists require a coven

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[151]*Dianic Wicca htp://*www.threemoondesign.com/ silverpeace/anyeharmnone/dianic.shtml
[152]Marron, Kevin. *Witches, Pagans and Magic in the New Age.* 1993:97

and formal initiation, many eclectics are self-initiated or informally initiated, and may worship and practice alone, joining a coven for more important rituals. Generally, cowans[153] will be more welcome at eclectic Neo-Pagan rituals than they would be at traditional ones.[154]

The inter-polar groups essentially gained popularity during the 1980's. Eclectics or Inter Polar witches draw their practices and approaches from any number of Pagan and non-Pagan rituals and ideologies. One Website explains that eclectics are largely influenced by the work of "herbalist Scott Cunningham, Starhawk (Miriam Simos) and other books released by Llewellyn Publishing, a Minnesota based 'New Age/Occult' publishing company."[155] The fusion of Neo-Paganism with New Age philosophy and ideology is most evident in eclectic groups and practices. Clearly, this is due to the influence of the human potential movement of the 1980's that lumped many New Religions under its category.

Some eclectics do not support the Jungian gender concept of male/female complimentary roles. These particular pseudo traditional groups, one known as the Faerie sect, are composed largely of gay men. Like the Dianics, these inter polar groups encourage same sex student-teacher relationships, but are not necessarliy opposed to complimentary roles. Thus, the gender duality shown in the esoteric traditionalist groups is not emphasized in some inter polar groups, much like it would not be amongst the exoterics. In all likelihood, eclectics would also be less rigid concerning conduct during rituals, the organizational structure or leadership/hierarchy.

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[153]Non- participant observers or outsiders.
[154]Melton, J. Gordon. Project Director. Lewis, James R. Senior Research Associate. *The Religious Requirements and Practices of Certain Selected Groups: A Handbook for Chaplains.* 1993 http://www.heart7.net/handbook.html#intro
[155]*Types of Wicca,* www.eden.rutgers.edu/~rupagan/ginfo/wiccatype.html

Evidence shows that at the public grove gatherings, Neo-Pagan traditions from all ends of the spectrum are represented. Yet, my findings indicate that the majority of public grove attendees (CUPS and Montreal Grove) are pseudo traditionalists or inter polar. Asking CUPS respondents which pagan path they follow, (40%) claimed to be eclectics, (31%) claimed to be hereditary traditionalists; (13%) admitted to being devoted to Goddess worshipping, and (3%) affiliated themselves with Techno-Paganism.

Concordia Pagan Society
Which Pagan path do you follow?

Traditionalists (Esoteric)	Goddess oriented (Exoteric)	Eclectic (Inter-Polar)	Techno
31%	13%	40%	3%

At the Montreal Pagan Grove (46%) of respondents claimed to be eclectics, (21%) considered themselves Goddess oriented, (17%) considered themselves to be hereditary traditionalists, and (10%) said they were Techno-Pagans.

Montreal Pagan Grove
Which Pagan path do you follow?

Traditionalists	Goddess Oriented	Eclectic	Techno
17%	21%	46%	10%

When I first conducted my research in 1998, only (1%) of my respondents explicitly stated that they practised Techno-Paganism. One can assume the term was still unfamiliar to most, as Internet usage was not as widespread then as it is today. A revision of this survey indicates that with the growing popularity of the multi media trend, a growing number of

Neo-Pagans have incorporated technology into their practices and rituals, and as a result now consider themselves to be Techno-Pagans.

One may conclude that the pseudo-traditionalist attendance at public grove gatherings is as high as it is because most of the eclectics are not linked with a functioning coven in worship celebration. During our interview, Dreamweaver claimed that although he is one of the Montreal Pagan Grove's co-founders, he rarely frequents the public rituals. He explained that as a traditionalist, he finds grove gatherings too full of 'wannabe witches' whose hearts are not into the traditional form of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. He explains:

> " These people do not want a firm commitment to traditional Wicca, as it is easier to attend a grove rite rather than deal with coven members and the associate demands."[156]

While traditional Neo-Pagan Witches like Dreamweaver rarely attend public grove rites, most Neo-Pagans believe that a bond of unity, despite differences, is important. Thus traditionalists provide a means to unite all Neo-Pagan followers, regardless of their orientation, by creating the Pagan grove. It is in such a social setting that different groups gather, leaving petty differences at the door to worship as a collectivity.

Dreamweaver explains the number of attendees at Public Grove rituals will vary depending on the festival being celebrated. Anywhere between fifty and two hundred Neo-Pagan witches will attend Montreal Pagan Grove rituals. The number of Neo-Pagans in Montreal is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate, as many groups and individuals do not frequent these public grove events. One American study estimated that there are over a

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[156]Personal Communication

million practising Neo-Pagan Witches in the USA.[157]

Also asking Participants at the Concordia Pagan Society how do they worship, the break down was as follows:

Concordia Pagan Society
How do you Worship?

Group/Coven	Solitaire	Both
15%	32%	48%

The results of the same question to those in the Montreal Pagan Grove are as follows:

Montreal Pagan Grove
How do you Worship?

Group/Coven	Solitaire	Both
6%	31%	61%

These results elucidate that the variety of forms of practice is determined by how were members introduced or become involved in the movement. Was the discovery of Neo-Pagan Witchcraft through books, the Internet, with a friend who wanted to start a group or with a formal introduction in a traditional coven? These results are also contingent on how long the individual has been practising Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, as noted on page 70. However, it should be pointed out that the majority of those who voluntarily responded to my questionnaire are relative newcomers to the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement. One cannot deny the fact that in both groups, willing respondents to the questionnaire were those who had been involved with the movement less than five years. This could indicate that the

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[157]Demographics of Wiccans are difficult to find. There is much secrecy, and groups do not release membership rolls. Curott estimates there are 3 million to 5 million Wiccans. Helen Berger, associate professor of sociology at the University of Westchester in Pennsylvania, has surveyed more than 2,000 Wiccans for her research. Estimates cited by Berger and Christian apologist Craig Hawkins in his book Witchcraft: Exploring the World of Wicca put the U.S. witch population at the 150,000 to 200,000 mark.   •
From Catherine Edwards. http://www.angelfire.com/ca6/armorofgod/spells.html

longer one is involved with the movement, the less likely one would be inclined to share one's views and attitudes about their practices. It also is similarly plausible that Neo-Pagan Witchcraft has increased in popularity over the past five years, and that long time practitioners are more likely to be traditionalists, and more secretive about their attitudes.

It is safe to say that the majority of contemporary Neo-Pagan witches are younger, have been involved in the movement less than five years, and are more likely to be followers of the more open eclectic groups than of more traditional groups. Obviously, the combination of old and new, spiritual and material evidenced is Neo-Pagan Witchcraft holds more appeal than what has been offered by long established and more rigid Judeo-Christian religions.

PART II
Animism, Technology and Neo-Pagan Witchcraft

Part 2 will illustrate the link between technology, animism and Neo-Pagan Witchcraft. Chapter 5 will discuss the theories of animism from the perspective of various classical sociologists, and will explain how these theories highlight the techno-animistic tendencies of those who work with computers. Chapter 5 will also illustrate the technological environment and artificial intelligence by referring to various *Wired* articles and will deal with the analogous elements of technology and magic as well as its link to the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft movement. Chapter 6 will discuss the new surge of Neo-Paganism, specifically called Techno-Paganism.

Chapter 5
Empiricism and Animism

In his study on Techno-Animism, Aupers (2001) explains that technical experts in the field of artificial intelligence along with many writers in *Wired*[158] believe that:

> "The technological environment is no longer considered to be fully under control. The virus, bot and personal agent are becoming anthropomorphized as 'spiritual beings' that live on the World Wide Web and have good and bad intentions. Many articles use terms such as "organic," "uncontrollable" and 'irrational' to describe technology. Contrary to the classical modern perspective (of Descartes and Bacon), where nature is seen as a mechanical and therefore controllable machine, Wired portrays new technology as an uncontrollable, artificial force of nature."[159]

Aupers (2001) selected *Wired* as a source because it is based on the personal speculations of

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[158] *Wired* Magazine is an internationally oriented American magazine concerned with 'the digital revolution'. It focuses on new technology, varying from computers, Artificial Intelligence, robotics, various new gadgets and genetical engineering to space exploration, hacking, the Internet and the World Wide Web. The editors of *Wired* describe it as the journal of the future. It's daring, compelling, innovative, courageous and insightful. It speaks not just to high-tech professionals and the business savvy, but also to the forward looking, the culturally astute, and the simply curious. Each month, *Wired* covers the people, companies, and ideas that are transforming the way we live.Aupers. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

[159] Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

techno gurus. In his study, Aupers (2001) discusses several articles from *Wired* magazine, and the theories of classical sociology to ascertain if "pre-modern man's animistic view of his environment, and contemporary man's view of Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Life are similar, and if so, to what extent?"[160]

Aupers (2001) explains that during the late 19th to early 20th centuries, classical sociologists and psychologists as Comte, Marett, Tylor and Freud had addressed the subject of animism. The writings of Tylor[161] and Marett[162] are significant, says Aupers (2001), as their theories "of animism were a result of their search for what Tylor (1889) called the minimum definition of religion."[163] According to Tylor (1889), animism is the conviction that: "spiritual beings are held to affect or control the events of the material world, and man's life here and hereafter."[164] Aupers (2001) alleges that 'natural authorities' are the controlling destiny of humankind. However, Tyler's definition of animism (1889) appears to be vague; as when he mentions spiritual beings, he is not explicit in defining where these beings are and why these beings are alive and controlling the destiny of man.

Tyler's definition of animism (1889) has been criticised by many other sociologists; one of whom is Marret (1914), who takes Tyler's definition of animism (1889) a step further. Marret (1914) says: "animism not only explains the inexplicable, but also reflects the emotions aroused by experiencing the inexplicable...animism is essentially one of the first intellectual manifestations of these archaic religious feelings."[165] Aupers is convinced that

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[160]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[161]Tyler, Edward. *Primitive Cultures* 1977, first print 1889
[162]Marett, Robert. *The Threshold of Religion* 1914, first print 1909
[163]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[164]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[165]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

the unpredictable and human-like characteristics of the new technological environment reflect Marrets' definition that the religious feeling from an experience with the inexplicable is primarily humility, manifested as fascination, awe, and fear of/for the natural environment. Despite their differences in defining animism, explains Aupers (2001), Tylor (1889) and Marret (1914), as well as other classical sociologists and psychologists, agree that the result of the "progress in science and technology will inevitably lead to the disappearance of religious-mythical ideas. Magical practices and animism, is far behind us and will never return."[166] This is a basic assumption of some aspects of sociology: that as science and technology ascends, religion will disappear from society as humankind heads for what Weber termed a 'disenchanted world'.

The turn of the last century saw traditional religion weakening under the onslaught of industrialization, secularisation and the privatisation of religion. Aupers (2001) explains that since the Age of enlightenment, practical rationality has gradually overtaken western society. Secularism and technology has increasingly become institutionalized and subsequently autonomous of and detached from humanity. Aupers explains:

> "Weber points out that these subsystems obey to their own rational laws and have their own internal dynamic. As a result, the modern individual experiences these systems as autonomous external forces, of which he or she has no control over, much in the same way that pre-modern people experienced the inexplicable. This autonomization of goal-oriented rationality is the reason why Weber wrote about western society as a suffocating 'iron cage.' In a similar context, Mannheim compares the anxieties of modern man, aroused by their rationalized environments, with those of pre modern people."[167]

However, the increase of the secularization of religion from the Industrial Revolution appeared to have leveled off in the last decade, and has moved to theories about the de-

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[166] Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[167] Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

secularization of religion.[168] By 1990, it was apparent that some classical theorists had missed something in their evaluation of the effects of science and technology upon religion. Ignited by new technology, as Aupers believes (2001), some of society has begun to be re-enchanted by the mystical and magical. This presents a confounding situation since science and technology, considered to be the adversaries to religion for some sociologists, is the ammunition to the re-enchantment of the world.

Aupers explains that since the Second World War the mainstreaming of Artificial Intelligence and Artificial Life following has made:

> "...many people, even those not directly involved in its development, more aware of the autonomy of technology. The specific combination of autonomy and intelligence in our new technological environment creates a fertile ground for late modern techno animism and elucidates the feelings of humility described in Wired. Like pre modern people, these technical specialists are confronted with an autonomously 'behaving' environment that they cannot fully understand, control or predict. This incomprehension is not caused by a lack of scientific knowledge, as Tylor assumed was the case with pre modern animism. On the contrary, late modern techno animism can be interpreted as the ultimate result of a superior level of scientific and technical knowledge. Artificially Intelligent machines are an example of this. To those even less knowledgeable about technology than the technical specialists, the advanced creations that have entered our homes and our lives are even more difficult to understand. As a result, advanced technology has assumed mythical proportions, and especially animistic representations of our material environment."[169]

On the basis of my personal discussions with software developers and computer experts on the subject of animism and technology, it would appear that, even though new technology does show unpredictable, human like reactions, the potential of extending the human senses; it is neither divine nor sacred. Scientifically, objects do not contain anything intrinsically holy. An item can become sacred only when a community enshrouds it with that significance, when the dominant collective experience of an object eclipses individual experience, and is endowed a sacredness.

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[168]See Berger, Peter. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*
[169]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

Yet, for many, the attempt to link 'God' and Cyberspace would meet with some resistance, as the computer, a simple machine, is the framework for Cyberspace, or the fifth dimension to come. Understandably, many cannot identify a machine with ontological status, as the notions of pantheism and animism are still dead to many. However, the digital networks in our post industrial (modern) world are increasingly becoming recognized as more than just a machine connected by wires and signals, linked to a network. As computers become more humanlike, by doing what only people did, the trend in techno animism will grow. Similarly, as the collective experience of communicating through and with computers evolves, the networks will subsequently, be seen as an extension of the self. Jon Lebkowsky (1997) has written an article explaining the question when Cyber intelligence becomes an organism. He explains that despite no dominant net-based spiritual vision or belief, the global interactive character of the Internet tightens in the sense of an evolving global consciousness. Lebowsky explains that through the writings of Teilhard there still transpires a persistent thread within cyber-cultural discourse. He explains that Teilhard:

> "...proposed noösphere as transbiological evolutionary goal, an inherent final step
> coextensive with the Omega point, the end run of collective salvation, (a rapture sort of
> gig, but not unlike the vision within Arthur C. Clarke's 2001/Childhood's End
> shaggy-apocalypse stories). At some point we all sort of merge, humming one note or
> hummed as one note, ingested by Nirvana and regurgitated as Enlightened Unity."[170]

In this sense, we have an expectant aesthetic movement, a pledge of a net-based spiritual evolution that is shaped through one's perception of Cyberspace. In the same vein, there is Techno-Paganism, which attempts to plant the divine into computer networks. Quoted in the *Wired* article *Techno-Pagans: May the Astral Plane be reborn in Cyberspace,* one

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[170]Lebkowsky, Jon. *The Cyborganic Path.* http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/apr/lebkow.html. 1997

respondent said: "Without the sacred there is no differentiation in space. If we are about to enter cyberspace, the first thing we have to do is plant the divine in it."[171] Techno-paganism concedes that the fabricated objects and surroundings are natural, implying that artificial enhancements, though synthetic, encompasses the depiction of the divine and should not be ruled out from religious worship.

Empiricism, Animism and Technology

Aupers (2001) explains that from our modern world perspective, the application of the presuppositions from classical scientists relays their conviction that religion was on the road to declining and disappearing. Animism, therefore, would not be expected to be found among technological experts since they have been the catalysts of rationalization and the major push toward a disenchanted society. Aupers believes that "the characteristic of a disenchanted world conflicts with the articles in *Wired* Magazine.[172] This is mainly because Artificial Intelligence has aspects of an 'incalculable force' that can no longer be 'controlled by rational calculation."[173] Johnson illustrates this in *Wired* when he writes:

> "Evolving so far beyond our comprehension, the Omninet would have to be studied as we now study nature: by probing and experimenting, trying to tease out its laws. Maybe it would defy rational analyses, becoming an object of veneration. Faced with an artificial nature no longer of our own making, all we could do is stand back in awe."[174]

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[171] *Wired*. Davis, Erik. *Techno-pagans. May the Astral Plane be Reborn in Cyberspace.* http://www.wired.com 1995
[172] According to *Wired*, late modern people find themselves increasingly in a sort of simulated or artificially 'enchanted garden'. Not nature, but the technological environment we created is experienced as mysterious. More important there are techno animistic ideas and sentiments in the technological field. Although the group of techno pagans can be seen as the most evident case of techno animism, it is surely not the only illustration of this unexpected development. Apparently, a paradoxical development is taking place: techno animism can be seen as a direct but unforeseen consequence of the accelerating process of rationalization. This process does not by definition instigate the disappearance of religion. On the contrary: it can be seen as the main driving force behind the emergence of this archaic form of religion. Aupers. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[173] Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[174] Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

Animism has captured the human imagination since the start of civilization, and influenced upon early scientists the idea that inanimate objects contain souls or a life of their own. Many old and traditional religions have their creation myths claiming that the first inhabitants of the world were derived from materials of the four elements: earth, air, water and fire. The desire to artificially create an intelligent object has been evident in history. Historically, many have claimed to make artificially intelligent 'things' that acted human. An example of this is found in the medieval magical tradition, most notably in the 11th century when Eleazar of Worms relayed instructions on how to put together spare parts of corpses to make a man. Chlem in the 16th century had claimed to make a man or a 'golem,' but it had to be destroyed due to its violent nature. In the 19th century, Mary Shelley wrote her account of an artificially created man in *Frankenstein*. However, it has only been since the end of the 20th century that the reality of creating an artificially intelligent being has been within real reach. The developments in technology since the Second World War have enticed computer scientists and engineers to explore the possibility of creating intelligent machines in the image and thought processes of man/woman.

In the first decade of the 21st century, Cyberspace and the Internet seem to have grown, both in size and function, at a pace and a power that was unforeseen and unpremeditated. Sherry Turkle (1990), a clinical psychologist and science professor has done numerous studies and written subjects on the 'subjective experience' of the relationship between technology and society. She says that artificial intelligent machines pose new

philosophical views in everyday life:

> *"The computer plays the role of an evocative object, an object that disturbs equanimity and provokes self reflection. That it should do so for adults is not surprising: after all, intelligent machines strike many of us as childhood science fiction that has become real. But computers also play this role for children. You may give a computer to a child hoping that it will teach mathematics or programming skills or French verbs. But independent of what the computer teaches the child, it does something else as well. For the child, as for the adult, the machine is evocative. It creates new occasions for thinking through the philosophical questions to which childhood must give a response, among them the question of what is alive. Children are led to a new way of talking about the relationship between life and consciousness. In Piaget's studies, the idea of consciousness evolved side by side with the idea of life. Generally, when children ascribed life to inanimate objects, they ascribed consciousness too; when life became identified with the biological, consciousness became a property unique to animals. But when today's children reflect on computational objects, the pattern is very different. Many children allow intelligent machines to be conscious long after they emphatically deny them life. They talk about the nonliving computer as having malicious intent when it consistently beats them at games. Adults hold onto the fact that computers are not aware as a sign of their fundamental difference from people. But today's children take a different view. The idea of an artificial consciousness does not upset them. They find it a very natural thing. They may be the first generation to grow up with such a radical split between the concepts of consciousness and life, the first generation to grow up believing that human beings are not necessarily alone as aware intelligences. Children's new psychologized appreciation of machines influences how they articulate what is most special, most important about being a person. While younger children may say that the machine is alive "because it has feelings," older children tend to grant that the machine has intelligence and is thus "sort of alive" but then distinguish it from people because it lacks feelings. Today's children came to understand computers through a process of identification with them as psychological entities. They come to see them as our new nearest neighbours. From the point of view of the child, this neighbour seems to share, or even excel in, our rationality. People are still defined in contrast to their nearest neighbours. Now people are special because they feel. The notion of a rational animal gives way to the paradoxical construction of people as emotional machines. the child's and the adult's, contrast with a prevalent fear that involvement with machine intelligence leads to a mechanical view of people. Instead, what I find is something of a romantic reaction. There is a tendency to cede to the computer the power of reason but at the same time, in defense, to construct a sense of identity that is increasingly focused on the soul and the spirit in the human machine."*[175]

According to Turkle (1990), by the time the children of today become the adults of

tomorrow, symbols and metaphors of spirituality will have taken on new meanings,

transforming human experience into a post-industrial mould. Increasingly, Cyberspace and

artificial intelligences are becoming the paradigms for new potential religious experiences.

To some, the Internet has become a religious symbol itself, as place of worship for some or

a source of religion for others. Like 'God,' the new information milieu does not just reside

in the minds of people, nor is it detached from the world. This new reality in virtual form has,

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[175]Turkle, Sherry. *The Age of Intelligent Machines: Growing Up in the Age of Intelligent Machines: Reconstructions of the Psychological and Reconsiderations of the Human.* 1990
http://www.kurzweilai.net/meme/frame.html?main=/articles/art0163.html

as Aupers mentions, come to be seen as an: "incalculable, dynamic, complex, infinite and organic network, spread all around the planet, which allows contact to any part of the world,"[176] similar to the omnipresence of 'God'. In a pantheistic sense, Cyberspace not only offers the chance for many to worship virtually online but also is to be the virtual meeting place of 'God' and as such is becoming a spiritual tool.

The virtual worlds and games within Cyberspace extensively uses MOO[177] technology, a main component of VR and AI. MOO technology is not only perceived as leading its own existence but also is becoming an extension of the human psyche, as within a virtual world one realizes and interacts with one's imaginings. Used for almost anything from re-enacting historical events to virtually exploring distant geographical locations, MOOs are capable of creating or recreating from books and movies the possible futures presented by sci-fi. In other words, MOO is the technology that creates the 'virtual' in Virtual Reality.

People will be capable of using Virtual Reality networks for entertainment and communication purposes, all made easier due to drastically improved methods of information management. Many technologists further believe that the creation of a VR system will make it possible for humans to be stationary; plugged to a universal network and remain there,

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[176]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

[177]In the beginning, there were text-based video games. You put your floppy disc in and it said, "You're standing in a field of green grass. You can go left. You can go right. You see a book on the ground. Programmers decided to put textual games on a machine that a number of people could have access to, either by connecting onsite or by telnet (i.e. connecting to that machine via modem from their own machine). Thus, a number of people could be standing in that field with you, and as you decided whether or not to take the book, someone else could take it first, and run away. This example is interactive gaming in a virtual space. These types of programs (which were used mostly for games) were called MUDs, which stands for Multi-User Domain, and they became very popular with sometimes hundreds of players connected to the same game all at the same time. In the same vein, MOOs (MUD Object Oriented or, to some, Multiuse Object Oriented systems) are text based virtual realities housed on computers connected to the Internet. Since the public domain release of the MOO server code and its subsequent porting to various operating systems, MOOs have become a vastly popular form of communication and learning. They serve a variety of functions, both social and educational, and are not simply games. Taken from http://cinemascope.berkeley.edu/~rachel/moo.html

living in a matrix, using brain signals for motion, and talking in an almost telepathic matter. Artificially intelligent machines will sustain the whole system of maintaining the body and surrounding environment, and delivering necessary food materials intravenously. With the perfection of replication technology, a new world will open up in Virtual Reality networks. Some computer technologists will go as far to say that people will be grown from female eggs, but then plugged into the universal VR network, and artificially intelligent machines will perform all the maintenance. Many computer technologists believe that humans and machines will become a whole, developing their relationship to a much more profound level than what it is now.

In artificial intelligence, humans partake in the creation of inanimate objects, objectifying the animistic worldview, and at the same time playing 'God the giver of life'. Therefore, it is of small wonder that the emerging new technology is invoking feelings of awe, fear and fascination, as has been mentioned by Aupers (2001). Writing for *Wired*, Scott Kirsner points out the impact of Artificial Life on humanity in a *Wired* article on artificially intelligent toys, he says:

> *"Toys such as 'Barney', 'Tamagotchi' (an artificial animal that learns, must be fed and eventually dies) and 'Furby' are appealing because they act as though they are alive, and often develop unique "personalities." 'Furbies' do not only behave like living creatures; each 'Furby' has its own character. Programmed to learn from interaction with children and, according to their manufacturers, Furbies show unpredictable or even irrational behaviour."* [178]

The attitudes and experiences discussed in *Wired* comply with both the first and second criteria of animism, as proposed by Aupers[179] who explains: "not only are subjective

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[178] *Wired*. Kirsner, Scott. *Moody Furballs And The Developers Who Love Them* http://www.wired.com Sept.1998
[179] Aupers defines animism as (1) the attribution of subjective characteristics to the material environment, combined with (2) assumption that objects actively and autonomously exercise influence over the human lifeworld, which is accompanied by (3) feelings of humility manifesting itself in fear, fascination and 'awe'. Aupers. *Revenge of the Machines*. www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

characteristics attributed to technological 'things', but these things are also believed to autonomously influence the human world."[180] Some authors of *Wired* allege that Artificial Intelligence, in the form of clever domestic appliances will, in due time, result in what Aupers (2001) calls a "living palpable environment...Research indicates that technological progress is also accompanied by the mystification of technology itself."[181] New technology has influenced the human imagination in promising a future in advanced communication capable of creating a 'heaven on earth'. Similarly, fears like the Y2K hysteria and human annihilation through monster machines also disclose how easily the computer can dominate one's fears and nightmares. The fear of technology is illustrated in the idea that the material environment 'comes alive with technology,' and 'leads a life of its own.' To some, explains Aupers (2001), this implicates that if these:

> *"Artificial constructions 'lead their own life' they are then withdrawing from the rational control of those who created them and those who use them. These technologies created are able to interact, learn from these interactions, and adapt accordingly."*[182]

To many, the vision of machines living a life of their own may conjure up images of Frankenstein's monster, a negative symbol of destruction rather than creation. Similarly, some will argue that in the wrong hands, replicating technologies like nano-technology,[183]

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[180]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[181]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[182]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[183]Nano-technology is the projected ability to make things from the bottom up, using techniques and tools that are being developed today to place every atom and molecule in a desired place. If this form of molecular engineering is achieved, which seems probable, it will result in a manufacturing revolution. It also has serious economic, social, environmental, and military implications. Nano-technology is often referred to as a general-purpose technology. That's because in its mature form it will have significant impact on almost all industries and all areas of society. It offers better built, longer lasting, cleaner, safer, and smarter products for the home, for communications, for medicine, for transportation, for agriculture, and for industry in general. A key understanding of nano-technology is that it offers not just better products, but a vastly improved means of production. A computer can make copies of data files, essentially as many copies as you want at little or no cost. It may be only a matter of time until the manufacture of products becomes as cheap as the copying of files. That's the real meaning of nano-technology, and why it is sometimes seen as "the next industrial revolution". *Center for Responsible Nano-technology.* http://www.crnano.org/whatis.htm

robotics and genetic engineering have the potential of destruction. This progression of the Technological Age is an evolution that cannot be halted, but its development has so far been gradual enough to allow the building of safeguards into the technology, holding users to ethical standards and using law enforcement when necessary. Law enforcement will expand to include any new ethical standard within the fold as new technologies appear. However, many will adhere to sensationalistic notions of machines wreaking havoc and despair upon humankind. The potential of destruction lies within humankind, which theoretically can be transferred to machines, as artificially intelligent machines only do what they are programmed to do. However, the likelihood of warrior robots in a 'Terminator' setting is almost laughable.

Kurzweil (1999) predicts in *The Age of Spiritual Machines*, that the progression and perfection of robotics and nano-technology will lead to a breed of computers demonstrating specific, human-like behavior. He explains that by 2029:

> *"The prevalence of highly intelligent visual navigation devices for the blind, speech to print display devices for the deaf, nerve stimulation, intelligent orthotic prosthetics for the physically handicapped, and a variety of neural implant technologies will essentially eliminate the handicaps associated with most disabilities. Sensory enhanced devices will be used by most of the population...automated agents will be now learning on their own and significant knowledge will be created by machines with little or no human intervention. Computers have read all available human and machine generated literature and multi media material. There is widespread use of all encompassing visual, auditory and tactile communication using direct neural connections, allowing Virtual Reality to take place without having to be in a total touch enclosure."*[184]

Today in the start of the 21st century, artificial intelligence is becoming a part of life for every individual. As artificial intelligence advances, it will eventually be necessary for humanity to deal with the social and philosophical issues raised by attempts to create new life forms.

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[184]Kurzweil, Ray. *The Age of Spiritual Machines*. Penguin Books, 2000:200

Kurzweil (1999) predicts that by 2029 humans will no longer be the masters of their own creations, as Artificial Intelligence increasingly surpasses human intelligence. He says:

"Some machines will be so humanlike, that they will claim to be conscious. There will be a growing discussion about the legal rights of computers and what constitutes being human, as a sharp division no longer exists between the human world and the machine world. Human cognition is being ported to machines, and many machines have personalities, skills and knowledge bases derived from the reverse engineering of human intelligence. "[185]

Kurzweil (1999) forecasts that this will raise a host of ethical issues dealing with the consciousness of a robot. One would suppose the arising of questions as: if a robot is a 'conscious' machine then would it be immoral to whack a machine in frustration or abandon it in a dump yard? Similarly would this consciously endowed machine have a free will, and capable of making choices, perpetrating crimes or acting immorally? Notions of a conscious machine with a soul may be a bit 'out there' to many, as consciousness and souls have always been human attributes. But, if the trends as predicted by Kurzweil (1999) do become a reality, then it will be likely that the 'Golden Age', 'heaven on earth' and 'man becoming God' will likely be found in the new emerging technologies.

Technology and Magic

Historically, magic and technology were intertwined, and shared a long relationship. Perceived as means of controlling, directing, and manipulating power, magic and technology were two sides of the same coin. Used to dominate the environment, technology has served as a protection from hostile settings with the creation of devices. Magic worked with myth and ritual for the same ends: protection, domination, and creation. Both technology and magic have served at rendering power over the environment, and its interrelationship had

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[185]Kurzweil, Ray . *The Age of Spiritual Machines.* Penguin Books, 2000:220

been like a sibling rivalry. Having taken a backseat to technology from the mid 18ᵗʰ century, magic is once again undergoing a renaissance and is fusing with its wayward sibling, technology. Aside from the popular belief of magic being spells and hexes, magic is increasingly becoming the idea of finding and establishing sacred space in the physical world as well as in the Cyber one, thus a computer, the framework for Cyberspace, is becoming a magical tool in itslef..

The computer is a visible reality, tangible and easy to see, but many are only now noticing the effect of the spread of home computers on our environment. In Turkle's terms artificial intelligent technology is evocative. Essentially, the World Wide Web is available to almost all in the world, so anyone can make anything known to millions. For many, the use of technological intelligences has become habitual. Many cannot imagine themselves without a home computer, an email server, or a wireless phone. Increasingly, many rely on artificial intelligences, and this reliance is transforming the way life is experienced, creating ways of thinking through what is alive, and the relationship between life and consciousness.

This new approach towards technology is affecting what traditionally is called the human soul or Turkle's view of reflecting into the world of inner experience (1990). Some maintain that the individual soul undergoes 'changes' when subsequent altered spiritual needs and attitudes arise. Michael Friedjung (2003), a scientist who has written *Putting the Soul into Science* characterizes inner experiences as Knowledge, the world of feelings, (emotions and desires), and the ability to instigate change in the world, he says:

> a)Knowledge, which, in the case of the inner experience of human beings, is the result of combining perceptions with concepts through thinking. Both perceptions and concepts are experienced in the inner world. (The fact that knowledge is arrived at in this way was emphasized by Rudolf Steiner in his "The Philosophy of Freedom" (Rudolf Steiner Press 1964). Other quite different ways of arriving

at knowledge are conceivable however. b) The world of feelings, emotions and desires.c) The ability to act, so as to change the world. These three aspects can be related to thinking, feeling and willing.[186]

Changes to the human soul through technology will ignite new personal dreams and public visions, as are predicted by cyber culture experts who forecast[187] that new personal dreams and public visions will arise due to the changes to the human soul. As Artificial Intelligence advances, new experiences encountered through the senses will create these changes. Responses to these changes are due to the fluctuations in one's spiritual environment, brought on by the transformations in the essential context of human experience. The possibility of downloading a consciousness or a 'space of heaven' into a computer, and the idea of creating a fifth dimensional reality indicates that a computer will be able to free people from their bodies and presents an idea of the next great step of evolution. To many Neo-Pagans, this would be like visiting an astral plane, where anything is possible.

Derived from the science fiction writer Arthur C. Clark,[188] a feature tenet of Techno-Paganism is referred to as Clark's Law, which states: "any sufficiently advanced form of technology will appear indistinguishable from magic."[189] Clark's Law can be illustrated in a forecast from Kurzweil(1999), who explains that by 2029:

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[186]Friedjung, Michael. *Putting Soul into Science.* http://www.southerncrossreview.org/2/soulsci1.html

[187]Aupers further predicts that the world of the made will soon be like the world of the born: autonomous, adaptable and creative. The development of human level artificial intelligence leads to enormous leaps in robot evolution, which leads in turn to a "post human" universe presided over by godlike machines. Advances in Virtual Reality technology enable individuals to have cybersex with any man, woman or creature of their choosing, while at the same time allowing them to choose the style, color and material of their own bodies. Aupers. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

[188]Arthur C. Clarke is one of the most celebrated science fiction authors of our time. He is the author of more than sixty books with more than 50 million copies in print, winner of all the field's highest honors. He was named Grand Master by the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1986. His numerous awards include the 1962 Kalinga prize for science writing, which is administered by UNESCO; the 1969 AAAS_Westinghouse science-writing prize; the Bradford Washbur Award; and the Hugo (2 times), Nebula and John W. Campbell Awards. His bestsellers include Childhood's End; 2001:A Space Odyssey; 2010: Odyssey Two; 2061: Odyssey Three and most recently, 3001: The Final Odyssey, Rama II, The Garden of Rama and Rama Revealed (with Gentry Lee). His most recent work is The Light of Other Days (with Stephen Baxter). *Arthur C. Clark: Unauthorized Homepage.*.http://www.lsi.usp.br/~rbianchi/clarke/ACC.Homepage.html

[189]*Arthur C. Clark: Unauthorized Homepage.* http://www.lsi.usp.br/~rbianchi/clarke/ACC.Homepage.html

> *"Permanent or removable implants (similar to contact lenses) for the eyes, as well as cochlear implants will provide input and output between the human user and the worldwide computing network. Direct neural pathways have been perfected for high bandwidth connection to the human brain. A range of neural implants will be available to enhance visual and auditory perception and interpretation, memory and reasoning."*[190]

Nano technology, sensory expansion technologies, virtual worlds, and medicines are the areas of technology advancement that will create the magic of the 'new age'. The future vision of technology will soon offer possibilities in today's world that many would have regarded as magic or miraculous in the past.

Similarly, Cyberspace and Virtual Reality, the space inside one's computer, will be magical, as Virtual Reality will make almost anything possible. Some will argue however, that being only a part of a computer the 'magic' of Virtual Reality does not occur in the physical and real world. Thus, some will come to question the validity of these experiences. At the same time, others will argue that regardless of the fact that a computer is a machine, it will essentially be one capable of extended the physical senses into a virtual realm, creating a reality in a reality, or a fifth dimension. A CBC radio host broadcasted in August of 2000:

> *"That environmental audio has allowed us to interact in a more 3-dimensional environment online and in games. In fact, you're now even able to "scan" yourself into games, allowing you to interact with an online body that is true to your own, paunch and all. Other technologies, such as Immersion.com's Touch Sense technology (formerly the "Feel It Mouse") actually let you "feel" desktop and web pages. Imagine experiencing a window stretch like a rubber band when resizing it; or sensing the weight of a folder's contents when you try to move it; or more real-world experiences, such as visiting an e-commerce web site where you could experience the texture of fabrics, finishes, and lotions. Entering a web site by reaching in and feeling the contours of its environmental design, from a desert landscape to a topographic map of Mars. Or even going to a family web site and while chatting with your sister, reaching out and tickling her too. The latest online sensory phenomena hit the good old olfactory sense, almost a parody following a long line of jokes about "scratch and sniff" websites. DigiScents brings us one step closer to what one some people are affectionately referring to as "Smellovision"."*[191]

Clearly, Virtual Reality is still in its primitive stages, but it is on its way to becoming the tool for sensory expansion. As the 21st century emerges, Kurzweil explains that

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[190]Kurzweil, Ray. *The Age of Spiritual Machines*. Penguin Books, 2000:220
[191]Morning Watch. *Back to the Future*. CBC Radio Community Technology with Sue Braiden
http://www.tinman.org/edge/080200.html

tomorrow's computers will come to understand speech and will be capable of effectively analysing a scene. For example, those needing to understand another language will have immediate translation at hand. Similarly, Virtual Reality systems will eventually develop artificial perception and subsequently will become a useful tool for people with disabilities. Those with sensory disabilities will be able to use artificial perception to re-plan information between senses. Thus, more visual information will be audibly available for the blind and audible information made into visuals will be offered for the deaf.[192]

The main advantage of Virtual Reality will be increased control in options that do not currently exist in the areas of travel, communication, and information access. Currently, the breed of sensory Internet technologies has been developed, inviting humans to immerse themselves in the virtual world. Only more than two decades old, Virtual Reality requires the use of headgears, gloves and a microphone. Even though Virtual Reality systems today are still in their toddler stages, they indicate the 'move' into Cyberspace. Being in a computer-controlled environment, inside Virtual Reality, almost anything will be realized. Cyberspace is ultimately becoming a universe in which the five senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch) will be created by computer simulation. This sensory innovation will extend the physical senses into another realm, appearing much as the every day world. Thus, the symbiosis of magic and technology can feasibly be united in the concept and proposed possibilities of Cyberspace.

Similarly, the 'magic' of technology will also find expression in the real world through the advances in medicine and nano-technology. Ray Kurzweil (1999) explains that

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[192]See Kurzweil, Ray. *The Coming Merging of Mind and Machine*
http://www.kurzweilai.net/meme/frame.html?main=/articles/art0063.html?

currently medical science is inserting computer neural implants to those who are suffering

from Parkinson's disease. Artificial Intelligence scientists believe that technology will

become capable of rebuilding damaged organs. This medical technology will work in

accordance to the individual code in a one's DNA structure that points out organs with

defects. Being the next great leap for humankind, the potential of human genetic engineering

will allow one to request the terms and conditions of modifying their bodies. Artificial

perception technologies, depending on the velocity of technological advances, will attune

more closely with people than is feasibly evident in today's world. First being available for

those with disabilities, artificial sensory abilities will also have great attraction and glamour

to many, as it will offer the possibilities for any experience.[193]

It is little surprise why many in the Neo-Pagan movement see magic and technology

as sisters. Paraphrasing Rushkoff, Davis explains that many "Modern Witches candidly

affirm the link between magic and the computer culture."[194] Davis quotes Rushkoff in an

interview with an urban Neo-Pagan witch named Green Fire who claims that:

> *"High technology and high magic are the same thing. They both use tools from inner resources and outer resources. Magic from the ancient past and technology from the future are both one. That is how we are creating the present; we're speeding up things, we are quickening our energies; time and space are not as rigid as they used to be. Those of us who know how to work through time and space are using our abilities to bend time and space into a reality that will benefit people the most. We humans are all shape shifters. We just learn to access our DNA codes. It's very computer oriented. We are computers; our minds are computers, and our little cells are computers. We are bio-organic computers."* [195]

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[193]See Kurzweil, Ray. *The Coming Merging of Mind and Machine*
http://www.kurzweilai.net/meme/frame.html?main=/articles/art0063.html
[194]Drury, Nevill. *Magic and Cyberspace.* http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIV/MagicCyber.htm
[195]Drury, Nevill. *Magic and Cyberspace.* http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIV/MagicCyber.htm

Neo-Pagans generally regard technology and magic as interchangeable.[196]   Drury quotes

Douglas Rushkoff, author of *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace*. He explains: "the

Neo-Pagan revival makes no distinction between occult magic and high technology. In the

words of one Neo-Pagan, the magic of today is the technology of tomorrow. It's all magic.

It's all technology."[197] To confirm this trend, I asked in my survey if technology and ritual

workings are interchangeable. An astonishing majority of respondents said yes.

Are Magic and Technology Similar?

Yes	No
85%	12%

Neo-pagans are pragmatic, so they are primarily concerned with what works. If technology

creates something useful and practical in the physical world, and if cyber rituals and magical

pursuits can shape a particular religious/spiritual or psychological result, they are

consistent.[198] Neo-Paganism may be one of the first movements to regard the implications

of magic in technology or technology in magic. Similarly, human kind will come to deal with

major decisions in choosing the direction of the future when the power of new technology

will offer the possibility of working magic within it.

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[196]
    Many say no because magic and technology do not mix, at the most basic level. Magic works by bending physical law, allowing an effect to occur that would otherwise be impossible. For example, when a spell caster produces a lightning bolt, he is causing (through an act of will) electrons to flow from one spot to another, despite the fact that the electric potential of the destination may be equal or higher than the source. This is in clear violation of physical law, but the caster has temporarily suppressed that law in their local environment. Thus, magic is a way to tell the universe "Do what I want!" It is very powerful but very personal. Technology is the exact opposite. Technology relies on physical law to operate, and the use of a technological item or skill serves to reinforce the physical law on which it operates. When a technologist shoots a gun, he is relying on the chemical properties of the gunpowder to create a controlled explosion in the gun's chamber and propel the bullet forward. By using this gun repeatedly, he is actually strengthening those chemical properties, making them harder to subvert through magic. Therefore, magic and technology oppose each other. Magic is constantly bending or suppressing physical law, while technology is reinforcing those same laws. Obviously, both cannot succeed when directed at the same physical law. Hence, there is conflict. http://arcanum.sierra.com/us/game/game_magic.html
[197]Drury, Nevill. *Magic and Cyberspace*. http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIV/MagicCyber.htm
[198]Drury, Nevill. *Magic and Cyberspace*. http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIV/MagicCyber.htm

Artificial technology appears to be affecting many in much the same way as magic or animism influenced humanity in the past. In the view of some, technology performs 'magical' operations, instilling fear, fascination and awe. To others, a computer terminal, Cyberspace, and even the telephone and television, conducted by simple electricity, are deep, arcane mysteries. Many have faith in new technology, and extensively use it, but come up empty handed when trying to explain it. The reaction of many with the 'magic' of technology appears to be two sided. Drawn to the 'magic' of the computer, some use technology and derive from it a sense of power and subsequently can become obsessed with that technology. On the other hand, sensing the 'magic' of technology, some approach it with apprehension, persuaded for whatever reason that they cannot control a computer or what occurs in Cyberspace. Some may bring themselves to a state of peril, fearing that someone may be capable of using a computer to dominate them. Thus, science and technology that historically was embedded in magic, has made us re-acquaint magic into our daily lives, and humanity must once again deal with the power of animism.

Chapter 6
Techno Animism and Techno-Paganism

The Techno Pagan is the latest group emerging from the Neo-Pagan Witchcraft fold.

Being an umbrella term, Techno-Paganism divides into two major groupings, each having

its sub-contexts. This chapter will discuss these sub-categorical forms of Techno-Paganism

or Techno-Animism that are referred to as Technophiles, Cyber-Witches, Techno-Mages,

Cyber-Shamans, and Cyber-Gods.

As mentioned earlier, despite the fact that Neo-Pagans revere nature, a relatively high

percentage of them work in the field of technology. Some Neo-Pagans consider themselves

Techno-Pagans, as they "feel that the technological environment shares, in equal measure,

sacred and animated elements found in nature."[199] In my surveys of the Montreal Pagan

Grove and CUPS, this influence of technology on Neo-Paganism inspired me to ask:

Has technology helped you as a pagan/witch in any way?

Yes	No
89%	9%

Even though the majority do not consider themselves as Techno-Pagans, they

acknowledge that technology has enhanced their practices in some form. To many Neo-

Pagans, the use of the Internet as a religious tool is analogous to that of television, but with

differences. Firstly, the Internet is not only a broadcast medium but an interactive one;

Secondly, almost anyone is capable of launching him/herself onto the World Wide Web with

ease and at a small expense; and finally, the Internet is global, and reaches anyone in the

world.

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[199]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm

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In his book *Escape Velocity,* Mark Dery explains that the fusion of two seemingly

inconsistent domains have emerged, technology and Neo-Paganism:

> *"Techno-animism is not easily evident in the products of mainstream technology corporations such as Microsoft, but in the fringe cyber culture those products engendered. For avant-garde roboticists, cyberpunk novelists, Virtual Reality designers, "body art" performance artists, "cyber hippies" and "Techno-Pagans," Techno-Animism is a reality.*"[200]

The underlying philosophy of the cyber worlds discussed in Dery's book has had their

start in the psychedelic culture of the 1960's. He suggests that without the psychedelic

revolution in the 60s, the personal home computer would have been unthinkable. The

discovery and use of LSD opened up avenues of mind expansion innovations and Dery

claims that Microsoft founder Bill Gates and Apple founder Steve Jobs had shared similar

psychedelic experiences that enabled them to conceive of Microsoft and Apple computers.

Dery explains that:

> *"It is well known that most of the creative impulse in the software industry, and indeed much of the hardware has been derived directly from the sixties consciousness movement. Apple cofounder, Steve Jobs went to India, took a lot of acid, studied Buddhism, and came back and said that Edison did more to influence the human race than Buddha, and Microsoft founder Bill Gates was a big psychedelic person at Harvard. It makes perfect sense to me that if you activate your brain with psychedelic drugs, the only way you can describe it is electronically*"[201]

Neo-Paganism, always thought of as a nature religion; and technology, always thought of as

the foe or anti-thesis of anything natural, merge in Neo-Paganism. The Techno-Pagan

believes the computer to be an instrument of uniting and communicating with the collective

mind, and a medium able to expand one's existing senses into a metaphysical reality soon

capable of communicating with 'God.'

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[200]Kakutani, Michiko. *Escape Velocity. An Interesting Look at Cyberculture.*
http://mbhs.bergtraum.k12.ny.us/cybereng/nyt/velocity.htm
[201]Dery, Mark. *Escape Velocity.* From: *Think for Yourself: Question Authority.*
http://www.geocities.com/arno_3/menu.html

What is Techno-Paganism?

There are over 50,000 sites on the World Wide Web about Neo-Pagan Witchcraft.

Most of these web sites do not contain information on Techno-Paganism overtly, nor are

there any references to the many cyber covens that exist online. In demographic studies

conducted by *The Covenant of the Goddess*,[202] Techno-Paganism was not referred to at all,

so it is impossible to estimate how many Techno-Pagans there are in North America.

Aupers (2001) defines Techno Pagans as using "technological tools to access the

divine from a pagan, but not always from a nature oriented approach."[203] Techno-Paganism

is a broad title, much like the Neo-Pagan term. One calls him/her self a Techno-Pagan

depending on what kind of relationship one has with technology. For example, one who

connects with the Pagan community through the Internet via web pages, e-mail, and

listservs[204] may or may not term oneself a Techno-Pagan. A traditional Witch may use web

pages or listservs for research or for communication but may abhor being called a Techno-

Pagan. Those who use Virtual Reality MUDs, MOOs, and chat rooms may also likewise

term himself a Techno-Pagan, but again the same rationale applies here as in the previous

example.

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[202]The Covenant of the Goddess conducted a yearlong poll of Witches and Pagans, starting 1999_JUL. They estimate that the total number of Witches and Pagans in the United States is about 768,400. Most of the demographic data is as expected: There is an atypical age distribution when compared to other religions:
11% are 17 or under; 25% are 18 to 25; 40% are 26 to 39; 23% are 40 to 59; 1% are 60 or over. 86% are registered to vote. This compares with about 50% among American adults generally. This puts their effective size as a voting block at about 1.3 million, approximately half that of Jews and of Muslims in America. 71% are female; 29% male. 13% have military service records. From:http://www.religioustolerance.org/wic_nbr2.htm
[203]Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines*. www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[204]A Listserv group is similar to newsgroups where people exchange information about a wide array of subjects but use the Internet email system to exchange messages. Subscribing to listserv groups adds your name to mailing list so that every time someone sends a message to the group, this message is automatically forwarded to everybody in the mailing list in the form of email.

At the same time, others go a step further with their relationship with technology, and believe that the divine is essentially experienced in the human mind. In this respect, fabricated electronic and synthetic devices are a reflection of that divinity innate in human kind, and provides a doorway to a mystical and/or a spiritual experience. Aupers (2001) explains:

> *"On the surface, Techno-Pagans embody quite a contradiction. They are Dionysian nature worshippers who embrace the Apollonian artifice of logical machines. Techno-Pagans are also magic users who understand that the Western magical tradition has more to offer the world than the occasional product name or theme for yet another hack and slash game. Magic is the science of the imagination, the art of engineering consciousness and exploring the virtual forces that connect the body-mind with the physical world. Techno-Pagans believe that magic can spiritually enhance our dizzying digital environment of intelligent agents, visual databases, as well as online MUDs and MOOs."* [205]

Techno-Paganism is sorted into two variable contexts that rely on the manner in which followers may affiliate him/herself with technology in general. The first group of Techno-Pagans support the use of technology as a tool for spiritual development, but do not believe that Cyberspace is an extension of heaven or the astral plane. This first group may use technology within their rituals conducted online. Jenkins et al explain that Techno-Pagans in this category believe: "technology itself does not possess any spiritual character, it is simply a tool."[206] This first category of Techno-Paganism is an umbrella term further categorized into two sub-contexts: Technophiles and Cyber-Witches. Both of these groups use technology as only a tool, but differ in how they use technology and apply it to their daily lives.

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[205] Aupers, Stef. *Revenge of the Machines.* www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/aupers.htm
[206] Jenkins, Sielolhof, Clark *Technopaganism.* http://www.flindersclubs.asn.au/pagan/journal/oct1999/techno.html

Pagan Technophiles

The site *Techno-Paganism* defines a Technophile as one who:

"Observes technology as a worthwhile instrument, but not central to one's spiritual beliefs. They are traditional earth spiritualists who enjoy using technology to communicate, but do not use it in their rituals or spiritual expression. A typical example would be a modern witch who maintains a web page, or Druids who spend a lot of time on internet chats discussing their beliefs and ritual experiences. "[207]

Thus, the Technophile uses technology as a tool, and has no deeper involvement. The use of technology in this manner is useful to those living in distant rural lands or in the Bible belt of North America where locating any Neo-Pagans is impossible. For the Technophile, those unable to access a pagan contact, or obtain supplies of any kind, technology offers the tools to reach into the new community of Neo-Paganism, created in Cyberspace.

Cyber-Witches

Cyber-Witches vary from other Neo-Pagan Witches by leading rituals online. It is explained that Cyber-Witches:

"Are often members of online covens, they partake to an online Book of Shadows, and also meet to carry on their rituals within Virtual Reality through Web Chats, IRC, MUD/ MOOs, or even in VRML. A step ahead of the Technophiles, Cyber-Witches will create virtual circles, often using virtual tools, and can replicate compass points online so that they can be easily referred to. Although they have embraced technology to the extent that they are willing to work within the virtual framework, their beliefs are very much in keeping with other Neo-Pagan Witches who do not work online. They view the Internet as an energy system that reflects earth energy, and thus see no need to recreate their earth rituals for use in Cyberspace. "[208]

The *Wired* article *The Goddess in Every Woman's Machine*,[209] Paulina Borsook (1995) demonstrates a role of Cyber-Witches. Borsook illustrates the Cyber-Witch as various female technicians who engage themselves with Techno-Pagan ideas, magical

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[207] Jenkins, Sielolhof, Clark *Technopaganism.* http://www.flindersclubs.asn.au/pagan/journal/oct1999/techno.html

[208] Jenkins, Sielolhof, Clark *Technopaganism.* http://www.flindersclubs.asn.au/pagan/journal/oct1999/techno.html

[209] *Wired.* Borsook, Paulina. *The Goddess in Every Woman's Machine.* July 1995. http://www.wired.com

practices and online rituals.[210] Thus, Cyber-Witches will use the tools of technology along

with running cyber covens, and the use of chat programs to participate in rituals online.

Branwin, a High Priest of both a cyber coven and an earth-bound coven, allowed me

to witness an online ritual conducted in a Yahoo chat room using a microphone and a web

cam. The online ritual had all the trappings of a traditional rite, the casting of sacred space

and the calling down of the sun and moon. The only difference was that there was a

computer a foot from the altar, and the entire room was captured online and broadcasted to

the others participating in the rite. At the same time, those participating in the rite via the

Internet, were visible on the computer terminal, and able to follow our every step and

gesture. To those searching for cyber-covens can find an array of them online. Cyber-covens

are increasingly becoming the new mode of worship for many Neo-Pagans.

Cyber Spirituality

The second category of Techno-Paganism believes that Cyberspace is an actual place that has

its own laws and spirituality. Jenkins et al define this group as:

> "Unlike the Technophiles and Cyber-Witches, do not see technology merely as a tool, but as
> something spiritual in its own right. Since Cyberspace is quite distinct from Earth space, they will not
> even try to translate earth-based rituals and magic for use in the virtual domain. Instead, they will
> use distinct laws and rituals suitable for Cyberspace, but no less meaningful than their earth-bound
> Pagan counterparts. Like Technophiles and Cyber-Witches, this group is not homogenous."[211]

Like the first group of Techno-Paganism, the second is also an umbrella term. Separated into

three sub-categories, this grouping of Techno-Paganism is known as the Techno-Mages,

Cyber-Shaman, and Cyber-Gods.

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[210] *Wired.* Borsook, Paulina. *The Goddess in Every Woman's Machine.* July 1995. http://www.wired.com
[211] Jenkins, Sielolhof, Clark *Technopaganism.* http://www.flindersclubs.asn.au/pagan/journal/oct1999/techno.html

Techno-Mage

The first sub-category is the Techno-Mage who endeavors to express the magic of technology in tangible terms. The Techno-Mage will employ technology as a tool, using their computer to do or represent something. In so doing the Techno-Mage will:

> *"Build electronic graphical altars for spell work and ritual. They will codify the laws of magic, as they exist within Cyberspace, rather than trying to transplant them from their natural origins. The Techno-Mage creates new rituals and new ways of expressing their spirituality, and these methods can only have meaning within the virtual domain. They have acknowledged that it is not Earth, but that it is nevertheless something, and that magic can work within Cyberspace so long as you reexamine the basic principles upon which it is founded.* "[212]

The Techno-Mage regards the constructed entities and environments found in technology as natural. He estimates that these fabricated intelligences and cyber-organic enhancements are extensions of consciousness, which symbolize divine creation, and is therefore, not separate from religious worship. The Techno-Mage regards the idea of new technology as a natural entity, as portrayed in the pantheistic world view. This lessons the impact of belief in the previously mentioned idea that artificial life is monstrous and destructive as represented in the golem or Frankenstein myths.

While Neo-Pagan rites in general may vary, the stage is commonly set by invoking the four elements which are believed to be composed of all matter. Normally symbolized by colored candles, or artistic representations, the four elements of earth, air, water and fire, are in the Techno-Mage view, replaced with silicon, plastic, wire and glass. Davis supplies the perfect example of a Techno-Mage rite, he explains:

> *"Tonight's Watchtowers are four 486 PCs networked through an Ethernet and linked to a SPARC station with an Internet connection. Pesce is attempting to link old and new, and his setup points out the degree to which our society has replaced air, earth, fire, and water with silicon, plastic, wire, and glass. The four monitors face into the circle, glowing patiently in the subdued light. Each machine is running WorldView, and each screen shows a different angle on a virtual space that a crony of Pesce's*

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[212]Jenkins, Sielolhof, Clark *Technopaganism.* http://www.flindersclubs.asn.au/pagan/journal/oct1999/techno.html

concocted with 3D Studio. An ornate altar stands on a silver pentagram; four multicolored polyhedrons representing the elements hover around the circle; a fifth element, a spiked and metallic "chaos sphere," floats about like some ominous foe from Doom. WorldView is a virtual based coordinate system, and Pesce has planted this cozy virtual world at its very heart. As Pesce explains to the crowd, the circle is navigable independently on each PC, and simultaneously available on the World Wide Web to anyone using WorldView. More standard Web browsers linked to the Cyber-Samhain site would also turn up the usual pages of text and images, in this case, invocations and various digital fetishes downloaded and hyperlinked by a handful of online Pagans scattered around the world. [213]

For the Techno mage, the use of multi-oriented objects (MOOs) is essential. As mentioned previously MOOs link physical reality with the virtual, and provides the framework for interaction. Regarding magic as influencing the physical world in accord with the will of the magician means that the use of MOOs can be seen as a form of magic, as it affects, molds, and sustains the virtual world.

Cyber-Shaman

A Shaman is an individual capable of transferring to the spiritual plane by inducing an ecstatic or trance state. Using the tools of a traditional Shaman as music, drugs, meditation, and dance, the Cyber Shaman is similar. A *Wired* article entitled *Zippies,* exemplifies the Cyber-Shaman. Its author, Jules Marshall uncovers a growing movement that refers to themselves as 'Zen Inspired Professional Pagans' otherwise termed as 'Zippies', cyber crusties or techno hippies. Like the Techno or Cyber Shaman, Marshall explains that Zippies integrate "the rave scene and the shamanistic way of thinking with technology. The Zippie is someone who has balanced their hemispheres achieving a fusion of the technological and the spiritual. In 1994 a reported 200,000 Zippies resided in the UK" [214]

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[213] *Wired.* Davis, Erk. *Techno-pagans. May the Astral Plane be Reborn in Cyberspace.* 1995 http://www.wired.com
[214] *Wired.* Marshall, Jules. *Zippies.* May 1994 http://www.wired.com

The Cyber-Shaman will use programming and synthesized music to induce a shamanic experience. Jenkins et al explain that the Cyber Shaman:

> *"Replaces the horn dance around a campfire with Techno music, dance, drugs and the rave scene to induce their ecstatic states. Where a computer programmer sees computers sending packets of information along wire lines, a Cyber-Shaman sees an energy network where they can journey to, experience and commune with."*[215]

The ideology of Cyber or Techno Shamanism has had its start in the wave of rave parties. The introduction of techno and trance music at raves has opened up ways of inducing trance like states through the use of music. Thus, a Cyber-Shaman will induce an ecstatic state with trance music and then journey through Cyberspace or Virtual Reality with the use of MOOs. The Cyber-Shaman does not see the technological world through customary perspectives as a medium of communication, but rather as a spiritual paradigm.

Cyber-Gods

Cyber-Gods are the last category under the second grouping of the Techno-Pagan umbrella. To the Cyber-God, Cyberspace is alive and pulsating with a real energy. Unlike the Techno-Mage and Cyber-Shaman, the Cyber-God does not believe that the journey or the acts performed within Cyberspace are sufficient. Cyber-Gods will use Cyberspace and the process of creation within Cyberspace as a means to better understand divinity and their place within it. The site *Techno-Paganism* clarifies Cyber-Gods:

> *"As programmers who walk a mile in the Gods' shoes, hoping to better understand them. One of the more popular concepts amongst Cyber-Gods is that of mythic space, where several people collaborate within Cyberspace to create a space that can be experienced independent of the creators. Cyber-Gods come from a variety of backgrounds, and have a variety of beliefs, any of which may or may not be in keeping with the traditional Neo-Paganism movement. For Cyber-Gods, the framework is primary, not belief or ritual."*[216]

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[215]Jenkins, Sielolhof, Clark *Technopaganism.* http://www.flindersclubs.asn.au/pagan/journal/oct1999/techno.html
[216]Jenkins, Sielolhof, Clark *Technopaganism.* http://www.flindersclubs.asn.au/pagan/journal/oct1999/techno.htm l

An example of a Cyber-God is exemplified in Mark Pesce, creator of VRML, which is a technology that creates navigable and hyperlinked 3-D spaces in Cyberspace. Davis explains:

> "Pesce spends his time practicing kundalini yoga, and boning up on Aleister Crowley's Thelemic magic. Pesce's collaborator, Tony Parisi at Intervista Software, will soon release a 3-D graphical Web browser called WorldView, which will add a crucial spatial dimension to the Web's tangled 2-D hyperspace of home pages, links, and endless URLs. Collaborating in Cyberspace, Pesce's and Parisi have created WorldView and VRML, which may well end up being a catalyst for the expansion of Cyberspace."[217]

Thus, Cyber-Gods are individuals involved in the creation process of artificial intelligences within Cyberspace, and Virtual Reality. Cyber-Gods can also be and software developers who are involved in creating particular games. Based on the developer's imagination, computer games refelct their creators imagination. By playing these computer games one is immersing him/herself into the world of the developer, which can be construed as entering the developer's mind and playing with his recreated demons and/or Gods.

Becoming a Techno-Pagan

From the stance of the first category of Techno-Paganism (Pagan Technophiles and Cyber-Witches), people become Techno-Pagans for reasons of amenity and comfort. For some, a cyber-coven can be very appealing and practical if one is unable to meet or find other Neo-Pagans in their surrounding area. In the second category, becoming a Techno-Pagan, as in a Techno-Mage, relies on the desire to use a precise magical philosophy as Chaos magic.[218] Similarly, the Cyber-Shaman must have a desire to express spirituality with the

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[217] *Wired.* Davis, Erik. *Techno-pagans. May the Astral Plane be Reborn in Cyberspace.* http://www.wired.com 1995
[218] Many modern magicians are delving into something they call chaos magick. This is not really a new "theory" of magic, but rather a new method of doing it. Chaos magicians emphasize the importance of personal experience and using what works for the individual. There is no dogma for chaos magick. There can't be, since each magician uses his own method to achieve results. This allows the modern, or chaos, magician to choose from any past tradition or use parts of several traditions incorporating both ancient myth and science fiction into the same practical application of magic. It is the intent of the magician that determines whether a combination will succeed or fail.

use of computers and trance music. For both these sub-groups Cyberspace is an actual place with other worldly conceptions, shrouded in mystery waiting to be discovered. Techno-Paganism has infused everyday technology with mysticism and magic, and is similar to how a traditional Neo-Pagan infuses mundane and traditional objects with spiritual qualities.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

Clearly, in a post-industrial world, religion continues to influence the social realm, as religious and spiritual movements continue to grow in both traditional and non-traditional fashions. Spirirtual changes in the traditional sense is seen in the expansion of Protestant forms in Christianity. This growth is evident in the surge of non-traditional forms of religion and spirituality. In some cases, the latter takes the form of NRM as Neo-Paganism and subsequently, religion becomes a part of technology, a realm where one would not have thought possible.

Some sociologists have forecast that the influence of religion would decline as technology rises. Yet, in the twenty first century, religion continues to have impact on the majority of people, the economy, politics and society. In the last few decades church participation patterns have oscillated, but current quantitative data indicate a tilt toward decreases. Quantitative data also show that many people continue to believe in some form of faith. Some of these are emerging faiths, otherwise known as New Religious Movements that are planting the divine in technology, and technology in the divine.

Cyberspace provides the framework for some of these New Religions, and the cause of the re-emergence of animism is found in Artificial Intelligence. On the surface, Artificial Intelligence is nothing more than a machine that can learn, a toaster for example, that can record our preferences and learn to make toast just how we like it. The Internet is nothing more than a space where bunches of computers communicate and exchange information through the transmission of data. Yet, for many, the Internet is more than just a sum of its

parts. As the meeting place of many minds, it has become the sum of those minds and the ideas exchanged. Subsequently, the Internet is increasingly leading a life of its own and, is developing an autonomous spiritual essence. The medium where multiplicities of ideas are being exchanged has become the voice of the collective unconscious. New technologies and their off springs, Cyberspace and artificially intelligent organisms cannot be measured in a literal sense, nor can their beginning, end or evolutionary path be predicted. This has caused some of those most involved with these technologies to develop techno-animistic tendencies.

The appeal of Neo-Paganism clearly lies in a consumer philosophy that addresses modern social, sexual, ecological, and technological issues. As an autonomous new religion, Neo-Pagan Witchcraft provides a welcome alternative to the more pervasive, highly structured and often rigid religious traditions. Contradistinctly, in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft, there is no central authority or liturgy; and various traditions have their own autonomy, philosophy and beliefs which are traced to Gerald Gardner.

Defined as a nature based religion, Neo-Paganism is often conceived as an ecology-based theology, grounded in ancient matriarchal myths. Only recently have Neo-Pagans discovered the power and magic of technology. Using the fluidity that so defines Neo-Paganism, Techno-Pagans have merely transplanted earth-bound rites into the new world of Cyberspace. For the Techno-Pagan, only the tools used in the quest for spirituality have changed.

One may question if the nature based Neo-Pagan tradition is flexible enough to accept and embrace new groups that have substituted nature with technology. In my opinion, due to the very nature of Neo-Paganism, a faith characterized by autonomy and flexibility,

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Techno-Pagans are a rightful form of Neo-Paganism, as a traditional Witch may attempt to travel through Cyberspace as a Cyber-Shaman would, or a Techno-Mage may conduct an earth bound ritual. Branwin, one of my subjects for this study is an example, as he is currently a member of both a Cybercoven and a traditional, earth-bound one. Thus, the potential of creating and crossing boundaries in their quest of spirituality does exist, showing the flexibility and tolerance of this movement.

As we advance into the twenty first century, the computer is evolving from being 'a typewriter on steroids' to a vehicle of salvation, spiritual growth and enlightenment. The same science that has freed humanity of animism is now causing it to re-emerge. Neo-Paganism, animistic at its core, is a stage where the interplay of faith and technology, once two opposing concepts, are now being re-integrated. Cyberspace expresses the growing plurality of greater society and religion, becoming a framework where anything goes. The Internet can certainly offer new and innovative religious and spiritual experiences, but for now only those who have a flexible enough theology will embrace it.

Many Neo-Pagans, Techno-Pagans among them, believe that the dominant religions that took form of the Piscean age have served their purpose and no longer reflect the needs and goals of modern man. The dualism character of the Piscean age, which separated the good from the bad, man over nature, is no longer appropriate in a pluralist world suffering from the eco-disasters left in its wake. Many believe that in order for these religions to survive, they must move out of the Piscean mould and evolve into its Aquarian form. So questions arise as: will the practice of some traditional religions need to be altered in order to suit the needs of the contemporary follower? Will traditional religious leaders incorporate

new technologies into worship, or are Neo-Pagans the first and the last to do so? As we enter the Aquarian age, the new age, some forms of traditional religions are suffering from a decline in membership,[219] while other traditional faiths and new religions flexible enough to express the pluralism of western society are taking their place.

As for all the breakthroughs of AI, highly intelligent machines are still decades away and the possibilities proposed by Artificial Intelligence does make one wonder about its efficaciousness. Despite this, Artificial Intelligence research continues, and machines will eventually grow more like humans. The pursuit for Artificial Intelligence is currently one of the most important undertakings. As learning about AI progresses, the more humanity will learn about itself. Not only are many learning more about the sense and importance of Artificial Intelligence, they are also shaping and forming the future relationships with the upcoming technological marvels.

Though the technical questions of AI are complex, the social and philosophical concerns raised by its prospects will be no less complicated. Many fear the event of robots becoming more human, and the possibility of displacement. In this negative sense, many may question whether machines should be trusted with individual lives, to whom is assigned the responsibility when something goes amiss, and does one have full control over the machines? People have already become fascinated with the potential of robots, and the development of robot characters in movies has reflected and perpetuated that fascination. As robots become more like humans, as has been forecasted by Kurzweil, it is unlikely that they will turn

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[219]See consensus Canada. 1998

against humans. Though any questions that one has of technology will have to be sorted

through within society, as developments in Artificial Intelligence continue.

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1. List in order of preference (1=highest 10=lowest) those features that most attracted you to Modern Witchcraft

    ___ Reverence for dual divinity   ___ Magic and ritual
    ___ Reverence for nature   ___ Simplicity in life
    ___ Personal Growth   ___ Political and social action
    ___ Creating a new world approach   ___ Escape from convention
    ___ Spirituality of sensuality and self expression   ___ Sense of community

2. How many years have you been involved in Modern Witchcraft?

    A) 0-1   B)1-5   C) 5-10   D) 10-20

3. What Pagan Path are you follow?

    A) Traditional   B)Dianic   C)Eclectic   D) Techno   E)Other (specify)

4. Do you view Modern Witchcraft as a New Religion

    A) Yes   B) No   Feel free to comment why

5. Do you view Magic and Technology as similar?

    A) Yes   B) No

6. What are the common features of Modern Witchcraft?

    ___ Worship of the Feminine   ___ Focus on Nature
    ___ Working of magic and psychic powers   ___ Ethics and threefold law
    ___ Male and female worship   ___ Undecided

7. How do you worship

    A) Groupor Coven   B) Solitaire   C) Both

8. Has Tecnology helped you as a Witch/Pagan in any way?

    A) Yes   B) No

Concordia
UNIVERSITY

Summary Protocol Form

Date: December 1, 2005

What type of review do you recommend that this form receive? Expedited ☐ or Full ☑

Part One: Basic Information

1. <u>Names of Researchers</u>:

    Principal Investigator: Bill Koulakis

    Department/Program: History and Philosophy of Religion

    Office address:

    Telephone number:

    Names and details for all other researchers involved (e.g., co-investigators, collaborators, research associates, research assistants, supervisors – please specify role):

    Fred Bird: Supervisor

2. <u>Title of Research Project</u>:

    Demystification and Transmutation: Neo-Pagan Witchcraft in the 21st Century

3. <u>Granting Agency, Grant Number and Title OR Contract and Contract Title (if applicable.)</u>:

    No Grants

4. <u>Brief Description of Research</u>:
    For funded research, please include one-page summary; otherwise, include a brief overall description. Include a statement of the benefits likely to be derived from project. You can address these questions by including the summary page from the grant proposal.

    Aside from textual and Internet research, studies were conducted in public meetings in the form of anonymous questionnaires. Said questionnaire was randomly handed out to those individuals who were willing to participate. Another form of research involved personal interviews

5. Scholarly Review of Proposed Research:

    Minimal risk involved. Much research data has been obtained through anonymous questionnaires or secondary sources.

Part Two: Research Participants

1. Sample of Persons to be Studied:

    Along with those at the public meetings, interviewed participants are open and public Neo-Pagan individuals.

2. Method of Recruitment of Participants:

    In the public meetings, announcements to my questionnaire were made and those willing filled out a questionnaire. Interviews were one on one, conducted in closed quarters and were recorded in order to note precise wordings. During the interviews, specific questions were asked and resposes were recorded accordingly.

3. Treatment of Participants in the Course of the Research:
    A brief summary of procedure, as well an account of the training of researchers/assistants.

    As mentioned course of research involving living subjects have been conducted through anonymous questionnaires and verbal interviews.

Part Three: Ethical Concerns
Indicate briefly how research plan deals with the following potential ethical concerns:

1. Informed Consent:
    Please indicate how you will obtain consent from your participants. Written consent form and/or oral script must be attached. Please note, written consent forms must follow the format of the sample model provided at the end of this form.

    Written consent forms will be used.

2. Deception:

    No deception involved in the course of research.

3. <u>Freedom to Discontinue</u>:

   Subjects were well aware of their freedom and only replied to those interview questions that they felt they were privledged to answer.

4. <u>Assessment of Risks to Subjects' Physical Wellbeing, Psychological Welfare, and/or Reputation</u>:

   It might be argued that this research put its subjects at more than ordinary reputational risk, though not at any sustainable level. The majority of the research was based upon anonymous survey data or secondary sources. Additional research was based on confidential sources through interviews but subjects were not identified by their legal name. Therefore, no one was put at additional risk because of this research.

5. <u>Protecting and/or Addressing Participant "At Risk" Situations</u>:

   As mentioned data was obtained through anonymous survey research surveys, and no legal names were used in this process.

6. <u>Post-Research Explanation and/or Debriefing</u>:

   Research is explained or relayed within study.

7. <u>Confidentiality of Results</u>:

   As mentioned, the survey questionnaires are anonymous and identities of interview subjects subjects are not revealed.

8. <u>Data Handling</u>:
   Please describe the path of your data from collection to storage to its eventual destruction/disposal. Include specific details on data handling, data storage (format and location), who will have access, and disposal/destruction method.

   Data is stored in home on personal computer.
9. <u>Other Comments</u>:

   No Comments

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date: <u>December 1, 2005</u>_____

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *Demystification and Trasmutation: Neo-Pagan Witchcraft in the 21ˢᵗ Century*

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Bill Koulakis of the Religion Department of Concordia University,

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to validate survey questions as well as textual theory.

B. PROCEDURES

Research is conducted in closed quarters ie. the subjects home. Subjects are expected to answer questions put fourth by the researcher which are recorded onto a voice tape recorder. Expected time will not be more than an hour. All subjects are anonymous and will use a pseudonym.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

Minimal to no risk involved

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

*   I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

*   I understand that my participation in this study is confidential: the researcher will know, but will not disclose my identity.

*   I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print)   *Dreamweaver*

SIGNATURE

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NAME (please print)   *Branwin*

SIGNATURE

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NAME (please print)   GARINDA

SIGNATURE