New Spiritualities, Gender Differences and Belief Systems

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The visible world was generated.
The workings of water and fire,
Life and death,
The myriad kalpas, and
The light of primordial yang were initiated.
The two principles of yin and yang
Used them to carve out the three realms.
The holy sages mounted them,
To attain union with the transcendent.
The five sacred peaks hold them,
And are thereby filled with spiritual power.
All things possessing them have life breath (ch'I).

(Saso 1978, 201)

Introduction

The above text is from the Ling-pao Five Talismans liturgy. It involves a world view with the Taoist sense of value and way of structuring knowledge. The earliest religion in China was shamanism, a world view in which this physical world is but one of the two worlds. The other, the more significant world, is the spiritual one. The shaman is someone who in a trance could pass between the two worlds. They could change their shapes and become the totem animals through which they could move into and out of the spirit world. This world with its systems of beliefs has been among the interests of Mihály Hoppál. He has done field work widely, mostly in the East, among people who have old shamanistic traditions and beliefs (see, e.g., Hoppál 1985). His approaches have been ethnohermeneutics (see Hoppál 1992) and ethnosemiotics (see Hoppál 1996). He has, for example, investigated animism, which still plays a very important role in the shamanism of Northern Siberian peoples. Mihály Hoppál has also written about different concepts of the soul, the different types of shamanistic spirit helpers, and the forms

of their representation.. He has been interested in what kind of symbols they play with and what kind of roles they play. His answers to these questions have given us a deeper understanding of shamanism. Mihály Hoppál has shown us, moreover, that shamanism is involved in the cult of the dead, of ancestors and mountains, and in rituals of animal sacrifice. The deepest meaning of the world view and belief system of animism in Siberian shamanism is in its interpretation of the balance between man and nature.

Mihály Hoppál's academic work has been in a different world than my own. I have been engaged in research involving Western young people since 1976. My doctoral thesis, "Nuorten maailmankuva" (The World View of Young People, 1987; published in English by Annales Academia Scientiarum Fennica 1993) was based on a 10-year longitudinal study on young people born in Helsinki area in 1965 and 1968. The shaping of world views of the same 41 girls and 31 boys was observed in 1976, 1982-3, 1984-5 and later in 1989-90, 1992-93 and 1996-7. Comparative data was collected in 1989-90, 1992-3 and 1995-6 in the Helsinki area and in some rural localities. The sample included 107 upper secondary school pupils, 52 vocational school pupils, 27 university or other students, plus 54 working young people. In 1995-96 457 young people were investigated (see Appendix 1). My material is composed of questionnaires, attitude scales, individual and group interviews and psychological tests. Some interviews were video-taped. The results were analyzed using multivariate statistical methods and qualitative content analysis. Different methods for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data were used to complement each other.

My study among contemporary young people has involved entirely different research methods and approaches than Mihály Hoppál's research, yet even so, we have shared an interest in people's belief systems and world views. In this article, therefore, I shall refer to the results of my empirical research into world views (see Helve 1993b, 14-24; Hoppál 1982, 129; Penner 2000, 61-62) and values (see Helve 1993a; and 2002, Chapter 1) to examine both the "new spirituality" and gender differences in world views and belief systems.

In the world views and values of young people these days we find a "spirituality" which in some respects comes close to the shamanistic belief systems. I use the term "spirituality" here in the sense of an individual faith, which in this case arises within secular societies where organized religions are unpopular and where people are searching for more spiritual content in their lives. Since there are many alternative forms of such "spirituality" I prefer to use the plural form, "spirituali-

ties." The primary spirituality that I am referring to here is related to a specific world view, which I found evidence of in my empirical follow-up study. This new type of world view, the Green, is not like traditional religious paradigms based on a religious authority, such as the Bible, the Koran, the Veda, the Tripitaka, etc.; or on ecstatic religious experiences of contact with the supernatural, referred to as God, the spirits of the deceased or extraterrestrial visitors. The Green world view has (environmental) beliefs about the world, mankind, and existence according to which, e.g., animals could have the same status and rights as people (animal rights vs. human rights). This world view can turn human spirituality and experiences of the natural world into a rapt mystery, with a romanticism that seems excessive at times. For example, in Finland we have had the so called "fox girls" who liberated thousands of captive foxes from fur farms because they believe that foxes should have the same sort of basic right to liberty as people. (Unfortunately many of these foxes died of starvation and exposure as a result, but that's another story.) This world view promotes a relationship with the natural world of forests, lakes and animals, and concern for environmental questions with spiritual nuances. (For a more detailed analysis see Helve 2001, cf. Hoppál 1985.)

In any case this is a secular world view, which has own beliefs, attitudes and values, not based on science or religion, but on a spiritual dimension within human nature – within one's own (ecological and environmental) moral and values, doctrines and rituals – integrating oneself with the natural world holistically (not scientifically, as do those of the scientific world view) (Whaling 1987, 8). This kind of spirituality is in many respects comparable with the new spiritualities and New Age phenomena. Paul Heelas for example (1996, 41; Woodhead & Heelas 2000, 112) has, instead of using the term "New Age", referred to "spiritualities of life," which to my mind means giving some kind of spiritual values to life itself. Susumo Shimazono (1999, 121-122) as well has coined the alternative terms of "World of the Spiritual" and "New Spirituality Movements and Culture" (NSMC) to be used in place of New Age. To these authors spirituality means that people have a direct experience of the sacred (for more see Cousin 1987, 306 –335).

The Rise of New Spiritualities.

Changes in Western industrial societies have led to a religious revival. The Vietnam War gave rise to a counter culture. Young people's rebellion against the Vietnam War was the beginning of many new religious movements. These same young people also rebelled against the materialism of modern culture. The new

spirituality movements and cultures such as the "New Age" inspired them with ideals of spontaneity, love and freedom. This also led to a certain commercialization and personal disorganization associated with drug use, yet, ironically, this movement still rejected materialism (Glock and Bellah 1976, Tipton 1984). From this point on a large number of new religious movements, cultures and spiritualities have been springing up in the USA and Western Europe, where mainstream churches in particular have lost members. Especially young people have been interested in new cults and sects (Bruce 1996, 169).

A generation later, the changes in societies after the collapse of communism have lead to a feeling that we are at a turning point in history. Radical changes which have taken place have resulted in the break up of the modernist paradigm of Marxism and centralized economic planning in formerly communist countries. However, there is also a strong modernist backlash against post-modernism (Jencks 1996, 477). For example, many physicists do not want to accept the uncertainty principle, chaos theory and other manifestations of post-modern theories. Still there is no denying that recent developments – from ecological crises such as the greenhouse effect right up to the recent terrorist attacks – have been signaling a shift in our epistemological structures: in what we accept as grounds for knowledge and in the way we understand the world. This is leading to an emphasis on the continuity of nature and reconsideration of the nature of science. It does not mean complete skepticism and an end to all master narratives and beliefs (cf. Lyotard's (1996) "meta-narrative"). It supports relative absolutism and the idea that truth propositions are time- and context-sensitive. This also signals a change many people's values; a greater openness to the transcendental.

It is still worth remembering, however, that all of these changes are taking place within what is still a very secular society. Secularization refers to the process whereby religion loses its influence over the various spheres of social life. The rise of modern science and industry seriously affected the significance of religion, which has become less of a central force in social life than it was prior to the modern age. In Western countries today more emphasis is being put on individualistic beliefs than on collective values. This is especially true among young people (Helve 1993a). Durkheim's theory of the importance of ceremony and ritual in binding the members of groups together no longer seems to be relevant (Durkheim 1912, 1995; also see Hamilton 1995, 97-109 and Idinopulos & Wilson 2002).

Has science replaced these collective structures? Have humanist social values such as freedom or equality and social cooperation replaced the old religious

moral values? Are these new values fostered by civil religions (cf. Bellah 1976)? As has been noted, civil rituals often replace and take over the functions of religious ones (see Lawson & McCauley 1990, 165; Pye 1972, 78-80). Such symbols as the flag and the national anthem at athletic events are examples of such new civil rituals. For example, in 1995 the Finnish national ice hockey team won the world championship and within an hour hundreds of young people gathered in Helsinki waving Finnish flags. To indulge in a bit of understatement, this powerfully reaffirmed the Finnish national identity. Whether such an activity is really some kind of civil religion in this context, however, is still debatable.

The case is also unclear when we speak of NSMCs. Even if they have similar symbols and practices with traditional religions, their meaning for young people may not be the same as for traditional believers (cf. Helve 1986, 1989, 1991, and 1993b). The beliefs and values of young people may reflect some phenomena of new spirituality movements and cultures. Their values are more post-modern than those of their parents and older generations, who picked up their values from the traditional religions and ideologies (Helve 2001, 191-218; Inglehart 1997). Young people are more free to choose different values according to the situations in which they find themselves.

In the first part of this paper the concepts of 'New Spirituality', 'belief' and 'disbelief' and their connections to belief systems, world views and values will be discussed. I will also discuss the socialization of belief systems and world views. The second part analyses an empirical case study of the belief systems, attitudes and values of young Finns, representing a European Union country with a Nordic welfare system, highly developed new technology networks, and largely post-materialistic values (see Inglehart 1997, 151). I will try to show the ongoing changes and gender differences in the beliefs and values of young people. Part three discusses how the hidden assumptions of the 'new spiritualities' shape not only concepts of religious belief but also value systems and world views.

Part 1. The New Spirituality Movements and Cultures

The concept of NSMCs is used loosely to describe a wide range of beliefs and practices. These movements' philosophy is rooted in ancient traditions, sometimes based on mystical experiences, each within a different context. It is not widely realized that the first encounters with these spiritual and magical traditions actually took place much more than a century ago (Heelas 1996, 41-42). New spirituality movements such as the "New Age" selectively combine aspects of many traditions

to create a new multicultural mixture with aspects of Eastern religions, Western esotericism with psychological components, and some tribal cultures (mainly native American; African cultures are almost absent, as are Muslim cultures).[1] All in all, "New Age" represents a whole cornucopia of beliefs and rituals; an undefined sort of religion, claiming vague connections with Christianity and the major faiths of the East, as well as an occasional dab of pantheism and sorcery.

The greatest growth in the these movements has been in the United States. This is not surprising, as they are based there on an already existing but dormant religious/philosophical movement that had peaked in the nineteenth century, when Oriental religions and the European occult tradition had a great impact on the intellectual elite of America (Rogge 1997).[2]

The Concepts of "Belief" and "Disbelief"

We are speaking of "belief" and "disbelief" here in a religious context (regarding disbelief see, e.g., Deconchy 1991,14). In our western culture we are used to thinking in dichotomies such as "belief" and "disbelief." We tend to think of belief as having a cognitive component, but there is a non-cognitive component as well (see Parsons 1971, 207-245; and Connolly 1980). This distinguishes religion from philosophy and science, both of which are purely intellectual disciplines. In a religious world view there is a contrast between the transcendent or supernatural and the natural. Most expressions of religious belief are not subject to what we call empirical verification. It is very difficult to scientifically measure religious belief or disbelief or some kind of religious experience. Individuals have a need to maintain stable relationships between the elements of cognition, feeling and behavior.

In sociological terms religiosity has often been seen as a dependent variable which correlates with such variables as age, sex, family background, and membership in a group (Brown 1987, 5). It is thought to be caused by predictable psychological factors. This, however, neglects the effects of religious experience itself, which are very difficult to evaluate scientifically.

Identifying religious variables is neither an easy nor straightforward process. The measuring of religious beliefs, attitudes, feelings and experiences has

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[1] This issue has been discussed more widely in the article "Globalisation or Westernization? New Age as a Contemporary Transnational Culture" by Liselotte Frisk (2001, 31-41).

[2] One of the American psychologists of the time was William James (1842-1910) who called for a serious study of paranormal phenomena. He played a leading part in the founding, in 1885, of the American Society for Psychical Research. A noteworthy event was also the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893.

been undertaken in studies of the psychology of religion, comprised of gathering statistical data, e.g., on church attendance, or observing relevant behavior, such as prayer habits. Several alternative techniques, such as focused interviews, have also been applied to the study of religions and ideologies. Models of religiosity have been constructed with reference to combinations of these different forms of religious expression (for more on methods of measuring religiosity, see Brown 1987, 48-73). Multi-dimensional measures of religiosity have become generally accepted since being religious involves different kinds of behavior which are measurable as dimensions (cf. Glock & Stark 1966; Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi 1975, 5). Religion has also been operationalized as a personal value: e.g., W. A. Scott gives a list of 12 values which, besides religion, included intellectualism, kindness, social skills, creativity, independence and self-control (Scott 1965; Wulff 1991, 586-591).

In the study of young people's religious belief systems we must first discover their formal or internal cognitive structure which filters their perception of the world and daily life. In other words we have to investigate their world views. Belief systems involve different variables representing beliefs, to which they can adhere with more or less clear awareness, and disbeliefs, which they know about and understand but cannot accept (cf. Rokeach 1960; Deconchy 1991, 14). Religious beliefs are part of larger historically and culturally marked belief systems (Deconchy 1991, 14). For example behind young people's religious life there is a wide range of beliefs, disbeliefs, and traditions coming from Christianity, pre-Christian cultures and other world philosophies and religions (e.g., Eastern religions and NSMCs) which we can collectively refer to as a belief system.

Theories Explaining the Socialization of Beliefs

My study research findings are interpreted in the light of the cognitive development theory (Piaget 1929, 1932; Piaget and Inhelder 1947, 1966; see also Rogoff 1990, Lee & Gupta 1995), social learning theory (Bandura 1977 and Mischel 1968) and socialization theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979 and Brofenbrenner and Mahoney 1975). Young people's cognitive belief systems arise through socialization from the home, church, mass media, and other social institutions. This includes beliefs about humanity and nature, the world and life, death, the supernatural, space and time, and society. Together these make up one's world view (Dundes 1971, 102; Jones 1972, 79; Kearney 1975 and Löfgren 1981).

Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of other significant people who serve as role models of appropriate behavior. Young people's and children's

beliefs are formed in social communities and their ways of interpreting the world are shaped by the shared images of their parents and other people around them. Children and young people conceptualize the world in different ways at different stages of their growth, according to their level of cognitive development. Infancy, childhood and adolescence are each characterized by the development of basic abilities to think and learn; by shaping beliefs, attitudes and values and by preparing the young person for separation from the home and family. A commitment to the beliefs, values and cultural themes of religion means that as people grow and develop they can still hold on to both public and private values (cf. Brake 1985, 10).

In the past two hundred years scientific theories and findings, e.g. about evolution, have changed many factors of the commonly accepted world view. That in the Bible which was earlier taken to be literally true has been largely reinterpreted in ways significantly different from traditional religious beliefs which took the stories in Genesis as the starting point of history.

Different theoretical formulations dealing with the socialization process and human development throughout life present varied perspectives on the link between parental religious patterns and adolescent and adult religiosity (e.g., Fowler 1981). It is implicit that world views established in childhood may be expected to persist in later life. Those who develop a religious world view, for example, will tend to maintain such a world view when they are adults. What is unclear is at what age such a view begins to stabilize and to what extent there is departure from it at later ages. The significance of family background factors both in establishing the world view and maintaining it also need to be discovered.

Part 2. Changes in the Beliefs and Values of Young People

Comparative studies on changes in people's values have been greatly influenced in recent decades by the empirical work and theory of Ronald Inglehart (1977, 1990, 1997 and 1998). He argues that advanced Western countries are experiencing a change in values from materialism to post-materialism and that young people are in the vanguard of this trend. He builds his theory on Abraham Maslow's theory of human needs (1954), which argues that when primary physical, survival and security needs are satisfied, needs of belonging, of self-fulfillment, intellectual and aesthetic needs, which he defines as "post-materialist needs", become more important. In his socialization hypothesis, value systems tend to be relatively stable throughout adolescence and adulthood. Inglehart's theory has

been criticized, however, and it seems that the post-materialistic value system might not be a coherent one.

Another question is whether the post-materialistic value system is related to spirituality and secular religious movements' and religions' values; or whether there are any coherent value orientations behind these.

The theoretical starting point of my empirical research project was the assumption that the evolution of post-industrial society has caused, and will presumably continue to cause, numerous changes that are first seen in young people. A three-phase study (1989, 1992-93 and 1995-96) of the attitudes and values of young Finns from urban Helsinki and rural Ostrobothnia (Helve 1993a and c; 1995b; 1996a and b; 2001; see also Appendix 1) suggested that the following three main attitude dimensions could constructed:

Humanistic beliefs and values included such humanist ideas as respecting the beliefs of conscientious objectors; readiness to tolerate a reduction in one's own standard of living in order to reduce pollution and environmental problems; concern for the unemployed, sick, disabled and other disadvantaged groups; and the belief that the standard of living is so high that better care should be taken of the underprivileged in society. Such views show that the attitude structure of those who fall under this category stems from a Christian humanist set of values. Further evidence of this is a positive attitude towards foreigners arriving in the country and an unselfish willingness to increase foreign development aid irrespective of needs at home. The construction of a fifth nuclear reactor is not considered worthwhile, and there is little faith that science and technology will be able to solve the majority of today's problems. This belief system is also comprised of attitudes demonstrating a critical stance towards science, technology and continuous economic growth. The attitudes incorporated in this belief system may be regarded as progressive. They include attitudes to be found in the ideologies of, e.g., the Green movement, Christian social action groups and the political Left. Many of these attitudes were already fashionable in the 1960s and 70s (cf. Tipton 1984).

Comparing the humanistic belief system in the first phase of the study (1989) the position that development aid to foreign countries should be increased even if there are people in need of help in Finland was lower in the second and third phases of the study, when the Finnish economy (measured by per capita GDP) was no longer the third highest in the world (after Japan and Switzerland) but had slipped way down the rank. Unemployment rates for young people had grown rapidly. In the second phase (1992) when the economic crisis was deepest, the

growth in the popularity of the beliefs that "Science and technology are beginning to control people instead of serving them," and "Economic growth is not the only possible basis for continuous social welfare," could be interpreted to show that there were more young people who were critical towards science and technology, believing that they have not helped the world (e.g., because they are creating environmental problems) and that more young people were seeking other solutions than economic growth as the basis of a good life.

In the third phase (1995-96) the beliefs that "The construction of a fifth nuclear power plant should not be supported" and "Science and technology are beginning to control people instead of serving them" had reached new heights. The critiques towards science and technology had grown among young humanists. Also the attitude towards developing economic welfare had become increasingly critical.

Young people's changed set of values and beliefs reflected the then current economic recession. The humanist youth's willingness to sacrifice their standard of living in order to solve environmental and pollution problems increased. More young people also subscribed to the notion that science and technology are becoming the master instead of the servant of human beings. For humanists the economic recession signified the need for a more critical look at the foundations of welfare for humankind. They believed that welfare could not depend solely on economic progress. It was also clearer to them that the progress of science and technology had not helped solve ecological problems or inequities in the distribution of income in society.

The Individualistic belief system represented highly pessimistic attitudes concerning traditional party politics. Attitudes based on an individualistic set of values expressed no personal interest in public political matters. This does not mean that at the personal and private level they are not interested in political matters (cf. Biorcio et al., 1995, 35-36). Throughout all phases of the study their most common belief was that, "People's opinions don't have much influence on social and political decisions." According to this thinking, an individual cannot have faith in the fundamental political institutions of society, since they have no regard for the opinions of the ordinary citizen. No political party stands for matters of importance to them. Such values presumably imply that a person can trust only in himself or herself, because the institutions of society are far removed from him or her. It can also be assumed that those displaying attitudes belonging to this

category are modern, critical young people who have not inherited the values and attitudes of traditional ideologies.

This individualistic attitude structure was manifested in an increasingly critical view of society which spread during the 1990s. The political cynicism and pessimism of individualists towards parties and party politics has increased in the wake of economic difficulties. They felt that parties had drifted away from the problems of ordinary people, and as a result, people have to cultivate individual happiness and navigate through life without political/societal systems.

The Traditionalistic belief system was comprised of traditional Finnish attitudes, behind which lies a conservative attitude structure. Examples include a desire to prevent depopulation of the countryside, belief that abusers of social benefits – idlers and "spongers" – have it too easy in Finland, and a high regard for the Finnish "fatherland" that is manifested in the belief that one is fortunate and privileged to be a Finn. This nationalistic attitude was most common in the 1995-96 study. In addition, the attitudes towards foreigners had become stronger. These attitudes are evidently those of young people for whom the fatherland, religion, honesty and industry still constituted important values.

Comparing the value systems of young Finns with the framework of Inglehart's scarcity and socialization hypothesis (1990, 68), the latter seems to be interesting, but also too over-simplified to explain the young Finns' value systems. The attitudes and values of the majority of the young people studied here were contradictory and disorganized. Our research showed that the attitudes and values of most of the young people in our sample were not anchored in any political, religious, or other ideological belief systems. They were free to choose their beliefs, values and attitudes. They questioned the key commitments of the traditional ideologies. In this sense they seemed to be truly "post-modern". Maybe a new kind of ideology is coming into being; maybe not. Anyway, there seems to be space here for new spiritual phenomena (cf. Roof 1993).

Gender Differences

A yet further study of the beliefs, values and attitudes of young people shows that even in Finland girls/young women and boys/young men have different beliefs, attitudes and values towards life and society (Helve 2001, 201-218). Education has had some effect on these attitudes. This study found that those whose values most stressed gender equality in working life, for example, were girls who had been to upper secondary school. They wanted a woman to be their boss and in their opin-

ion it is equally important for a woman to go to work as for a man. In their mind men and women both need to earn money and take care of the home and the family. They believed that there should be more women bosses in important jobs, and it is very important to live according to one's conscience. They would not mind if their children went to school where half of the children were of another race. These were Humanist-Egalitarians in their beliefs, attitudes and values.

The most "Traditionalist – Conservative" values were found among secondary school boys, and most urban girls were against these values. These values were reflected by agreement with conservative statements such as, "Couples who have children should not divorce," "Marriage is for life," and, "Young people today don't respect traditional values enough." They supported the political position, "Our country needs strong leaders who can restore order and discipline and the respect for values."

"Environmentalist – Greens" stressed ecological values and were mostly female upper-secondary school students. In their opinion the development of economic welfare should not be taken any further. Nuclear energy should be given up even if it would result in a decrease in the standard of living. They believed that the continued rise in economic well-being increases mental illness and that science and technology are beginning to control people instead of serving them. They were willing to lower their standard of living in order to decrease pollution and environmental problems. They also believed that, "Even young people can promote world peace by participating in peace work."

This study also identified a new group of values: the "Global–Internationalists". Those belonging to this value system believed that if more foreign people came to Finland these contacts would be mutually beneficial. In their opinion it was not a privilege to be Finnish and "East, West, home is best," is an obsolete phrase.

With respect to gender differences girls valued humanism and equality more than boys, and boys in turn valued technology and economic welfare more than girls. Girls more than boys valued environmental issues, especially urban secondary school girls. Boys valued technology and science more than girls, especially urban secondary school boys. Urban vocational school girls were the most politically passive. They were critical of traditional politics, citing Green values as an alternative to technological and economic values. On the other end of the spectrum from the International-Globalists were "Racists", most of whom were boys who studied in vocational or business schools and colleges. The most humanistic values were

found among secondary school girls. In general rural young people valued family values more than urban young people.

Several studies have demonstrated that girls and boys perceive the world in different ways (Dahlgren 1977; Helve 1993b and 1996; Rauste-von Wright, Kauri and Niemi 1975). For girls the formation of both identity and perception of the world is effected by the framework of their gender. Many cultures regard "soft" values as being feminine. The different values associated with the gender stereotypes created by a patriarchal society are evident. School, peer groups and commercial mass entertainment convey sexual stereotypes which guide the viewpoints held by young people and manifest themselves in matters such as their career choices.

The Finnish study showed that girls were not as aware of party politics as boys. For many of them politicians were, "fat old men who lie to people." This critical stance taken by many girls heralds the birth of a new type of political culture. Girls held attitudes which were more global than those held by boys. They were more willing to increase aid to developing countries, they were more willing to accept refugees and they were also more critical than boys with respect to the capacity of science and technology to solve the problems of our era. Most but not all of the girls expressed humanistic values. The space within which girls can move has expanded, and it has provided them with the possibility of being either "soft" or "hard". Girls' perceptions of the world seem to be more varied and open than those of boys.

Collective consciousness of such things as the kinds of role expectations which are directed towards women arises within a social context. The situation experienced by mothers, sisters, and girl friends, for instance, indirectly provide girls with information about the essence and role of being a woman. Various theories of cultural influence claim that the media have a great influence on their audience. They create beliefs, attitudes and values according to which people interpret the world. The differences in girls' and boys' values and attitudes cannot be explained as simply biological. (The only personality difference that can be shown to have biological roots, perhaps, is the level of aggressive activity.) Parents and society tend to respond to girls differently than to boys. These differences and social influences have to be considered. One social explanation is in terms of the divergent socialization of girls and boys. Another explanation is in terms of gender roles and culture.

In the following tables some examples of variables of religious identification in the data from the 1995-96 comparative study (N=457) are given:

	Yes, like the Church teaches	Yes, but not the way the church teaches	I can't say	No
Girls	44.4%	29.1%	18.8%	7.7%
Boys	25.8%	23.5%	34.8%	15.9%
Average	35.1%	26.4%	26.8%	11.7%

Table 1: Do you believe in God?

	At least once a month	A couple of times a year	Once a year	Less often than once a year	Never
Girls	0.4%	36.3%	24.2%	18.8%	20.3%
Boys	3.9%	13.6%	18.0%	27.2%	37.3%
Average	2.2%	24.8%	21.1%	23.1%	28.8%

Table 2: Not counting weddings, funerals and baptisms, how often do you go to church?

	Regularly every day	A couple of times a month	Less often than once a month	Only in an extreme situation	Never
Girls	27.9%	27.0%	7.5%	26.1%	11.5%
Boys	9.4%	10.3%	8.5%	31.3%	40.5%
Average	18.7%	18.7%	8.0%	28.6%	26.0%

Table 3. Do you pray?

Finnish girls seem to be more religious as measured by their belief in God (like the church teaches or not the way the church teaches, table 1), going to church (table 2) and praying (table 3). The following tables show how interested Finnish boys and girls were in "New Age" phenomena (table 4) and in beliefs in unidentified flying objects (UFOs) (table 5). A larger percentage of the boys (72.3%, vs. 55.3% of girls) said that they were not at all interested in "New Age" phenomena. Larger percentage of the boys (37.7%), said that they believe in unidentified flying objects (UFOs) than the girls (27.6%). However a larger percentage of the boys (32.5%) did not believe in them than of the girls (28.9). (Tables 4 and 5.)

	Very interested	Interested	Can't say	Not very interested	Not at all interested
Girls	1.3%	6.2%	17.7%	19.5%	55.3%
Boys	2.7%	1.4%	8.0%	15.6%	72.3%
Average	2.0%	3.7%	12.9%	17.6%	63.8%

Table 4. How interested are you in "New Age" phenomena?

	Yes	Don't know	No
Girls	27.6%	43.5%	28.9%
Boys	37.7%	29.8%	32.5%
Average	32.7%	36.6%	30.7%

Table 5. Do you believe in unidentified objects (UFOs)?

These findings describe the situation during Finland's transition to a post-industrial society. Advances in science and technology continue to reinforce trends towards forms of humanism that exclude the concept of transcendence and see all knowledge as resting upon science. But science has not succeeded in providing the young people of a post-industrial society with powerful ideological themes.

In summary we can say that the spiritual resources typical of contemporary young people contain a religious core consisting of individual human rights, self-fulfillment and individual expression, combined with the recognition of social interdependence, the continuation of networks of kinship and friendship, and a non-dogmatic, private "open world view" and belief system based mostly on Christian values and traditions. In many respects these are also valid for personal spirituality, individualism and experience-orientation.

Part 3. Discussion

The mass media has a significant meaning for the beliefs, attitudes and values of modern and especially post-modern people. Undoubtedly mass media influence the values of young people more than they do those of older generations. This too is difficult to measure scientifically. Traditional values are becoming blurred in the younger generation. Through the mass media teenagers become aware of foreign countries and their problems. Many already think globally. (cf. Featherstone 1990, Featherstone et al. 1995, Rothstein 2001). Environmental issues are seen as world wide problems and each individual is understood to be part of the global ecosystem.[3]

Although the mass media are controlled by the ruling establishment, they do bring about changes in values. On the one hand they uphold traditional values, while on the other they stimulate the development of new, critical values, particu-

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[3] As globalization has rapidly expanded it has become a target for opposition and criticism. The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 showed how vulnerable the integrated, open world is. In a tragic way the terrorist attacks have dramatically influenced and increased the challenges of globalization, in relation both to security and to equal opportunities to participate in the global economy.

larly among young people. There no longer seems to be a consensus on cardinal values.

There was a difference in values and beliefs between the sexes. Girls viewed the achievements of science and technology more cautiously. They were also doubtful about the value of continuous economic growth. Their values were more non-materialistic than those of boys, and they were not as willing to uphold the existing social structure. These differences show the different ways men and women interpret the world.

As the result of conditions of economic recession facing most young people in Finland in 1990s, the physical body has become one of the main venues where control can be exerted. At a time when most young people can "manage" little else, the body can still be "managed." It also becomes the primary vehicle for the achievement of pleasure. The growth of body-building, anorexia, the interest in new spiritualities with notions of achieving "higher" states of awareness and fulfillment through meditation or "trancing", the use of drugs (such as "ecstasy") and other forms of amusement are related to this absorption in one's own body (cf. Pine1997, 162-166).

Religious interests seem to follow a certain pattern of gender roles and gender-related areas of specialization. The Christian religion in its symbolism is a male affair: God is the Father, and Jesus took the human shape of a man. Woman was created from a rib taken from a man (cf. Anderson and Hopkins 1991). Yet while the official positions of Christian churches are dominated by men, the majority of those in the pews have been women. Now that Finnish girls are encouraged to see themselves as equal to men and independent from them, the roles and images offered to them by the patriarchal religion are in conflict with their own positive self image. Parapsychology and esoteric knowledge are male dominated, whereas faith healing and mystical spirituality tend to be female pursuits (Bruce 1996, 219). Other things spiritual pursuits, however, are more gender-neutral. For example the life style of some "New Age" travelers may attract young people to rave cultures. The nomadic life, riding in caravans and old buses from one musical festival to another, has a definite appeal to young people of both sexes.

Generally speaking though, religious beliefs appeal more to young women than to young men (cf. table 4). Females of all ages are more religious than males. Women are more likely than men to describe themselves as religious, to be church-affiliated, to pray frequently, to feel close to God, etc. (Weiss-Ozorak 1996,17). It seems likely that their experience of religion is different from that of men. Recent

work suggests that women and men experience God and faith differently. For women the emphasis seems to be on a personal relationship with a loving God and with others in the religious community (Anderson and Hopkins 1991; Weiss-Ozorak 1996, 18). These distinctions have been seen in different roles and socialization patterns of women and men, who then develop different views of morality. Women emphasize care and connectedness as the greatest moral good, while men emphasize independence and objectivity (Gilligan 1982).

It can be assumed that young people who have lived through childhood and adolescence in physical security place greater emphasis on post-materialist and spiritual values, as well as on values concerned with the quality of life, than their parents' (and grandparents') generation, which grew up in the period of post-war hardship. Post-materialist values go particularly well with young people's social criticism. They are represented by a range of alternative movements (e.g., Greenpeace, Amnesty International, animal rights, feminism, the "New Age" and other NSMCs) that are popular among the young, and the new secular ideologies underlying them. Few of the young people in this study were actively involved in either official or unofficial religious or political organizations. The majority seemed to have abandoned traditional religion. The same has been seen in their relationship to traditional politics. An alternative to the conventional religious or political world view would appear to be the "Green" concept of the world (cf. Helve 1996a). Young people's values are no longer built around "grand narratives". Some young people are, however, seeking to replace the post-modern absence of values with a new system of values that might be termed hypermodern. On the other hand, there is also evidence of a return to pre-modern values built around harmony with nature (cf. the shamanistic system of beliefs, Hoppál 1985).

Judging from what sort of people are attracted to new spirituality ideas, it is obvious that it is strongest in those parts of Europe and America where Christianity and other traditional religions are weakest. The new spirituality movements also appeal to women much more than to men, as women tend to focus more on religious activities in general and also some new secular religion ideas (seeing the roles they offer as corresponding to the ideas of feminism). In particular, e.g. the "New Age" in general has appealed more to younger generations than to older ones because the younger generations have seen it as a counter culture. Assessing the significance of new spiritualities and secular religions, we may conclude that its counter-cultural influence is certainly very small (Bruce 1996, 222). Beyond the changes that have taken place in the people who have become personally involved

in these, there may have also been important changes in the general cultural climate.

In summary, new spiritualities and secular religions cannot aspire to promote radical and specific change, yet with their environmentalism and holistic approach to the world, some of their ideas are being accepted into the cultural mainstream. They can be seen as the embodiment of individualism through their questioning of authority and orthodoxy. In a rapidly changing world where the old narratives of the past have died, people, especially young people, are actively seeking new ways to integrate themselves into the new world order of technology, materialism and information. New spiritualities can provide alternative paths to find meaning in life, and a holistic frame of reference, especially for young people who have not found answers in the cold phase of the last decade of materialism, technology and science.

Some Closing Muses

Already Durkheim was searching for a new secular religion by trying to identify key aspects of the sacred, and this still provides the basis for identifying problems with the idea of secular religion today. For example Michael Maffesoli, one of the more interesting neo-Durkheimian writers, in The Time of the Tribes (1996) sees a re-enchantment of the world according to some kind of idea of a semi-sacred realm. His concern is with the pluralism of the sacred. There has been a deconstruction of history, but not the development of a shared social and moral identity remembrance. This, I believe, is the challenge that both those in Siberia with (neo)shamanistic belief systems and the quasi-religiously ecology conscious girls we have here in Finland each try to face in their own creative ways. Especially in the latter example of ad hoc secular religion, hope in God doesn't exist. There is thus a need to renew and revive some sense of the sacred in order to keep and relish hope for the future among a people who have no hope. Hope has been referred to as "the memory of the future," and it is only by "remembering" that which has not necessarily ever been, and by building identities through sharing those "memories" with each other, that the spiritual seekers of our time can find the hope that they need. In Ostrobothnia as in Siberia, this involves trusting one's primitive instincts, seeking harmony with one's immediate natural environment and hoping for the best.

Appendix 1. The phases and methods of the research:

1989	*Phase 1.* 16-19 year olds Methods	123 girls, 117 boys (n= 240) • Questionnaires • Word association and complete-the-sentence tests • Individual and group-focused interviews (videotaped) • Attitude scales
1992-3	*Phase 2.* Follow-up study 19-22 year olds Methods	93 girls, 72 boys (n=165) • Questionnaires • Word association and complete-the-sentence tests • Attitude scales
1995-6	*Phase 3.* Comparative study 16-19 year olds Methods	228 female, 229 male (n=457) • Questionnaires • Word association and complete-the-sentence tests • Attitude scales

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