

Pilgrimages to the Self: Exploring the Topography of Western Consumer Spirituality through ‘the Journey’

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Introduction

Metaphors of spiritual pilgrimage are often revealing to the scholar of religion. Representations of a journey towards the ultimate destination of unity with the divine are capable of illuminating both the nature of the sacred, and the modes of salvation of an epoch. In the West, the immense cultural shifts of late modernity have seen an internalising of the sacred, and a soteriological relocation from a salvation based in eternity and proffered by external grace to one that is imminent, worldly, and obtained through internal experience. In this context, the sacred or ‘authentic’ Self has become a novel form of the divine,¹ and acts of internal pilgrimage in order to locate it through layers of ‘stories’ or ‘inauthenticities’ are becoming increasingly common. The new Western spiritual landscape, characterised by consumerism and choice abundance, is scattered with novel religious manifestations based in psychology and the Human Potential Movement, each offering participants a pathway to the Self. ‘The Journey’ is one such spiritual product, delivered in the form of seminars, books, audio, and private practitioners, and is here examined as a ‘corporate religion.’ This article will demonstrate the manner in which the nature of both the internalised sacred and the novel soteriologies of Western spirituality are reflected in the philosophy and praxes of the Journey, and specifically through the act of travelling to the Self. Through this prism, corporate religions like the Journey are shown to be genuine representations of Western spirituality, and should not be rejected as merely inauthentic, cynical manipulations of market capitalism. Indeed, the allegorical pilgrimages facilitated by ‘Journeywork’ reveal it to be paradigmatic of the age, upholding both an internalised sacred and a remodelling of salvation that are becoming ever more ubiquitous within Western spirituality.

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¹ Landmark Education, the contemporary manifestation of *est* or Erhard Seminars Training, offers a perfect example of this trend. See Renee Lockwood, ‘Religiosity Rejected: Exploring the Religio-Spiritual Dimensions of Landmark Education,’ *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2011), pp. 225-254.

Journey Metaphors: Revealing Spiritual Epochs

Metaphors of spiritual travel often reveal much about the religious zeitgeist that produced them. Dante's allegorical journeys to the three realms of the dead, for example, paint a vivid picture of sin and salvation within medieval Europe,² while Christian's travels in Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* highlight the philosophy and praxes of seventeenth century Puritanism.³ Such journey metaphors reveal the nature of religion and spirituality within an epoch, with both the journey itself and the destination describing the sacred and soteriological paradigms of a culture.

It is not only depictions of external pilgrimage that offer such religious insights, however. The import of internal voyages is also manifest, as expressed in Augustine's sentiment that "we go to God not by walking, but by loving."⁴ Reflections on interior journeys to the sacred are often as descriptive as meditations upon those that traverse external space, and at times more so due to the potency of their metaphor. The symbolisms of glittering stairwells and passageways locked, gatekeepers and spiritual guides, demonstrate the role and relationship of the sacred and the seeker. The sixteenth century Spanish saint, Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), offers such a representation in her work *Interior Castle*,⁵ in which the soul is depicted as a set of seven crystal mansions, each penetrating deeper into the internal until one reaches the seventh house – the home of God – and achieves *unio mystica*.⁶ While Teresa essentially offers a road map for the spiritual traveller,⁷ and Christ acts as a "faithful companion and guide to God at the centre of the soul,"⁸ the subjective efforts of the pilgrim come to naught without the permission of Divine will; in light of human "baseness," "frailty," and "unworthiness," she tells us, "His Majesty alone can bring us there, and come into the centre of our souls."⁹ The omnipotent perfection of this discrete Divinity is starkly contrasted against the filth of human sin in Teresa's metaphor, with darkness, impurities, foul stench, and venomous creatures constantly surrounding the inner castle,

² Dante also paints a vivid picture of the social and political landscapes of his time. See Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin, 1986).

³ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007 [1678]).

⁴ Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 253.

⁵ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle Or the Mansions*, trans. F. Benedict Zimmerman (London: Kessinger Publishing, 2003).

⁶ F. Benedict Zimmerman, 'Introduction,' in Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle Or the Mansions*, trans. F. Benedict Zimmerman (London: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), p. xxi.

⁷ Katherine Grieb, 'Teresa of Ávila,' *Theology Today*, vol. 62, no. 2 (2005), p. 234.

⁸ Grieb, 'Teresa of Ávila,' p. 232.

⁹ Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle*, p. 94.

waiting to enter and defile the light-filled mansions when sin is allowed to penetrate the heart.¹⁰ Teresa's allegory of internal pilgrimage paints a vivid picture of a theology in which salvation lies in the grace of God and a life of obedience.

The Human Potential and Corporate Religion: Reflections of a New Spiritual Epoch

Within twenty-first century consumer culture, particularly in the West, such spiritual principles have become largely anathema. Charles Taylor's description of the "massive subjective turn of modern culture, a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths,"¹¹ highlights the collective search inward for life's existential truths, historically located in external agencies of religious authority. The Human Potential Movement, along with myriad new religious groups of the 1960s and 1970s that appropriated both Eastern spiritualities and humanistic psychology, were largely products of this cultural shift inward.¹² Within many novel Western spiritual groups, networks, and products, the divine is relocated from an external authority to these very inner-depths.

The post-war culture of consumption has played an explicit role in these spiritual shifts, with the atomised consumer assuming absolute power through the 'freedom to choose.'¹³ As stated by Roy Wallis, "customers cannot effectively be controlled while they continue to view themselves as the definite authority on the virtues of the products they consume."¹⁴ Within this context, religion and spirituality have become commodities, competing to generate a "compelling religious product"¹⁵ capable of fulfilling a consumer's spiritual needs. This is evident within both established religions and new religious

¹⁰ Zimmerman, 'Introduction,' p. xviii.

¹¹ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 26.

¹² For a detailed account of the creation of the Human Potential Movement and the role of humanistic psychology in American spirituality in the 1960s and 1970s, see Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

¹³ See Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); and David Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Roy Wallis, 'The Dynamics of Change in the Human Potential Movement,' in *Religious Movements: Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers*, ed. Rodney Stark (New York: Paragon House, 1985), p. 146.

¹⁵ Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*, p. 79.

groups, as seen in the rise of mega-churches¹⁶ or the participation of more ascetic movements in capitalist enterprises, such as the Unification Church and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).¹⁷

Yet perhaps a more salient manifestation of this phenomenon exists in the form of corporate religions, groups with a specific religio-spiritual function that are established, managed, and presented as corporations. Representing the ultimate fusion of the sacred and the economic, corporate religion may be interpreted as the latest manifestation of the Human Potential Movement, with groups and practitioners such as Anthony Robbins, Deepak Chopra,¹⁸ and Landmark Education¹⁹ offering epoch-specific modes of salvation in the form of seminars and spiritual products. The philosophy and praxes of corporate religions are predominantly bound by the ethics of market capitalism and the values of Western consumer culture. To this end, they are often tailored towards improving productivity amongst individuals and employees, and are subsequently marketed not only to individuals, but also to companies and government agencies.

Within corporate spirituality, the late-modern concept of the internalised sacred is paramount, with the “Self”²⁰ regarded as the “ultimate concern,” holding the “answer to the question of the meaning of our life.”²¹ Locating the ‘authentic,’ higher Self is thus the ultimate spiritual goal, and may be regarded as a new mode of mystical union. Concepts of salvation too are relocated, as worldly spiritual aspirations such as freedom, wholeness, and health, supersede those based in the afterlife.

¹⁶ Adam Possamai, *Religion and Popular Culture: A Hyper-Real Testament* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 45-46.

¹⁷ These range from the sale of flowers, candles, and *prasadam* by Hare Krishna communities, to the Unification Church’s trade of newspapers and small arms. See Bryan Wilson, ‘Introduction,’ in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, eds Brian Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 5; and Roy Wallis, ‘Religion, Reason and Responsibility: A Reply to Professor Horowitz,’ *Sociological Analysis*, vol. 44, no. 3 (1983), p. 216.

¹⁸ Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 150ff.

¹⁹ Lockwood, ‘Religiosity Rejected,’ pp. 225-254.

²⁰ See Donald Stone, ‘The Human Potential Movement,’ in *New Religious Consciousness*, eds Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 93-115; and Wallis, ‘The Dynamics of Change in the Human Potential Movement,’ pp. 129-156.

²¹ Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 4.

A Novel Pilgrimage for a New Era: The Journey

In this context, the act of internal travel, of pilgrimage to the Self, has become thematically salient. As Wade Clark Roof observes, within popular spiritual discourse “journey is a major metaphor, second only to recovery, suggesting the crucial importance of spiritual growth as an ideal.”²² Ultimately, at the foundations of the Human Potential Movement and all its contemporary manifestations, is the journey into self-actualisation, towards a freer, more whole, more ‘authentic’ Self. While numerous spiritual groups, networks, and products demonstrate these principles, one of the most pertinent examples is found in the Journey, or Journeywork, created in the 1990s by Brandon Bays. As a spiritual product, the Journey is paradigmatic of the trends in contemporary Western spirituality discussed above. Analysis of the philosophy and praxes of Bays’ product, illustrated through the allegory of travel, demonstrates the nature of the internal, subjectivised sacred,²³ and the shift in soteriological expectations from the eternal to the temporal.

Brandon Bays and the Journey

As the name suggests, the fundamental purpose of Bays’ spiritual product is to allow participants to embark upon a journey to locate the Self, and to this end it consists of several forms.²⁴ It is both a seminar²⁵ – that is, a part of the burgeoning global seminar industry – and a process that can be accessed via Bays’ written and audio books, as well as through trained Journeywork practitioners.²⁶ Its praxes are based largely in psychology and Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques, particularly in regard to uncovering old and painful memories. These principles, however, extend into the pseudo-scientific realm of ‘cell-memories,’ which Bays encountered primarily through Deepak

²² Wade Clarke Roof, ‘Modernity, the Religious, and the Spiritual,’ *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: Americans and Religions in the Twenty-First Century*, vol. 558 (1998), p. 218.

²³ For the subjectivisation thesis relating to the ‘subjective turn,’ see Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

²⁴ This article relies heavily upon primary sources due to the lack of published academic work on the Journey.

²⁵ ‘Seminars and Schedule,’ *The Journey* (2011), at <http://www.thejourney.com/seminars-and-schedule/>. Accessed 19/12/2011.

²⁶ There are currently around 500 Journey practitioners globally, with a reported 300 more graduating this year in Australia, South Africa, and Europe. See ‘Find a Practitioner,’ *The Journey* (2011), at <http://www.thejourney.com/practitioners/find-a-practitioner/>. Accessed 19/12/2011.

Chopra.²⁷ This is a concept very similar to that of *engrams* in Scientology,²⁸ and revolves around the idea that actual memories or traumas are stored within cells, creating measurable negative chemistry and blocking ‘cell-receptors’ in particular parts of the body; the ultimate cause of illness.²⁹ Bays’ programs are thus designed to offer processes by which participants are able to clear these harmful memories by journeying to the divinity within.³⁰

Prior to creating the Journey, Bays spent over ten years in the ‘Mind, Body, Spirit’ field.³¹ She trained in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, kinesiology, iridology, medical hypnosis, and other forms of alternative therapies.³² Bays claims to have discovered her life’s purpose, “to be pure joy, and to help myself and others discover our greatness – our god-selves,” at an Anthony Robbins seminar.³³ Later in the 1990s, she and her husband were working as trainers with Deepak Chopra and Anthony Robbins on the ‘Mastery’ seminar series when she was diagnosed with a “basketball sized tumour” in her uterus.³⁴ This was the catalyst for the creation of the Journey.

The philosophy, systems, and praxes of the Journey are born from two of Bays’ personal enlightenment experiences. The first occurred during a large group *satsang* in the early 1990s, when she observed an unnamed “awakened teacher” guide a fellow “seeker” through her fear and distress to a place of enlightened peace by “opening” to her anxiety and emotions.³⁵ Following this, Bays decided to attempt the practice herself at home. Sitting alone, she began by focussing on her “worst emotion” until it seemed to engulf her, and she realised she needed to “welcome it.”³⁶ At this point, Bays fell into another,

²⁷ Brandon Bays, *The Journey: A Road Map to the Soul* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), pp. 45-47.

²⁸ In Scientology, *engrams* are “traces of past incidents that cause anxieties and fears,” and subsequently require clearing through the “auditing” process. See George D. Chrystides, *Exploring New Religions* (London: Cassell, 1999), p. 284.

²⁹ For more on this, see Deepak Chopra, *Perfect Health: The Complete Mind Body Guide* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000); and Grace J. Scott, *Beyond Cell Memory: Messages from Creator on Origin, Purpose, and Use of DNA and Cell Memory* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2011).

³⁰ See ‘Thejourney1,’ ‘Introduction to the Journey,’ *YouTube.com* (8 November, 2007), at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9cnF3Egc0w>. Accessed 19/12/2011.

³¹ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 20, 47.

³² Bays, *The Journey*, p. 48.

³³ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 159.

³⁴ This was a mass-seminar series including such speakers as General Norman Schwarzkopf, Dr Deepak Chopra, Dr John Gray, and Sir John Templeton. See Bays, *The Journey*, p. 42.

³⁵ Brandon Bays, *Freedom Is: Liberating Your Boundless Potential* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2006), pp. 117-121.

³⁶ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 124.

deeper level of pain and loneliness, which she subsequently felt entirely, opening to it before falling into the next emotional level until she reached a “black hole,” a “vast emptiness.”³⁷ Terrified, she describes hovering over this final frontier until:

... [W]hoosh! ... [L]ike a soft breeze, I felt my resolve melt, all at once. All resistance dissolved, all relaxation appeared, and as I let go into the blackness, I felt a peace softly pervading my being. As I relaxed even deeper, a lightness of being showed up and pure love flooded everything.³⁸

Through this enlightenment experience, Bays found the practical path to the place of sacred, authentic Self. She writes, “Since that day, the realisation of who and what I am has never left. Every part of my being knows that I am totally *free*...”³⁹

The second experience occurred during her healing journey, when Bays saw a massage therapist who asked her to visualise being inside her tumour, and to examine which emotions were present within it. These, in turn, triggered memories of a past childhood trauma. Bays imagined both her adult and child self seated by a campfire with all those involved in the ordeal, and a long discussion of the event that ultimately resulted in forgiveness. When she arose, she felt instantly that her tumour had become softer.⁴⁰ As a result of these experiences, Bays set out to create a means by which others could find a path to the Self, intentionally encountering ‘Source’ and thus achieving salvation from the malaises of their lives.⁴¹

Journeywork is comprised of two primary components; the ‘Emotional’ and the ‘Physical’ Journey, both of which begin with the intentional descent into Source. In the former, the participant ‘drops down’ through layers of emotion, feeling each one completely and noting any particular memories elicited by these sensations, until they reach the divine within.⁴² Source is then brought back up through each level to illuminate them, and aid in the “fireside chat” with the people involved in the memories identified on the way down.⁴³

During the ‘Physical’ Journey, rather than emotion acting as the vehicle for descent, the participant meditates upon walking down ten steps, each taking

³⁷ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 126.

³⁸ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 127. This experience is also described in Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 58-61.

³⁹ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 127.

⁴⁰ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 22-24.

⁴¹ Bays uses the term ‘Source’ interchangeably with ‘Self’ and ‘Being,’ always capitalised, when referring to the internal sacred. See Bays, *The Journey*; and Bays, *Freedom Is*.

⁴² Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 161-167.

⁴³ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 171-178.

them closer to the divine.⁴⁴ At the bottom of the steps is a door, which opens to reveal both Source and the participant's chosen "sage or mentor."⁴⁵ This trinity of the divine "light of [one's] Being," the chosen mentor, and the participant, take a journey around the body in a space shuttle to discover any negative memories that are trapped within the cells of particular organs, and subsequently engage in therapeutic campfire discussions in order to clear these memories and heal the body of emotional pain and physical disease.⁴⁶

The Journey as Corporate Religion

Due to its forms of dissemination, it is difficult to assess the number of people who have participated in Journeywork. Since 1994, however, the Journey has become available in 36 countries in over 20 languages.⁴⁷ Its foundational seminar, the 'Journey Intensive,' runs for two days, and is a prerequisite for all advanced level seminars, workshops, and retreats.⁴⁸ Participants can also engage in Journeywork through working with one of over five hundred trained Journey practitioners, or simply through the books and audio recordings available. Bays' technology is employed not only by individuals, but also by private and government organisations.⁴⁹

As a corporate religion, the Journey also occupies the professional sector, offering courses to promote productivity and leadership skills within organisations. 'Visionary Leadership' is marketed as being "a program for anyone with the desire to grow as an authentic instrument of conscious change and anyone ready to recognise that they are, in fact, already leaders," providing seminars and "conscious coaching certifications."⁵⁰ This specifically corporate dimension of the Journey has now produced an auxiliary branch entitled 'Consciousness Company,' offering seminars and courses to both private and government sectors that will promote "higher efficiency," "improved

⁴⁴ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 182-183.

⁴⁵ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 184.

⁴⁶ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 183-190.

⁴⁷ 'The Journey and Visionary Leadership,' *Journey Outreach: Liberating Humanity's Highest Potential* (2010), at

http://www.journeyoutreach.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2. Accessed 29/12/2011.

⁴⁸ 'Entry Level Seminars,' *The Journey* (2011), at <http://www.thejourney.com/seminars-and-schedule/entry-level-seminars/>. Accessed 29/12/2011.

⁴⁹ Bays claims that Journeywork is also employed in addiction rehabilitation centres, in cancer-treatment facilities to augment chemotherapy treatments, and in police trauma units for the benefit of victims of violent crime, though it is difficult to verify this. See Bays, *The Journey*, p. vii.

⁵⁰ 'The Visionary Leadership Programs,' *The Journey USA* (2011), at <http://www.thejourneyusa.com/conscious/>. Accessed 20/12/2011.

communication,” “more effective use of creativity and resources,” and “optimal performance” from workers.⁵¹ Despite this corporate, professional guise, the concept of the higher, authentic Self remains within the discourse of ‘leadership,’ and despite the corporate image, the religio-spiritual philosophies remain. Indeed, at the time of writing, the Journey Intensive seminar is a prerequisite for completion of the Visionary Leadership program.⁵²

Yet Bays’ mission is larger than this, and in 2008 she established ‘Journey Outreach,’ the purpose of which is to “[share] Journeywork with communities worldwide to liberate humanity’s highest potential.”⁵³ This includes offering Journeywork programs to schoolchildren in several countries, including Australia.⁵⁴ In 2010, a report from Australia’s Flinders University on the Journey in schools entitled *Releasing Children’s Shining Potential* recommended that “wellbeing programs [like the Journey] be included as core curriculum subjects to be attended by all children.”⁵⁵ Bays offers accounts of children’s physical, emotional, intellectual, and behavioural problems disappearing following Journeywork.⁵⁶ She writes:

My belief is that if you live as a true expression of your Self, your soul, you don’t have to co-create disease. With these children, I really feel that they get a healthy head start and I pray that they take the work and continue to use it.⁵⁷

Further, like the seminar programs offered to prisoners by Erhard Seminars Training (*est*) in the 1970s,⁵⁸ Journey Outreach provides Journeywork to correctional facilities in the United States, South Africa, and Indonesia.⁵⁹ It

⁵¹ ‘Corporate/Government Seminars Overview,’ *Conscious Company* (2011), at <http://www.consciouscompanyworldwide.com/>. Accessed 20/12/2011.

⁵² ‘The Visionary Leadership Programs,’ *The Journey USA*.

⁵³ *Journey Outreach: Liberating Humanity’s Highest Potential* (2010), at <http://www.journeyoutreach.org/>. Accessed 20/12/2011.

⁵⁴ ‘The Journey – Making A Real Difference For Children,’ *Journey Outreach: Liberating Humanity’s Highest Potential* (2010), at http://www.journeyoutreach.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=21. Accessed 20/12/2011.

⁵⁵ J. Beattie and A. Carne, et. al., *Releasing Children’s Shining Potential: Improving the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Primary School Children through Journeywork*, Executive Summary of the Journey into Schools Report (Adelaide: Flinders University, Flinders Human Behaviour and Health Research Unit, 2010), p. 24.

⁵⁶ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 106-109.

⁵⁷ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 109.

⁵⁸ Earl Babbie, ‘est in Prison – General Overview,’ *American Journal of Correction*, vol. 39, no. 6 (1977), pp. 22-25.

⁵⁹ ‘Correctional Facilities,’ *Journey Outreach: Liberating Humanity’s Highest Potential* (2010), at

also offers programs to aid “employment and empowerment,” “wellness and recovery,” and “schoolchildren and youth,” particularly within developing countries such as Kenya, India, and South Africa.⁶⁰ These programs demonstrate not only the sacrality and soteriology of Human Potential spirituality discussed above, but also the mission-based objective to spread a distinct spiritual ethic that has driven religion for millennia.

Despite the manifest presentation of the sacred within the Journey, like so many other seminars and Human Potential training programs it is viewed largely as an organisation rather than as a religious product of late capitalist modernity.⁶¹ Yet the underlying purpose of such groups and products is to illuminate a sacred dimension. The re-enchantment offered through the Human Potential Movement and humanistic psychology is based in the notion that a human is more than a machine as presented through scientific perspectives.⁶² Bays writes:

Doctors are trained to work on bodies – in the same way that mechanics are trained to work on cars. They go into the healing field ostensibly to help people heal, but somewhere along the way they forget that people aren’t just their bodies.⁶³

In this paradigm, these seminars and spiritual products act to locate the supraporeal Self as traditional religions function to unite individuals with the divine. Describing the false, protective layers that people construct around their authentic Selves as they go through life, Bays states:

Then one day, if we’re very lucky, through some act of grace, or through a transformative seminar, a book[,] ... we might have the great good fortune to break through and crack this brittle surface ... [to] unearth the priceless diamond that has always been there – shining, pristine, pure, and exquisitely beautiful.⁶⁴

http://www.journeyoutreach.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=24. Accessed 20/12/2011.

⁶⁰ ‘The Miracle Train: A Journey into Healing,’ *Journey Outreach: Liberating Humanity’s Highest Potential* (2010), at <http://www.journeyoutreach.org/>. Accessed 20/12/2011.

⁶¹ This is made evident by the employment of such groups as Landmark Education and the Journey by government and private organisations. See ‘Corporate/Government Seminars Overview,’ *Conscious Company*; and ‘About Landmark Education,’ *Landmark Education* (2011), at http://www.landmarkeducation.com/about_landmark_education.jsp. Accessed 30/12/2011.

⁶² Indeed, a major part of the transformation or enlightenment process in *est* and now in the Landmark Forum involves the trainer telling the participants that they are, in fact, ‘machines,’ in order to demonstrate the dualistic nature of the unconscious, socialised personality and the fully realised, self-actualised Self. See Adelaide Bry, *est: 60 Hours That Transform Your Life* (New York: Avon, 1976), p. 89.

⁶³ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 31.

⁶⁴ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 62.

This is further highlighted in Bays' description of Journeywork as a "'living' tool that could be used in a very practical way to help others go on their own spiritual and emotional journeys."⁶⁵

As a reflection of the consumer oriented, commercially competitive culture in which they are born, corporate religions necessarily share an acceptance of their participants following other paths simultaneously. Within late capitalist or 'liquid' modernity, in which little is constant and individuals are necessarily flexible in their approach to life, the idea of belonging to only one group or tradition is becoming ever more anachronistic.⁶⁶ Increasingly, religious and spiritual groups must compete within a global market⁶⁷ and, as such, understand the impossibility of demanding fidelity from their followers. Within this context, corporate religions often act as auxiliary spiritual products to mainstream religions, and are even marketed as being employed by religions and religious leaders to enhance spiritual experiences.⁶⁸ Bays writes:

In the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia priests are taking the work back to their flock ... A swami has taken the work back to his ashram to help people deepen their experience of the Infinite, and nuns are using it to experience the deep peace within. A rabbi is helping the people in his temple free themselves from long-standing emotional issues, and some therapists who help people on their deathbeds are using Journeywork to open their patients into the infinite peace inside to ease their passing.⁶⁹

Rather than nullifying their own religious status, the act of accepting and even enhancing participants' involvement in other religions should perhaps now be understood as an unavoidable consequence of belonging to a global spiritual market.

Paths and Obstacles to a New Divinity: Journeywork as Paradigmatic of a Spiritual Epoch

The Spiritualisation of Psychology and the Goal of Authenticity

The pilgrimage to the Self undertaken by Journey participants highlights the contemporary manifestation of the divine in the form of internal authenticity. The employment of psychology-based concepts, particularly those of the Humanistic or Third Force principles set out by such practitioners as Abraham Maslow in the mid-twentieth century, is a primary facet of Human Potential

⁶⁵ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 77-78.

⁶⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

⁶⁷ Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*, p. 79.

⁶⁸ Lockwood, 'Religiosity Rejected,' pp. 225-254.

⁶⁹ Bays, *The Journey*, p. vii.

spiritualities and corporate religions.⁷⁰ In their caustic assessment of this phenomenon, Jeremy Carrette and Richard King refer to the “psychologisation of religion”; describing the “process of turning the social ideals of religion into the [narcissistic] interiorised world of the self.”⁷¹ Stepping away from the demoralisation perspective, it seems often more appropriate to examine the spiritualisation of psychology,⁷² and focus on the shift from a purely scientific endeavour into one that is ultimately religious, involving the search for the ‘real,’ higher Self in the pursuit of salvation. Journeywork may well be described as a metaphysical psychology session, designed to heal both body and mind through the confrontation of traumatic memories.⁷³ Yet these salvific aims are made possible only through the descent into Source, and the location of the ‘real’ Self.⁷⁴

Such processes go towards demonstrating the reality of authenticity as a characteristic of the divine, and thus a spiritual goal of late Western modernity.⁷⁵ As Dean MacCannell notes, “The concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their experiences parallels concerns for the sacred in primitive society.”⁷⁶ The notion of the ‘authentic Self’ has arisen in this context, borne by the principles of Humanistic psychology that reject Freudian appeals for socialisation and acculturation, and instead posit innate greatness within the individual that is smothered by society’s demand to conform.⁷⁷ Paul Heelas has argued that, within novel

⁷⁰ Carrette and King, *Selling Spirituality*, pp. 72-73.

⁷¹ Carrette and King, *Selling Spirituality*, p. 75.

⁷² It is interesting to note that the latest version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*, a text published by the American Psychiatric Association describing all currently recognised mental health disorders, now has a code for “religious or spiritual problem” (V62.89). See ‘DSM Diagnostic Codes for Mental Disorders,’ *PsychCentral* (2011), at <http://psychcentral.com/disorders/dsmcodes.htm>. Accessed 22/12/2011.

⁷³ Bays, *Freedom Is*, pp. 210-214.

⁷⁴ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 52.

⁷⁵ Authenticity represents not only a spiritual goal within late Western culture, but also the desired destination of both internal and external journeys. MacCannell’s discussion of socially constructed mysteries or ‘back’ regions, to use Erving Goffman’s terminology, leads him to conclude that the modern touristic experience is often grounded in the desire to explore these normally unseen areas in the search for what they perceive to be genuine. “Tourists,” he concludes, “demand authenticity.” See Dean MacCannell, ‘Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings,’ *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 79, no. 3 (1973), p. 600.

⁷⁶ MacCannell, ‘Staged Authenticity,’ p. 590.

⁷⁷ See Abraham H. Maslow, ‘Psychological Data and Value Theory,’ in *New Knowledge in Human Values* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 130; and Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1984 [1942]).

forms of “Self-spirituality,” there is “a general agreement that it is essential to shift from our contaminated mode of being – what we are by virtue of socialisation – to that realm which constitutes our authentic nature.”⁷⁸

These ideas saturate Bays’ discourse, encouraging participants to surrender to their “very essence,”⁷⁹ and to discover their “true selves, beyond the pain.”⁸⁰ In order to get in touch with this sacred entity, all stories and all labels must be removed. Journeywork provides several guided meditations designed to achieve this, including the process ‘who are you?’:

If all the outer things you’ve identified with in the past ... were taken away ... who are you really without these things? Who are you?

If you could not define yourself in terms of anything [your job, family, background, possessions, etc] ... [i]f all labels dropped away, and you sincerely opened and asked: ‘Who am I?’ what would arise... [?]

Who are you? ...

Who are you *really*? ...

What remains? ...

Who are you?⁸¹

The perception of the individual consisting of a false, socially-created exterior and an authentic, sacred interior results in what is essentially a dualistic perspective. Common within the seminar industry and other spiritual products built upon the Human Potential ethic, such as Landmark Education and Anthony Robbins, is the tendency to abominate ‘stories’ and ‘belief systems,’ seeing them as ultimately responsible for smothering the higher, true Self.⁸² This generally results in the participant clearing themselves of *something* within, a kind of metaphysical, psychological exorcism, with a particular focus

⁷⁸ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 2.

⁷⁹ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 22.

⁸⁰ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 66.

⁸¹ While this may superficially appear to be simply another Eastern practice pre-packaged for a Western consumer base, such as a Zen koan or mantra, the difference is significant. Instead of resulting in the realisation of ‘no self,’ universal ‘Buddha nature,’ or unity with Brahman, the Journey practitioner becomes acquainted with their personal, subjective, and deified ‘authentic Self.’ Bays concludes these questions with: “Just rest now in the unobscured presence of your *own essence* ... all of manifestation is welcome to dance lightly through the vast, open expanse of your *own being*.” Bays, *Freedom Is*, pp. 53-54, emphasis my own.

⁸² Lockwood, ‘Religiosity Rejected,’ pp. 225-254.

on driving out the ‘victim’ story.⁸³ Within this milieu, stories and beliefs have taken the place of sin as the primary obstacles blocking the path to the divine.

Like Teresa of Ávila’s depiction of the soul as a pristine jewel surrounded by the filth of human sin, Bays often refers to the authentic Self as a diamond amongst the “shit,” the faecal analogy referring to the stories and false layers we wrap around our Selves.⁸⁴ In both soteriologies, salvation is dependent upon the removal of the soiled from the sacred. Of her own healing experience, Bays writes:

I had to own up to my own righteousness and finally give up the whole story – a story that had been a defining experience and expression of who I held myself to be. I had to give up my *attachment* to the story that I had been wronged by life. And when I finally forgave[,] ... the story was over. While I was forgiving I realised that the tumour had never been clinging to me. *I’d* been clinging to it, and thirty years of dragging my victim story with me, finished in that one instance...⁸⁵

In another book she describes the moment of healing thus: “A simple knowing arose from within, a knowing that THE STORY WAS OVER! ... Somewhere deep within I knew the tumour’s healing had begun.”⁸⁶

Ultimate Subjectivity

This mode of dualism further highlights the sacredness of the authentic Self, and its ability to create from nothing, to perform the miraculous, and ultimately to offer salvation through subjective experience. With the ‘massive subjective turn’ of the twentieth century, in the words of Taylor, and the profound impact of psychology on Western spirituality, it could be argued that the ultimate spiritual question is no longer ‘who or what is God?’, but ‘who am I?’⁸⁷

⁸³ Again, these ideas are rooted largely in the philosophy and praxes of Scientology, which proffers a soteriology based on ‘clearing’ the remnants of past events and old memories. See James R. Lewis (ed.), *Scientology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁸⁴ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 62.

⁸⁵ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 204.

⁸⁶ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 25.

⁸⁷ Popular culture supplies endless examples of this novel religious inquiry, one of the most recent being Elizabeth Gilbert’s immensely popular book *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman’s Search for Everything*, now an equally successful motion picture starring Julia Roberts, in which a middle-class American embarks upon the ultimate global quest for truth and self. See Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman’s Search for Everything* (Bloomsbury: London, 2010).

This shift has been greeted with obloquy and accusations of utilitarian individualism from one side of the academy,⁸⁸ while a more sympathetic approach from the other often fails to recognise the ubiquity of the concept. In acknowledging the diversity of beliefs and practices within the New Age movement, Heelas recognises a consistency in the form of the sacred Self, and the shared motivation to connect with this inner divinity. He thus proffers the term 'Self-spirituality' in an attempt to illustrate the coherence within the New Age movement.⁸⁹ Although this is helpful, an analysis of newer modes of spirituality, such as corporate or 'invented' religions,⁹⁰ demonstrates that this concept encompasses far more than what many would recognise as New Age.⁹¹ It may well be argued that this concept of the Self as the ultimate arbiter of change becomes ever more ubiquitous throughout Western culture and spirituality, representing the novel sacred.⁹² Certainly, within myriad corporate spiritualities and descendants of the Human Potential Movement, embarking on a kind of psychological journey to locate the divine, authentic Self has become a ritual worthy of note.⁹³

The existence of an active, omnipotent inner divinity is taken for granted in Bays' cosmos; her books are brimming with descriptions of its

⁸⁸ See, for example, Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991 [1971]); Edwin Shur, *The Awareness Trap: Self-Absorption Instead of Social Change* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977); Robert Bellah, 'New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis in Modernity,' in *New Religious Consciousness*, eds Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 333-352; and Jennifer Rindfleish, 'Consuming the Self: New Age Spirituality as "Social Product" in Consumer Society,' *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2005), pp. 343-360.

⁸⁹ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement*, p. 2.

⁹⁰ See Carole M. Cusack, *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010). Possamai's conception of 'hyper-real' religion is also salient here; see Adam Possamai, *Sociology of Religion for Generations X and Y* (London: Equinox, 2009), p. 28.

⁹¹ While the Journey may be recognised as part of the New Age movement, its distinctly corporate image, evidenced by its employment by private companies and government institutions, demands a rethinking of such classifications, particularly considering the negative connotations now commonly associated with term. See Possamai, *Sociology of Religion for Generations X and Y*, p. 172.

⁹² Oprah represents a salient example of this; see 'Spirit and Self: Happiness and Self-Help Advice,' *Oprah.com* (2011), at <http://www.oprah.com/spirit.html>. Accessed 30/12/2011.

⁹³ The idea of travel motivated by a search for the Self is prevalent in other modes of Western culture. Indeed, Norman notes that many Westerners now go on holiday in order to "connect with" or "find" themselves. See Alex Norman, *Spiritual Tourism: Travel and Religious Practice in Western Society* (London: Continuum, 2011), p. 1.

nature and abilities.⁹⁴ This internalising of the sacred is illustrated in her retelling of the famous Christian story of a man's vision of footprints in the sand; his and those of Jesus. The man discovers that there is only one set of footprints during difficult times in his life because in those moments, he was being carried by his Saviour. In Bays' story, Jesus is replaced with Source. She writes, "Here, in the most devastating moments of my life, Source was here, carrying me, embracing me."⁹⁵

The idea of the internal divine as the ultimate destination in the Journey is manifest in the presentation of the authentic Self as *axis mundi*, revealing through a hierophany a new understanding of the sacred centre. When Source is located during the Journey process, a revelation of the truth ensues. Stories are stripped away and only authentic reality remains, paralleling Mircea Eliade's theory on the nature of religion. He writes, "When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space, there is also revelation of an absolute reality..."⁹⁶ Thus, the *axis mundi* revealed through a hierophany offers a clear orientation, a "fixed point" at which the "religious" individual may establish a home.⁹⁷ Remodelling this idea in order to take into consideration the realities of liquid modernity, in which the sacred centre is no longer fixed, but able to move through time and space, the Self is clearly seen as this novel centre of reality, which the individual may "come home" to.⁹⁸ Similarly, within the *mise-en-scène* of corporate religion, in which the Self is conceived of as the ultimate creator of reality,⁹⁹ the religio-spiritual processes that lead to such a hierophany again fit into Eliade's paradigm: "The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world."¹⁰⁰

But this revelation or creation of authentic reality, manifested through the hierophany of the Sacred self, is possible only after the crossing of the final

⁹⁴ Bays gives numerous accounts of apparently miraculous healings, including the first ever case of lung cancer disappearing entirely after its 67-year-old Yorkshire host located a painful childhood memory within his tumour, then went on to complete a fireside chat with God and the Nazis, all of whom were able to account for their actions at the time, and were present and open to the man's forgiveness. See Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 98-100.

⁹⁵ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 154.

⁹⁶ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959), p. 163.

⁹⁷ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 163.

⁹⁸ In describing the path to "the infinite" and to the "Self," Bays writes, "It's time to come home." See Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 128.

⁹⁹ Lockwood, 'Religiosity Rejected,' pp. 225-254.

¹⁰⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 162.

threshold¹⁰¹ en route to the divine. The processes of Journeywork fit well within Victor Turner's model of liminality, which emphasises the necessary vulnerability of the individual in the liminal state, and the symbolic stress of the ritual subject.¹⁰² Bays describes the experience of one Journey participant who was terrified by the final frontier of the Journey, the "black void." She writes:

When she got to the black hole, she announced in an 'I told you so' voice, "I'm stuck!"
"So what if you were to relax and smile and just fall right into the blackness? What would that be like!"...[?]
A brief look of confusion and questioning crossed her face, then she began shaking, "I'm falling! I'm falling!"
"Keep falling," I said. And suddenly she burst into tears, sobbing and sobbing. Tears streaming. "I'm love ... I'm God ... I'm free ... I'm Freedom ... I'm beautiful ... it's beautiful..." She wept in relief and beamed with awe.¹⁰³

Soteriological Relocation

With this new conception of the divine comes a new mode of soteriology. Not only does this present a shift from salvation based in eternity, that is, with a view to the afterlife – heaven, hell, or reincarnation – to one that is temporal and immediate,¹⁰⁴ but also one that is entirely dependent upon the subjective experience of the individual rather than the grace of an external force or deity. Indeed, the moment of enlightenment within the seminar industry and corporate religion milieu exists in the understanding that you are, in fact, whole and complete and perfect.¹⁰⁵ The road to salvation is obtained by the individual consciously removing the layers of "shit" to get to the holy diamond within.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ For Eliade, thresholds separating the profane from the sacred are external, tangible places, such as the door to a church or temple. See Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p. 164. His description of their function and spiritual significance, however, could easily translate to the threshold that the Journeywork participant must pass through in order to reach the "black void." See Bays, *The Journey*, p. 90.

¹⁰² Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 108.

¹⁰³ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 90.

¹⁰⁴ Bauman's comments on this element of post-modernity are salient: "[T]he late pre-modern 'art of pious life' had pushed the church-inspired obsession with death and posthumous salvation to a radical extreme beyond which continuation of life became virtually impossible, thereby making some sort of psychological 'neutralisation' of death imperative." See Zygmunt Bauman, 'Postmodern Religion?', in *Religion, Modernity and Postmodernity*, ed. Paul Heelas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 63.

¹⁰⁵ See Lockwood, 'Religiosity Rejected,' pp. 225-254; and Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 232.

¹⁰⁶ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 62.

Within the Journey, dogmatic belief systems and preconceived notions of enlightenment are rejected as obstacles to the salvation proffered through the authentic Self. Bays writes:

What if every notion you ever held regarding enlightenment was just a dream? And what if the very act of creating these imaginary constructs and mental images was *preventing* you from experiencing the unobscured enlightenment that is *already* here – the vast, boundless, infinite presence which is your *own* essence?¹⁰⁷

This is not to suggest that the vestiges of older soteriologies do not linger. The concepts of enlightenment, salvation, and absolute truth revelation through the ‘death’ and rebirth of the Self are recurrent within many corporate religions and spiritual products. For religio-spiritual corporations such as Landmark Education, all previous ideas and beliefs must be dissolved and washed away in order to create ‘nothing,’ a clean slate from which truth may arise.¹⁰⁸ Examining these concepts as kinds of ritual death, Holger Kalweit sees the individual as subsequently “capable of seeing life and nature undistorted, because the mask of earthly ignorance and delusion was removed from [one’s] eyes.”¹⁰⁹ In *Journeywork*, a more literal expression of this emerges, with the death of old, unhealthy cells that were storing negative consciousness, and their subsequent rebirth, arising anew without the trauma of old memories and emotions.

Indeed, emotion plays a significant role within this soteriology; certainly another consequence of the spiritualisation of psychology. While thoughts, stories, reason, beliefs – all things that involve the mind – are impediments to reaching the Self, emotions offer a means of passage.¹¹⁰ Particularly within the seminar industry, leaders tend to rely on an intense emotional response from their participants in order to achieve their spiritual outcomes.¹¹¹ As Bays

¹⁰⁷ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁸ Lockwood, ‘Religiosity Rejected,’ pp. 225-254.

¹⁰⁹ Holger Kalweit, ‘When Insanity is a Blessing: The Message of Shamanism,’ in *Spiritual Emergency: When Transformation Becomes a Crisis*, eds Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof (New York: Tarcher, 1989), p. 86.

¹¹⁰ Anthony Robbins constantly expresses this notion; see, for example, ‘Tony Robbins: Why we do what we do,’ *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading* (June, 2006), at http://www.ted.com/talks/tony_robbins_asks_why_we_do_what_we_do.html. Accessed 30/12/2011.

¹¹¹ Of course, the relationship between emotions and religion is by no means a new one; see John Corrigan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). What is interesting, though, is that the manner in which emotion is employed by corporate spiritualities is far more analogous to the Christian evangelical *mise-en-scène*, than the ‘Eastern’ practices that they are often accused of replicating.

proselytises, “The time has come to befriend your emotions. They are the gateway to your Self.”¹¹² In this vein, she criticises other religions and traditions for teaching “the value of *transcending* emotions; as if they are the ‘bad guys’ that hinder our experience of the divine.” “We are trained,” she continues, “to believe that enlightenment is what happens when we have become free from our emotions, as if emotions are the captors that imprison us in the illusion of life.”¹¹³ In reality, Bays argues, emotions line the path to salvation, “for they hold the key to the infinite, they are your route to your Self.”¹¹⁴

Not only do emotions represent a means to salvation, but they are also part of late capitalist modernity’s temporal salvific goals of mental and physical health and wellbeing, as evidenced by the popularity of the Mind, Body, Spirit movement. This spiritual focus on mortal concerns is perhaps not surprising considering that the visceral realities of death and decomposition are, perhaps for the first time in human history, largely hidden from the vast majority of contemporary Westerners.¹¹⁵ With many of Abraham Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’ met for hundreds of millions of individuals,¹¹⁶ spirituality for many in the West has become synonymous with the pursuit of happiness and wholeness in *this* life.

The attainment of freedom, or at least a sense of it, has also become a spiritual goal and primary element of this novel soteriology, doubtless as a reaction to the mechanistic and quantifying dimensions of modernity, and the atomising and liquefying nature of late modernity. Taylor identifies the loss of freedom as being one of the malaises of our time, responsible for our feelings of anxiety in the West, both personally and on a societal level.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Graham Dann draws attention to the “state of psychological oppression” experienced by modern individuals, with ubiquitous closed-circuit television creating a sense of suffocation alongside a burgeoning desperation for liberation.¹¹⁸ The search for freedom has subsequently become another salvific

¹¹² Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 113.

¹¹³ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 107.

¹¹⁴ Bays, *Freedom Is*, p. 128.

¹¹⁵ For the manner in which the gory realities of life and death have altered drastically throughout modernity, see Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (London: Transworld, 2010).

¹¹⁶ See Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper, 1954).

¹¹⁷ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, pp. 2-10.

¹¹⁸ Graham M.S. Dann, ‘The Tourist as a Metaphor of the Social World,’ in *The Tourist As a Metaphor of the Social World*, ed. Graham M.S. Dann (New York: CABI, 2002), pp. 6-7.

goal, part of the spiritual search for “an ascension from a worse state to a better”¹¹⁹ that characterises all soteriologies. Bays writes:

... [I]t is when the emotional issues are addressed at the *deepest* level – at the level of the soul, of consciousness itself – that you really get to the *core* of the issue. It’s then that *true freedom*, emotionally as well as physically, can take place. Then *real* healing begins.¹²⁰

Thus, like most corporate religions and modern spiritual products, Journeywork offers pathways to achieving the salvation of ascension from a state of psychological suffering to one of emotional wellbeing, from a state of illness to one of health, and, perhaps most predominantly, from the mundane to the extraordinary. Achieving weight loss, job satisfaction, or confidence in public speaking are all attainable through the location of the authentic Self.¹²¹ This is illustrated through the story of a former millionaire who, after having lost his entire fortune, discovered that his failure came from losing touch with his Source, his inner genius. Salvation came when he was able to reengage with his “real, free Self” subsequently shedding the “victim state” and gaining “the possibility of succeeding again.”¹²²

Indeed, within the soteriology of corporate religion, there exists no zenith of salvation, no final destination. The values of flexibility, changeability, and fluidity that result in marketing, managerial, and corporate success are transferred to the soteriology of such spiritualities. This is, of course, vital to the survival of corporate religions; to limit the customer base to the sick, broken, or in need would be commercial suicide. Bays notes that many Journey participants are neither physically nor emotionally unwell, but in fact “already feel healthy, and lead successful and fulfilling lives.”¹²³ She writes:

I think a true sign of success is the honest recognition that there is always room for improvement ... Success tends to breed more success, and to continue to succeed, you must grow. And so, highly successful people often come to the Journey for a general internal ‘house cleaning,’ to become even *more* free, *more* alive and *more* healthy, in their relationships, at work, or within themselves. They come to be more successful ... Sometimes, it’s only when you have all your ducks in a row, when everything seems to be going right, that your soul whispers to you, “Yes, *and* there’s something more.”

¹¹⁹ George Cross, ‘The Modern Trend in Soteriology,’ *The American Journal of Theology*, vol. 19, no. 1 (1915), p. 32.

¹²⁰ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 53.

¹²¹ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 124, 132, 135.

¹²² Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 138-9.

¹²³ Bays, *The Journey*, p. 133.

It's then that people find themselves in private one-to-one sessions or at the Journey weekend.¹²⁴

The Journey: A Cynical Product of Capitalism or 'Authentic' Religion?

On many levels, this mode of spirituality appears to be little more than a gross manipulation of the consumerist ethic for the cynical purposes of producing and marketing a sellable commodity. Certainly, criticisms of spiritual products and corporate religions abound, particularly in the form of accusations of packaging appropriated techniques into 'one size fits all' programs.¹²⁵ Similarly, the trade mark symbol that succeeds 'the JourneyTM' has been viewed as antithetical to the nature of 'authentic' spirituality.¹²⁶ In their work *Selling Spirituality*, Carrette and King censure what they term "individualist or consumerist spirituality," referring to "those who embrace capitalism, consumerism and individualism and interpret their religious or spiritual worldview in terms of these ideologies," engaging in a "'pick and mix' approach to religious traditions."¹²⁷ Such observations implicitly recognise a dichotomy of 'real' or traditional religion, and inauthentic, contemporary spiritualities.¹²⁸ This leads us into muddy territory, however. In her examination of invented religions, Carole Cusack aptly hypothesises that

¹²⁴ Bays, *The Journey*, pp. 133-134.

¹²⁵ 'Andrew P,' 'Hijacking Natural Enlightenment: A Critique of Brandon Bays' The JourneyTM,' *Energy Grid Magazine* (March, 2005), at <http://www.energygrid.com/spirit/2005/03ap-brandonbays.html>. Accessed 20/12/2011.

¹²⁶ 'Andrew P,' 'Hijacking Natural Enlightenment.' See also Susan E. Smith, 'Body Memories: And Other Pseudo-Scientific Notions of "Survivor Psychology",' *Child Abuse Accusations*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1993), at http://www.ipt-forensics.com/journal/volume5/j5_4_2.htm. Accessed 20/12/2011.

¹²⁷ Carrette and King, *Selling Spirituality*, p. 19.

¹²⁸ Eliade's work on the 'myth of the eternal return' is useful in exploring the 'authentically' religious nature of the Journey, which may be read as offering a new context for a primordial process. The mythos of Bays' personal healing journey, involving time limitations, turning points, rising action, impossible obstacles, magical allies, and final resolution, endows the creator with a kind of 'hero' status. This is further validated by the reaction of Anthony Robbins to her cancerous plight, stating "No problem Brandon, you'll get it sorted"; a phrase that would be repeated verbatim by complete strangers up to the day of her final, seemingly miraculous, and almost instantaneous healing. In this light, Bays may be seen as having established a mythological archetype of salvation and healing through her Journey process, upon which all subsequent Journeywork rituals are based; for "an act becomes real only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype"; that is, one that was "consecrated in the beginning by gods, ancestors, or heroes." See Bays, *The Journey*; and Bays, *Freedom Is*. The focus on the instantaneousness that characterises the information age of late consumerist modernity renders the idea of 'instant mythology' apposite, and certainly not as oxymoronic as it initially appears.

“religions will reflect (positively or negatively) the host culture in which they develop.”¹²⁹ It is thus entirely unsurprising that spiritual products and corporate religions have arisen to supply modes of salvation befitting the existential realities of the age. Considering the atomisation and commodification of the post-modern self, Roof concludes that: “Contemporary quests for spirituality are really yearning for a reconstructed interior life, deliberate and formative efforts aimed and forming an integrated self and transcending the limits of the given.”¹³⁰

Indeed, it may be argued that spiritual products like the Journey create a context for spiritual growth in an otherwise secular culture. Sara Lewis has argued that while many cultures still offer a cultural framework for “spiritual crises,” Westerners are often cut adrift, left to believe that “they are going crazy if they have religious or spiritual experiences that are inconsistent with cultural norms.”¹³¹ In this regard, rather than a cynical pre-packed product of capitalism, the Journey may be viewed as offering a mode of spirituality to which individuals inhabiting the consumerist West can relate. As Zygmunt Bauman reminds us, “Men and women haunted by uncertainty post-modern style do not need preachers telling them about the weaknesses of man and the insufficiency of human recourses. They need reassurance that they *can* do it – and a brief as to *how* to do it.”¹³² Considering the fact that corporate spiritualities offer very real concepts of the sacred, along with tangible soteriologies appropriate for a new epoch, they may well be seen as functionally similar to traditional religions.¹³³ As pointed out by theologian George Cross, “the religion of every man [sic] is just his way of seeking salvation.”¹³⁴

Conclusion

The nature of the sacred and the means of reaching salvation are, at times, located within the metaphor of pilgrimage. Bays’ spiritual product, offering a direct path to the authentic Self, is representative of greater spiritual trends within modern consumer society. Following the “massive subjective turn of modern culture,”¹³⁵ depictions of spiritual journeys, particularly within the West, demonstrate the relocation of the sacred to within, and salvation from the

¹²⁹ Cusack, *Invented Religions*, p. 24.

¹³⁰ Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*, p. 35.

¹³¹ Sara E. Lewis, ‘Ayahuasca and Spiritual Crisis: Liminality as Space for Personal Growth,’ *Anthropology of Consciousness*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2008), p. 113.

¹³² Bauman, ‘Postmodern Religion?’, p. 69.

¹³³ Cusack, *Invented Religions*, p. 3.

¹³⁴ Cross, ‘The Modern Trend in Soteriology,’ p. 32.

¹³⁵ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 26.

Pilgrimages to the Self

eternal to the temporal. This shift in spiritual goals is seen in myriad modes of spirituality within the West today, including Human Potential products, seminars, and corporate religions, all of which reflect the culture of Western consumerism in which they were created. Through its allegorical pilgrimages, Brandon Bays' *Journeywork* encapsulates these contemporary trends of ultimate subjectivity and soteriological relocation, showing itself to be a valid representation of religion in the West.