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The Proliferation of Post-Modern Religiosity in the Late Sixties

The Case of 'The Process Church of the Final Judgement': from Psychoanalysis as Therapy to Psychoanalysis as Theology

The sixties may be considered as a true turning point in the history of the West. It may be correctly stated that the counterculture 'revolution',¹ which has characterized Western civilization since the sixties, gave rise to further (and crucial, especially from a religious perspective) acceleration of what has been called 'post-modernity',² the most important character of which is the revaluation of the 'religious' and the detachment of the category of 'sacred'—the divinity being generally considered as 'impersonal' and in terms of 'energy'—from traditional religions. The student rebellion first took root in the 1950s, when signs in literature, the cinema, comics, the theatre and music all bore witness in some embryonic way to the 'end of innocence' and the beginning of a new age in the US (especially in light of the fact that these products of new mass culture were meant for the younger generation, as well as of the irresolvable conflict between young people and adults). It was at that point that the cultural hero took on the form of a defeated rebel, amid deeply-rooted nostalgia over the certainty that something essential had been lost—a 'primordial America', to which one feels attracted with infantile amazement, not exactly knowing how to find it again if not by means of a search for *intensity*, *purity*, *immediacy* and *meaning* (not 'happiness', which the American dream had already guaranteed in the public imagination in previous years). Its expression in literature is found by way of the use of a syncopated and 'living' language,

1 On which one can see the standard Roszak 1969 and Webb 1989: 298–335.

2 On post-modernity from a 'religious studies' perspective see Terrin 1995.

a reflection of a deliberately precarious, vitalistic and marginal existence.³ This, apart from its being a contemporary attitude (modern man showing a lack of interest in eternity and duration, as testified to by the contrast between medieval cathedrals standing even today and multimedia installations becoming out-of-date in a matter of days),⁴ was also the starting point for an existentialist, post-Romantic and post-modern attitude with a typically American flavour, entirely extraneous to the political character of the rebellious second half of the sixties.⁵ From a religious point of view, a generalized interest in Eastern wisdom spread in this period, potentially (yet not always fully knowingly) aimed at the vulgarization (in the etymological sense) of most especially Hindu and Buddhist spirituality (with particular reference to *Zen*⁶). The post-modern character of 'new religiosity', which caught on in the US of the early 1960s, is shown by the reception given to themes and sources of fascination mostly from Eastern religions and interpreted in accordance with a (post-)Western mentality. The practice of these religions was placed in an entirely different context from that of its origin, almost always resulting in a profound change of the traditions discussed and at times inserting them into that 'supermarket of religions' so popular today in New Age culture.

R. N. Bellah has done an excellent job of summarizing the relationships between counterculture spirituality, politics and traditional religions, as well as the sources and the results of the first, writing about the potential attitude of counterculture against Catholic or Protestant churches, 'for most of the political activists . . . too closely identified with the established powers to gain much sympathy or interest',⁷ and about the lack of preparedness of the same churches

to cope with the new spirituality of the sixties. The demand for immediate, powerful, and deep religious experience, which was part of

3 For example, the implicit theme of the 'initiation journey', utilized in J. Kerouac's *On the Road* in its aspect of continuous and aimless 'escape', eminently expresses this attitude.

4 This would open a lengthy discussion on the generally presumed superiority of modern post-Western civilization, that we are compelled not to develop here because of subject and space. However, in this respect one can read the enlightening Fennell 1999.

5 On this subject see Antonelli 2001: 12–20.

6 See for an antecedent Watts 1959.

7 Bellah 1976: 340.

the turn away from future-oriented instrumentalism *toward present meaning* and fulfilment, could on the whole not be met by the religious bodies. The major Protestant churches in the course of generations of defensive struggle against secular rationalism had taken on some the colour of the enemy. Moralism and verbalism and the almost complete absence of ecstatic experience characterized the middle-class Protestant churches. The more intense religiosity of black and lower-class churches remained largely unavailable to the white middle-class members of the counterculture. The Catholic Church with its great sacramental tradition might be imagined to have been a more hospitable home for the new movement, but such was not the case. Older Catholicism had its own defensiveness which took the form of scholastic intellectualism and legalistic moralism. Nor did Vatican II really improve things. *The Catholic Church finally decided to recognize the value of the modern world just when American young people were beginning to find it valueless.* As if all this were not enough, the biblical arrogance toward nature [*sic*] and the Christian hostility toward the life impulse were both alien to the new spiritual mood. *Thus the religion of the counterculture was by and large not biblical.* It drew from many sources including the American Indian tradition. *But its deepest influences came from Asia.* In many ways Asian spirituality provided a more thorough contrast to the rejected utilitarian individualism than did biblical religion. To external achievement it posed inner experience; to the exploitation of nature, harmony with nature; to impersonal organization, an intense relation to a guru. Mahayana Buddhism, particularly in the form of Zen, provided the most pervasive religious influence on the counterculture: but elements from Taoism, Hinduism and Sufism were also influential. What drug experiences, interpreted in oriental religious terms, as Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert did quite early, and meditation experiences, often taken up when drug use was found to have too many negative consequences, showed was the illusoriness of worldly striving. Careerism and status seeking, the sacrifice of present fulfilment for some ever-receding future goal, no longer seemed worthwhile. There was a turn away not only from utilitarian individualism, but from the whole apparatus of industrial society . . . *Thus, the limits were pushed far beyond what any previous great awakening had seen: toward socialism in one direction, toward mysticism in the other.* But perhaps the major meaning of the sixties was not anything positive at all. Neither the political movement nor the counterculture survived the decade. Important

successor movements did survive . . . , but the major meaning of the sixties was purely negative: *the erosion of the legitimacy of the American way of life*. . . ,⁸

through which 'utilitarian individualism' was substituted by 'cynical privatism'.⁹

8 Bellah 1976: 340–1, my italics.

9 Bellah 1976: 341–2. According to Bellah, 'on the surface what seems to have been most drastically undermined was utilitarian individualism, for the erosion of the biblical tradition seemed only to continue what had been a long-term trend. The actual situation was more complicated. Utilitarian individualism had perhaps never before been so divested of its ideological and religious facade, never before recognized in all its naked destructiveness. And yet that very exposure could become an ironic victory. If all moral restraints are illegitimate, then why should I believe in religion and morality? If those who win in American society are the big crooks and those who lose do so only because they are little crooks, why should I not try to be a big crook rather than a little one? In this way the unmasking of utilitarian individualism led to the very condition from which Hobbes sought to save us—the war of all against all. Always before, the biblical side of the American tradition has been able to bring antinomian and anarchic tendencies under some kind of control, and perhaps that is still possible today. Certainly the fragile structures of the counterculture were not able to do so. But out of the shattered hopes of the sixties there has emerged a cynical privatism, a narrowing of sympathy and concern to the smallest possible circle, that is truly frightening. What has happened to Richard Nixon should not obscure for us the meaning of his overwhelming victory in 1972. It was the victory of cynical privatism.' (Bellah 1976: 341–2.) On *Zen* in counterculture see Bellah 1976: 344–5; on conflict between Eastern non-dualism—according to Bellah not totally incompatible with the Christian tradition—and the American way of life, in particular with this 'utilitarian individualism' (yet recovered in other ways: Bellah 1976: 349–50), see Bellah 1976: 347–8, where among other things the author puts in evidence the anti-dogmatic and potentially non-political character—though sometimes very near to Marxist positions—of certain 'counterculture non-dualism'. Nevertheless, 'the youth rebellion of the 1960s was not entirely uninformed by the modes of consciousness just described. Indeed, a considerable part of the outrage of youth was grounded in a perceived discrepancy between principles espousing the right of human beings to fulfil themselves and practices abridging that right. Also present, although at a lower key and a distinctly secondary level, was a conception of a nation turned too far from the God of its creation. By and large, however, the youth counterculture was more denying than confirming of old world views. Its informing power came from a way of comprehending the world basically at odds with individualistic and supernatural modes of consciousness. This alternative world view was not new to the counterculture. It had been slowly diffusing, albeit in an inchoate form, through the American population over a number of decades. *The new*

Nevertheless, not only was Eastern wisdom involved in this cultural process. The period witnessed the emergence of some intellectually refined and at least partially genuine and 'heterodox' revisions of Christianity, aroused among other things by psychoanalytical speculation on symbolism and archetypes. In this respect, the exploration/exploitation of the unconscious started to be a *religious* means through which to fathom the depths of the human soul on a large scale. On this subject, one of the most interesting movements of the second half of the sixties was The Process Church of the Final Judgement, established in 1965 in London by Robert de Grimston Moore (Shanghai, 1935)

cognition has its inspiration from science . . . The sciences, and here I refer especially to the social sciences, effectively deny that human destiny is entirely either in man's or in God's control. The possibility that both may be control agents is not closed out; but that they function as either the old imageries would have it is not accepted. Insofar as they exert an influence, the sciences tell us, they do so in interaction with other forces—biological, psychological, sociological, anthropological, genetic—all of which have some influence in shaping human and social events.' (Bellah 1976: 361, my italics.) It is clear that 'the effect of a scientific world view is to undermine the underlying assumptions of the old imageries' (Bellah 1976: 362): 'although the participants were unaware of it, the youth counterculture, once launched, quickly came to reflect both the power of a scientific world view to expose the myths of old world views and its failure to contribute an alternative myth as a substitute for the old ones. The counterculture was clear and united in its stand that the old myths and the social arrangements and ways of life they had fostered were no longer viable and acceptable. It was unable to come up with an agreed on substitute to fill the void it created, although it insisted in a kind of desperation that the void be filled.' (Bellah 1976: 365. From this point of view, one may think to the New Age attitude on science, that can be considered as the legitimate heir of the counterculture one.) On American *Weltanschauung*, fundamentally characterized by the belief that God, after (and for) having created man in His image, gave him freedom and the possibility to 'control' the world (to which corresponds, besides the Calvinist corollaries of individualism and economical success, responsibility), see Glock 1976: 356–8 (a more 'theocentred' *Weltanschauung* opposes this view: Glock 1976: 358–9). It is interesting to notice Glock 1976: 359, that 'it has been possible for the two world views to coexist alongside each other throughout American history *because the supernatural did not effectively challenge the social arrangements inspired by the individualistic view; on the contrary, it supported them.* Also making for accommodation, if not compatibility, was the fact that, although the conceptions of God and his creation and purposes for man are different, but world views acknowledge God and his ultimate dominion over the world' (my italics), and Glock 1976: 361, that 'protest emerged much less from those immersed in a supernatural mode of consciousness, and not because they were necessarily more content with the way things were.'

and Mary Anne Maclean (Glasgow, 1931)—and officially dissolved in 1974—as a group of Adler’s psychotherapy [and] which has passed through Scientology before the late discovery of Jung’,¹⁰ which Massimo Introvigne persuasively placed in the category of ‘Luciferism’.¹¹ It is significant that, in the years of the foundation of The Process, the New Age movement had started to spread its message.¹² This ‘movement of the human potential’ seems to ably represent a ‘microcosm’ in which one can detect some features characteristic of a certain sophisticated (though sometimes confused from the doctrinal point of view) ‘new religiosity’, the elaborateness of which expressed itself through the lively intelligence of its founders (especially de Grimston) and through some influences from the American ‘underground’ culture. Among these features, worthy of note—apart from some techniques and methods characteristic of Scientology¹³ (of which The Process founders were members between 1961 and 1962)—were a complex cosmology and symbolism based on an evident apocalyptic orientation, as well as a ‘psychoanalytical’ view of Christianity, in which the ‘archetypal’, ‘emanationist’ and ‘reconstructive’ interpretation of the Trinity took on particular value,¹⁴ transformed as it had been into a ‘quaternary’, making use of the Jungian category of the ‘shadow’ in the figure of Satan for therapeutic ends. This view, in line with Jung, changed psychoanalysis from a form of therapy addressed to individuals into a theology with the aim of explaining reality as a whole.¹⁵

10 Introvigne 1990: 411, my translation.

11 Introvigne 1990: 411 ff., in particular 413. For a distinction between Satanism and Luciferism (the latter, in this sense, being similar to certain forms of Gnosticism) see Introvigne 1990: 410. Introvigne, who denies the possibility to define The Process a Satanic group on the basis of its thesis of the necessity to get through (and then give up) the ‘Satanic phase’ and of the belief in four gods (Introvigne 1994a: 300), significantly considers The Process as an ‘exception’ in the outline of contemporary Luciferism (Introvigne 1994a: 291), first of all to the usually narrow and discreet character of Luciferian groups (Introvigne 1990: 411), in addition to—I believe—the above-mentioned impossibility to make it be technically part of ‘Satanism’ and of its unusual—in the Satanic *milieu*—intellectual refinement.

12 See among others Introvigne 1994b.

13 Though transferred in a totally different context (Introvigne 1992: 11).

14 See Introvigne 1990: 411.

15 Introvigne 1992: 11.

In 1963 de Grimston and Maclean married and founded a group called 'Compulsion Analysis', strongly influenced by Alfred Adler's psychoanalysis. In it psychoanalysis, in contrast with Scientology,¹⁶ was not yet treated as a religion. After the official establishment in 1965 of The Process (already existing in an embryonic state and without its definitive name in 1964), a religious turning-point occurred in March 1966 when twenty-five members of the group started living together in a luxury apartment in Mayfair, London. On June 23 about thirty members left for Nassau in the Bahamas in search of the ideal place to settle, relying in part on magical visions and telepathic transmissions. In September 1966 the group moved to Mexico City, where an epic and meditation-driven trip began, ending in Xtul on the Yucatan peninsula. After having learnt that 'Xtul' meant 'end' in the Mayan language, they set up a community affectionately remembered by the nucleus of the group as 'the real Process', an experience that, owing to its social and natural environment, lasted only a month. In Xtul The Process, in the words of de Grimston, met God face to face like Israel in the desert. Besides the creation of a hierarchical structure, the assumption of 'sacred names' by members and the following emergence of sectarian dynamics inside the movement (between the Xtul group and others), on the basis of chiefly Jungian influences de Grimston devised a doctrine based on the belief in four divinities: Jehovah (feminine divinity representing earth, sacrifice, self-renunciation and emotion) and Lucifer (masculine divinity representing air, indulgence and intellect), Satan (feminine divinity representing fire and violence, who divides and spreads conflict through 'Pure Hate') and Christ (masculine divinity representing water, who unifies and solves conflict through 'Pure Love'). 'Reconciliation' between the last two was to have led to the end of the world and the beginning of a golden age, the 'age of Christ'.

According to the theology of The Process, the four above-mentioned divinities are therefore connected in two pairs of opposites: Jehovah and Lucifer and Satan and Christ, the dialectic of which must be 'reconstructed' in a higher level synthesis. However, first one has to pass through the different gods—which means acting according to their 'character'—in order to achieve final reconciliation. Therefore it is necessary to pass through Satan to find Christ, the end of the spiritual journey as 'freedom from conflict' and 're-unifier of all the paths of the Gods'. It may be

16 Introvigne 1992: 11.

said that full salvation, according to the ideology of the group, can be achieved only in Christ, who extinguishes the fire of Satan as 'water that gives life'.¹⁷ Though an arduous path, as Jung wrote, one must recognize and explore the 'shadow'. In operative terms this means to pass through a 'Satanic phase' that partially recalls an *épater le bourgeois* well placed in the counterculture climate. Moreover, according to the theology of The Process, Satan is not evil, but only an 'icon of the separation', whereas 'humanity is the Devil'¹⁸ since Satan has transferred all his evil to man through history. The observation of some passages of the 'liturgical apparatus' of The Process, a psychodrama¹⁹ and form of group therapy²⁰ celebrating the necessary unity between Satan and Christ (and between Jehovah and Lucifer),²¹ may prove useful to understanding the spiritual orientation of the movement. In the third scene of the 'Assembly of the Sabbath', the 'Sacrifist', one of the chief characters of the liturgy, declaims together with the Assembly the 'words of the unity':

Christ said: 'Love your enemies'. Christ's enemy was Satan, Satan's enemy was Christ. Through Love the enmity is destroyed . . . Through Love Christ and Satan have destroyed Their enmity and come together for the End: Christ to judge, Satan to execute the Judgement. The Judgement is Wisdom. The execution of Judgement is Love.²²

In the fourth scene, the 'Sacrifist' and the 'Evangelist' converse:

S: 'The Final Catastrophe'.

E: 'An End and a New Beginning'.

S: 'And to this end Christ and Satan are joined'.

E: 'Pure Love has descended from the pinnacle of Heaven, and He has joined Pure Hatred risen from the depths of Hell'.

S: 'To pay off the debt'.

E: 'To keep the promise'.

S: 'All conflicts are resolved'.²³

17 See Introvigne 1990: 414.

18 This is the title of one of the books by de Grimston.

19 Notice that also the black mass of LaVey's Church of Satan resembles, at least publicly, a psychodrama (Introvigne 1994a: 280).

20 Besides which there were also individual sessions (Introvigne 1990: 413).

21 Introvigne 1990: 413.

22 Introvigne 1990: 413, my translation.

23 Introvigne 1990: 413, my translation.

Between the end of 1966—when most of the members had returned to London from Xtul—and 1967, The Process became an ‘open’ and institutionalized group (and socially active as well), starting to truly function as a ‘church’ (officially registered as such in the US), and from the end of 1968 de Grimston began to spend most of his time in the US. Even if many suspicions were raised, there is no real evidence that Charles Manson—whose ‘Family’ killed nine people in a horrendous manner (including Sharon Tate, Roman Polanski’s wife) between the July 27 and the August 10, 1969—was a member of or directly implicated in The Process before the slaughter. Nevertheless, Manson was visited in prison by members of de Grimston’s group and was persuaded to write an article for the monographic issue of its review ‘The Process’ devoted to death (published in 1971). The latter is a fact that probably caused the group (clearly trying to exploit Manson’s image for propaganda) to fall into even greater disrepute—than the weak suppositions of connections between Manson and The Process *before* the above-mentioned carnage, giving rise to the so-called ‘disaster of the Manson case’.²⁴ It proved a lethal blow for the group by causing not only the entrance into the group by psychopathic and sociopathic individuals, but also by the watering down of the ‘Satanic’ doctrines and the image of the group, as well as a number of conflicts between de Grimston and Maclean culminating in the breach between the two in 1974.²⁵ However, William Sims Bainbridge, a sociologist who observed the group from the inside

24 On this subject see Bainbridge 1992: 186–94.

25 The history of the group and its ‘theology’ as reported above are based on what Bainbridge wrote in his quoted book and on the summaries by Introvigne 1994a: 291–300, especially 292–9. See also Introvigne 1990: 411–14; Sennit 1989; Taylor 1990; www.religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Process.html; www.religioustolerance.org/process.htm. It is noteworthy that Maclean, who, after the breach with de Grimston founded the ‘Foundation Faith of the New Millenium’ (then ‘Foundation Faith of God’), a small Christian apocalyptic-millenarian ‘church’ (the ‘statement of faith’ of the Foundation Faith of God is quoted in Melton 1988: 738–9), today is at the head of the ‘Best friends Animal Sanctuary’ based in Kanab, Utah. The connections between Gnostic—‘leftist’ or ‘rightist’—re-interpretations of Christianity with animal liberation and naturism have been often put in evidence (an example being a number of deep ‘ideological’ connections, in terms of theosophical sources, between Nazism and New Age; see, moreover, www.atwa.com, the site of Manson’s ecological organization), and are clearly confirmed in this case too. ‘From Luciferism to animalism’, a cynic could state with regard to the case of Mary Anne.

as an important member (particularly between 1970 and 1971, and in the period of its dissolution), has convincingly stated that the doctrines of the movement, apart from not being understood by the majority of members (who perceived them as being farther and farther from reality),²⁶ described the movement itself from the perspective of its social experience but could not influence events²⁷ and describe reality as they wanted.

It is quite evident that the theology of The Process—especially the belief in four gods—derives from Jungian theories. According to the Swiss psychoanalyst, the quaternary is an almost universal archetype, that forms ‘the *logical* basis for any whole judgement’, while ‘three is not a natural coefficient or order, but an artificial one’.²⁸ In particular, Jung defines the ‘development of the idea of Trinity’ as a ‘collective process, representing a differentiation of the consciousness that has been going on for several thousand years’.²⁹ If ‘there are four elements, four primitive qualities, four colours, four castes, four ways of spiritual development in Buddhism, etc.’, so ‘there are four aspects of psychological orientation, beyond which nothing fundamental remains to be said’, that is ‘a function which ascertains that something is there (sensation); a second one which establishes *what* it is (thinking); a third function which states whether it suits or not, whether we wish to accept it or not (feeling); and a fourth function which indicates where it came from and where it is going’.³⁰

Outline of the Jungian quaternary:³¹

	Father	
Son		Devil
	Spirit	

26 Bainbridge 1991: 300.

27 Bainbridge 1992: 424. On the social character of the doctrines of The Process see also Bainbridge 1992: 426.

28 Read *et al.* 1969²: 167, my italics. The *logical* character of Jung’s reasoning (see also, with regard to the schema Father–Son–Devil, Read *et al.* 1969²: 174) seems, just from a theological point of view, to invalidate his thesis. On Trinity and quaternary as ‘projections of psychic processes’ see also Read *et al.* 1969²: 180.

29 Read *et al.* 1969²: 180, see also 193 ff.

30 Read *et al.* 1969²: 167.

31 Read *et al.* 1969²: 175.

Here the Father represents the original unity, Christ and Satan are the two aspects of the Father in conflict (the second being the 'shadow' of Christ, see below, note 36, and the 'dark emanation' of the Father),³² and the Spirit is the unity re-established by the *dialectic* between Christ and Satan.³³ In the theology of The Process, the function of 'peacemaker' is assumed by Christ, a fact that gives the quaternity an 'asymmetric structure', Christ being both (first) a 'son in conflict'—*i.e.* 'Satan's enemy'³⁴—and, of course, (afterwards) the 'peacemaker'.

Jung's view clearly emerges in the following passage: 'the unspeakable conflict posited by duality resolves itself in a fourth principle, which restores the unity of the first in its full development. The rhythm is built up in three steps, but the resultant symbol is a quaternity'.³⁵ Moreover, the Swiss psychoanalyst maintains that

the individuation process is invariably started off by the patient's becoming conscious of the shadow,³⁶ a personality component usually with a negative sign. This 'inferior' personality is made up of everything that will not fit in with, and adapt to, the laws and regulations of conscious life . . . Closer investigation shows there is at least one function in it which ought to collaborate in orienting consciousness. Or rather, this function does collaborate, not for the benefit of conscious, purposive intentions, but in the interests of uncon-

32 Read *et al.* 1969²: 175.

33 Read *et al.* 1969²: 175–6.

34 See the excerpt from a 'liturgy' of The Process quoted above, p. 244.

35 Read *et al.* 1969²: 175. On Jung's implicit 'Manichaeism', corroborated by precise references to dualistic and Gnostic doctrines, see Read *et al.* 1969²: 167–70 (criticism of the classical Christian conception of evil as *privatio boni* and clear acceptance of the Gnostic dualism, from which the theory of the quaternity re-elaborated by The Process).

36 On the typical Jungian category of 'shadow' see Read *et al.* 1969²: 165–7, where the author connects it to the indelible link of the consciousness with the 'undifferentiated' and the 'unconscious', which the primitive initiations cannot totally wipe out; on this subject Jung (in Read *et al.* 1969²: 166, n. 4) refers to the 'alchemical symbol of the *umbra solis*' and to the 'Gnostic idea that Christ was born "not without some shadow"' (*Christus natus non sine quadam umbra*). Moreover, 'it often happens that people who have an amazing range of consciousness know less about themselves than the veriest infant, and all because "the fourth would not come"—it remained down below—or up above—in the unconsciousness realm' (Read *et al.* 1969²: 166–7; 'the fourth would not come' is an expression drawn from Goethe's *Faust*).

scious tendencies pursuing a different goal. It is this fourth, 'inferior' function which acts autonomously in relation to consciousness and cannot be harnessed to the latter's intentions. It lurks behind every neurotic dissociation and can only be annexed to consciousness if the corresponding unconscious contents are made conscious at the same time. But this integration cannot take place and be put to a useful purpose unless one can admit the tendencies bound up with the shadow and allow them some measure of realization—tempered, of course, with the necessary criticism. This leads to disobedience and self-disgust, but also to self-reliance, without which individuation is unthinkable.³⁷

In order to interpret the material here briefly set forth, we can say that The Process, 'model of a part of the world of Satanism that gives hospitality to groups too structured to be stable',³⁸ chose to give, within the diatribe between 'traditional' religion and (post-)secularization, a very original answer. Moreover, it was a highly significant example of the extraordinary crossover between the late hippy culture and psychoanalysis during the second half of the sixties—revised in the light of a 'religious quest' occurring in a (post-)Enlightenment society—with the tormented (and unsolved) alternative between a deep demand for spirituality and a clear-cut refusal of the institutional/traditional forms of religion as its constant background. We may also consider The Process quite a refined—compared with the common models of its time, and especially of the 'satanic' *milieu*—'subculture' characteristic of the sixties,³⁹ a dualistic and apocalyptic 'gnosis' greatly influenced by the *état d'esprit* of the youth rebellion, by psychoanalysis (Adler, Jung) and partially by Aleister Crowley.⁴⁰ Moreover, it was a 'human potential movement' which directly or indirectly re-elaborated material of a high cultural level, in an eccentric and typically 'underground'—but not intellectually weak—fashion.

37 Read *et al.* 1969²: 197–8. On the 'demoniac' as Jung's inheritance one can see Hillman 1987.

38 Introvigne 1992: 12, our translation. The 'excess of structuring' was *in primis* intellectual (Introvigne 1994a: 300), but also organizational, concerning the strongly hierarchical structure of the group.

39 See Raschke 1990: 111.

40 Introvigne 1994a: 300.

In an article devoted to Anton S. LaVey's Church of Satan, Randall H. Alfred expressed a paradoxical and general opinion on Satanism which, however, may at least partially suit The Process (even if, as already noted, the latter does not technically come under the category of 'Satanism', see above, note 11):

while retaining Protestantism's worldly interest in the value of work and discipline, Satanism no longer rejects the enjoyment of the mundane fruits of those labors. It is a final ratification of the spirit of capitalism . . . Satanism . . . *In many ways, [it] is becoming another Protestant sect.* ⁴¹

Bearing in mind the evident differences between the Church of Satan and The Process (in particular the deep rooting of the latter in the counterculture climate, while from this point of view the former, certainly less 'religious' than The Process, was far from being a typical product of the sixties),⁴² we believe that this interpretation may acutely shed light on some sources and trends of the complex phenomenon in question. Contemporary Satanism seems quite often to be, besides a 'counter-religion', a nihilist and roughly Nietzschean philosophy and ideology (as is clearly the case with the Church of Satan), sometimes making use of Nazi stylistic features and aesthetics (as the Process itself did, against the main counterculture inclinations)⁴³ and a hypercapitalistic 'attitude'⁴⁴ assumed, as in the case of hippies, more to impress or to shock

41 Alfred 1976: 199, my italics. The sociological and economy-related interpretation here proposed explains a good part, but obviously not all, the roots of contemporary Satanism, which is also—sometimes perhaps *in primis*—a 'spiritual' phenomenon.

42 On the scarce popularity of LaVey's group between 1968 and 1969 (for instance, in this period it had a very limited success among those under 30, its typical member being a white professional of the middle classes aged between 28–30 and 40), see Alfred 1976: 193–4; on 'ideological' differences between counterculture and Church of Satan, also in political terms, see Alfred 1976: 195–6. Nevertheless, one must keep in mind that the 'golden age' of the Church of Satan occurred between 1966 and 1975, therefore in a period more or less contemporary to the time of the widest popularity of The Process.

43 While the 'religious heiress' of counterculture, New Age—and sometimes the hippy movement too—clearly draw from some theosophical themes which were exploited by Nazism some decades ago.

44 This is one of the main differences between the Church of Satan and mainstream counterculture trends.

the man in the street than consciously adhering to a specific ideology. De Grimston's 'Luciferism', like counterculture in general, was both historically and culturally an expression of late modernity, *i.e.* post-modernity and what we may call the 'hyperWest'. It was a sentimental *reaction* to the processes of depersonalization and secularization typical of modern society. The Process was an experience synthesizing some 'trajectories' of postmodernity: some 'cultural outcasts' of the West (for example occultism and Nazi iconography) were recovered and mixed by the group, in line with a certain 'spiritualistic background' of the West itself. One could see the development of these phenomena as the emergence of trends which are constantly latent—officially refused but absolutely not to be got rid of, and sometimes even covertly promoted—in mainstream society, or which are expressed in other ways, generally socially accepted or tolerated. In line with this interpretation, these trends would be the extreme sign (often manifested in parodist and theatrical ways) of values at the very least not entirely opposed by the contemporary world,⁴⁵ whose values are separated by a difference of *degree*—but not of *nature*—from those trends. And yet, Satanism turns out to be one of the last *taboos* in the collective imagination of contemporary society (even for those who support it, its character of 'total rebellion' against socially shared conventions often being the spur to join it).

The experience of the Process—and that of counterculture in general—can be easily interpreted as one of the several—narrow, but mostly genuine and significant for its origins and *iter*—post-modern chapters of the attempt to re-enchant the world and to rediscover the profound 'meaning of things', an experience that can give rise to 'intense' existence (see Bainbridge 1992: 425 and above, p. 237) against the dark anonymity of modernity; it was an attempt which quickly imploded, mostly owing to the above noted internal reasons (see above, pp. 244–5). Herein

45 According to Introvigne (in Fiore *et al.* 1997: 23, my translation), 'organized Satanism is interesting . . . since it is the metaphor of a brutal modernity to which all rhetorical screens have been taken off. When the Satanist tells us that the strong has the right to abuse the weak, to reduce him to an object for his longing of power, wealth and sexual pleasure, is simply stating what a lot of people thinks and what not a few ideologies have hidden behind the most multicoloured pretexts. The Satanist, from this point of view, takes the mask off to a certain modernity and makes it see for what it is. Whatever small or very small, organized Satanism of movements and of adults may therefore be a further clue revealing a crisis of civilization.'

it is possible, in our opinion, to identify the genuine character of The Process, which—like counterculture and New Age—more or less had its beginnings in a period when the awareness of the ‘loss of innocence’ emerged especially among American youth, when the latter sensed the end of the so-called American dream (which, according to some, had never really begun). In this sense, 1962 is a very significant year,⁴⁶ immediately preceding Kennedy’s murder (November 1963) and the official beginning of the Vietnam war (1964); in the same period, among other things, were the ‘birth’ of New Age (Introvigne 1994b) and the first steps of the group that was to become The Process.

However, often post-modernity does not offer people a ‘map’ to see their way clearly through this world, sometimes offering instead the kind of map that clearly confuses them. The end of The Process may be compared to the end of counterculture, even if the latter chronologically preceded the former by a few years. From the historical point of view, their end is clearly connected with the ‘disaster of the Manson case’ (see above, pp. 245), while from an ‘ideological’ perspective their ‘implosion’ is closely linked to the fallacy of certain post-modern trends. While The Process ceased to exist owing to the already noted internal problems (see above, pp. 244–5), a strong politicization of the hippy movement followed its mythicized ‘golden age’, the ‘Summer of Love’ of 1967—the ‘dark side of the coin’ of this politicization being the emergence and the widespread diffusion of a deviant and muddled ‘esoteric’ trend inside it. In this sense, one can note that the reasons for the dissolution of The Process and counterculture were in both cases also the creation of ‘ideological superstructures’ which irreparably damaged them. Ironically and tragically at the same time, the brief course of The Process shows, beyond the most refined sociological interpretations, and as Bainbridge himself has brilliantly written, Satan’s triumph—and with it the triumph of separation and dispersion—at the same time *against* and *in line with* the very theology of the group,⁴⁷ proving how difficult ‘reconciliation’

46 *American Graffiti* (1973, by George Lucas) and *Big Wednesday* (1978, by John Milius) magnificently and nostalgically catch the spirit of 1962 (the plot of the latter begins in 1962 and ends in 1974). These movies are aching evocations of a historic and personal age irreparably lost: at the end of adolescence, one understands the fact of being alone before life. In this regard, the night and the sea are clear metaphors of the perils that life itself hides: one has to ‘overcome’ them to be ‘initiated’ to life itself.

47 Bainbridge 1992: 424–8.

with the unconscious is and how dangerous exploring the recesses of one's mind turns out to be. In fact, 'the gates of the unconscious are not closed by chance'.⁴⁸

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