

Everybody's Life is Like a Spiral: Narrating Post-Fordism in the Lifestyle Movement of the 1970s

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What has been variously termed the post-Fordist turn in the social and economic organization of Western societies describes (among other things) the demise of a middle class professional culture and the emergence of a new lifestyle morality of expressive self realization. This study examines the role played by selection of lifestyle innovators in this process: through an interpretive study of narratives of moral change, the shift from the old professional morality to the new lifestyle morality is interpreted as a story of learned relaxation and impulsive release. Drawing material from over 83 lifestyle publications and 34 open-ended biographical interviews, the importance of this vanguard lifestyle movement is related to a wider historical consideration of the moral culture of the American middle class, and to an overview of theories of the post-Fordist turn.

Keywords: 1970s; new middle classes; lifestyle; post-Fordism; counterculture; narratives; moral culture

Four months after the terrorist attacks of September 11th that sent the nation into a spasm of recrimination, self-doubt, and giddy patriotism, George W. Bush used the following words to paint the national mood as one of vigorous moral renewal: "For too long our culture has said, 'If it feels good, do it.' Now America is embracing a new ethic and a new creed: 'Let's roll'" (Bush, 2002). For Bush, "Let's roll" sounds a call for renewed commitment to self-sacrifice for the public good, epitomized by such uniformed public servants as the police and fire fighters, and intoned against the hedonistic moral quagmire implied by the phrase, "If it feels good, do it"—a reckless and indulgent invitation to selfish pleasure left over from the counterculture of the 1960s. Indeed, the anxieties posed by this invitation have remained a staple of conservative calls for national renewal for many years, from Nancy Reagan's demand that children "Just Say No" to drugs to the attacks on Bill Clinton's "character" to Tom Brokaw's fanciful nostalgia for the "Greatest Generation"—parents and grandparents of baby boomers whose hard work and suffering through the 1930s and devoted service in the Second World War reflected their fortitude and devotion to flag and family. Indeed, it is a nostalgia for a morality of work that has ani-

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mated much neoconservative criticism of contemporary culture—a recrimination that indirectly implicates the moral legacy of the counterculture as a pathological growth on the American character, to be drowned in the 4,000 hours of voluntary work devoted to the war on terrorism that Bush has asked of every American in his creation of the USA Freedom Corps.

If nothing else, the ghostly threat of '60s hedonism in America's post September 11th mood suggests the depth to which the lifestyle ethic of the counterculture has penetrated the national moral fabric and, I will argue, has played significantly in shaping American society over the course of the past quarter century. In short, in the pages that follow, I will argue that a broad set of cultural, economic, and political changes bundled together under the phrase "post-Fordism" could not have occurred without the influence of a new moral discourse urging the relaxation of traditional forms of self-constraint.

Theorists of the post-Fordist turn have pointed to the economic slump of the early 1970s as the starting point for a long process of decentralization in American economic, social, and cultural organization (Schulman, 2001). Accounts of this transition are well known; the decline of the manufacturing sector and the emergence of a new service sector along with the demise of mass markets and the segmentation and saturation of niche markets marked a general drift from the old industrial and administrative firms to new flexible and decentralized forms of employment—a shift that replaced a traditional emphasis on employment and professional accomplishment as the emblem of social status with a new focus on lifestyles and consumer tastes. These economic and organizational changes emerged coextensively with (or in some reciprocal causal relation with) a wider cultural turn that saw traditional, collective sources of moral authority (embedded in family, community, and class) replaced by an ethic of self-realization through the personal choice of lifestyle. Various descriptions of this shift from a society of work to one of play, from asceticism to hedonism, or production to consumption, somewhere around the century's midpoint, American society changed in fundamental ways (Aglietta, 1976; Amin, 1994; Bell, 1962, 1973, 1976; Castells, 1996; Featherstone, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 1990; Jameson, 1984, pp. 12-27; Lash, 1990; Lash & Urry, 1987, 1993; Leiss, Kline, & Leiss, 1986; Murray, 1989; Sennett, 1998).

What's more, narratives of the post-Fordist turn reserve a special place for a cultural vanguard, the "new middle classes" or "cultural intermediaries"—young baby boomers who take their lifestyles more seriously than their careers. For this newly dislocated portion of the middle class, unmoored from the stable collective moralities of the fixed Fordist economy, identity acquires a flexible, reflexive, and somewhat fragmented character as the field of lifestyle emerged as the chief social arena for the shaping of moral self-understandings (Bell, 1976; Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 354-372; Featherstone, 1991, pp. 83-95; Lasch, 1978; Lash & Urry, 1993, pp. 285-314; Lury, 1996, pp. 93-108; Slater, 1997, pp. 203-209). Where middle-class professionals under Fordism saw identity as

a coherent narrative of professional achievement, long-term commitment, and earned rewards, under post-Fordism, the focus of identity fell on practices of “controlled hedonism” or a learned capacity for self-realization through highly individualized lifestyle choices. New moral self-understandings developed through the lifestyles of the new middle classes and took the shape of what Charles Leadbeater calls a “revolt against centralised sameness” brought on by “the decay of traditional sources of solidarity and common identity forged through work [and] the growth in the importance of individual choice in consumption” (Leadbeater, 1989, p. 140).

Typically, accounts of the influential role of these classes point to the “yuppies” of the 1980s as innovators of a new ethic of lifestyle, which rose to supplant the older ethic of work practiced by their parents (Hammond, 1986). But this view ignores the real origins of the yuppie ethic in the counterculture of the ’60s and the more moderate versions of this ethic that penetrated the middle classes of the 1970s. This point of view also fails to grasp the dialogical character of the new lifestyle morality, which established itself in opposition to the moral traditions of the old, postwar middle class. In short, the lifestyle ethic celebrated a discourse of release measured against a traditional morality of discipline, constraint, and self-control—the “uptight” character of the squares and Mr. Joneses of the traditional middle class. In what follows, an examination of some influential lifestyle discourses illustrates the way in which a traditional middle-class hegemony, rooted in professionalism, repressive self-discipline, and a faith in institutional expertise and technical rationality, was overturned by a vital new morality of individuality, authenticity, and therapeutic release. The lifestyle ethic inaugurated a turn from the cold distance of the rational expert to the warm hug of the experiential learner, from the analytical authority of the administrative planner to the intuitive knowledge of one who lives in the present.

Most important, as this investigation will reveal, at the core of this insurrectionary lifestyle ethic was a narrative of personal moral growth—that is, people became better individuals as they learned to release themselves into the moment; to be themselves; to undo the harsh repression of work discipline, remote supervision, and social protocol; to permit desire and fantasy to run its course; to open the floodgates of natural impulses and to learn more about themselves from the experience. These narratives described a change of moral outlook in which doing was replaced by being, purpose by experience; rather than proving oneself through work, one had to experience oneself in the immediacy of one’s way of life. “Letting oneself go” provided a narrative of learned permissiveness that was put into practice in all aspects of daily life, from the choice to “let” one’s hair grow to the injunction to release one’s passions to the reverie of art and music.

These narratives, internalized in the biographies and worldviews of middle-class Americans, helped people make sense of the demise of old Fordist forms of work, leisure, and consumption and to embrace a new post-Fordist culture of

media-saturated consumption patterns, lifestyle identity, reflexive self-awareness and flexible responsibilities in both private and public life. What Cas Wouters called the process of “informalization” (the demise of the square of the 1950s and the emergence of the casual, intimate, and more personal style of the 1970s) was lived in the form of a narrative of moral renewal, from the old to the new, from self-subordination to self-release, or from the fixed to the flexible (Wouters, 1986). Contrary to Mr. Bush’s suggestion, doing what felt good was, for lifestylelists of the 1970s, more than a quagmire of hedonistic indulgence; it was a personal challenge related in a narrative of moral development.

The narratives considered in this study are gathered from a variety of sources—from self-help books, lifestyle manuals, countercultural literatures of various sorts, popular nonfiction paperbacks and best sellers (more than 83 magazines, newsletters, periodicals, and books from the lifestyle movement of the 1970s were considered for this study), and from the biographical recollections of the people who invested their lives and identities in this transformation and shared with me their own narratives of moral growth in their journey from the 1960s to the 1980s (selections from 34 in-depth, open-ended biographical interviews conducted over a 1-year period). Finally, it will be suggested that such an investigation into the American middle class’s use of narratives of moral renewal through personal release amounts to a genealogy of conservative nostalgia for the work ethic as the basis of American economic strength—what Bush trumpets as the “let’s roll” ethic. An interpretive genealogy of the origins of the lifestyle ethic reveals the extent to which notions of self-renewal through the relaxation of traditional moral constraints operate at the core of American forms of moral self-identity. Far from an aberrant growth on the sturdy American character, morally purposeful hedonism is, in many ways, central to contemporary forms of self.

The Moral Culture of the Middle Class (and Its Discontents)

The moral culture of the American middle class was profoundly shaken by the social conflicts of the 1960s and by the years of economic slowdown that followed (Ehrenreich, 1989). Faith in meritocracy and professional training was shaken by rising white-collar unemployment; belief in the ability of the state to act as the custodian of the collective interest was eroded under the scandals of Watergate and the festering of the welfare state, and the idyllic picture of the nuclear family as a respite from social turbulence was shaken by rising divorce rates and a devastating “generation gap.” Perhaps, most significant of these broken faiths was the middle-class belief in work as a guarantor of security and happiness. A postwar contract between labor, business, and the state, which bought off worker unrest with promises of lifetime security, retirement, and a high standard of living in exchange for lifelong devotion to a single employer was eroded by inflation, a shrinking economy, and a turn toward flex-

ible, part-time employment. Moreover, with the decline of manufacturing and the emergence of a robust service sector, the marketing of goods and services eclipsed production as the lynchpin of capitalist development, displacing the jobs that composed the core of this contract. And, for millions of middle-class Americans, with changes in employment patterns came changes in the cultural basis for identity and self-worth. Where work discipline and professional merit served the “organization man” as the measure of attainment, an emergent morality of self-realization through consumption, experiential learning, and therapeutic release through lifestyle became increasingly prevalent within middle-class culture. In short, the trauma of what Lash and Urry have termed the “end of organized capitalism” effectively divided the middle classes into contrasting fractions—the old and the new middle classes (Frank, 1997; Lash & Urry, 1987, pp. 292-296).

The new middle classes, since their appearance in American sociological literature in the 1970s, have remained the focus of scholarly debate (Burriss, 1986; Vidich, 1995). Various assessed as the harbingers of postmodern consumption (Featherstone, 1991; Lash & Urry, 1987), promoters of the “culture of narcissism” (Lasch, 1978), purveyors of the “cultural contradictions of capitalism” (Bell, 1976), or the instigators of an elitist coup against business and the working class through the network of professional institutions, nonprofit organizations, welfare professions, and the state (Bruce-Briggs, 1979), the baby boomers and counterculturals who composed the moral vanguard of the new middle classes have a checkered dossier in the academic archive. This record notwithstanding, it is possible to generalize the identity of this vanguard cohort by a revolt against the moral traditions of the older, postwar middle class, who were judged as being too wedded to the institutional and functional compromises demanded by a postwar economic and cultural contract.

Under the strains of the economic contractions and political and cultural traumas of the 1970s, this moral compromise appeared vulnerable on many points, not the least of which was a long-standing middle-class faith in the authority of expert planning. Middle-class belief in expertise and the dogmatism of credentialed supervision can be traced to the Progressive movement in the early part of the 20th century (which saw an expansion of management, administration, and the development of a new education-based system of stratification) and specifically to the application of F. W. Taylor’s techniques of scientific management to all sectors of manufacture (Harvey, 1990, pp. 127-128). With the increasing separation of planning from execution, the increasing compartmentalization of tasks, and the increasing supervision of such tasks under a hierarchical management bureaucracy, there emerged a body of educated middle management professionals, possessing supervisory authority over the entire manufacturing process on the basis of nonexperiential knowledge—an authority that was soon expanded to such disparate realms of institutional life as social work, finance, medicine, and defense and indirectly to the marketing and promotion of consumer goods, deemed “scientifically” engineered for

customer satisfaction. Importantly, the authority of the new class of credentialed experts rested on the imperative of procedural standardization. All human activities (including consumption and leisure) were to be integrated within rigid hierarchical bureaucracies to avoid waste, speed up production, and maximize efficiency (Lash & Urry, 1993, pp. 163-178; Marchand, 1985). The “masses” were, for Henry Ford and other engineers of the mass society, the object of instrumental control from an administrative distance in both the manufacturing and the consumption process. Specific talents, aptitudes, and desires of unique producers and consumers could be safely subsumed under the categories of experts in industrial engineering, welfare, and marketing, driven, as always, by the imperatives of functional efficiency, profit, and administrative control (Aglietta, 1976; Chandler, 1977). Moreover, these same imperatives of instrumental efficiency were indirectly internalized by workers and consumers themselves in the form of an ethic of work and achievement; for the neurotic housewives described by Betty Friedan, scrubbing their bathtubs with the full force of the latest scientific innovation, to C. Wright Mills’s neurotic “power elite,” the internalized imperatives of administrative expertise and instrumental control shaped a morality of discipline and self-subordination (Friedan, 1963; Mills, 1956).

For workers in the Fordist plants and bureaucracies and the experts who supervised them, this compromise was not without its rewards: U.S. gross domestic product rose 4.4% a year during the '60s, and median family income grew from \$14,000 in 1949 to \$28,000 in 1969 (Harvey, 1990, p. 130). Consequently, throughout the 1950s, belief in the authority of such planning experts was evident in all walks of middle-class life, from professional careers to private consumptions (Cross, 2000; Ewen, 1988; Lears, 1994). But by the mid-1960s, this faith was beginning to fade; as experts pleaded the case for a deepening American involvement in Vietnam and amid mounting evidence of the environmental and health costs of many new products, the authority of credentialed expertise began to waver in the minds of many middle-class Americans. Moreover, as the effects of economic slowdown began to take their toll on the big manufacturing centers; as new, smaller, more flexible firms arose to take their place; and with the concomitant expansion of the sphere of recreation; lifestyle and leisure and the expert administration of the masses by a credentialed body of specialists was increasingly challenged by alternative modes of expertise that were more sensitized to deeper human potentials and needs (Featherstone, 1991, pp. 83-95; Martin, 1981, pp. 185-202). From the counterculture of the 1960s, a grassroots print culture of lifestyle advice shaped a discourse on experiential learning and authentic self-realization through immediate practice in the present (Binkley, 2002).

It was against the backdrop of this declining middle-class faith in technological rationality that the counterculture developed what would become a broad critique of social institutions and a new discourse on authentic self-realization through alternative styles of life. This contrast can be characterized; where a

traditional middle-class faith in the authority of experts saw the means of life and work as instruments toward the realization of specific goals (the acquisition of status-conferring goods or professional advancement), countercultural lifestyles saw means and ends as conjoined in a single learning process. An emphasis on process over product was cobbled together from the various influences that informed the counterculture—from Eastern mysticism, where being was privileged over doing; from a tradition of American romantic pastoralism, where nature was celebrated over civilization; in rock music and art, where energy and expression were given priority over the studious talents of classical geniuses; and in psychedelic culture, where the epiphanies of the LSD experience revealed the ultimate continuity of the self and its objects in all human endeavors.

Psychedelic consciousness was perhaps among the most forceful expression of an ethic of self-realization defined in opposition to the remoteness from real experience that was typical of traditional administrative expertise. In dozens of testimonies, song lyrics, album-cover liner notes, and other psychedelic writings, the power of a new consciousness decried the part-and-parcel thinking of remote expertise for an inclusive understanding of the immediacy of lived experience. A statement from the album cover of the Texas-based psychedelic group the 13th Floor Elevators testifies to the power of psychedelic drugs to surpass traditional modes of expert knowledge:

Since Aristotle, man has organized his knowledge vertically in separate and unrelated groups—Science, Religion, Sex, Relaxation, Work etc. The main emphasis in his language, his system of storing knowledge, has been on the identification of objects rather than on the relationships between objects. He is now forced to use his tools of reasoning separately and for one situation at a time. Had man been able to see past this hypnotic way of thinking, to distrust it (as did Einstein), and to resystematize his knowledge so that it would all be related horizontally, he would now enjoy the perfect sanity which comes from being able to deal with his life in its entirety.

Recently, it has become possible for man to chemically alter his mental state and thus alter his point of view (that is, his own basic relation with the outside world which determines how he stores his information). He can restructure his thinking and change his language so that his thoughts bear more relation to his life and his problems, therefore approaching them more sanely.

It is this quest for pure sanity that forms the basis of the songs on this album. (The 13th Floor Elevators, 1966)

The “pure sanity” that results from being able to develop from “vertical” to “horizontal” knowledge, enabling one to deal with one’s life “in its entirety,” is a transition that signals a rupture with the expertise of a centralized system of work discipline and administrative control that had hitherto informed middle-class views of work, professional life, leisure, and identity.

Among many other influences, psychedelic discourse fed into what Daniel Yankelovich called the “new morality” of the 1970s and was expressed in a wide

assortment of specialist literatures stemming from such fields as the human and social sciences, education, environmentalism, psychology, social and community planning, ecology, nutrition, health and personal therapy. With close links to psychology and post-Freudian therapeutic methods, new views of selfhood and identity were spelled out in popular books such as David Spangler's *Emergence*, Ram Dass's *Be Here Now* and Marilyn Ferguson's *Aquarian Conspiracy*—best sellers that carved out a new publishing niche somewhere between psychology and religion. No area of American cultural life remained completely untouched by the new personalist insurrection against remote administrative expertise; from such public realms as advertising, political oratory, and professional demeanor to the intimacies of fashion, hairstyles, personal relationships, vernacular speech, and bodily sensibilities, the new morality of self-realization in the present confronted the “uptight” form of the rational expert with the relaxed and informal assurance of an integrated and expressive style of selfhood (Bruce-Briggs, 1979; Gitten, 1993; Martin, 1981; Wouters, 1986; Yankelovich, 1974).

By the end of the 1970s, the hegemony of the new morality was nearly complete. A *New York Times* article commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Woodstock rock festival acknowledged the retreat of the political movements of the 1960s but pointed out the “new openness” that permeated American culture from centers of urban life down to the most remote regions. Citing figures on relaxing attitudes toward sexual life, marijuana use, and professional demeanor, the piece described the gradual filtering of the posthippies into professional slots in education, business, and even the police force, as well as the costs of such moral laxity. “It is marvelous to have relaxation of the older constraints from which Sinclair Lewis fled,” Harvard sociologist David Reisman is quoted, “but in many places the new values have such near total hegemony that people with older values are persecuted” (“Counterculture’s Social Change,” 1979).

Moreover, social statistics testify to a profound weakening of traditional moral authorities and a concomitant increase in individualistic moral entrepreneurship within middle-class culture; a survey of changing attitudes toward public institutions reveals declines of roughly 10% between 1973 and 1980 in the popular favorable regard for medical, scientific, and financial institutions and education and organized religion (*American Social Attitudes: Social Indicators III*, 1980, pp. 38-41). Although cynicism tended to focus on corporate institutions (favorable views of big business declined from 60.2% in 1964 to 48.4% in 1976—a drop that was felt most severely among 25- to 34- year-olds, who declined from 59.4% to 41.7%), big business was not the only institution to suffer eroding respect. Favorable regard for the military declined from 74.4% to 67.5%, most severely among ages 18 to 24, who slid from 71.1% to 58.7% (Converse, Dotson, Hoag, & McGee, 1978, pp. 7-11). Between 1970 and 1979, the number of people living alone increased by 60%, constituting 23% of households by 1980; and between 1950 and 1978, the rate of divorce

increased from 3.1% to 7.1% (*American Social Attitudes: Social Indicators III*, 1980, p. 52).

In a culture of relaxed professional, religious, and sexual norms, Americans turned to narratives of personal transformation and spiritual awakening to explain this sea change in popular attitudes (Lasch, 1984). In 1976, a Gallup Poll survey of Americans involved with “spiritual experimentation” found 12% of Americans practicing either transcendental meditation, Yoga, “the Charismatic Movement,” mysticism, or an Eastern religion (Gallup Poll Public Opinion 1972-1977, 1978, p. 913). By the end of the 1970s, this trend had become widespread, and these highly individualistic narratives of authentic self-realization were increasingly common. Studies from Daniel Yankelovich indicate that while 72% of Americans spent “a great deal of time” thinking about themselves and their inner lives (Yankelovich, 1974, p. 5), 70% said that although they had many acquaintances, they have few real friends; and 41% stated that they have fewer close friends than they did in the past (p. 251). Much of the zeal for inwardness followed directly on the ambitious social movements of the 1960s, which had mobilized so many middle-class youth against the hegemony of middle-class moral authority. “People must be saved and peaceful, before they can save the world and make it peaceful,” said a new convert to the Self-Realization Fellowship describing the “Rush for Instant Salvation” that had gripped many antiwar activists (Davidson, 1971).

In the wake of the new inwardness, a plethora of leisure pursuits, advice literatures, and lifestyle choices asserting individual creativity in personal lifestyle (in contrast to the passive consumption of mass-produced goods practiced by the old middle class) flooded the consumer market. A do-it-yourself and home-crafts movement stressed domestic self-reliance as an alternative to pre-fabricated mass-market goods; a physical fitness craze stressed the values of personal health regimes, such as jogging and exercise; yoga, meditation, and other spiritual exercises sold the question of spiritual growth to an educated middle-class market (Hanegraaf, 1996). At the center of these cultural shifts was a set of compelling narratives, weaving together social and personal moral developments. The dismantling of institutional expertise, remotely administered supervision, and the subordination of impulse to an abstractly configured work regime (the basis of middle-class moral culture) was to be swept away to allow a highly intuitive and experiential realization of authentic selfhood in everyday lifestyle choices. As a closer study of this lifestyle literature and of the personal testimonies of lifestyle practitioners reveals, the “pure sanity” of a lifestyle consciousness charted a narrative of release, relaxation, and a learned talent for letting go.

Narratives and the New Alchemical Dream

Tom Wolfe (1976) famously summarized the striving for self-transformation that characterized middle-class longing during the “Me Decade”: “The old

alchemical dream was changing base metals into gold. The new alchemical dream is: changing one's personality—remaking, remodeling, elevating, and polishing one's very self. . . and observing, studying, and doting on it (Me!)."

This "remaking, remodeling, and elevating" was given a popular narrative form in the lifestyle literature of the 1970s. Indeed, two kinds of stories were told: one dealing with a national and global march into a postindustrial age, in which the anonymity of complex societies would be superseded by a new humanistic polity; and another in which personal hang-ups, anxieties, and the frustrated strivings for egoistic gratification would give way to an ethic of self-acceptance and genuine self-knowledge. These social and biographical narratives of renewal helped a young middle-class generation come to terms with the painful and disorienting ambiguities left by a diminished middle-class moral hegemony and the precarious economic conditions that greeted the baby boomers' emergence into professional life (Yankelovich, 1974).

The importance of narratives in the domestication of moral uncertainties resulting from the flux of modern change has been widely theorized; as Jean-Francois Lyotard has pointed out, modern societies depend on metanarratives of morally purposeful social change (typically termed "progress" toward enlightenment or rationality) for the legitimation of modern developments. On a more intimate level, Anthony Giddens has related the plights of modern people in fashioning morally coherent biographical narratives to deal with the personal consequences of rapid change, uprootedness, and inundation with apparently arbitrary lifestyle choices (Giddens, 1991, pp. 52-54; Lyotard, 1984, pp. 31-37). Giddens uses the phrase "reflexive project of the self" to describe the way individuals fashion life stories of personal growth that are organized around teleologies of unfolding self-authenticity. 'Self-identity, as a coherent phenomenon, presumes a narrative: the narrative of the self . . . is something that has to be worked at, and calls for creative input as a matter of course" (Giddens, 1991, p. 76).

Similarly, the intertwined social and personal narratives that composed Wolfe's new alchemical dream sought to domesticate the ambiguity and uncertainty of radical social change, even as they undid the foundations of the old middle-class moral culture. These narratives entail, as Giddens states, a practical dimension; they have been "worked at," fashioned into forms of continuity toward morally purposeful ends by their authors in a variety of texts and products. Innovations in lifestyle in the 1970s promulgated precisely such narratives, which variously charted a path of personal growth from the formal rationality of traditional middle-class morality into noninstrumental expressive selfhood. In 1976, *Reader's Digest* attempted to plot new lifestyle fads on a larger trajectory leading from the turbulence of the '60s to the lifestyle movements of the '70s.

The last dozen years have been as traumatic and divisive as any in our history. Assassinations, a tragic war, a political and economic upheaval have divided and dismayed this country.

In order to face problems like these, a democracy needs themes and common goals which bring unity and commitment. The emerging ecological ethic and the change in life-style which accompany it may be such a force (Rockefeller, 1976, p. 61).

The article goes on to describe an assortment of new lifestyle fads and consumer sensibilities—recycling, bicycling to work, fitness, turning off lights when not in use, smaller cars, use of renewable energy: “this all adds up to a new pattern of living—one that is essential to the well-being of individuals and of the nation” (Rockefeller, 1976, p. 64). This intertwinement of personal and national narratives was seminal to the sense of historical purpose espoused by the counterculture. Charles Reich’s famous countercultural manifesto *Greening of America* related a rosy account of the groundswell of antiauthoritarian humanism he observed in his students at Yale University, pushing its way up through the cracking facade of a declining middle-class “technocracy.” In a sweeping historical overview, Reich traced the gradual unfolding of Consciousness I, rugged individualism fostered by the harsh conditions facing the original frontier settlers (Reich, 1970, pp. 20-41); this was succeeded by Consciousness II, the bureaucratic, administrative “organization men” of the postwar society of consumer abundance and institutional sprawl (pp. 59-87); and, finally, by Consciousness III, an exuberant, sincere, expressive, and playful spirit—one that had thrown off the constraints and empty aspirations of “the machine” and undertaken a radical reassertion of individuality and the right to live freely (pp. 217-265).

In a similar manner, Theodore Roszak, in his 1978 book *Person/Planet*, brought together the personal narratives of individual transformation with the global narratives of social and historical change in a glowing appraisal of an immense humanizing transformation. Describing the “creative disintegration of industrial society” (as an alternative to the traumatic convulsions of modern change), Roszak describes

a postindustrial society whose highest social value is the project of self-discovery, whose principal wealth is the richness of the autonomous personality. . . .

But there is more to the matter than the inherent delight of becoming one’s own person. Another more inscrutable force drives the ethos of self-discovery forward with a special urgency. . . . There is a planetary dimension to the spreading personalist sensibility which links the search for an authentic identity to the well-being of the global environment. . . . The needs of the planet are the needs of the person. And, therefore, the rights of the person are the rights of the planet. If a proper reverence for the sanctity of the Earth and the diversity of its people is the secret of peace and survival, then the adventure of self-discovery stands before us as the most practical of pleasures. (Roszak, 1978, p. xxx)

For Roszak and others, the needs of the planet and the needs of the person defined two interwoven stories of holistic development, combined with a larger trajectory of global social change—a narrative that would deliver the individual from the instrumental thinking that dominated the professional institutions of Fordist industrial society to the impulsive pleasures and expressive leisure of a lifestyle culture. Such a trajectory is recounted by James, a middle-class convert from a professional job to Zen Buddhism and long-term resident at a holistic commune.

Born to a middle-class family in Brooklyn in the early 1960s James found himself an up-and-coming statistician at the prestigious Bell Labs in New Jersey. However, his growing interest in Zen Buddhism and LSD led him to question the purpose of this professional trajectory and to pursue deeper forms of self-knowledge:

I was walking around [Bell Labs] with this guy, one of the leading statisticians in the country. . . . He was in his prime, and I was sort of his protégée. . . . We were walking around during lunch one time, and I said “I dunno, it just seems like the work we’re doing, there’s something about it that’s very dissatisfying. . . . No matter what you do, it’s just such a small step in the world of mathematics and all that, . . . kind of like being a small bird pecking at a mountain. . . . It seemed so limited, even if you do something major it’s just so limited. So the guy turned to me and said “look, I think you’re in the wrong line of work.” (laughs). So, it was clear that I was on my way out.

[Zen] gave a sense of understanding and stability as to who and what you were. I had to come to a radical change to come to that stuff. So I went up to Maine where this community was forming, where there was a simple style of living, a primitive style of living.

Communal life gave James an entirely novel moral outlook and a radical alternative to the desperate moral deficits of mainstream culture:

People were looking for something different. Rather than the 9-5 or the corporate agenda, or the straight life, any of that, it just seemed worthless. . . . It just seemed pointless, meaningless, it seemed connected to the whole war and the racial stuff and the black oppression, [the straight world] just looked like privileged dead-end means. Straights were . . . their consciousness was too limited, too means-ends restricted, too full of plastic, TV commercial mentalities. They had to prove themselves with big cars and expensive watches. With Zen, LSD, things like that, we saw ourselves part of the whole world. They only saw part of that view, protect your stuff, every man for himself. And the war stuff really helped start all this. Somehow we all got connected to rejecting the straight life, business as usual, corporate America and living with plastic food and clothes.

James’s account of his moral renewal in the counterculture sets up an opposition between the enlightenment and self-understanding that he attained at the commune and the narrowness, instrumentalism, and “means-ends” restrictions that clung to acquisitive consumption and professional outlooks of the

mainstream. Seeing himself as “part of a whole,” James found meaning in rejecting the inauthenticity of mass consumption for holistic alternatives. At the heart of this rejection was, for many counterculturals, a surrender of will to the experiential textures of lifestyles. In another example taken from a countercultural commune magazine, a learned capacity for the surrender of calculated and controlled effort (the very talent their middle-class parents assured them would provide stability and success) and the embrace of the haphazardness of unplanned outcomes permits the negotiation of the cultural and social crises of the early 1970s. In 1978, one lifestyle journalist found these words to relate the political trajectory of the lifestyle movement to its roots in the social movement of the 1960s, in terms of a learned ethic of inner release:

[Social change] is not something we can make happen, though it is something we can *let* happen. . . . You can't change [society] by reform, you can't topple it (without instituting another just as bad). These were the lessons learned in the streets of Chicago in 1968. You can only withdraw. (Jerome, 1978, p. 22)

Learning to let things happen (as opposed to making them happen) related a narrative of moral growth from the analytic planning of middle-class professionalism (here, manifested in New Left militancy) to an acquired talent for self-surrender to the present and the acceptance of unplanned outcomes. Typically, the lifestyle moralities articulated within this vanguard were antidogmatic in character, stressing the irreducible uniqueness of direct individual experience over the abstract expertise of formal knowledge. Jean Diamond, a middle-class hippie from Connecticut, recalls her early years in the counterculture:

In '67, when Sergeant Pepper came out . . . I was writing poetry, I was studying Yoga, I was doing a lot of reading and I was very much into feeling love and peace . . . like that Beatles song, “All You Need Is Love.” I was very much into the idea that whatever the problem was, love was the answer. Spiritually, though, I've always wanted to go my own road. As soon as I heard someone saying something from a platform it just didn't ring true for me.

All of these accounts relate the morally fractured character of the middle class during the 1960s and the 1970s and the manner in which narratives of social change, which combined personal and social trajectories of renewal, negotiated the moral vacuum left by a flagging middle-class moral culture premised on a faith in hard work and the authority of remote experts. Emerging from an instrumental ethic of rational planning, dogmatic expertise, and conspicuous consumption to an experiential ethic of expressiveness, intuitive knowledge, and lifestyle, what James termed the “means-ends restrictedness” of the straights had to be superseded by what Roszak called the “the spreading personalist sensibility” of the new middle classes. On closer reading, we see that

the distinct moral fields separated by this fracture were further defined in more nuanced terms, distinguishing the holistic from the dualistic.

Against the Rat Race: From Dualism to Holism

Rock mythology recounts a telling episode in the history of the psychedelic counterculture, again, involving the 13th Floor Elevators. Stumbling and tripping through the streets of Haight Ashbury, members of the band came across a line of people waiting for admission to a rock show. Inspired, the group fell in line, eager to see the show. When the doors finally opened and the crowd was admitted to the hall, a poster clued them in to the act they had been waiting for; they were, themselves, the headlining band. Such a “mind blowing” experience, whether it actually happened or not, tells a story that is typical of countercultural moral narratives; that is, in the course of one’s actions, one inevitably returns to oneself. The striving for objects inevitably uncovers an underlying continuity between subject and object, self and world, means and goals, intentions and outcomes. Where traditional moralities operated within a dualistic framework separating agent from outcome, the lifestyle morality of the counterculture affirmed the continuity of agents and outcomes in a holistic cosmology.

In various studies of the “new consciousness” movement of the 1970s, Robert Bellah, Steve Tipton, and others have defined this holistic moral tendency of the postcountercultural middle class by a rejection of old utilitarian and individualist tenets deeply rooted in the American moral tradition. In a centuries old dialogue between biblical religiosity and utilitarian instrumentality, a dualistic morality defining the self in opposition to nature, to God, and to society established the characterological foundation for an industrial middle-class professional ethos, defined around administrative expertise and credentialed, Taylorist managerial supervision (Bellah, 1970; Bellah & Glock, 1976; Tipton, 1982). Where the Protestant biblical tradition stressed self-restraint and the control of impulse in deference to the will of God, the utilitarian tradition required these same measures of self-control in accordance with the inner demands of one’s rationally calculated interests, acted out in real world markets, frontiers, and industries (Bellah, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, pp. 142-167; Tipton, 1982, p. 2). In short, a dualistic opposition separating self and other, self and world, impulse and norm fueled an emergent instrumental rationality among middle-class professionals. With the onset of industrialism and the ascendancy of utilitarianism over biblical morality, “technological reason—the rationalization of means to maximize given ends—replaced conscience as a moral guide” (Tipton, 1982, p. 7).

In the professional centers of the Fordist economy, this utilitarian tradition manifested itself in White Anglo-Saxon Protestant middle-class cultural hegemony euphemistically summarized in the phrase “military-industrial complex,” although apparent throughout the literature of the counterculture as

“the machine,” “Amerika,” “the establishment,” or simply “mainstream society.” In the professional cultures of the big administrative and bureaucratic concentrations and specifically in the identities and outlooks of the middle-class “organization men” who staffed its ranks, moral identities were centered around a dualistic view of the world that was traceable to utilitarianism’s instrumental reasoning—that is, the Earth’s resources were there for the taking in a social world of competition and one-upmanship, in which formal procedure counted more than authentic experience. Likewise, in the realm of mass consumption, the instrumental interest in advancement up the status ladder propelled the suburban conspicuous consumer of cars, swimming pools, and lawn ornaments to compete with his neighbor (Packard, 1957; Warner, Meeker, & Eells, 1949).

The characterological pathologies of this moral type have been documented in popular sociological literature of the 1950s and the 1960s; in *White Collar* and in *The Power Elite*. C. Wright Mills studied the social world of the great bureaucracies, where the bland character and firm handshake of the middle-class administrative expert concealed the cutthroat opportunism of an aggressive and self-interested careerist (Mills 1951, 1956). William H. Whyte (1956) traced the *Organization Man* to the decline of the 19th-century, blue-blooded Schumpeterian entrepreneur, replaced by his obsequious administrative counterpart, the product of business schools and training centers, a mere cog in the machine of mass provision. And Vance Packard diagnosed the neurotic rat race among mass consumers, striving for some means of social differentiation in a world of mass-produced happiness (Packard, 1957). The middle-class professional was simultaneously at odds with himself, his coworker, and his neighbor in an internalized frontier struggle—a character famously termed “outwardly directed” by sociologist David Reisman (Reisman, Glazer, & Denney, 1950).

The countercultural morality of the 1970s confronted this professional dualism with a lifestyle, ethic-centered “holistic monism,” in which a recovery of the “whole self” was to be achieved, not through professional commitments or organized actions but through the reintegration of authenticity, feeling, and impulse into everyday style of life. For the hippie, the goals of organized action, analytically distinguished from the means of their attainment in the professional culture of the middle class, were magically reconnected in a culture of play and celebration, in which “being here now” was its own reward. Moreover, the holistic motif applied to a range of political and cultural disputes. The reckless extraction of natural resources for industrial exploitation was replaced by a holistic, ecological understanding of mankind’s place on the “whole Earth” or, in Buckminster Fuller’s phrase, we became conscious of ourselves as astronauts on “spaceship Earth” (Fuller, 1969; Schumacher, 1973). Stressing “process over product,” organizations devoted to the collective pursuit of specific goals were replaced by the “be-ins,” in which simple shared experience in the present allowed opportunities for self-renewal, and communes, in which living off the land was an end in itself.

Holistic injunctions to “be here now,” “tune in, turn on, drop out,” “do your own thing” “let it all hang out” differently denounced the dualistic functional logic of the utilitarian culture with appeals to a recovery of impulse, sensuality, and the intrinsic value of noninstrumental action. The phrase “uptight,” connoting the fixation on formal presentation of the business suit (buttoned up to the top button), contrasted with the injunction to “hang loose,” undoing one’s shirt to reveal chest and navel—integrating real self and appearance in a single whole. In this way, the holistic morality of the counterculture (later codified for a more stable new middle class in the 1970s) shaped a morality of lifestyle, which was set in opposition to the dualistic morality of the old middle-class professionals and was centered around the integrative effect on character and identity of noninstrumental doing in daily life. This novel moral sensibility was largely centered on an evolutionary narrative from the older dualism of a unique holistic lifestyle sensibility.

Stanford futurologist and researcher Duane Elgin sketched such a national narrative in his best selling lifestyle manual *Voluntary Simplicity* (1981). Elgin’s ethics of consumption resonated with the moral sentiments of the counterculture while offering a new social agenda more amenable to the middle-class aspirations of exhausted radicals:

For millions of persons who had to varying degrees opened to the “new consciousness,” the 1970s were a challenging time of finding a new integration and balance between the old and the new cultures. For the more persistent among this pioneering culture, the agenda shifted from transforming society to finding new ways of living at the grass roots level of society. Instead of continuing the seemingly fruitless struggle to change dominant institutions, many among this forerunner group began to concentrate on their immediate lives—the domain where they had genuine control and could make a visible, if seemingly small, difference. (Elgin, 1981, pp. 28-29)

The “pioneering culture” to which Elgin refers described a trajectory of personal and social renewal in which dualistic themes of competition were to be supplanted by holistic affirmations of collectivity and cooperation. Elgin provides an account of the developmental character of an emerging “voluntary simplicity” view, rising from a declining Industrial Era perspective.

Industrial Era View

- The overriding goal in life is material progress.
- Much emphasis is placed on conspicuous consumption.
- The individual is defined by his or her body and is ultimately separate and alone.
- “Cutthroat competition” prevails; compete against others; strive to “make a killing.”
- The welfare of the whole is left to the workings of the “free” market.

Simple Living View

- The central intention in life is that of evolving both the material and spiritual aspects of life with harmony and balance.
- The individual is experienced as both unique and an inseparable part of the larger universe.
- Each person takes responsibility for the well-being of the whole and directly participates in the overall welfare.
- Much emphasis is placed on becoming more self-reliant and self-governing. (Elgin, 1981, pp. 39-40)

Whereas the industrial era depicts the individual as a solitary entity opposed to nature and to the desired goods that compose “material progress,” the simple living view allows a holistic, integrated model of the individual as an “inseparable part of the larger universe” at one with the cosmos and the Earth.

The overcoming of competitive practice provided an important focus for many of the new lifestyle fads of the 1970s. Jogging, derived from highly competitive track and field sports, stands out as a typical '70s lifestyle fad, stressing personal improvement over traditional forms of competitive sport. An article in *Runner's World Magazine* (one of hundreds of new lifestyle publications that emerged in the early years of the 70s) invokes the image of the lone seagull from Richard Bach's runaway best seller *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* as an emblem of self-realization through a solitary form of recreation. Subtitled “Going Beyond Fitness, Beyond Competition, to a Fresh Definition of Running—‘Fun Running,’” the article includes pictures of figures jogging along open expanses of beach (reminiscent of the illustrations in Bach's book) and celebrates what the author calls the “Jonathan Livingston Seagulls of the Running World,” announcing the arrival of “fun runners,”—that is, new lifestyle runners who bring a new noncompetitive outlook to the sport.

The running world has its Jonathan Livingston Seagulls—more of them all the time. And they're expanding consciousness of what the activity is and it can be. They're pushing back the psychic limits of traditional running. . . . The Fun-Runner of the 1970s is expanding the definition of running beyond fastness and fitness by going beyond competing and conditioning into an arena of his own. Here he is an experiment of one, free to explore at will (“Jonathan Livingston Seagulls of the Running World,” 1972).

Like the seagull in Bach's novel who escaped the competitive bickering over food scraps on the beach to float freely high on the ocean winds, the noncompetitive runner as an “experiment of one” had transcended the oppositional jockeying of mainstream athletes. This narrative of holistic transcendence suggests an interesting correlate to the experience of the young absconders of the middle class, who abandoned their parent's endless battles to “keep up with the Joneses” for lifestyles of experiential learning and authenticity.

The emergence from dualistic to holistic moral identities is reiterated in the recollections of Claire, a middle-class college instructor living in New York

City. In 1967, Claire moved from Texas to Manhattan with her husband and took a job as a professor of English at a local community college. Within months of her move, Claire was exposed to many of the lifestyle fads affecting Manhattan's cosmopolitan middle class and became an avid recycler—saving and washing plastic bags for reuse, driving across town to deposit recyclable materials, and so on. At the same time, from about 1969, Claire practiced Yoga, which she understood as a related project to that of environmental home life and responsible consumption.

I saw it all as one of a piece. And some of my best awareness of different things came from a Yoga teacher—cooking techniques and things like that. Yeah, it felt integrative, it felt whole, that I could do my meditation, and when I could I would do it outside. Even when I was gardening I was conscious of my breathing, and different exercise movements and so on, Yoga and the spiritual side.

For Claire, who expressed no direct identification with the counterculture, the “simple life” presented an opposition to the “suburban” lifestyle she had known in Texas. Her development out of this lifestyle involved the assumption of an integrated outlook on politics, spirituality, and lifestyle in which recycling and ecologically responsible choices were central. For Aaron, who spent most of his life in Manhattan's Lower East Side countercultural scene, a holistic morality is expressed in a far more radical narrative of revolutionary transformation from middle-class culture to collective, cooperative forms of life.

[The Revolution] would have meant the end of the American middle class. The revolution meant people sharing instead of competing—housing was a big issue. I just feel that the non-authoritarian approaches to solving problems, like conservation and fuel efficiencies . . . just to try to decentralize the whole thing. To decentralize authority so that people could have more control over their lives. The Revolution happened in a lot of people's minds, but it stayed limited. [Other] people acted in their own self-interest. But I was way over-optimistic about the revolution, and I don't mean violent revolution because I'm a pacifist. It was a revolution of the mind . . . ways of sharing.

Taken together, these accounts describe narratives of moral development, tracing both a personal and a wider social emergence from the narrow dualistic categories of centralized administrative planning, mass consumption, and competition to a new morality of experiential release, cooperation, and an impulsive embrace of the larger continuities linking self, society, terrestrial environment, and cosmos. As the professional moralities of the sprawling Fordist bureaucracies began to melt down in the 1970s and as marketing and consumption became increasingly tuned to the unique “values and lifestyles” of highly individualized consumers, the shift to lifestyle as the arena of moral identity was facilitated by this popular valorization of the experiential over the instrumental, expressed in narratives of attained holistic moral consciousness.

To become who one really was, one had to learn to release oneself from the part into the whole.

Inevitability and Intentionality in Lifestyle Narratives

The distinction between dualistic and holistic moral styles describes the opposing moral realms negotiated by the lifestyle narratives of the middle-class vanguard. But a closer study of the specific structure of these narratives reveals the inner tension between instrumental and expressive moralities; for many of these narratives, the realization of a holistic moral state is told in a nonteleological way—moral elevation, or Wolfe's alchemical dream, was not a goal of life, but a lesson extracted from reflection on the cyclical pattern of a larger biographical trajectory. In other words, in many of these narratives, goals are not achieved, but underlying patterns are glimpsed from privileged vantage points from which the storyteller could see a story in its entirety. This dimension is expressed in the deep interplay of intentionality and inevitability in narrative telling.

In his sociology of moral codes, Robert Wuthnow (1987) has examined the functions of inevitability and intentionality in the structure of durable moral outlooks. For a code to retain moral meaning, Wuthnow argues, it must at once limit the subjective freedom of individual choices while retaining some measure of responsibility for one's choices and actions. A sense of inevitability limits the burden of responsibility one takes for one's actions, giving purpose and meaning to unexpected outcomes and occurrences, while a sense of intentionality puts moral codes into play in daily life, making the self part of the course of events and locating identity at the center of moral behavior. Intentionality and inevitability must find a balance in any moral outlook. Were one's responsibilities to be overextended to all realms of life and society or were one's actions to be read as entirely scripted and determined in advance, a given moral outlook would lose its poignancy and meaning, giving way to crisis and cynicism (p. 79).

Within the holistic framework of the counterculture and shaped around a dismissal of the functional rationality of traditional middle-class moral sensibilities, a sense of an uncovered inevitability, or a pervasive force guiding all seemingly haphazard change, marshaled a powerful moral opposition to the flagging morality of the technocracy; against the planned biography of the middle-class professional, which was centered around personal achievements and accumulated status, counterculturals wove narratives of unfolding inevitability in the arenas of both social change and personal, biographical development—time was an inevitable current one had to learn to release oneself into. This sense played a specific role in rehabilitating the moral convictions of lifestyle counterculturals in the 1970s, whose dreams of radical social change had run up on the shoals of Nixon's electoral victories and shrinking popular support. In the pages of the *Briarpatch Review*, a small newsletter for

countercultural entrepreneurs that circulated throughout the Bay Area in the mid- to late 1970s, one author tells the story of the new ethic of therapeutic lifestyle in an unfolding trajectory of personal and social growth, underpinned by the inevitability of a grand social and personal process.

Like a lot of other folks, I had my consciousness raised (directed is perhaps a more accurate word) during the political struggles of 1968-1971. I became impatient for change, worried that we had little time left to “save” ourselves, our communities, and our planet. I wanted “revolution now!” I thought in terms of large-scale projects; government, private, or university funding; even nationwide organizations and impacts.

Five years later I find myself persuaded that most “revolutionaries” will only succeed in replacing one centralized, intolerant, authoritarian regime with another. So I am seeking a change theory which recognizes the necessity of evolutionary change based on human values (Mosher, 1976, p. 16).

For this author, there is a rupture between the late 60s and early 70s that separates a dogmatic revolutionary agenda (one that “directs” rather than “raises” consciousness) from an alternate program of change that incorporates personal, “human values” into an inevitable evolutionary trajectory. Later, in the same article, the author reflects on this sense of moral equilibrium that has replaced the strident, dualistic inner conflicts brought about by revolutionary strife. After a brief discussion of the *I Ching* as a model of gradual change, he writes,

These words of ancient Chinese wisdom are echoed by many other people on both the personal and community level. Gurdjieff says that fundamental personal change comes only through lifelong work. Barry Stevens reminds us, “Don’t push the river; it flows by itself.” The Beatles sing “there will be an answer, let it be.” And the steady tortoise crosses the line ahead of the dashing hare. (Mosher, 1976, p. 17)

Letting the river flow by itself assumes a stabilized pattern of duration and change that engulfs the will of the individual, soothes the anxieties of a worldview lacking in clear sense of what is worth striving for yet heavy with intense personal and political aspirations. Learning how not to push rivers required one to expunge oneself of the egoism and intentionality of a utilitarian dualism—a task that would prove a sustaining challenge in daily moral conduct, supplying moral practice with a vitality and meaning that reverberated with urgency.

However, the learned acceptance of inevitability was often told through narratives that lacked clear actors or authors, often returning the teller to the point of origin in a biographical narrative that is less teleological, more cyclical, and deeply patterned (like the 13th Floor Elevator’s accidental sojourn to their own performance). The inevitability of moral growth is revealed in Elizabeth’s recollection of her transition from a ’60s radical to a morally conscious lifestyle in

the '80s and '90s. Elizabeth considers herself "a product of the '60s" and attributes her views, her sense of spirituality and her politics to her early involvement in antiwar activism and the new consciousness movement. After an intense involvement with the counterculture, Elizabeth drifted into dead-end administrative work, which she maintained until the early 1980s, when she joined the simple living movement:

I was living my life in a dull, totally meaningless way, and I just couldn't hack it anymore. I was so out of synch with my beliefs, in a sense, and what I was doing was in no way enforcing my beliefs. Doing this meaningless work . . . The period in my life, from the mid-'70s till the mid-'80s was a time of grappling with these issues, and through all these experiments and trying stuff to see whether it worked. Then when all this avalanche of books on simplicity came out I read them and found that they were reaffirmations of ways of doing things which I had been looking for all along, without having a how-to manual on how to get your life working. So, it's almost like a cosmic synchronicity that brought me back to my old values. Losing my goals only brought me back to what I wanted my life to be all about. . . . All of the language people used, like do your own thing, let it all hang out—to me the new emphasis on simple living, which came out of Elgin's book, seems like a natural outgrowth of these seeds that were planted in the '60s. 'Cause I do think that everything is a continuum, and there is a continuation between today and the ideas of the '60s. . . . So, my own personal journey has become very spiritually informed, if I can use that word, its very over used, I think that once you get to be middle aged, I think that people meet that point in their path, when they embrace the mainstream and become and go forward and make peace with your choice, or you say I'm going to go out and live my life the way I believe I should live it. That's the choice I made, but it wasn't really a choice, it was just the way things had to be for me.

Elizabeth takes credit for her choices, although she also attributes them to the unfolding of deeper personal determinations that in some way anticipated her choices. Likewise, on a larger social level, Elizabeth perceives historical and cultural developments as underscored by a "cosmic synchronicity," linking disparate events into a "continuum." Her story, in this regard, is nonlinear and lacks a clear biographical actor; it is, instead, patterned on deeply structured cycles glimpsed at certain moments.

Similarly, for Sherry, a 58-year-old occupational therapist living in New York City, the changes in moral identity she underwent during the 1960s and 1970s are understood as moments in an inevitable flow of circular time. Born in 1947 to a wealthy Episcopalian family in Westchester County, she followed a wave of countercultural professional migration during the 1970s into services and the helping professions. She views her life as a process of choices concealing an underlying pattern, optimistically developing toward greater and more perfect stages of evolution yet returning again and again to original points of departure. This pattern is revealed to her at marked moments of sudden insight, or "epiphanies," in which cycles of recurring events are suddenly appar-

ent. Drawing a coiling pencil line on a piece of paper, she uses the metaphor of a spiral to describe this linear continuity:

Everybody's life is like a spiral: You're evolving, you keep doing stuff and you keep coming back to the same place, because you've been there before. So here I am, here's where I was when I was 15. It's interesting to see these epiphanous moments, coming back to the same place, where you were maybe 15 or 20 years ago. And when you saw your life in front of you, and the things you did to get there, you see your own evolution over time. And all the sudden bam! and you see it. There you are, you're in the same place, but you're a more evolved person. So it's always spiraling up, toward becoming the more authentic person that you really are.

The order Sherry gives to her life is not arbitrary; it reflects deeply held views on the ultimately holistic teleology of life and the self as an object of unfolding moral improvement and authentic realization. Sherry's "Bam!" offers her a glimpse into the deeply patterned nature of this narrative—one that calls on the individual to accept rather than to intervene in the inevitable unfolding of events.

For both Elizabeth and Sherry, the development of self-authenticity provides a structuring moral agenda that weaves together disparate biographical episodes and cements lifestyle choices into coherent stories of moral growth and purposeful evolution. In both cases, the authenticity of the self provides a guiding ballast in an unfolding biographical narrative self-realization through style of life.

Conclusion

It has been argued that the vanguard lifestyle movements of the 1970s pioneered a set of cultural changes that facilitated a shift in the moral basis of middle-class identities, from professional life to consumption, lifestyle, and highly reflexive forms of leisure—changes that have been variously termed post-Fordist, postmodernism, late-capitalist, and postindustrial. Specifically, it has been argued that the core tenets of this traditional middle-class moral culture—deriving from utilitarian and biblical moral traditions, professionalized in the Taylorist management regimes in the early part of the century—variously conveyed a dualistic view of the world; that is, a sovereign, rational individual was set against the world and against himself or herself in a relation that was egoistic and instrumental. This instrumental rationality found its way into the professional administrative positions inhabited by the postwar middle class and culminated in the faith in specialization, expertise, and supervised planning that characterized the mass markets and bureaucratic hierarchies of the Fordist economy.

With the decline of this economic model and the disenfranchisement of this professional class amid the economic, cultural, and political turbulence of the

1970s, an oppositional lifestyle ethic countered the hegemony of a declining dualistic morality with a holistic outlook on expressive self-realization through style of life. Throughout, this transition has been described through personal and social narratives relating the development from the old middle-class dualism, encumbered with instrumental rationality, egoism, and the narrowness of professional expertise, to a holistic new middle-class morality in which ends are conjoined with means and experience provides its own ethical reward. These narratives, I argue, provide an important cultural dimension to a process of postwar social change that is too often attributed to narrow economic and technological determinations, such as the shift from fixed to flexible modes of accumulation and so on (Harvey, 1990). Moreover, accounts of the pioneering role of the new cultural intermediaries typically identify the yuppies of the 1980s as vanguard players in a valorization of lifestyle as a reflexive moral terrain (Featherstone, 1991). The narratives studied here point to the influential role of an earlier cohort—the postcountercultural lifestylists of the 1970s—in a post-Fordist turn from professional obligation to lifestyle experience as the basis of moral identity.

But there is more at stake in this than a historical case study of changing moral cultures; understanding the cultural origins of a lifestyle ethic stands to challenge a political regime in which the ghost of “hedonism” is repeatedly summoned up and demonized in the name of national renewal. Conservative appeals to “the Greatest Generation” wax nostalgic for a morality of work and public commitment that have long since lost ground to a variety of alternative, more permissive ways of conceiving an ethics of the self. That the lifestyle ethic of the counterculture was not, as is often implied, merely an appeal to hedonistic release but a sustained effort to renew the basis of identity in a meaningful and often quite rigorous way stands to correct the careless characterization of the injunction “if it feels good, do it” as an accident of American cultural history. A genealogy of this lifestyle ethic raises other questions on the relationship between identity, subjectivity, and capitalism, and it points the way to a rethinking of assumptions about the right place of a work ethic in a capitalist society. Moreover, understanding the dialectic of work and play, of constraint and release, as part-and-parcel of a wider pattern of capitalist “disorganization” exposes the shadow boxing of conservative critics of “hedonism” as ignorant of the real ways Americans have coped with the changing economic and social conditions of the past decades.

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