

THE “RAEL” WORLD

Narratives of the Raelian Movement

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ABSTRACT

In December of 2002, an organization called Clonaid released the news that the first human clone had been born. This company is the offspring of an emerging religious movement, the Raelian movement. Whether the story is true or not, the emergence and growth of this movement suggest that people are looking beyond major world religions, creating a religious outlook (which is a hybrid of dominant religions) with the tenets of extraterrestrial intelligent design, human consciousness, and scientific and technological development. It is a new spin on science as religion, with components of science fiction.

To better understand the significance of this movement in contemporary North American culture, the following research is based upon a narrative analysis of the accounts of five members of the movement. The thesis will elaborate on such topics as the sociology of religion, science, biotechnology, social movements and cults, science fiction, and the role of stories in shaping meaning of our place and relationships in the world. The reason for this study is to ascertain characteristics of those participating in the movement: who is joining, why they are joining, and what they are getting out of it. The research uses narrative analysis to focus on the stories of individual members, to provide the best view of the movement, from the inside-out. What emerges is an elaborate depiction of the significance of the Raelian movement in the world through individual members' interpretations.

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DEDICATION

To the Three Stooges – Tristan, Jude, and Roman –
for making me laugh and keeping me grounded.

And

To “Bumpa” Otto Johnson
for ethereal applause along the way.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Permission to Use.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of contents.....	v
List of Terms.....	viii
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH.....	1
1.1 Relevance of the Study.....	3
1.2 Outline of the Thesis.....	4
2. EXPLORING THE LITERATURE: THE RAELIAN MOVEMENT IN CONTEXT...7	
2.1 Religion on the Edge.....	7
2.2 The Missing Link: UFO Lore in Western Culture.....	8
2.3 Science Fiction and Technotopia.....	10
2.4 Death and Denial.....	11
2.5 Religion or Cult?.....	12
2.5.1 Cult Analysis: What is Relevant?.....	13
2.5.2 Emerging Religious Movements.....	13
2.5.3 UFO-Based Religions.....	14
2.5.4 The Sustainability of New Religious Movements.....	16
2.6 Religion and Biotechnology.....	18
2.6.1 Human Cloning.....	20
3. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	22
3.1 “Cult” as an Ideal Type.....	22
3.2 Technology and Spiritual Rationality.....	24
3.3 Secular Religion and the Sacred.....	26
4. METHODOLOGY.....	31
4.1 Narrative as the Voice of Experience.....	31
4.2 The Complexity of the Narrative Approach.....	33
4.3 Introduction to the Research Process.....	35
4.4 The Virtual Interview.....	37
4.5 Limitations of the Research.....	39
4.6 Ethical Issues and Research Dilemmas.....	40
4.6.1 Secret Identities.....	40
4.6.2 A Fly on the Wall.....	42
5. AN OVERVIEW OF SENSUAL MEDITATION, THE MANUAL.....	44
5.1 Introduction.....	44
5.2 “Chapter 1: The Watchmaker’s Manual”.....	45

5.3	“Chapter 2: The Stages Toward Total Awakening”	45
5.4	“Chapter 3: Becoming Aware of Oneself”	46
5.5	“Chapter 4: Voluntary Deprogramming”	47
5.6	“Chapter 5: Voluntary Reprogramming”	48
5.7	“Chapter 6: Program of Sensual Meditation”	48
5.8	The Manual’s Significance	49
6.	OUT OF DARKNESS: RAELIAN ILLUMINATIONS	51
6.1	Introduction to the Narratives	51
6.1.1	The Participants	52
6.1.2	What is the Raelian Movement About?	54
6.2	The Dawning	56
	Close Encounters of the Raelian Kind: Mr. A’s Story	57
	The Doorway: Mr. B’s Story	57
	Beyond the Mainstream: Mr. C’s Story	58
	Coming Home: Ms. D’s Story	58
	The Missing Piece: Mr. E’s Story	60
6.3	A New Day	62
	Hope Renewed: Mr. A	63
	Joy in Simplicity: Mr. B	63
	A Turning Point: Mr. C	64
	Finding a Voice: Ms. D	64
	Confirmation: Mr. E	65
6.4	Metamorphosis	66
	Perfect Alignment: Mr. A	66
	A Way of Life: Mr. B	67
	A Way of Being: Mr. C	67
	A Burst of Fresh Air: Ms. D	67
	The World Expands: Mr. E	68
6.5	The Prophet Rael	68
	Mr. A	69
	Ms. D	69
	Mr. E	71
6.6	Sensual Meditation	73
	Mr. A	73
	Ms. D	73
6.7	The Seminars	74
	Mr. C	75
	Ms. D	75
	Mr. E	75
6.8	Cellular Transmission	78
	Mr. A	78
	Mr. C	78
	Ms. D	79
	Mr. E	79

6.9 The Angels.....	80
Ms. D.....	80
6.10 Consciousness.....	80
Mr. A.....	81
Ms. D.....	81
Mr. E.....	82
6.11 Science and Technology.....	83
Ms. D.....	83
Mr. E.....	84
6.12 Misunderstanding and Marginalization.....	84
Mr. A.....	85
Mr. B.....	85
Ms. D.....	85
6.13 Faith, Spirit and Religious Comparison.....	87
Mr. C.....	87
Mr. E.....	88
6.14 The Significance of Raelianism in Today’s World.....	89
Mr. A.....	89
Mr. C.....	90
Ms. D.....	90
Mr. E.....	91
6.15 Walking in Illumination.....	91
Being Happy, A Philosophy for Life: Ms. D.....	91
A Lesson in Happiness: Mr. E.....	92
7. AS GODS AND CHILDREN.....	94
7.1 Troeltsch Takes a Ride in a UFO.....	94
7.2 Sensual Meditation and Cultivating the Mystical.....	96
7.2.1 Raelianism and the Concept of Divinity.....	98
7.2.2 “Divine Seed”.....	101
7.3 Scientific Mysticism and Biotechnology.....	104
8. CONCLUSION.....	106
8.1 Thesis Summary.....	106
8.2 Contributions.....	107
8.3 Considerations for Further Study.....	109
8.3.1 Methodological Considerations.....	109
8.4 Final Thoughts.....	110
REFERENCES.....	111

LIST OF TERMS

“Cellular Transmission”	A procedure similar to the Christian baptism, where the individual’s genetic code is “transmitted” to the Elohim. This symbolizes a Raelian’s acceptance of the Messages and of the Elohim as the creators.
“Elohim”	The Hebrew plural for “Gods.” Literally means “those who came from the sky.” These are the extraterrestrials, mistaken as gods, who, Raelians believe, are the creators of life on earth.
“The Seminars”	Official gatherings of Raelians, where they receive teachings, meditate, and bond with fellow Raelians.
“The Guides”	Leaders within the movement, as chosen by Rael. Parallels to priests and bishops.
“The Messages”	The written version of “the Truth” as relayed to Rael by an extraterrestrial. Parallels to the holy texts of other religions (Bible, Torah, Q’uran).
“The Order of Angels”	Raelian women who act as Rael’s aids.
“Rael”	The founder and head of the movement, formerly known as Claude Vorhilon. The name “Rael” was bestowed upon him by the extraterrestrials who contacted him.
“Sensual meditation”	A meditation technique used by Raelians. It is also the title of a supporting manual for the Messages, and an important part of the Raelian philosophy.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

A culture of humanist futurism lies at the fringe of the mainstream. Though much of the contemporary world clings to past foundations of science and religion, one group is trying to nudge mainstream culture into a brave new world. Advances in biotechnology, nanotechnology, and the intellectual evolution of human theology and philosophy, offer the promise of a better world. The Raelian movement, an atheist religion, suggests a different perspective on the human condition, one that emphasizes human conscience in human action and denies and denounces the role of a deity (www.rael.org).

In December of 2002, Dr. Brigitte Boisselier, from a company called Clonaid, garnered international attention with the claim of having successfully cloned a human being (Axelrod, 27 Dec 2002, online). The company, however, failed to produce any proof of this claim, and denied access to the clone and her mother on the grounds that the child's safety might be compromised. Giving further incredulity to their claim was the relationship of Clonaid to a UFO-based religion, the Raelian movement, led by a space-suit clad French man named "Rael." The story of baby Eve, the first human clone, brought public attention to this unique religious movement. The movement's supportive involvement in cloning research challenges us to define the significance of a world in which biotechnology and religious philosophy walk hand in hand. This movement's collaboration with other social and political movements makes it a multifaceted, highly interactive identity which potentially influences its overall international recruitment. This study will delineate this movement as a unique marriage of religion and science. Its ideas

of extraterrestrials translate into a unique form of individual and group consciousness. It utilizes pseudo-scientific explanations of the world and a neo-literal (or techno-literal) translation of religious texts that questions the tenets of historical knowledge, and relates them to innovative scientific capabilities. Their scientific philosophy is more than simply that. It demonstrates itself in a way that resembles certain religious traditions and the spiritual tensions of the everyday variety – and the mysteries of life.

The question of whether or not this movement can motivate or interrupt the advancement of human cloning technology is secondary to the issue of its greater socio-cultural significance. The goal of the research was to learn from those imbedded in the culture of the Raelian movement (through virtual conversations with members) in order to understand their interpretations of the world and internalization of the movement's tenets. The result is a religious and cultural reflection of a technologically advancing society. The development and adaptation of future technologies will occur regardless of the Raelian movement's involvement. One can only speculate whether its involvement may shorten or lengthen the time it takes for these technologies to be realized. The significance of this movement for this study is that it arises from the socio-technological context of its root. It opens the question of where and how technology and religion align.

If, hypothetically speaking, in the distant future, the only remnants of our civilization were the enduring records of the Raelian movement, how would our lost civilization be characterized? Though the movement inhabits the margins of contemporary culture, it reveals aspects of the social and cultural world that remain elusive when one simply focuses on the center. This research provides a glimpse of the world outside of the Raelian movement from the perspective of those inside of it.

Superficially speaking, one of the appeals of the Raelian movement may be that it links weirdness to fact, science fiction to reality, and the incredible to the credible. Certainly, to a researcher, this is the case. But weirdness alone does not distinguish it as unique from other religious philosophies, as part of their goal is to make sense of human life in a broader, peripheral context.

1.1 Relevance of the study

Very little in-depth analysis of the Raelian movement, at an academic level, has been carried out on the Raelian movement. It has been thrust into cult literature categories, charismatic religious movements, and been the subject of journalistic exposé accounts that have left the movement in a somewhat vulnerable and defensive posture. A recent publication by Susan J. Palmer (2004) covers the movement's characteristics from its beginnings and its evolution. She provides an in-depth account of the people who participate in the movement and analyses the movement within the sociology of religion. The following research is complimentary to Palmer's in that it delves deeper into the experiences of individual Raelians. The goal of this specific research is to understand the movement from the members' perspectives in a way that respects their values and experiences. These members' stories are not presented for the purpose of exhibition or public display. They are presented to offer some kind of understanding for the emergence and attraction of such a movement at this point in history. What void in society is the movement filling? What does it offer in the context of a technologically advancing society?

At a time when the contemporary world perches on the verge of life-changing scientific applications in biotechnology, nanotechnology and the digital revolution, we are rushing towards the inevitable deepening of science and religion. Have we hit a wall where popular world religions will hinder the development of new life-altering technologies? Do we continue to move ahead, despite religious and moral warnings that we are headed into unknown territory? Can we, or should we, be making scientific applications whose long term consequences we do not know? In his comments on certain “raelscience” articles, Rael sometimes reveals his distaste for these questions, for the world’s apprehension, in his exasperation to proceed with the “elohimization” of the world. As he preaches the necessity of advancing technology (to the anxious masses), his writings and commentary demonstrate his frustration with the debates over certain scientific applications.

Rael’s personal criticisms aside, what the stories of these members’ embody is the imperative of humanity to come to terms with our technological prowess. In this ideological conflict between technology and religion, which will prevail? What is the significance of the Raelian movement? Humans need to adapt both attitudes and relationships with each other to correspond to a growing technological culture. The scientific ideology has and will continue to become part of how we define ourselves and how we make sense of ourselves in the world. Technology’s place in our self-definition and sense of meaning in the larger world view must be fully considered.

1.2 Outline of the thesis

The following work is divided into eight chapters. Chapter two provides a

literature review of topics relevant to the study of the Raelian Movement, specifically, a sociological analysis of emerging religious movements and sustainability, science fiction culture and "technotopia," and the connection between religion and biotechnology.

Chapter three outlines the theoretical framework of Ernst Troeltsch in technical mysticism. In addition, I have provided some background theory on sociological cult analysis, secularization and the "death of God" theory, which I consider relevant to understanding the kind of culture from which this movement has evolved.

Chapter four elaborates the methodological approach of the study. It details the specific characteristics of the research, limitations, and ethical issues. The chapter describes the use of narrative inquiry as a central aspect of the study and its sociological impact.

Chapter Five provides an overview of one of the movement's key books, Sensual Meditation (2002) is the Raelian philosophy come to life. The book is a significant aspect of the members' narratives, and it represents and reflects the movement as comprehensive and relevant to the multiple facets of living in the contemporary world.

Chapter six presents the participants' stories. The narratives are divided thematically in the first three sections: The Dawning, A New Day, and Metamorphosis. Respectively, these metaphors embody first, life before joining the movement; second, discovering the movement; and third, how the movement has transformed each person. The remainder of the chapter is divided into topics that are important to conceptualizing the movement and its place and significance in contemporary world culture.

Chapter seven offers an interpretation of the narratives in a broad sense. It draws upon Ernst Troeltsch's concept of technical mysticism and Bruce Campbell's cult

typology, demonstrating the character and significance of the Raelian movement.

Chapter eight concludes with an overview of the significance of the study, contributions, and a discussion of considerations for further study.

Chapter Two

EXPLORING THE LITERATURE: THE RAELIAN MOVEMENT IN CONTEXT

This chapter discusses Raelian reinterpretation of history and some sources supporting it, the distinction between a religion and cult and relevant cult analysis. It provides an interpretation of UFO-based religions and identifies specific factors that contribute to a successful religious movement. It also includes an introduction to a religious response to biotechnology and expands upon Raelian involvement in human cloning research. The chapter includes a relevant literature review on the sustainability of new religious movements, as well as demonstrates a pervasive undercurrent of science fiction utopian analysis.

2.1 Religion on the Edge: A Background to the Movement

The founder of the Raelian Movement, Claude Vorilhon, renamed Rael, claims to have been contacted in 1973 by an extra-terrestrial who gave him the “truth” about life on Earth: the human and natural world are the products of an extensive genetic engineering experiment conducted by extra-terrestrials. These beings are specifically referred to as the “Elohim.” “Elohim” means “those who came from the sky,” a mistranslated term from the Bible’s Book of Genesis (Rael, 1998). Human history and religious text give witness to the relationship between humans and extraterrestrials, however misinterpreted and disregarded over time (Rael, 1998). Upon a second contact in 1975, Rael was whisked away to the “planet of the Elohim” where he witnessed amazing technologies, experienced decadent sexual pleasures with biological robots, and dined with Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha (Rael, 1998). A technological utopia, he reveals,

is possible on Earth. It would abolish the suffering of humanity by eliminating the need to work and increasing sensual pleasures (thanks to increased human consciousness and biological robots), eradicating hunger and environmental degradation through nanotechnology, and realizing eternal life through cloning and transhumanism) (Rael, 2001). Through the spread of this movement, Rael wishes to share the message of “our fathers from space,” with the hope of building an embassy that would welcome the Elohim, proving that humanity is ready and willing to accept and learn from them (Rael, 1998).

There are a number of other UFO-religions that have emerged over time, now extinct or modified in some way (Palmer, 2004). The way the Raelian Movement has established itself mimics contemporary forms of religion in its structure and practices. Palmer argues that the Raelian Movement

is re-tracing the theological steps of some of the most successful and endearing small sects and churches of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Theosophy, Mormonism, Christian Science, New Age, and Scientology (2004: 102).

Through the Raelian Movement, the companionship of science and theology continues.

2.2 The Missing Link: UFO Lore in Western Culture

What is the relationship among UFOs, extraterrestrial life, and technology? Simply speaking, the documentation of unidentified flying objects corresponds to flight capabilities far beyond that of humans (unless, of course, one subscribes to certain conspiracy theories). Extraterrestrial presence on Earth would necessitate a level of technological advancement that exceeds humans, as our international space programs demonstrate. The relationship of technology to aliens is therefore quite explicit. Another example of this relationship can be seen in UFO contactee accounts, according to Clark (2001), which commonly refer to alien warnings

about nuclear destruction and the human and environmental implications of certain aspects of technological advancement. In essence, it is imagined that extraterrestrials wish to save us from ourselves. The relationship between humans and extraterrestrials appears to be singularly technological, on which the Raelian Movement sheds new light.

The idea of human and extraterrestrial relationships is not new. There is a plethora of literature in archaeology and theology purporting to give historical accounts of extra-terrestrial involvement with humans since Adam and Eve (Gardner, 1999; Picknett and Prince, 1999; Sitchin, 1976; von Daniken, 1969). The belief that extraterrestrials were primitively interpreted as gods is not unique. In fact, Rael's accounts of "The Truth" are nearly identical to the ideas proposed in Erich von Daniken's book Chariots of the Gods?, published in 1969, four years before Claude Vorilhon's purported alien contact.

Regardless of the credibility of Vorilhon's alien contact, the way in which this movement supports the deconstruction of historical knowledge gives it an interesting face, especially because it simultaneously upholds the tenets of science and supports scientific research. Alien involvement in human technological development is supported by Colonel Phillip Corso's (1997) first-hand account of the UFO crash in Roswell, NM in 1947 which, according to Corso, sparked the unmatched technological innovation of the past five decades. He suggests that lasers, fiber optics, night vision, the computer chip, particle beams, and an array of other innovations, are all adapted from information gathered from the UFO crash site (Corso, 1997). This claim supports Vorilhon's alien contact accounts in regards to the "fact" that extra-terrestrial technology has inspired our own. All of these adapted technological innovations have greatly altered everyday human life, if not teased out some greater human potential as we continue to hone our own technological artistry. Technology and religion are brought together in the hope of

transcending the human condition, eliminating ignorance and suffering, primitivism and superstition through applying scientific theory to the development of technologies that promise to save us from ourselves.

2.3 Science Fiction and Technotopia

The existence of extra-terrestrials (or spiritual beings, for that matter) implied in the phrase, “we are not alone,” fulfills the “apocalyptic promise” of human completion that the unknown will become known (Kreuziger, 1982: 98). The Raelian movement asserts the application of technology as the path to human completion and the establishment of a technological utopia.

The science fiction utopia, as discussed by Kreuziger, involves an alternative historical interpretation, or historical re-invention. He suggests that defining the world through science and technology creates a unique version of the utopian narrative that exceeds politics, law, and even reason (Kreuziger, 1982: 100).

The more technological and scientific the society extrapolated the less political and historical the transition becomes, until, in the end, there is no description of the passage . . . and even in the most extreme cases, overt rejection of the study of history. All roots have been chopped away.

The Raelian movement rejects the authority of historical theology because it is perceived as steeped in corruption and falsity and misrepresentation of “the facts.” In terms of Biblical interpretation, it promotes a neo-literalist perspective: a literal interpretation of events with a technological spin, which contrasts with fundamentalist literal interpretations. In its assertion of a technological utopian philosophy, its deconstruction of the past becomes almost secondary to our future momentum and the realization of certain technologies. Essentially, this movement’s

writings establish the need to recognize that the world is moving in a certain direction, regardless of social, moral, historical, and theological obstacles. The reconstructed past is more of a declaration of the present. Just as the “future is now,” so also is the past.

This brings into question the necessity of human agency in the creation of this technological utopia. The problem of science fiction, according to Kreuziger, is whether science (in technological form) motivates future human experience (1982: 105). Is science self-motivated? Is technology autonomous (Winner, 1977)? Human agency is required for “doing” science; however, the sci-fi utopian aspect implies a sense of faith in technology similar to a faith in a higher power (e.g. God). This blurs the line between technology as the product of human agency and technology as autonomous evolution.

2.4 Death and Denial

In science fiction, human cloning, and religion, the topic of death emerges. For many traditional religions, death is that step towards the unknown which fulfills the sense of human completion, as the end of the cycle of life, or the door to an alternative form of existence. The Raelian movement expresses an ambivalence about death while at the same time sharing in the hope of being re-animated through human cloning on the planet of the Eternals (along with supporting the science to develop the necessary technology). The subject of death is implied in the Raelian concept of Infinity. Upon death, the body decomposes, is eaten by insects, and (re)turns to dust. Since everything can be reduced to the size of an atom, we will never fail to exist, but continue on in one form or another. A small sample of genetic material, containing the DNA of the individual, is all that is needed to create a copy of that person. Though the capability may not yet exist, Rael argues that following the perfection of human cloning technologies, we

will develop other technologies to download human memory and personality into a clone, allowing a person to live forever in clone after clone after clone. When one body stops functioning, another is created.

The Raelian movement confronts the reality of death with an overpowering instrumentalism. Death does not have to remain inevitable; technology is salvation. Since we can compare this scientific rationality to the spiritual rationality of religion, this relates to issues of faith. According to Kreuziger, “life *after* death” and “life *over* death” are similar because “both issue in a denial of history, because both see death merely as negation, not the negation of negation” (1982: 107). Cloning for the sake of living forever is equal to the eternal life of the soul. Both describe transcendence of death. The flaw, in both cases, is in the denial of the end, as Kreuziger notes:

It is for this reason . . . that there can be [a denial of] any true science fiction utopia as story for there exists no tension, which only an acceptance of the end can provide (1982: 107).

If religion and science fiction can be reconciled in this way as both negating death, then the Raelian movement, even in its denial of God and as a proponent of science and rationality, can be legitimately characterized as a theologically-motivated movement.

2.5 Religion or Cult?

Based on general comments of members and Rael himself, the Raelian movement does not understand itself as a cult, nor is it really a religion. It is a “scientific philosophy” (Palmer, 2004:182). We cannot ignore, however, its similarity to a religious movement in that it provides a way of living that follows a specific philosophy and incorporates ritual practices such as sensual meditation and “cellular transmission” (similar to baptism). There is also an

organizational structure that mimics, specifically, Catholicism in the order of Raelian bishops and priests and Mormonism in the “order of Angels,” a network of Raelian women (Palmer, 2004). As well, its members follow the teachings of a charismatic leader and try to emulate his teachings. Sociological cult analysis is somewhat limited and characterizes such a group as deviant by negative definition. The following sections will discuss this issue in detail.

2.5.1 Cult Analysis: What is relevant?

Much of the current literature on cults and cult formation defines these marginal religious groups as deviant with pejorative annotations. Approaching the Raelians from a negative position disregards the significance of certain aspects to be explored. Therefore, it was not in my interest as a researcher to do so. Deviancy, here, describes more so the distinction from “normal” cultural practices, not what is “good” or “bad,” but simply, what is different. The following chapter will explore cult analysis as a tool for identifying typical features as a kind of religious movement. The Raelian movement’s identity as an emerging social movement makes a cult label of this group quite deficient. Focusing on the Raelians as a new religious movement will explore more ways in which a new religious movement emerges from the shadows and sustains itself.

2.5.2 Emerging Religious Movements

All human beings face the problem of coping with frustration because some highly desired rewards, such as everlasting life, do not exist in this world (Bainbridge and Stark, 1983: 48).

The Raelian movement, like any other new religious movement, responds to the idea of everlasting life; however, Raelians offer that it *is* attainable in this world through human cloning. Andrew J. Pavlos suggests that as revitalization movements, cults “reach out in an

attempt to transform society into what they believe is a perfect social order” and a key element in cult movements is to endorse some form of social change (1982: 6). The Raelian movement philosophy supports new technologies which would in turn fulfill its religious mission and utopian goals.

In a discussion of new religious movements, Alan Aldridge points to three types: “world-rejecting, world-affirming, and world-accommodating” (2000: 46). The Raelian movement fits two of these types; it rejects certain aspects of the world and affirms others. The Raelian movement rejects traditional, monotheistic religions, giving reference to the historical corruption of the Catholic Church (Rael, 2001): Hate crimes, religious conflict, terrorism and war are the effects of monotheistic religious clashes (Silver, 2001). As world-rejecting, it asserts its version of the truth as “The Truth;” subscription to it entails certain consequences (specifically, the right to eternal life through cloning, and the improvement of life on Earth), as does its rejection (probable human self-annihilation).

The Raelian movement is a world-affirming religious movement because of its assertion of individual liberation and self-realization through “sensual meditation” techniques. These enable one to tune into the infinite nature and connectedness of all things in the universe since all things can be reduced to atom-form (Rael, 2002). As a world-affirming movement, the Raelians “cast off the restraints of convention and tradition” (Aldridge, 2000: 48). They are supportive of sexual freedom and exploration and act as proponents of controversial new technologies that assume a new form of social morality.

2.5.3 UFO-Based Religions

In Jerome Clark’s (2001) writing, according to Carl Jung, UFO mythology is related to

psychology. He suggests that the conceptualization of “mandalas,” or circles, represents an “archetype of the self” which connects to a sense of a wholeness of the self (Clark, 2001: 352). This symbol will appear in dreams in periods of stress and insecurity. In this sense, Jung proposes that UFOs illustrate the mandalas reflecting the subconscious wish for stability (Clark, 2001). A common theme in UFO contactee movements, according to Clark, is the message of the aliens’ desire to prevent humanity’s nuclear annihilation of themselves and the world (2001). The connection between technology and human potential is apparent in Rael’s message that an era of revelation will be ushered in by what he refers to as “the Age of Apocalypse” (Rael, no date: video). Accordingly, this period will enable humanity to recognize its full creative potential through the recognition of our capability to completely destroy ourselves (e.g. through nuclear and biological warfare). The advances in space travel and human reproductive technologies, as well as a growing environmental awareness, indicate that humans are on a path to greater intellectual evolution (Rael, no date: video). This fear of nuclear annihilation relates back to Jung’s UFO interpretations. UFO movements appear to be closely linked to the growing apprehension of living in a technical age. Clark suggests, “friendly aliens are projections of our hopes of being rescued from ourselves” (2001: 353).

Anti-cult responses to UFO-based religions focus on anti-social behaviour, but Raelians, at least on an individual level, are far from anti-social (Robinson, 2001). Through my research, it appears that this is a movement of humanism, social acceptance, integration, and a celebration of collective individualism. Robinson (2001) suggests that in the study of new religions, stereotyping belief systems is non-productive when it comes to understanding them. He criticizes that the conceptualization of UFO movements as “quasi-religious” is steeped in secular thinking (Robinson, 2001). The Raelian movement is an example of a unique and complex UFO-based

religious movement that deserves and requires comprehensive study rather than a negative label.

Kreuziger suggests:

The UFO experience does not merely symbolize the desire for transcendence, omniscience, perfection and redemption; it symbolizes a desire for, and a movement toward, a community of people who share those very same beliefs (1982: 193).

In a continued discussion of science fiction and UFO-based religions, here lies the concept of the “Werther effect,” describing “the form of voluntary behavior alteration produced by interaction with a powerful artifact of popular culture” (Kreuziger, 1982: 188). It seems befitting that in an examination of the Raelian movement as a reflection of the greater culture, pop culture would play a key role, specifically science-fiction fantasy. Science fiction followers have been commonly characterized as “losers” (Cox, 1973). Harvey Cox offers that “[r]adical theology needs to begin to pay more attention to the ‘losers’” (1973: 190). Essentially, this study asks: what is the significance of the losers’ “take” on the world, especially in the presence of a strong pro-technology stance? Cox suggests that radical theology or what he calls “the people’s religion” transforms traditional positions of domination (1973: 169). How does the Raelian Movement transform traditional domination? Their opposition to and mimicry of Catholicism is a good example. The organizational structure of the movement reproduces some of the Catholic Church’s own organizational structure, with guides, priests and bishops, followed with Rael as a pope-like figure. This resemblance to Catholicism and other religions (Palmer, 2004) could certainly have an affect on the movement’s longevity, as discussed in the next section.

2.5.4 The Sustainability of New Religious Movements

The power of a religious movement, according to Brian Johnson (1987), is based on three

factors. First is “the ability to interpret all aspects of life to a single cosmic scheme that is portrayed vividly and dramatically” (Johnson, 1987: 253). Secondly, “elaboration,” refers to the ability of “interpretation, innovation and reflection” (Johnson, 1987: 253). Thirdly, a religious movement must demonstrate “universalism” (Johnson, 1987: 253). The Raelian movement offers a fantastical, modern, and rational interpretation of the beginning of life on Earth as an extra-terrestrial genetic experiment. It provides a reconstructed version of history that fills in the gaps of our past that modern knowledge construction has not been able to do. All of this occurs under the assertion of a rational and logical approach to understanding the infinite nature of the universe and humanity’s place within it. It is an international movement, combating not only contemporary religious malaise, but aligning itself with other movements worldwide which focus on health, environment, human rights, technology, media, and politics (www.rael.org). Pavlos (1982) proposes that the survival of a new religious movement is linked to its co-existence with another movement. The Raelian movement demonstrates its relevancy to a wide range of other social groups, including other minority religions, gay and lesbian communities, scientific communities, and human rights movements. Its involvement in and advocacy of a wide range of social issues could be facilitating an increase in recruitment on an international scale. In renovating the roles of spiritual guides, priests and bishops, the Raelian “baptism” (cellular transmission), “the Messages” and “Sensual Meditation” as “holy” texts, arguably offer a sense of familiarity for those disenchanted with the institutions of their religious upbringing.

According to Alaine Touraine, social movements are not simply a response to a specific phenomenon but a “general representation of social life” (1995: 379). The new social movements arising are more along the lines of “pacific” and “consciousness-raising,” “not violent and interested in the control of power;” they are characterized by the rise of “democracy,” not

“revolution,” which distinguish the earlier social movements of the sixties (Touraine, 1995: 391). Those which are conceptualized as the “new” social movements “are social [and] concerned with the cultural sphere” (Scott, 1990: 15). Comparatively, David Plotke asserts the primacy of the cultural dimension; new social movements are weighted with “explicitly cultural elements” and “these cultural concerns are increasingly framed in terms not only of general social values and norms, but also of the definition and maintenance of identities for individuals” (1995: 122). Alan Scott suggests that the new movements are “located within civil society;” and “bring about change through changing values and developing alternative lifestyles” (1990: 16-17). Though new social movements can be characterized as networks, there is also an element of what Scott refers to as the “autonomy of struggle” (1990:17). This means that specific movements can maintain a sense of isolated-ness within the context of a greater social movement network. The Raelian movement is a prime example of an autonomous and isolated movement working in conjunction with other socially conscious groups.

Does the fact that it is an atheist movement make the Raelians less than a religious movement? No. The movement’s goal is to replace traditional forms of religious belief. Many ex-Catholic members are encouraged to send a letter of apostasy to the Catholic Church. As well, the movement has characteristics similar to religious movements in its structure, practices, and teachings, and in its iconography of Rael.¹

2.6 Religion and Biotechnology

[In] assess[ing] the theological significance of biotechnology . . . the most immediate concern is not the distant object of our evolutionary fantasies, but the present objectification of ourselves (Cole-Turner, 2001:142).

Theological response to biotechnology is becoming more and more relevant as

biotechnology takes science from the level of simply “watching life” to “modifying it” (Cole-Turner, 2001:140). It could be said that there is a growing religious response to biotechnology from mainstream religious thought, if only now being awoken by emerging technological issues. However, there is very little literature that demonstrates a positive relationship between religion and human cloning technology. Catherine Keller (2000) elaborates that perhaps technology requires a theological face if it is to maintain its momentum. This can relate specifically to a morally and ethically charged issue such as human cloning.

We must . . . work incessantly to lure the culture of techno-science toward a form of knowing that goes beyond the pretense of value-free, objectively disinterested detachment, toward an intelligence that is “clear” and “penetrating” precisely in its humanness, love of goodness, beneficence and justice (Keller, 2000: 107).

In my opinion, this sounds as lovely and as questionable as any utopian narrative: replacing one idealism with another that is just as unattainable in any practical sense. Take communism or matriarchy as an example. Even our best intentions are inadequate because we cannot know whether they might lead us to a desired affect. Correspondingly, David Loy (2000) echoes Keller’s sentiments in his Buddhist interpretation of biotechnology, suggesting that humanity’s motivations for proceeding with biotechnological ventures must be the deciding factor in supporting them or not. Good intentions breed positive results; wrong intentions (material gain, recognition, domination over nature) breed negative consequences (Loy, 2000). According to Loy, it is all a part of “overcom[ing] our *dukkha*,” or “the inability to enjoy our lives” (2000: 48). The fear of death could be one aspect of *dukkha*; the Raelians combat this with their human cloning stance.

As far as I know, the Raelian movement is the only UFO-based religion to actively support biotechnological research in its philosophical position and practical advocacy.

2.6.1 Human Cloning

The editors at Scientific American argue that human cloning research has been “pushed” to “the margin of acceptability” by government legislation, the interests and competitiveness of private industry, and mainstream media’s sensationalism of scientific and technological discoveries, leading to what they refer to as “a free-for-all” (2003: no page). This means that any fringe group practicing science can have its hand at attempting cloning research, regardless of its level of credibility in the scientific community. Governments are only recently responding to human cloning research; there are a number of scientists internationally who claim to be close to successfully producing a human clone (Caplan, 2002; CBC News, 26 Nov 2002). There is a continued debate within scientific circles focused on how close science actually is to perfecting cloning technology (Rader, 2001). The company Clonaid claims it has already done it, but skeptics say that the technology is only in its infancy, not yet able to produce an embryo that could make it to term (Stephens, 2001). The recent death of Dolly, the first cloned sheep, from problems related to rapid aging, raises doubts about the claim that a healthy clone has been born and questions its life potential (CBC News, 22 Dec. 2002) .

Human cloning can be broken down into two categories. The first is reproductive human cloning which results in cloned offspring and is similar to the artificial transplantation of an embryo produced through in vitro fertilization (Byrne and Gordon, 2002). In this sense, human cloning could easily be adopted into current reproductive technologies as a viable option for those who have been unsuccessful with in vitro fertilization, for same-sex couples and “unattached” individuals who desire a child. Clonaid supports this idea. They also support post-mortum genetic “re-expression” (Rael, 2001).

The second type of cloning is therapeutic. This type of cloning refers to stem cell research

that offers the potential to treat disease and regenerate damaged tissue (Byrne and Gordon, 2002). The Raelian movement supports further research in these areas.

Human cloning is certainly a complex and contentious issue. It requires moral and ethical considerations, and has far-reaching social implications (Stephens, 2001). Rael's Yes to Human Cloning (2001) provides an overview for advancing human cloning technology, asserting that those who do not agree with it are simply ignorant and primitively minded.

Endnote

- 1 In The Maitreya (Rael, 2004), small statues of Rael are depicted, similar to those seen in Buddhism.

Chapter Three

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the following chapter, I discuss some general theoretical issues at play, in supplementing this research's specific theoretical approach, based on the work of Ernst Troeltsch and his discussion of technical mysticism. Furthermore, I highlight other topics that help lay the groundwork for better interpreting the Raelian movement. These topics include a discussion of technology's relationship to the spiritual, Vahanian's "death of God" argument, and the increasing secularization of religious belief.

3.1 "Cult" as an Ideal Type

Ernst Troeltsch's concept of "technical mysticism" provides a theoretical framework for the study of this movement. Bruce Campbell (1978) provides a typology of cults, drawn from Troeltsch's work on technical mysticism. Campbell suggests that in the study of new religious movements there has been little sociological progress in developing a clear conceptualization of cults.

Cults [are] defined as non-traditional religious groups based on a belief in a divine element within the individual (Campbell, 1978: 232).

Campbell (1978) suggests that Troeltsch's concepts of mysticism can be used to characterize new religious movements that exist outside of Christianity and other world religions. Though the Raelian movement espouses science as its religion, it contains an aspect of Troeltsch's description of mysticism through the predominant notion of "consciousness" and a belief in humanity's extra-terrestrial origin.

In conceptualizing the Raelian movement as a form of cult, it is important to use the term

“cult” as an ideal type. The ideal type, as developed by Max Weber,

is a conceptual construct (*Gedankenbuild*) which is neither historical reality nor even the “true” reality. . . . Such concepts are constructs in terms of which we formulate relationships by the application of the category of objective possibility (1949: 93).

This conceptualization is value-free, not based in empirical reality, but is essentially a name for the nameless until it can be better understood. Michael Hill (1973) relates an analogy of colour printing to the concept of the ideal type.

Just as the printer uses [the primary colour filter] in order to extricate and later to reconstruct an intricate work of art, . . . the only justification for the use of ideal types is that they enable the sociologist to disentangle, and thus to explain as far as possible the “infinite richness” of reality (Hill, 1973: 150).

This concept of the ideal type allows an analysis of the Raelian movement as a “cult,” to be made with the use of Campbell’s ideal cult typology: The three types are the “illumination” type, the “instrumental” type, and the “service-oriented” type (Campbell, 1978).

Illumination type cults embody the mystical form of cult and relate most closely to Troeltsch’s concept of technical mysticism (Campbell, 1978). Here, the focus is on a direct inner experience, which has mystical attributes. This cult type is distinguished by “the detachment from the personality and the search for direct inner personal experience” (Campbell, 1978: 233). It “reflects a protest against the world’s understanding of human potential and of compromising with this understanding” (Campbell, 1978: 233).

Instrumental type cults are referred to as “the self-adjustment type” (Campbell, 1978: 233). Accepting of the individual personality, this type endeavors to improve the lives of followers through the use of special techniques. Through these techniques, “inner experience is sought for its effects, its ability to transform the everyday empirical personality so that it can

better meet the demands made upon it” (Campbell, 1978: 233). Due to the focus on the individual over society, sometimes this type can become sect-like in its distinction from general society.

Service-oriented cults describe groups that seek to improve the lives of others. Individuals perceive themselves as closer to the sacred than non-followers, therefore acting as spiritual advisors and encouraging individuals to participate in the groups’ techniques or rituals. Campbell offers that this type is not exclusive in itself, but normally found in other cult types to varying degrees, in the “spirit of inclusiveness and drive to expand” (Campbell, 1978: 233).

In the case of the Raelians, we can see within it threads of all three types. As an illumination type, the Raelian focus on the individual through sensual meditation give the movement a mystical element. Though Raelians favor individual improvement, they do not go so far as to be anti-social. The common bond between one individual and the next is their individuality and relationship to the Infinite. As an instrumental type, members of the Raelian movement work to improve themselves and their attitudes towards life through sensual meditation techniques. The movement’s focus on the effects of everyday consciousness, as well as the effects of technological application, make them sect-like. They are separated ideologically from mainstream society in their strong societal acceptance in technology. In addition, the sensual meditation techniques are integral to the human adjustment process required for building a technological utopia. As well, the desire to share the Elohim’s knowledge and the sensual meditation techniques through the seminars make this group service-oriented to a certain degree.

3.2 Technology and spiritual rationality

The advance of certain technologies such as human cloning usher in a questioning of

religious moral authority. Technological motivation speaks directly to the creative capacity of humans (like gods) and draws out the rational foundations of science in contrast to spiritual rationality. Joseph Agassi (1981) discusses the religious dimension of science as existing within the pursuit of the unattainable and the explanation of the unexplainable. He introduces the “positivistic utopia of rationality,” which refers to those little steps of rationality leading us to foreseeable goals and alluding (or deluding) us into believing that we have captured the intricate truths about ourselves and the universe (Agassi, 1981: 448). Loy continues this discussion when he suggests that our understanding of nature and our conceptualization of God are equal; they “both fulfill our need to be grounded in something greater than ourselves” (2000: 56). Science replaces religion as a way to “banish the mystery;” technological application becomes a ritual of self-realization (Loy, 2000: 56).

In response to our anxious alienation from a “natural” condition, we try to make ourselves feel more real by reorganizing the whole world until we see our own image reflected in it everywhere, in the “resources” with which we try to secure the material conditions of our existence (Loy, 2000: 55).

This thesis assumes a generalized notion that perpetual human agency motivates technological change, contradicting the argument of autonomous technology proposed by Langdon Winner (1977). William A. Stahl suggests that “cultural and organizational aspects shape the technical as much as the limits and capabilities of [them] affect the organizations and the people that use them” (1999: 16). He emphasizes technology’s inherent politics and “web of values,” which influence human response to it (1999: 17). Stahl (1999) suggests that a technological utopia necessarily requires the human factor. This human factor establishes the climate out of which new technologies develop and are integrated into common acceptance.

3.3 Secular Religion and the Sacred

. . . Christianity, while it has contributed much to Western culture, is now unable to speak to it, nor can it profit from the crisis of conscience through which modern man gropes for his soul (Vahanian, 1961: 71).

This statement from Gabriel Vahanian (1961) is certainly thought-provoking. The prevailing argument (by many Christians) remains that the world (especially the Western world) needs Christianity more than ever; and that it *does* speak to Western culture, if only those of us embedded in Western culture might listen. I do not wish to start a debate about the relevance of Christianity to modern times. However, Vahanian's words describe precisely the debate that ignites between religion and science when biotechnology enters the picture. What is significant about Vahanian's arguments at this point is to draw the connections between Christianity's explanation of the world of humans and the Raelian version. Raelianism is an amalgam of Christianity, other significant world religions (and religious movements), science fiction theories and popular myths. The movement addresses a singular issue, common with other religions: providing an explanation of humans in the world, relative to everything else in the universe, and how to best live our lives.

Vahanian offers a different definition of secularization that resonates within this analysis of a fringe religious movement. Secularization is embodied in new and emerging religious groups that characterize what Vahanian refers to as the "death of God" (1961). The death of God thesis connects to our living in a "post-Christian era" (Vahanian, 1966: 49). The post-Christian argument is relevant here because Raelianism denounces the Catholic Church and traditional Christian and Judaic biblical interpretation; this is a major aspect of its representative stance. We can define the twenty-first century as being "post-Christian," according to Vahanian, because today's Christianity is based upon a diluted version of original faith (1961). Because of this,

Christianity “no longer inspires contemporary culture; its spirit does not impregnate the ethos of our time” (Vahanian, 1966: 50).

In his discussion of secularization, Vahanian introduces the ideas of Ernst Troeltsch. Troeltsch parallels secularization “to the process of dismantling a house and re-utilizing some of its stones to build an entirely different structure” (Vahanian, 1961: 45). “Secularization,” according to Vahanian, differs from “secularity” in the following ways. Secularity refers to “the sphere of man’s action,” man’s “temporality in contrast to God’s infinitude,” and the “cultural manifestations of man’s self-apprehension as a creature of God” (Vahanian, 1961: 66). This, in essence, speaks of God and man as “the holy and the not yet holy,” which inextricably connect the human condition to the divine (Vahanian, 1961: 66). Secularization, in contrast, embodies “the concealed religious attitude” (Vahanian, 1961: 67). It demonstrates that the here and now are “invested with the attributes of the eternal and the transcendent;” it is an “expropriation of religion . . . for the sake of another mystique and another fundamentalism or fanaticism” (Vahanian, 1961: 67). The difference is subtle but striking. This other mystique could certainly include the mysteries of science, or the pursuit of a technological utopia. Historically, though, Protestantism provides the best example of secularization (Vahanian, 1961; Berger, 1967). In his discussion of Protestantism, Peter Berger (1967) best describes the problem of secularization when he states:

[Protestantism] narrowed man’s relationship to the sacred to the one exceedingly narrow channel that is called God’s word [or God’s grace]. . . It needed only the cutting of this one channel of mediation . . . to open the floodgates of secularization. . . [W]ith nothing remaining “in between” a radically transcendent God and a radically immanent human world except this one channel, the sinking of the latter into implausibility left an empirical reality which, indeed, “God is dead.” The reality then became amenable to the systematic, rational penetration, both in thought and activity which we associate with modern science and technology (1967: 112).

If we look to Rodney Stark's (1987) theory that science and technology were borne out of Christianity, then there is a plausibility in Vahanian's observation that "[t]he more Christianity has transformed the world and made it more hospitable, the more it has been unable to cope with it" (1961: 71). If Christianity, in its traditional form, is no longer relevant to modern life, and secularization exaggerates the duality of God in Heaven/human on Earth, one might be inclined to agree with Vahanian when he argues that man invents concepts of God which draw from everyday life and exemplify the ideal human (1961). The Raelian movement takes the ideal human and makes it extra-terrestrial. Their beliefs denounce the existence of a metaphysical God and assert the existence of physical beings (in the place of gods) that were once as ignorant and primitive as humans. There is secularity in this notion, if one subscribes to the Raelian version of history; however, in an encompassing "post-Christian" age, the movement follows as one in the stream of secularization. Vahanian's argument allows us to conclude that humans' ideas of God are historically contextual and contemporarily relevant. The Raelians' Elohim are the gods leading a world that is spinning into technological mastery (or at least the desire for it). Vahanian states:

[Men] worship the God they deserve . . . Their concepts of God represent but a hypertrophy of their self-understanding and sometimes a pharisaic or moralistic sanction of their aspirations. Man's understanding of the deity is dependent on his highest values and these are often created by his environment. God becomes no more than the ideal man (1961: 75).

Secularity and religion meet where the Raelian movement is concerned. Edward Bailey defines "religion" as "a whole way of life" and "secular" as "the opposite of religion" (June 21, 2005b, online, no page). This paradox in terms can and does exist and it describes the case of the Raelian movement exquisitely.

“Secular religion” is, therefore, a natural way of describing ordinary human life: either as that way of life that is expressed in religion, or as that way of life in which religion is expressed. The conceptual need to reestablish the secular ramifications of what appertains to a religious order, or to a hierarchical church, or to a transcendent sacred, only proves the symbiotic of the religious and the secular. Thus even a “secular” form of religion will still need its “extramural” forms of expression – if it is to be called a religion at all (Bailey, June 21, 2005b, online: no page).

The Raelian movement proposes a social and cultural shift in human attitudes and behavior (in daily life). It expresses these beliefs in a semi-structured religious format, defined by the organizational structure of the Raelian movement. William H. Swatos, Jr. highlights how the concept of the sacred is integrated into ordinary life. If religion is the acknowledgment of the sacred, then this must play out in the regular activities of social life for the sacred to have any meaning.

Religion also involves *far more* than the sacred – indeed, these social institutional and organizational aspects of religion as we see it operate in society and culture may actually obscure the sacred dimension (Swatos, 1999: 34).

The concept of the sacred is entwined with everyday life. Bailey describes “sacred” as “those aspects of life which are directly or indirectly related to God” (June 21, 2005a, online: no page). Swatos sees this conceptualization as a new paradigm in the sociology of religion. This new paradigm is grounded in the

understanding [that] spirituality-religion-sacredness finds its root in the limitless want dissatisfaction that is a species characteristic of *homo sapiens*. In other words, . . . [we] keep thinking we can do better. Religion is the institution of doing better *par excellence* (Swatos, 1999:37).

Swatos (1999) describes secularization as this motivation to do better, characterized by individuals having faith in a variety of social structures, such as education, health, law, etc. He goes on to say,

Rather than speaking here of secularization, however, we should really recognize these [expressions of faith in social structures] as manifestations of the “new religion” of Reason that emerged in the Enlightenment, which at least in its early forms, identified rationality with Divinity . . . and found in the pursuit of knowledge a spiritual quest (Swatos, 1999:37).

The human pursuit of technological mastery provides the tools for “doing better,” and may now constitute a novel and modern spiritual quest. Technology and religion as similarly improving human lives creates what one could call a perfect combination. Here, secular religion and the technological utopia come together. A movement such as the Raelians, which marries religion (a way of life) to technology (a means of making life better), provides not only a new dynamic to this new paradigm of the sociology of religion, but a powerful ideology that could bring about enormous social change.

Chapter Four

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I explain the epistemology and methodology used in this study, detailing the use of narrative inquiry and the specific steps taken in the research process. This chapter also discusses the email interview method versus other methods and some ethical issues I encountered along the way.

4.1 Narrative as the Voice of Experience

George W. Stroup, III suggests that “narrative [is] a formal quality of human experience” (1975: 133). This study of the Raelian movement is simply that. I chose the qualitative approach of narrative inquiry because of my interest in these individuals’ experiences relative to my own. The method produced rich brocades of personal accounts that have a broad, human collective resonance. The narratives of Raelian individuals provide us with a “window out,” a view of *their* perspective of the world. Quantitative research attempts to give us a picture of something, but narrative gives us a place to look out from. Narrative, as a strategy, because it draws out the questions that a structured survey cannot accommodate. It helps answer questions regarding how different personal experiences can shape a common movement. When we hear a story from someone’s life, we take out the pieces that resonate with our own experiences and our own stories. Narrative inquiry is complementary to the spirit of sociological inquiry because it shapes our understanding of people, our shared experiences (however differently they emerge) to create a meaningful sense of our place in the social world. It cannot hide our biases; it cannot be shaped

into anything but what it is; it accommodates a variance in interpretation, *if* we understand and accept its context.

Why approach members of the Raelian movement in narrative inquiry? There are two aspects of this which are relevant. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), there are the researcher's goals, and then there is the broader sociological significance of the research.

The narrative researcher contributes his/her self to the inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The journey through the narrative becomes "autobiographical," and "our research interests come out of our own narratives of experience and shape our narrative inquiry plot lines" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:121). Personally speaking, my interest in the members of this movement focuses on extracting meaning out of grand philosophies of human existence. What is the difference between a non-Raelian and a Raelian? Personally speaking, what makes me different from a Raelian? Essentially, this research was motivated by uncovering a way of viewing the world, and the self within it, to make sense of life. Because of this, the following interpretation of the Raelian movement is also a reflection of this moment in my own life.

Secondly, what is the broader question, or how does it relate to the social world? Where does this movement exist (along philosophical and theological lines) and what is so significant about it? What aspect(s) of life does it transform? What does it draw upon? In what ways do members experience personal transformation? Can this personal transformation lead to social movement and social change? All of these questions are encapsulated within the motivation for this research and the justification of the narrative approach. As well, narrative inquiry is complimentary to the nature of the Raelian movement. It relates to the individual search for truth, truth that is applicable only to the self.

Following the Clonaid media circus in December 2001, the majority of media coverage was bent on exposing this movement as heinous but marginal – a ridiculous but dangerous cult. Palmer’s (2004) fifteen years of examining the movement provide a fascinating and in-depth study of the shaping of the movement and its social and religious significance. My research provides a view of the world from the perspective of the members, through pieces of their stories. Presented in a thematic way using metaphors, these narrative excerpts frame the members’ key motivations and experiences. This research highlights an aspect of our culture that sees religion and technology as both necessary and important aspects of modern life. Raelianism reconciles this tension and the narratives make this reconciliation very clear.

4.2 The Complexity of the Narrative Approach

The importance of the narrative approach is in understanding the story in context. Specifically, it refers to the relationship between participant and researcher, the time frame of the research, and the extent of the email correspondence (or phone conversation) in this case, and the reflection of the participants on their experience before, during and after the research experience.

In taking the narrative approach, one must first recognize the “3-D Narrative space” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 50). This concept comes out of John Dewey’s idea of continuity as the key criterion of talking about experience, or “the imagined now” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 2). This continuity refers to:

the notion that experiences grow out of other experiences and experiences lead to further experiences . . . each point [on the continuum] has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:2)

The 3-D space takes into consideration that continuity, along with interaction and situation, the components that form context (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 50).

With this sense of Dewey's foundational place in our thinking about narrative inquiry, our terms are *personal* and *social* (interaction); *past, present, and future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation). . . Using this set of terms, any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry. . .” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 50)

The significance of self-reflection both by participants talking about their experiences, and by my research journaling, embodies the specific and unique nature of narrative inquiry. Participants gave accounts of their lives *right now*, which includes past, present and future reflections regarding their current situation. If this study were done again in five years, would the outcome be different? Narrative inquiry provides no static result; participants' narratives can only be interpretational. The method is based on the researcher's experience of experiencing the field. The dynamics of personal transformation, as a continual process, reflected in member's narratives, is a snapshot of a period of the participants' lives. It is also reflected as a snapshot of myself as a researcher. Though no clear, logical deduction or generalization can come out of it, the result is rich but sometimes “messy” in that what comes out of it is a certain depth of understanding of such a dynamic group of people.

Though a narrative signifies a momentary “pause” in one's life in order to reflect upon their experience, this “pause” helps the individual define meaning in his/her life as s/he is continually experiencing life. How one tells a personal story describes what aspects of an experience are most important and how one wants others to experience the story. As David Yamane explains,

[Narratives] are a primary linguistic vehicle through which people grasp the meaning of lived experience by configuring and reconfiguring past experiences in ongoing stories which have certain plots or directions and which guide the interpretation of those experiences. . . . By the time an individual comes to

understand the experience, it has past. What remains is the memory, the interpretation, the linguistification, the recounting, the emplotment, the narrativization. This is the “data” which sociologists must study (200:183-4).

Upon this basis, the study of Raelian narratives was undertaken.

4.3 Introduction to the Research Process

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board gave its approval for this research in July 2003. Until the study was given ethical approval, I read the Raelian movement’s publications and continued with a broad literature review. I subscribed to the movement’s e-magazine, “raelscience,” which sends out several daily emails of recent scientific discoveries, technological developments and social commentaries (which are compiled from various international news websites). Some of the emails include Rael’s commentary, providing a view into his thoughts on various issues. I also joined a Yahoo Raelian e-group where I was able to read informal postings on a wide variety of topics from Raelians and non-Raelians alike. Aside from the stimulating online dialogues, this activity helped me to better understand how the Raelian philosophy is being digested and discussed among members and non-members alike.

In August 2003, I began contacting people through the Canadian Raelian website. In Canada, I found it difficult to find many willing participants from English speaking provinces. Located in Saskatchewan, I was situated in a great Raelian desert between British Columbia and Ontario; Raelians have no known organization within the prairie provinces. At this point, I did some internet searching using the search engine Google to find contacts. In my contact with a Vancouver group, interview possibilities took a fruitless direction, as I could not find specific members and had to go through group leaders. I asked these group leaders to help in putting me

in contact with members, but got no response. I may have been able to interview more Canadian members if my French speaking skills were better. It was at this point that my committee and I discussed conducting email interviews due to the long distances between myself and my participants. Because I had two young children and another on the way, I could not travel away from home. Secondly, the email interview seemed to compliment the global, technological orientation of the movement. Finally, this technique also allowed me to gather responses that were self-reflective, consequently contributing to my narrative analysis approach.

I located two willing members in Canada. In extending my search across the border to the U.S. website, it was much easier to find people willing to participate in the research. I selected eight individuals and sent them emails about the project. From those eight people, I found three more participants. I asked these individuals for help and was able to contact a person in the higher ranks of the movement structure. This individual provided me with four more names under the stipulation of complying with a certain rule when it came to interviews – that she be sent copies of all correspondence. One of these individuals from this list became my sixth participant. In the end, I interviewed four Raelians living in the United States and two located in Canada. However, I discovered that three of them were originally from places in Europe and Canada, so their current location was of little significance.

Each participant was sent an email outlining the research and my interest in finding participants. To each of these emails, I attached the official research consent outline, which discussed the specifics of participation. If they returned my email with a favourable response, I then sent an email consent form as an attachment, which they emailed back to me. The email address of the participant appears with the person's response, therefore taking the place of a signature, similar to traditional consent forms. For each participant, all correspondence was

stored, printed and filed separately. Through preference, one participant gave a single telephone interview and another ended four months of email correspondence with a telephone conversation. The remaining interviews took place over approximately three months via email correspondence.

4.4 The Virtual Interview

The method of my research could be called *virtual inquiry*. My interviews took place over a period of months through email correspondences with five Raelian members. I was able to initiate contact through the Raelian website, www.rael.org, using a snowball sampling technique. Through open ended questions, participants responded to questions at their leisure. Each interview was unique, as each individual's responses would generate an entirely unique "conversation."

The virtual interview complimented the nature of this movement, in terms of the technology and the nature of the Internet. Some participants would include in their responses internet sites to visit or electronic articles or papers they had written themselves or had read. The movement's website plays an integral role as the home-base for the movement.

The email interview method was engaging and enjoyable. With email, conversation is drawn out and much more reflective. The dynamic of the interview is changed. There is less discomfort in talking to a stranger online than in person. In this sense, I think participants felt more comfortable in answering my questions in greater detail. However, writing does become tedious and this fact did affect the length of the emails and the depth of the responses in some cases.

In a traditional face-to-face interview, one considers the impression of the other: body language, face, voice, all of the details of physical, interpersonal interaction. While this could be seen as a shortcoming of the email method, it is also possible to portray emotion and personality in a typed response. At the beginning of the interview process, there was some consideration given to my own privacy, specifically, how much of myself I should reveal. Though I started out cautiously, it soon became apparent that we could interact in ways similar to the face-to-face experience.

Email correspondence provided a dynamic method for studying this small number of individuals. In most cases, a single open ended question might take a week or two for participants to respond to, but it provided me with a personal, self-reflective response that is sometimes missing in telephone interviews. Participants were allowed as much time and space to write whatever they wanted and those responses often guided me in asking other questions. Sometimes they spread over into my other correspondences with other participants. The written responses made it easier for me to ask for clarification and to make more thoughtful response to participants because I had more opportunity to reflect on them inside of the interview process itself. I did conduct two telephone interviews which had an entirely different dynamic from the email correspondence, and which really helped in my understanding of the people in the movement. From this observation, I would note the value of using both methods. The telephone conversation is energetic and more natural in terms of simply speaking one's mind. Writing responses through email takes thought and reflection and an objectification of the experience. Writing is simultaneous expression and discovery. The difference between talking and writing is being in the experience and stepping in and out of it momentarily to describe it (Yamane, 2000).

4.5 Limitations of the Research

This is a small exploratory study. Collecting narratives can be an exhaustive procedure. Each complete story provides a large amount of information. With time and resources permitting, a larger study could have been conducted. However, the point of this study was not to quantify Raelian experiences or generalize their voices, but to find a place to speak from within the Raelian movement in a way that provides a view and a voice from their perspective of the world.

Not physically meeting each participant may have contributed to the limitations of this study. I was not able to observe individual mannerisms, ways of speaking and show of emotion. I was not able to construct any impressions about them from face-to-face contact.

Email correspondence allowed for exclamations of emotion, which gave good indication of the way the participant wanted me to read something. These symbols or exclamations, called emoticons, included :), :0D, ;) (wink), and “lol” (laugh out loud). As well, the words and phrases that began and ended an email often set an emotional tone. Not being in the same physical space and not conversing back and forth simultaneously as in a face-to-face conversation led to an entirely different conversational dynamic. It permitted both researcher and participant to respond in his or her own space and time. This space and time were usually when and where each of us felt most comfortable and free to work around our busy schedules. A person’s mood may be different based on when and where s/he is responding. Some emails were written and sent in the early hours of the morning, some in the afternoon. There was no specific time of day that we all sat down to respond to each other. I think this may have affected what participants wrote and how much they offered, both positively and/or negatively.

Some interviews were singular and, though comprehensive, do not give as much detail compared to others. For example, the correspondence with Mr. B was brief. He provided one long response describing from his childhood up until he joined the movement. He also discussed characteristics of the movement he valued and some of his feelings regarding his involvement in the movement's structure.

With another participant, the interview was one phone interview that lasted about twenty-five minutes. She offered information about her background, her beginnings with the movement and her subsequent involvement both in the structure and incorporation of the movement into her daily life. As a researcher, this was the first telephone interview I had ever conducted. I was a little nervous and eager to demonstrate my active listening skills. The recording of the interview was poorly done, which I attribute to my inexperience with low-end recording technology. In addition, she had a strong French accent, which, in conjunction with the recording quality, made it difficult to decipher the taped interview. I was not able to transcribe the interview because of this. As a result, I was not able to include her interview in Chapter six. In mentioning this, I hope to demonstrate my interest in providing a gender balanced depiction of the movement, even though it did not work out in the end.

4.6 Ethical Issues and Research Dilemmas

The research process did entail some ethical issues, specifically with anonymity. My own inexperience in conducting interviews played a part in one of these instances.

4.6.1 Secret Identities

As a researcher studying a new religious movement that some might designate as a cult, one questions the level of detail about oneself that should be shared with research participants. Before the interviews started, I was encouraged by my committee members to be cautious about how much information I gave about myself. I took this into consideration when I started contacting members of the movement, but it soon became obvious that they wanted to know more. How much would they want to tell some disembodied stranger over the internet? After being asked by some participants to tell them a little about myself, my research, how I got interested in *them*, I decided to treat the virtual interview somewhat as I would a “real” interview. I did tread carefully at the beginning, but as the correspondences went on – some over a few months – I did start revealing myself a little at a time. Because I had access (in most cases) to a picture of the person I was talking to, I offered a picture of myself, first from the sociology students website (which is just a self-portrait drawing) and later on as we got to know each other better, a picture of myself with one of my kids. I also let them know that I was expecting a baby, as the birth would coincide with the interview process. In asking people to share their most personal beliefs and assertions about the world and life in general, it seemed one-sided not to do it myself, especially when they asked me to do so. Much of the Raelian philosophy is to be open, to discuss and question everything. In some cases our conversations had the characteristics of philosophical debates, though it was always respectful, and always centered on my questioning of Raelianism and focused on the participants’ responses. The participants encouraged my questions and, I believe, respected me more as a researcher for asking them.

In terms of participant confidentiality and maintaining participant anonymity, one issue emerged as a result of my interview inexperience. In the first telephone interview, the participant asked me few questions regarding the research. Then she asked me who else I had interviewed.

This was a question I was hoping would not come up, as thinking on my feet in a conversation is not a talent of mine. I mentioned the confidentiality issue, but she pressed me again in her curiosity. Feeling uncomfortable, I mentioned a couple of first names of people I had talked to. To my horror, she knew exactly whom I was talking about and described them to me! After the conversation ended, I felt sick, feeling foolish, and thinking I had just destroyed the confidences of those other participants whose names she recognized. I emailed them sheepishly and asked for forgiveness, saying that I understood completely if they wished to withdraw. I reiterated my dedication to their confidentiality. To my absolute relief and elation, they seemed not bothered in the least and continued to participate as passionately as before. My little research fiasco taught me a few things about the movement. These people are close-knit and have interpersonal connections beyond borders. They recognized my imperfections as a researcher (and human) with grace and they thanked me for my honesty and humility.

4.6.2 A Fly on the Wall

After interviewing five members, I was struggling to find more participants. In my recruitment frenzy, I somehow got in contact with the U.S. head of public relations for the Raelian movement, who gave me the names of several people interested in participating. The only catch was that she would like to be sent a “carbon copy” of all the email interviews conducted. I decided to ask the PR person if she would like to participate herself. She declined. When I asked her about why she needed to see all of the correspondences between myself and members, she stated that she needed to be aware of all interviews going on of Raelian members. I was afraid that any “cc interviews” might hinder participant responses, so I decided to do only one. For this participant, I altered the consent form to include the details of the “cc” nature of the

correspondences. This fifth participant, Mr. E, said it did not bother him in the least. It turned out to be one of the most fun and in-depth interviews conducted for this research. What the public relations person does with these correspondences is not known to me.

Since the 2002 Clonaid announcement, the movement has been infiltrated by journalists and negatively highlighted by the media. Based on what I have learned about the cohesiveness of this movement, after having interviewed members freely and without sanction for several months, my presence had finally been noted within the structure. The point of the PR person being “present” in the interviews was likely related to the bad press the movement had been getting and she simply wanted to know what people in the movement were saying about it and what they were being asked. This movement spends a lot of time on managing its image¹, as I found through watching the movement over nearly three years.

Endnote

- 1 One participant remarked on the number of times the covers and titles of the books had been changed. Also, Raeliannews.org and the Raelian newsletter "Contact" review all media articles involving Raelian activities. Rael and other members are publicly active in promoting and defending their beliefs and preserving the legitimacy of the movement.

Chapter Five

EXAMINING SENSUAL MEDITATION, THE MANUAL

Sensual meditation is an important aspect of Raelians' experience of the movement. Without explaining the technique of sensual mediation, understanding the participants' perspectives would be difficult. In this chapter I will discuss the manual, Sensual Meditation (Rael, 2002), a task necessary for continuing with the participants' narratives and the theoretical analysis. I briefly discuss the book, chapter by chapter.

5.1 Introduction to the manual

Sensual Meditation is more than a simply a book. It embodies the written practice of the Raelian movement since its beginnings in 1975 . The book is also available on tape and CD recordings. The meditations are practiced at Raelian seminars, and individually. The book contains eight chapters within its 140 pages. For the purpose of demonstrating its importance to the narratives, I have titled the sections in this chapter the same as the book, chapters 1-6. The seventh and eighth chapters of Sensual Meditation provide an explanation of the function of a Raelian Guide and some personal experiences of Raelians, respectively.

The book begins with a forward written by psychologist Michael Deydier. He provides a clinical appraisal of the technique of sensual meditation as the practice of spiritual and physical awakening, which leads to self-identification (Rael, 2002). Deydier proclaims the technique to “possess . . . highly valuable curative and preventative qualities” (Rael, 2002: 18). In the book's preface, Dr. Paul Auger, a psychiatrist, talks about the technique's “advantage of ‘rendering consciousness,’” as “bringing the vital and functional presence of the various tissues and specific

cells composing them, to the cerebral cortex, in a relatively short time” (Rael, 2002: 19). The technique enhances self esteem and sensual pleasure, which, combined with the science of “awakening the body,” enable “planetary awareness” (Rael, 2002:19). The book is a supplement to “the Messages” and an embodiment of Raelian philosophy.

5.2 “Chapter 1: The Watchmaker’s Manual”

. . . Man, in contrast to animals, was designed as a self-programmable computer; that is to say capable at all times of questioning, re-evaluating and reconsidering his habits, traditions and morals. Even though Man’s ability to re-evaluate himself continually represents an enormous superiority over animals, and though he must develop this capacity to the full in order to reach full awakening, it is also necessary for him to situate himself regularly according to his environment, that is to say, to realize where ‘he is at’ relative to his circumstances (Rael, 2002: 30)

The first chapter discusses the concept of infinity and humanity’s place within it, within the context of extraterrestrial intelligent design. It introduces the idea of human atomistic and elemental reductionism and its connection to everything else in creation. The reader is introduced to the analogy of the watchmaker: the Eloha, whose scientific and technological intelligence reveals the secrets of the universe.

5.3 “Chapter 2: The Stages Toward Total Awakening”

Chapter two reveals the “staircase” to awaking the self (Rael, 2002: 33). There are essentially five steps in this process. The first is described as “the sudden dawning. . . where we realize how mediocre our life is and how lacking in precision our objectives are” (Rael, 2002:33). At this point, a person feels great dissatisfaction with the course of his/her life, disappointment in things that are seemingly out of his/her control (Rael, 2002). This leads to the

second stage of “information.” Usually catalyzed by some “trigger event,” a person questions his/her foundational beliefs and attitudes (Rael, 2002: 33-4). This information stage entails pushing aside superstition and other beliefs that have been given to us and embracing the truth that science offers. The emphasis is on cultivating objectivity. The third stage is “the organization of a great spring-cleaning of all that controls our behavior” (Rael, 2002: 35).

Briefly, it consists of questioning deeply all of our actions and reactions so as to become aware of and define those which are due to our educators and those which stem from our very own selves, and then eliminating the former if they are in contradiction with our deepest tastes and aspirations (Rael, 2002: 36).

The fourth stage is the reprogramming stage.

Once we have eliminated the elements which caused the taboos within us, this willful and voluntary reprogramming can be done by becoming aware of our sensuality, that is to say by the optimal usage of our senses, through which our whole being is linked to the infinite surrounding us and of which we are made up (2002: 36).

The final stage describes the promised benefits of sensual mediation.

. . . the last stage . . . is the one from which the infinite staircase rises, leading to total awakening through a global awareness of space and time, resulting in a higher level of consciousness and allowing those who reach it to live in a permanent state of total harmony (Rael, 2002: 36)

5.4 “Chapter 3: Becoming Aware of Oneself”

Chapter three provides a discussion of religious education and criticism of theories of evolution. It develops a lengthy comparison of humans to computers and concludes that machines are superior to man and that man is nothing but an inefficient machine.

We are nothing other than a computer, a sort of machine whose performance capacities are only relatively mediocre when compared to some objects made by humans (Rael, 2002: 38)

Rael disclaims the existence of the soul and celebrates the genetic code as the one thing

that makes humans superior to computers, because it holds such creative and life-giving potential. He talks about how the “mystery” of creation needs to be “demystif[ied]” and critiques major world religions which want to continue to shroud creation in mystery (Rael, 2002: 47). He stresses the importance of demystifying the concepts of love, pleasure and sexual differentiation, using the example of a robot. According to Rael, all human motivations can be reduced to pleasure (directly and indirectly); and all of these things can be programmed into a computer.

5.5 “Chapter 4: Voluntary Deprogramming”

Chapter four invites the reader to deconstruct the effects of his/her socialization, “this unconscious conditioning” (Rael, 2002: 57). This requires re-evaluating normative frameworks, religious teachings, and behaviours and attitudes, and recognizing their source. This helps the reader recognize the difference between love and selfishness. Love is the source of all harmony; selfishness breeds fear, jealousy, and hate.¹

Awakening is the permanent development of one’s ability to communicate with one’s environment and one’s capacity for analysing and integrating (linking) the information transmitted to us by our senses (Rael, 2002: 65). Awakening is the development of consciousness, which, combining intelligence and comprehension, enables “the infinitely small within us and the infinitely large of which we are part, to ‘know itself together’ within us” (Rael, 2002: 66). The specifics of awakening are summarized in four sections. In “How Habits Atrophy Us,” Rael discusses how developing habits can atrophy the senses, similar to Buddhist teachings (Rael, 2002: 66). The next section, “Seizing the Moment,” elaborates on how each moment must be cherished and spent living consciously. Section three, “Masturbation—An Indispensable Stage” is important in the awakening process, as Rael states,

While our sensuality is our link with Infinity surrounding us, self-eroticism is one of the most efficient ways to set off on the internal exploration of our computer (Rael, 2002: 75).

The final section, “Creating a Void,” instructs the reader on how to empty the mind entirely through breathing exercises, shutting out all sensory stimulants and concentrating on nothing, then “concentrate on the fact we are concentrating on nothing,” which helps clear the mind even further. (Rael, 2002: 77). Because “everything that we do during our life . . . [is] in fact no more than a succession of reactions,” it is necessary to realize “a situation where our action becomes proper to ourselves” (Rael, 2002: 78-9).

The person who initiates this process escapes the uninterrupted cycle of unconscious successive reactions and consequently begins to elevate his level of consciousness (Rael, 2002: 79)

5.6 “Chapter 5: Voluntary Reprogramming”

To develop our sensuality means to develop our ability to perceive changes through our senses, especially the affects these produce in us (Rael, 2002: 81).

Chapter five invites the reader on a voyage of self-discovery through the senses. Going through each of the five senses, the manual suggests experiencing each moment of each stimulus to discover one’s likes and dislikes. Readers are encouraged to try new things for the sake of developing a new set of “tastes,” which helps slough away old forms of habit, socialization, and biases (Rael, 2002: 80).

5.7 “Chapter 6: Programme of Sensual Meditation”

In chapter six, the six exercises of the sensual meditation program are described. The Raelian movement offers these exercises on tapes and CDs. The exercises are normally

performed at seminars, led by Raelian guides. The meditations cover “harmonization with infinity” (Rael, 2002: 88), which teaches “the importance of breathing” (Rael, 2002: 90), “becoming aware of the infinitely small of which we are composed” (Rael, 2002: 91), “becoming aware of one’s level” (Rael, 2002: 93), “becoming aware of the infinitely large of which we are a part” (Rael, 2002: 94), and finally, “realizing humanity’s potential” (Rael, 2002: 95).

Further meditations include “becoming aware of our life rhythms” (Rael, 2002: 96), “body awareness” (Rael, 2002: 98), “meditation facing the symbol of infinity”² (Rael, 2002: 100), “discovering another universe: our partner” (Rael, 2002: 104), and “eroticism and mutual excitement” (Rael, 2002: 107).

The remaining chapters 7 and 8 of the manual of Sensual Meditation discuss the meditation centers that exist and the role of the Raelian guides, who are the teachers and experts of the method. The book concludes with some selections of personal experiences from members of the movement.

5.8 The Manual’s Significance

The *Sensual Meditation* manual is important because it is an embodiment of the movement’s philosophies and practices. The Raelians who participated in this study recommended the book. Many of the concepts and examples outlined in the book surfaced in participant responses. It is obvious that this book holds great significance to members of the movement, not simply as a book, but as the written practice of the movement which is highly important to what being a Raelian is. The narratives in the following chapter will demonstrate the depth of meaning of sensual meditation as it relates to daily life and to a perspective on world

events and everyday human behavior.

Endnotes

- 1 Raelians have a reputation for being highly sexual. This chapter discusses how the sharing of love partners is important for developing the distinction between love and selfishness. The permission to intimately relate to each other openly is part of what Rael refers to as “[developing] sensitivity” through “contact with people of differing personalities” (2002: 65). Members are not forced, but encouraged to explore intimacy with each other as part of the awakening process, to rid the self of sexual taboos and personal inhibitions.
- 2 The symbol of infinity, the Raelian symbol, is a swastika inside of a six-pointed star. Though long known as an ancient Hindu symbol, the connection of the swastika to the Jewish Holocaust persuaded Rael to change the movement’s symbol to a six-armed swirl inside of a six pointed star, out of respect for the Jews (Rael, 2002).

Chapter Six

OUT OF DARKNESS: RAELIAN ILLUMINATIONS

6.1 Introduction to the Narratives

This chapter discusses the narratives in a thematic format as they emerged through email correspondence. Though each individual story is unique, together they illustrate certain connections through thematic elements. In presenting them this way, it is not my goal to try to generalize the experiences of the participants but to show some of the similarities that resonate throughout the narratives. These narratives demonstrate not only the connections between individual Raelians' stories, but also to those of non-Raelian readers. To the best of my knowledge, these themes provide an overall picture of the movement, and specifically reflect what members take from it.

In this research, I found many similarities between my own experiences and those participants' presented in the following narratives. In preparation for this part of the analysis, I found myself asking, "Why not me?" Since my experiences are similar, why do I not subscribe to these beliefs? The research process forced me to re-evaluate my own spiritual philosophy. I did some concurrent personal reflection into the tenets of my own beliefs. Although it was sometimes uncomfortable, it was very important to me. It was difficult for me to separate my own past from the stories coming out of the research; in fact, in one of the email correspondences, I sat down and wrote to one of the participants my own religious philosophy (at his request). It was difficult, but I appreciated the experience for the reason that I was asking these individuals to do it for me, and I was able to recognize the hard work involved. It is highly self-reflective and so self-revealing to put these things in words, both written and verbally.

6.1.1 The participants

Mr. A currently resides in Canada, but spent the majority of his childhood in Europe. He is a successful business man with expertise in helping others succeed. He is an advocate of the Raelian movement and has been involved with it for twenty years. I imagine him as reserved, perhaps even shy, until you get to know him. I think he is deeply committed to the movement and this motivates him to share his convictions with others in an active and public way.

Mr. B is a resident of the United States of America, living in the south-east. He was born and raised in the Quebec area. He is a visual artist with a wonderful smile, based on the picture I have seen of him. In one comprehensive email, he told me much about himself after nearly forgetting about agreeing to participate in the study; “Oh la la, I nearly forgot!” he wrote.

Mr. C is also a resident of Canada. He has an extensive educational background, is highly involved in advocating for Aboriginal rights in Canada. He is a teacher, a health care specialist, and he travels extensively. He is married, has no children. Mr. C integrates his involvement in the Raelian movement into his profession, though it may seem on the surface to be completely unrelated. He is very intelligent and up-beat. In our correspondence, he asked a number of questions about me, and encouraged me to share my own beliefs with him.

Ms. D is a pleasant woman from the Eastern United States. She does work at the community level for at-risk children; her work has always been socially oriented. She enjoys learning and describes herself as a student. Ms. D is also a member of the Order of Angels, a group of female Raelians who work as Rael’s aides and train to serve the Elohim for the time when they return to Earth. She identifies very strongly with the concept of femininity. She is exceptionally articulate and almost lyrical in her responses. Ms. D’s gentle spirit is a cozy sweater; or a reverberation in your chest that you feel from the pitch of a live musical chord.

Mr. E is an artist and musician (and comedian!) from the United States West coast. He dedicates much of his time to the Movement and thrives on sharing the Messages with anyone who has an ear. Mr. E has a vibrant personality and is very intelligent; he studied at some of the United States most prestigious universities. He is well travelled and spent much of his young adulthood seeking and learning a variety of spiritual paths. He is a musical artist who graciously shared some of his work with me. In return, I shared some of my own with him, as a closet poet.

The sixth individual I interviewed was the youngest of participants in this study, from the Middle Eastern United States. She came into the movement as a young person since one of her parents has high standing in the movement and so she was strongly influenced by this. After studying religion, philosophy, and science, she decided to join. She is also a member of the Order of Angels. In our single telephone conversation, she was spirited and very open. Her voice emanated with such positive energy that I felt absolutely exhilarated after talking with her. Due to transcription difficulties, I have not included her narrative in this analysis. However, I would like to note that her story resonates throughout this chapter in the other narratives.

This chapter presents each person's story as close to his or her own words as possible, taking into consideration grammatical corrections, the flow of words, and confidentiality issues. In constructing and presenting the following narratives, I have pieced together the participants' responses, in some cases, from various emails and phone conversations. Following their stories of finding the movement, this chapter will also highlight certain concepts related to the movement, using excerpts from some of the narratives. These include explanations of aspects of the movement, as well as some relevant concepts. Some excerpts are longer and more detailed, which only demonstrates the self-reflective nature of the narrative approach and the virtual interview. As well, it reflects the personalities of the individuals and respects the experiences

reflected in the stories. By including longer quotes from the narratives, I wish to show the connections that the participants make, their thought processes, and their articulation of certain experiences. As the narratives will show, each individual has a unique perspective on his or her experience as a Raelian.

6.1.2 What is the Raelian Movement about?

This was the question that commenced the email correspondences. Though it began innocently as a broad and introductory question, this question threads itself through the entire narrative because this is the essential question that every one not familiar with the movement wants to know, and needs to know.

Mr. A provides a broad definition of the movement, based on its ideals and goals.

For me the Raelian Movement is a great spiritual and atheist organization. Some of the fundamental values of the members that I hold dear are respect for all forms of life, peace, love, harmony, serenity, consciousness, respect and love of the differences, freedom of choice . . . The organization has two main goals: to spread information (or the Messages) as given to Rael about the existence of the Elohim, the creators of mankind, and [secondly] to build an embassy to welcome them back. From Rael's teaching, we have the chance of being able to elevate our consciousness and awareness on every level, that is, personally, professionally, spiritually, physically, mentally, etc. The teaching is the key to maximize our potential in every sphere of our lives. The Raelian Movement brings hope and enlightenment to humanity . . .

Mr. B's description demonstrates the relevance of the movement in terms of rationality and introduces the conflict between traditional religious faith and living in a technological society.

The Raelian movement is to me a group of living cells that I would consider the consciousness of humanity. . . [It] is a philosophy of the 3rd Millennium. Raelians think by themselves. They are not believers first; they have to understand, and then believe what makes sense. It is based on logic. That is why the Raelian philosophy is for people who are intelligent.

Mr. C illustrates the ties inherent between the Raelian movement's philosophy and other world religious philosophies.

[It] is first and foremost a spiritual movement, similar in many ways to Buddhism in its theory and practice. Similar, also, to many indigenous spiritualities.

Ms. D talks about the movement's ability to motivate personal and social transformation.

[The] Raelian movement is all about "change." It invites and challenges me to change myself on a daily basis and by doing so to extend that change outward to the world, in a positive and affirmative way. The Messages received by Rael from our creators, The Elohim, enable me to give to myself and those I love and the world around me, a gift of full awareness and love . . . The Raelian movement is unique in that it presents this wake up call to the world with a spirit of love and utter respect. While we seek to inform, we do not seek to convince, and always we seek to inform with absolute respect for those who are listening to us.

Mr. E's description I present in poem form of my own construction, to connect specific phrases he uses to describe the movement. According to him, the movement is about spreading love: of the self, of others, and of the world in general. It also embodies intelligence and freedom.

The Raelian movement is
A philosophy of Love.
(An embodiment of Love).
Beautiful, impressive,
Comprehensive.
Openness – not worrying about who is watching or
listening.
Intelligence.
Just Being.

6.2 The Dawning

At midnight tears
Run into your ears (Bogan, online).

How many of us taste the deepest fears of life in the darkest hours of the night? All of the worries, the calamity of daily life and our most quiet moments alone often surface at this hour. This metaphor of midnight in Louise Bogan's poem speaks of the darkness of the questioning of faith and meaning, the feeling of wandering lost and blind in a world that does not make sense, living in a way that seems meaningless. The midnight metaphor is one that leads into the following narrative themes, specific themes that emerge after the midnight of the self: the "sudden dawning" that lightens the road to new beginnings (Rael, 2002: 33); daylight; and metamorphosis.

The following excerpts describe each participant's struggle with his or her religious upbringing and the circumstances that led them to the Raelian movement. There are some commonalities that emerge. The most significant is one of skepticism and the questioning of religion. Each story elaborates on the individual's search for spiritual meaning as it relates to the broader aspects of their lives. Mr. A's skepticism towards the Raelians was countered by the logical and intelligent discussion during his first "encounter" with them. Similarly, Mr. C embraces the connections between Raelianism and other traditional religious philosophies. His experience has been shaped by these similarities and even more so by the people he has met. In Rael's messages, Mr. B found validation in the ideas he had been courting, and they gave him a place to recognize his vocation without having to compromise the things he loved. Ms. D found a philosophy that finally made her feel comfortable. Mr. E found a place where all of his spiritual seeking uncovered a real source. The "Dawning" for these individuals is explained in the

following metaphors: an “encounter,” a doorway, a step beyond the mainstream, coming home, and finding the missing piece.

Close Encounters of the Raelian Kind: Mr. A’s Story

I was born in Switzerland and lived in eight countries on four continents. France and Switzerland were the countries where I lived the longest. I was born Jewish but in a non-practicing family. My parents divorced when I was two years of age.

At the age of 13 or 14, my mother sent me to an orthodox Jewish school for two years because of the school’s excellent reputation of teaching. It was a disaster for my religious belief. Since then, I decided not to believe in god anymore as I had already had doubts about god’s existence. After that, I was not interested in religion for the longest time. I grew up with my own philosophy of life, more of an independent person: traveling, a lover of nature and sports. I never smoked nor drank, or took drugs, or drank coffee. I simply was not interested in these things.

At the age of 27, I was living in Switzerland and the Raelians came to hold a presentation. Their weird UFO-religion mixed messages poster attracted my attention. I always believed that we were not alone in the universe. I liked the movie “Close Encounters of the Third Kind” from Spielberg (1977) that I had seen a few years before.

I was very skeptical of any spiritual group’s belief. I did not even sit in the lecture room at first, ready to leave if it became too weird. But the intelligent approach to the explanation of life and, more importantly, the smart and logical answers to my provoking questions, made me curious.

The Doorway: Mr. B’s Story

I was born in Montreal to a Catholic family, although my parents were not that fanatic about the Catholic rules. They followed them as best they could because they did not know better. Back then, the Catholics in Quebec were super powerful in every level of society and government. The Prime Minister could not even hold a ceremony without inviting the cardinal for his benediction. Though time has changed and the people have thrown religion out of government since the 1960s, they are still Catholic in their own way.

My childhood was nice but boring, and full of guilt because I did not know a world outside of the Catholic rules. Believe me, the Catholics have a special way of making you feel guilty about any pleasure. It is more or less like mental torture. At 12 or 13, I started asking my parents about God. Since I got no other response than, “It’s a mystery, boy, and you have to live with that,”

from my mother, I turned to my friends and the library. I read lots of books, even the Bible, which was interesting, but still gave no answer.

Then one day, I discovered a book, The Morning of the Magicians, by Louis Pauwels (1963). This book changed everything. Finally, there was another possibility. I finally found a door, a door to understanding what I had always thought. Perhaps God was an extra-terrestrial. That made me smile, happy like a kid that finds a pearl in a mountain of trash. Jesus? I believed in him more than God. Was he also an extra-terrestrial? This made more sense. Everything started to seem to me to be more logical. If we were created by a God, then it made more sense that he would be a man or more human-like, a scientist or something like that, able to somehow create life on earth.

At the age of 14 or 15, I decided I wanted to do something for other people. I wanted to become a priest. It took me a summer of self-questioning and guilt to decide that it was not for me. I loved the girls so much; thinking that I would have to give that up to become a priest was the utmost torture, because I wanted to please God or whoever he was, and especially Jesus. I told myself that I would find another way to help people on this planet, even if I were not a priest.

Beyond the Mainstream: Mr. C's Story

I was born in Montreal to Jewish socialist parents who were both rebelling from their orthodox upbringing. They later moved to Ontario, partly to escape the extreme right wing Maurice Duplessis government in Quebec and the angry communist witch hunt that was going on. I was raised an atheist, although by the time I was twelve, I started to think there might be a social and cultural benefit to religious affiliation. I went to university for several years, studying in the health sciences, and then spent some time traveling and working across the country. My career paths and personal interests have always been beyond the mainstream. My criteria have always been set by the question, "Could this make a difference to the health of the planet?"

I was initially attracted to the movement because of the people. I thought the extra-terrestrial creationist idea was crazy, but the people who were involved were definitely not. I have had a long standing interest in Aboriginal spirituality, and found parallels, especially the concept of infinity, which to me means that if every atom of our universe contains life, then everything is sacred. Still skeptical, though, I hung out for awhile.

Coming Home: Ms. D's Story

I was born christened, raised and confirmed an Episcopalian. (Anglican, Church of England) This was in the 1960s and 1970s and we relied on the King James Version of the Bible and the older "thee, thou" verbiage.

We knelt to say prayers and after confirmation received the sacrament, body and blood of Christ at the rail, along with the other parishioners. My first questioning of faith began when I received my confirmation classes, this would have been in my early teens. Until that time I had not realized that I did not believe what was behind the words in my prayers and hymns at church. Yes, I had heard bible stories and attended Sunday school as often as my mother could get me to church; but until I was facing actually confirming my faith did I begin to question it. I do not know if it would be fair to say that questions were not encouraged, but certainly my feeling was that I was supposed to “get it” and after a time not continue to question, rather just accept and understand.

After I was confirmed I ceased to want to go to church. The youth minister apparently found this a challenge and began to visit our home to discuss my absence with me and bring me back to the fold. I was sufficiently turned off and upset by his continued efforts that my parents supported me in my decision and so I was left to read and explore the spiritual concepts I was forming. I began to read more about Eastern religions and began thinking thoughts that would continue and expand over the next few years; was there a God? Was there a place for souls? Did we have souls? Were there past lives? Were we all part of and born from a universal consciousness (though at the time I am sure I did not employ that particular term)? I developed a belief in the infinity of all things and the energy that inhabits all that is seen and unseen. “God” remained in my vocabulary but Jesus had never been someone whom I felt a need to worship and so I continued to acknowledge him as the son of god but more in the role of prophet than anything else. If I prayed to something divine it was to God and I did not parse it out to father or son or holy spirit in particular. For many years in my late teens and twenties I rarely went to church and I think rarely prayed.

My thirties saw me return to considering the awe of things and I found that my original beliefs of infinity and consciousness were still very strong. Following the death of my father when I was 34, I felt the need to reclaim a sense of community within a spiritual structure. I fell back on my only roots, the Episcopalian church. I joined a church where one of my oldest friends worshipped and enjoyed a year of long drives to choir rehearsal and singing with her, both of us away from husbands and children, it was lovely. But as happy as I was to sing again and be with my friend, I felt each Sunday when I went to worship that I was not home, but in fact a tourist. I searched for straws to grasp within each service that would balance the bits that I disliked and rejected. Ultimately not a happy camper, I left the church at the end of the year. I began to dislike anything I perceived as organized and religious. At this same time, strangely enough, I went to work for a community ministry, an organization that served a network of communities thru the efforts and resources of an interdenominational group of churches and synagogues. In my work I came to see the good that applying organization to religion and its resources can bring. Perhaps I was lucky in that my job never required me to bring faith into any of my activities with those we served. So for a time I found

a bit of “gestalt” in my work and spiritual life.

In my 40s, I left the community ministry work to do other jobs in the field of social services. Later, I found I was talking more and more with my friends about faith and listening to their views and philosophies. I envied the way they were rooted in their faith and what it brought to their lives while I felt a bit cut off from it all. My god mother asked me one day if I believed in God and in the space of a lie I said I did, when in that moment I knew I did not. I had never admitted to myself that I was an atheist but here I was and where would I place myself now? I was making new friends on the internet at this time and one of them was a Raelian. I visited www.rael.org and began to read everything I could both pro and con about the Movement. A friend advised me to read Rael's books first. I traded the Tao of Physics to an online acquaintance who had been curious, too, and began one Friday night to read them. By Sunday that same weekend I knew I was home. I had been curious, intrigued, enthralled, thrilled, challenged, comforted and found welcome in what I read. In particular the portion of the Messages which speak to ‘no soul, no god’ resonated the loudest within me. I cried and fell asleep happy and excited that I might be able to know others who felt and believed the same way as I did.

The Missing Piece: Mr. E’s Story

I was born and raised in the eastern U.S. My dad hails from Trinidad, and my mom from Virginia. Since my dad was so deeply indoctrinated in his Muslim upbringing, my mom converted from Christianity to Islam when they were married. Mom is a very spiritual person – she always said that whoever created her knew that she was a good person, so the details did not matter. She is very well-loved by everyone who knows her.

I used to ask tough questions in Islamic Sunday School, as early as eight years of age. If God (Allah) is *everywhere*, then how can I pray to Him? Which part of me is not Him? If even one of my cells or atoms is not God, then He is not everywhere. It never made sense to me. If God knows everything, then why are we here? I have free will, but He already knows which choices I will make, and He knew before I was even created. I asked about the suffering in the world, and was told that Satan was responsible. So, who created Satan? If Satan was an angel who fell, did not God know that he would fall? Did not God create him to fall? After all, God is all-powerful and all-knowing, right? It never made sense. I did not mean to be disrespectful, but I sincerely wanted to understand the whole creation thing – why are we here? I never knew why I was so interested in such things at such a young age, but I have always been that way. I never drank alcohol, never smoked anything, and never had any interest in doing anything that would be harmful to me or others. I got involved in martial arts when I was twelve, and this supported my philosophical and health-oriented leanings. My parents, brothers, and friends will all tell you that

I was always a little “different” from most people.

In school, I was always an excellent student, but I often found myself bored with the curriculum. I went to a private, fairly exclusive high school with classmates like Ted Rockefeller and Eleanor Mondale, whose father was running for vice-president during my senior year. It was fun playing with the secret service guys on our field trips! It was during high school that I had the courage to admit that I could not honestly call myself a Muslim, simply because there were many things in the Q’uran which I did not believe or accept. There are many beautiful aspects, but Muslims believe that *every* word must be accepted as the word of God, and I just was not there. I was actually pretty happy that I was not struck down by lightning when I stepped away from Islam!

I read the Bible and Torah, and then various texts and scriptures from Eastern religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, and some African teachings. Much of what I found had great value, but nothing had what I was looking for. I knew instinctively that all these religions and philosophies were based in truth, and that there must be some tangible connection between them. Of everything I studied, Taoism is still my favorite – it simply teaches that we should live in harmony with the Infinite, the essence of all things. I still love Tao Te Ching, especially the Gia-Fu Feng/Jane English translation. I also read Von Daniken’s Chariots Of The Gods (1969), which had a big impact on me – I believed it right away, simply because it made sense. There was so much evidence for Von Daniken's theory, and I knew immediately that there was something real there.

I went off to Brown University with high hopes of designing my own major, combining various fields of study to “connect the dots” and find the missing piece of this incredible puzzle. Religion, science, UFO’s – I knew they were connected, but there was so much I still didn’t know. My classes at Brown ranged from Eastern Religion, Egyptology, Astronomy, Philosophy, Archaeology, Physics, Anthropology, and Plate Tectonics/Geology to Psychology, Music, Native American, Asian, and African American Studies. I even had a class called “The Philosophical Implications of Parapsychology” – it was wonderful! Soon I began to realize that I already knew more than many of my professors in some subjects. My Eastern Religion professor, for example, had never been to India, and everything she taught about Indian religions came straight from textbooks. Being partially of Indian descent, I was raised in the culture through my grandmother and cousins, so it was difficult for me to observe so much error in her scholarship: my professor simply did not understand the culture or religion, yet she was an expert with degrees to prove it! Even though Brown is considered one of the best schools in the country, even among the Ivy League schools, I saw such sloppiness in many of my classes.

I continued to live my life, knowing that as long as I followed my “inner voice” everything would be fine. I guess I fell into the category of “New

Age” to a certain extent at that point – living in a way that felt “right” to me, taking whatever made sense from any source. I loved reading philosophy and meditating, but I did not consider myself to be a part of any particular religion or belief system, nor did I feel any desire to be. I still had so many questions, though, especially about the true source of the world’s religions and about how we were really meant to live here on Earth.

After Brown, I attended Berkley School of Music. I always loved music, and played bass and percussion in many bands during high school and college. I had also studied the science and physics of vibration and rhythm, which goes quite deep. Everything in our vast universe is based on certain rhythms, from our heartbeats to the seasons, to the motion of the stars and planets in space. So, music means a great deal to me, and it can be a meditative vehicle to help us feel even more deeply our connection with the Infinite.

My family owns two small restaurants. I spent many summers working at one of them, and then managed the night shift for two years. This was not my calling, though, so I moved to the southern east coast to further my musical endeavors. Then, just as I had started to accept the possibility that I might never find that “missing piece of the puzzle” which connected science and religion as well as explaining our origins and future, along came Rael’s first book, The Final Message (1998). A friend first introduced me to this book in the early 1990’s, and I must admit that the cover looked more like a tabloid than a credible source of information to me! I actually borrowed his copy reluctantly, with no particular intention of reading it – I just thought the cover looked silly! I had seen so many books about UFO’s, and none really impressed me at all, so I assumed that this was more of the same. Needless to say, it was not. I read the whole book in one night, and felt a bit stunned the entire next day! I couldn’t get it out of my mind, and something inside of me *knew* it was true. I rushed to get the next two books, Let’s Welcome the Extraterrestrials (2003) and Sensual Meditation (2002). The more I read, the more I felt deeply moved by the information.

6.5 A New Day

After discovering the Raelian movement, the following narrative excerpts highlight the general sense of opening up to the Raelian ideas and recognizing how well they corresponded to these individuals’ ideas and lifestyles. Mr. A tackled his skepticism by searching further into the realm of spirituality. Because of this, he recovers from his pessimistic view of humanity. He also mentions the importance of my

research in creating a better understanding of the movement. Mr. B found relief in the congruence between what he already knew and what Rael taught, that made complete sense to him. Mr. C finally found a place where he could simply be himself. The movement for Ms. D created a vital place for her atheism to flourish and she quickly found herself participating in the organizational structure. Mr. E, a great skeptic, recognized the genuineness of the movement and felt compelled to join. This “New Day” recognizes an element of conversion and is embodied in the following concepts: renewed hope, discovering joy in simplicity, recognizing a turning point, finding a voice, and confirmation of belief.

Hope Renewed: Mr. A

I decided to buy the book, Sensual Meditation (2002). I read it very quickly and was fascinated by how close it was to my own philosophy of life. I bought the other Raelian books, met more people of the group who had a gathering in the area and in spite of my group gathering phobia, I pushed myself further to experience a summer seminar. Remember, anti-groups, skeptical Jewish upbringing, free thinker. . . I had my provoking questions and played the devil’s advocate at every opportunity. But during the seminar, I found that everything was a surprising eye and mind opener as I went further in my search of the “truth.” Who can tell me what is true besides myself? And so I went to search for more proof of the message Rael claimed to have received, reading more books, visiting more spiritual groups, reuniting with spiritualities, accepting and learning about others’ beliefs. As time went on, I learned a lot about life in general: spirituality, communication, self-discovery, self-improvement, self-acceptance, empowerment, love and respect. My values became clearer and my hope in humanity’s wonderful future came back. I did not believe that we would make it to the next century before I met the Raelians. But now, I trust that we can and we are responsible for changing this world, raising human consciousness and that every individual has the opportunity of creating a better world with their actions. This research is a direct contribution to the awareness of understanding, tolerance and respect of other minorities.

Joy in Simplicity: Mr. B

In 1976, I was working for a political campaign. I came home after a long day, turned on the television, and came across an interview of Rael. I saw

that he looked different but he had some kind of peace that attracted me; I was interested in what he said. He had met an extra-terrestrial in the center of France; that extra-terrestrial had been mistaken for God a long time ago. They came here and created life and organized the planet to be livable for their creation. The idea was already in my mind since I had read Louis Pauwels' Morning of the Magicians (1972). Finally someone had the same idea and, moreover, had met one of them. I went to a conference the night after, bought the book and came back home. I started reading the book that night. I finished the book late that night and could not sleep tight. I was so relieved that I was not the only one with such a crazy idea. This man had actually met the representative of those who created us. That made complete sense to me. I have not found anything more logical to this day.

It is so simple. The universe is infinite in both directions. We are part of it and it is also a part of us. We are, in fact, in the middle. Humans have always existed and always will exist.

A Turning Point: Mr. C

I attended my first sensual meditation seminar in 1990. I was blown away by the incredible spirit of non-judgement, of freedom and honesty, the supportive environment that allowed me to just be whom I was at that moment. It was a turning point. I had never been so relaxed in my entire life. And to this day, I have never had so much fun. I have learned not to take myself seriously and enjoy the present moment. It sounds terribly cliché, but I don't know how else to describe it without writing a dissertation.

Finding A Voice: Ms. D

In early 2002, I joined the movement as an official member of the organization and attended my first two-week seminar in Canada. This past summer I attended my second and it was even better than the first! I became an Angel, and in 2003, I had my cellular transmission. It was only the second ceremony in my life to move me to such love and tears, the first being my wedding to my husband twenty years ago. How have I changed and how do I send that outward? Quick answer is, "Well, not in as many ways as I have wanted to!" I had hoped I would have a huge metamorphosis by this time, but I am learning to take joy in the subtle and strong changes that I see in myself. My atheism is something which has grown louder within me since joining the movement. I feel free to give it voice and when I do I embrace at the same time the Messages. It is truly liberating. I have gone from the woman who answered falsely to her godmother to a woman who sees atheism and science as necessary for humanity and its survival. To know and live this truth about what I believe and who I am is the fundamental change. This is a freedom that I wish

the world had.

As a member of the Order of Angels I find that there is strength in my femininity that I have never fully embraced. I am at service to our creators, the Elohim, our Prophet Rael and our mission, as a woman and Angel, each day. My personal challenge is to become more aware of my femininity and the beauty within it and to see how each day I may bring, with love and soft determination, the Messages, and increased consciousness to the world. I have also re-prioritized my daily life. My family, husband and home, and my involvement in the movement are of equal priority in my life right now. Perhaps it will not always be so, but for this time I am able to happily volunteer many hours a week to the movement. In this way I help (in small ways) to support the work of the Guides who are involved in creating wonderful waves of change from the Raelian movement outward into our world. I am fortunate that my partner embraces my desire to be active in the movement and although he does not share my beliefs, he is a man of infinite respect and sensitivity, which make him very Raelian to me.

Confirmation: Mr. E

Being an American, I was extremely skeptical of Rael himself, and especially of the organization. I have always been very independent, and never had any desire to join anything aside from a band or martial arts school. I had also studied a great deal of history, enough to know just how distorted our teachings have been. Our Eurocentric society wrote a history that deliberately removed the contributions of African-Americans as well as people of color all over the world. Now, here is some French man who claims to be the last prophet – that was a hard sell for me, no matter how much I loved the movement’s books. I was very skeptical. Maybe Rael's information was partially true, or maybe he had a hidden agenda. Maybe he stole this from another source. I really had no idea, but I wanted to do some research and consider all possibilities. I spent two years researching, without telling anyone what I had found. *Everything* confirmed the truth of Rael's books! So, my next step was to meet him face to face. This took place in Las Vegas in 1994 when he did a lecture there. When I first met Rael, he didn't say anything much that I hadn't already read in the books, but I could tell that he was genuine. I have always been very good at reading people, so I trust my instincts.

After meeting Rael, I decided to attend a Raelian meeting. I told my wife as we walked in, “Don't eat anything, and don't drink anything. Let's be careful, we don't know these people.” I look back now and laugh at this fearful attitude – the media had really done its job in programming me to be afraid of anything different. After all, this could be some dangerous “cult” which might try to drug and brainwash me! When we walked in, we found some of the nicest, most genuine people I had ever met. I walked in suspicious, and walked out saying, “We have to help these people – I love these guys!”

6.4 Metamorphosis

The changes that these individuals mention relate to a greater sense of personal fulfillment, in all aspects of their lives. The fulfillment one finds is embodied in the movement as a way of life. Mr. A speaks to this directly; specifically, the benefits to his career, his level of spirituality, and in his personal relationships. Mr. B finally realizes his goal of becoming a priest, without having to compromise intimate relationships. Mr. C uses the movement's teachings in his everyday life and career, which have increased the level of enjoyment he finds in his work and the extent to which he can extend himself to others. Ms. D discovers a path towards an ideal humanity, that personal transformation is the catalyst to fostering a better experience for everyone. Mr. E suggests that the movement has enabled him to grow, and sees it as a tool for expanding the breadth of experience and spreading the joy of simplicity. "Metamorphosis" encapsulates the ideas of finding perfect alignment, discovering a way of life and a way of being, feeling a transforming burst of fresh air, and an expansion of the world.

The Perfect Alignment: Mr. A

The Raelian movement has changed my life in many ways. Professionally, I became more confident and, thanks to seminars, I have improved my communication and organizational skills and have more self-awareness. Therefore, I became more successful in my career. In personal relationships, my empathy towards my partners made my relationships more harmonious and more intense. Sensual awareness brought me refinement. Spiritually, of course, I encountered drastic change, I have improved my understanding of why people think the way they do, and accepting and appreciating others' beliefs and religions. In discovering meditation, I am feeling the Infinity, finding more balance in me, with others and the universe. Everything is clearer on so many levels. My career has evolved as well. I was in marketing and sales, but now I work helping people (and organizations) to grow, improve their lives, to find balance and fulfillment and to become peak performers in every area of their lives. My Raelian philosophy of life is

perfectly aligned with my purpose. I live it every day, naturally, with joy and satisfaction.

6.4.2 A Way of Life: Mr. B

After attending several seminars, in 1980 I became a guide, which is the equivalent of a priest in the Catholic religion. I was finally a priest, one of my childhood dreams! I am able to enjoy my life to the fullest since Raelian priests at all levels can have sex, and have a girlfriend or boyfriend; everything is possible with respect and without guilt. This represented for me then, and even more today, a way of life, helping other people discover the truth, helping them discover the pleasures of life being more conscious about everything. It is about finding a way for others to be able to love each other having a better spirituality and helping them express Infinity through themselves. That made sense and I love it.

A Way of Being: Mr. C

In the seminars' leisure activities, and by just being there, I have experienced the incredible feeling of being with people who are living their philosophy of non-judgment and their love of differences. I can see how the movement translates into gracefulness and genuine affection for one another. Gradually, I have worked this way of being into my teaching and dealing with patients, and the response has been wonderful. The effect of the seminars stays with you. I feel freer than I ever have. In fact, I have never felt so good nor had so much fun in my entire life. And it keeps getting better!

A Burst of Fresh Air: Ms. D

Each of us strives to do our best and to share our best with those around us and our world. The Raelian movement gives me a foundation and structure within which to accomplish this. As a result, I feel much more centred, grounded, directed, and inspired in my efforts. To be perfectly candid, in the time I have been on this earth, I have made an effort in many positive directions, each with some success. Until now, however, I did not feel that I was part of something with action and direction that also housed within its purpose a spiritual component (or at least one I could embrace).

I am an atheist with a strong belief in the concept of infinity. When I read Rael's books, I felt that they spoke strongly to me on many points. I made contact with other Raelians and felt a strong connection to those that I met. The

energy and freedom, which I felt then, I continue to feel on a daily basis. I am a part of something which extends the challenge outward and pushes the envelope, seeks to sweep away the status quo and wake people up. For me, it is akin to opening a window that many do not realize is shut, and helping them to feel sunlight and fresh air on their faces for the first time.

The World Expands: Mr. E

The Raelian philosophy happened to coincide with the beliefs I already had, although I must admit that it gave me more information, more answers, and more tools for growth than I ever expected. At this point, I actually find myself growing more now than I think I did in the beginning! I also feel good about finding other people who really do think like me in many ways, even though we are all so different.

Values such as peace, love, harmony, respect, and open-mindedness mean a great deal to me, and *all* Raelians share such values. We also understand the importance of science, meditation, and sensuality, as well as the depth of simple playing! We all love to learn, to explore, and to push ourselves to grow in whatever ways we choose for ourselves. My family and friends are still wonderful, and I love them dearly, but most do not share these values at anywhere near the level of most Raelians. So, I have even more good friends, and such wonderfully deep relationships.

I have found that most people's worlds seem to shrink as they get older – they live according to their habits, usually doing the same things with the same people. It feels so good to live in an ever expanding world, meeting new people and seeking out new experiences! This way of thinking is available to everyone, of course, but very few seem to choose it.

At this moment, I am most thankful for the growth I have experienced and am continuing to experience as a result of living the Raelian philosophy. I literally feel like I am growing every single day! I constantly push myself to be more open now, more free with people, and it is an incredibly fun exercise. I would even say that my openness with you is fun for me – I am playing right now, sharing my life and thoughts with a perfect stranger! I am not trying to be perfect, not trying to impress you, but just being myself. As Rael often says, just *being*.

6.5 The Prophet Rael

The participants explain the person and the personality of the movement's founder and leader, Rael. Mr. A describes him as simple but exceptional, a man of

genuine character. They talk about their initial impressions of him and how this impression changed. Ms. D describes him similarly, but also mentions how she struggled through coming to terms with the title “His Holiness.” Mr. E explains his experience in researching “masters” and how his experiences working close to Rael have strengthened his opinion of the prophet.

Mr. A

Rael is an amazing person, very humble, and has a great sense of humor. He always tries to make us laugh and speaks like it is not important, very lightheartedly, but if you catch it, it is really deep. He has a big heart and he is devoting his life to help us to grow and to spread the message of the Elohim to the world. Behind the “normal” man hides an amazing person, but only time can make you realize it. For new comers, it is always a bit hard to recognize, but the more you get to know him and see what his teachings can do for you, the more respect you gain for him. I was very doubtful at the beginning, but with time, I understood that it was my personal limitations that stopped me from seeing further. He is a man who is shaking and revolutionizing the world. Therefore, he who disturbs is not always liked.

Ms. D

The general media have the image of a space-suit-wearing-cult leader with a top-knot down pat. They seem to regurgitate this one-dimensional image over and over again. I found it in abundance in the early research I did prior to joining the movement. As I continued to read, I was amazed at the level of snide and jeering content I found in articles published by well-known media. So it was with keen interest that I attended my first seminar, which I could sit near Rael as he taught each day.

I watched and listened to him with rapt attention. I wrote every word of his teachings and re-read it all each night. I am surprised I lifted my head long enough to form an impression of the man at all, but I did. I found him to be engaging, inspiring, intelligent, full of humor, courageous and totally humble. He received our love and gave it joyfully in return. I watched along with others present at seminar as he took delight in the smallest and most beautiful things. Joy and humor is drawn from the simple and shared with us all. He awakened our “spirit” of life and challenged our minds and our humanity. I believe I perhaps saw him up on that stage and did not think to let him descend, as he most assuredly did.

The following months saw the birth of the first clones and a whirlwind

of media attention. The Raelians and our Prophet were blasted worldwide. I saw it and read it and felt nauseated by it. Still, when our Prophet Rael requested in early 2003 that he be addressed by the media as “His Holiness Rael” as a simple sign of respect, I did not understand it. Even being aware of the degree to which he is caricatured and slandered. I thought the title “Prophet” enough; what I failed to realize was that for years he had quietly asked for respect with this title and had not received it. He is our Last Prophet, we believe, sent by the Elohim to guide humanity, in line with other great prophets also sent by them – Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, etc. Still, I reacted with confusion and fear to this, even though I knew that as a Raelian, I would never be expected to address him this way. I remember being angry and feeling my atheism challenged. To be completely honest, I even allowed myself to say that it must all be vanity and ego, this request. That was definitely my fear talking, and confusion, for the way I was characterizing this request was diametrically opposed to the man I had seen and listened to so intently for two solid weeks. That man was humble. “Who is *this*?” I thought, “Am I blind?” I am not ashamed to say I was this fearful or unconscious in my thinking, for it is a true reflection of just how much work Raelians must do first with themselves and then the world. I took some weeks to withdraw from my Raelian duties and to rethink my commitment to the movement. I am not sure when this happened, but one day I was just acutely aware of all he had sacrificed for us; from the moment he was given this mission forward. I know only a bit, what I have read, of the costs to his personal life. How can you receive something so huge and strike out on your own to find other Raelians knowing you will be in for the roasting of a lifetime in the media and worse, and still arise each day to continue on with love and dignity? I felt very foolish and completely humbled. Suddenly it seemed such a small thing to ask to be accorded this little respect which he has earned in such abundance, by his actions and words. I committed myself to the structure and to an ever increasing degree to my work to help Rael and those who help to guide us.

I returned to one of last year’s seminars and did not take one solitary note. I just allowed myself to experience being there with him and listening to him. It was like a brand new seminar and I learned so much more. My impressions of him were much more centered and to me, much more real. He is a man, first and foremost, of exceptional humor and good will. His energy is boundless and he is up early at his mission and into the night with it and all the time living with love and playful heart. I see what he is reflected in the Guides that I have only come to know and they are the dearest men and women I have ever encountered. There is no judgment, only respect and compassion. While I have not been close to Rael at all, I have been present in small meetings with the Angels when he has come to us when he could have been doing something else, and spoken to us and answered our questions. He is the sort of man you want to spend hours listening to, playing with, loving and caring for. Every little grace given is met with sincere appreciation and tender love in return. He

absolutely holds women in the highest regard, and has told us that femininity is the salvation for humanity. Women in the movement are given equal voice and responsibility and it comes from the top, down. I adore it.

At the most recent seminar that I attended, Rael was among us again. This time, unlike the large summer seminar, we were a small number, so it was much more intimate and fun for me. At the mid morning and afternoon breaks, when he could have seen to his own comfort, he posed for endless photos whenever they requested. He embraced all who approached and spoke to each person as if they were the only ones in the room. He gives you his entire attention. He is very polite and sensitive. He put me at ease the moment I was introduced to him. I was too shy to approach him myself. He took my hands and very gently said to “never be shy” and with a smile spoke to me for a minute or two, until the seminar began afresh. While it was a meeting of joy for me, one that brought me tears of happiness, I was so delighted to find that he was “still on the ground,” as far as I was concerned, just a man, and what a man! Our own prophet, committed to a mission unending, each day embraced with love and passion, to transport humanity to a place of love and consciousness. I think if he could have taken the Earth in his hands and said to the fearful, “never be shy” and spoken to them as he did, as he does, to all of us, that our dear little planet Earth might just be saved. It is such a huge undertaking and it has cost him so dearly, yet he continues, living modestly and with world events and social changes that are formidable at say the least. I admire him terribly and respect him more than I could ever possibly tell you. I am inspired by him to help in any way that I can, and I do so with joy and a newfound humility that is becoming my quiet strength!

Mr. E

I looked for a true master my entire life before finding Rael, even in the martial arts. I have been close to a lot of people who claim to be masters and I am a pretty good researcher. Hang out with them for awhile; spend a little more time with them. Walk behind closed doors after they close up shop and look at their marriage, their financial situation, even their teeth. They could not master their teeth, or their eyesight, but they can bend a spoon? It is getting past the parlor trick and understanding that real mastery will be exemplified by your own success and personal happiness in your life. If you do not have that, you do not need followers. You need to work on what you say you have got. The deeper you go, the people you thought might have had it, they really do not. With Rael, I have had the privilege of being close to him and spending some time with him; not a lot, but enough. I know where he lives, what he drives, that kind of stuff. It is extremely impressive. He is a simple person. The simplest of things give him the most pleasure. He does not own anything. He drives a borrowed car that someone in the movement lets him use; he lives in a house that someone lets him live in. He is so simple and everything I have seen

has shown me nothing but the highest level of integrity and just purity. That has been a beautiful thing. I am someone who, every single time I have stepped in after being away for a while, I always go back with a critical eye and say, "Okay, let's see if anyone's gone off on the wrong track here." Not to say I have not seen mistakes from the movement, some things I consider actually big mistakes, But what I have seen and I am sure of is that the integrity and the intention has always been at nothing but the highest level. And that really has touched me. If I see someone make a mistake, I can help them to correct it by being part of it. And maybe if I make a mistake, someone has the wisdom to come along and correct me. I need that, too. We all do. I have moved up high enough in the organization to really be dealing with the highest level. It literally will bring tears to my eyes to realize, wow, it really is all that I would have ever hoped it would be. It really is. The integrity is just so, so genuine.

One thing the movement does is we receive these "raelscience" articles. Any "dirt" that comes out about the movement at all, anything negative at all, we get it first. We receive everything because they want us to stay informed. They want us to make informed decisions, especially since the Heaven's Gate cult that killed themselves.¹ My brother jokes, "Hey man, that was that you guys?" and I say, "Would I be answering the phone if it was?" Rael says point blank, everyone wants to create this fear of cults and new religious minorities. I do not agree with these people killing themselves, but it is their bodies; they had the right, they wanted to do it, they did it, right? More Christians kill themselves than anybody else, but no one is out talking about that, you know? Rael says that as Raelians, we are the ones who do not believe that life after death is an option. We do not believe that we have souls flying around, ending up somewhere in heaven. We believe we are lucky to be recreated. Of all the people in the world, we are the last ones who are going to want to kill ourselves! And Rael says, "Make no mistake, if I ever ask any of you to drink some Kool-Aid with some poison then please be sure that I have lost my mind! Treat me well, but lock me up somewhere!"

It is important to have an open mind. For me, always being open is important simply because it allows me to always be objective and consider *all* possibilities, even though I basically have *no* doubt about any aspect of the Raelian philosophy. But, if his story did turn out to be a fabrication of some sort, intentional or not, I would still be very proud to stand with Rael simply because I support all that the Raelian movement is doing and teaching and I know how much our planet needs it. I also know what the teachings have already given me! Whether or not one believes that Rael was really on a flying craft or actually visited another planet, it is undeniable that his teachings have been extremely accurate and are filled with valuable truths. This is not belief; it is simple fact, quite easily verified.

I must admit that at this point, I really do have a certain amount of faith in Rael's words, but it is not a blind faith, nor is it unconditional. Rael has *earned* my trust through over 30 years of being consistent – he has *never*

wavered, and the world around us becomes more and more as he predicted it would with each passing day. So, I do trust Rael, but if he ever asks me to kill or harm myself or someone else, I will immediately refuse and assume that he has become imbalanced or simply lost his mind! American soldiers, however, will kill simply because they were ordered to do so by their superiors, usually with the phrase, “God be with you,” being thrown in at some point. This is the difference between our philosophy and the faith of most people – I hope the distinction is clear.

Raelians are told to *never* do *anything* that goes against one’s own conscience, no matter who asks or gives the order, because we are the *only* ones who are responsible for ourselves, our lives and our actions. We do not have the luxury of saying, “I did it because he or she said I should.” Whatever we do, we do because we choose to – *as conscious, responsible individuals*.

6.6 Sensual Meditation

Sensual mediation plays a key role in Raelians’ lives. Mr. A reveals how the technique has improved his life, his sensitivity and sexuality. Ms. D explains in detail her daily meditation process and how it is an important tool for maintaining balance in body and mind.

Mr. A

Sensual Meditation has opened many doorways for me. I became more aware of everything, more sensual, enjoying more of everything and knowing why. It has enhanced my sensitivity, my enjoyment, helped me disconnect when I need to under stressful circumstances. It is helping to manage my life better in general and to deal with jealousy more easily. I have more respect for individuals and who they really are. My sexuality has become fuller and fulfilled. Try it!

Ms. D

Meditation is central to my ability to place myself each day in a state of being where I am relaxed, aware and open to becoming a conscious individual. While I may grab small meditations throughout the day, centering my thoughts and breathing, I do not consider this ‘sensual meditation.’ A sensual meditation is deliberate and involves a choice of where I shall do it, what senses I will attempt to nourish, what I will be focussing on and how it will proceed. I try to eliminate any potential distraction and make it a very comfortable and private time for myself.

Often, upon waking, I do a ten to fifteen minute sensual meditation with a recorded CD. This can be one of the recorded sensual meditations by the Raelian Movement, or a favourite CD of nature sounds or music. I begin with breathing to oxygenate my body and then take my mind and body on a brief voyage, during which I try to integrate all the parts of my being. At the end, I gradually return to being aware of my surroundings and then I am ready to begin my day. By doing this I take a self that is already relaxed and go even further into relaxing and, while in that state, to being aware and open. I emerge refreshed and rejuvenated and better able to cope with the challenges a largely unconscious world serves up. Instead of reacting from an already stressed and emotional position, when I encounter a problem I find I am less likely to react quickly with emotion and that precious time gives me the opportunity to step back and view with a little more intellect and less passion to what is before me. I am able to make better choices as a result. When I am able to meditate consistently, my whole life is generally less stressful, leaving me more energy and time for beneficial things.

When I fail to do this on a consistent basis, I find that my body quickly learns to knot up and get out of whack. My muscles are not as smooth upon waking, but rather sore or tight. I may not have slept well having dealt with stress the day before, or in my thoughts. If I wake up and do not meditate, I am beginning my day in a compromised state, both mentally and physically. It will be all I can do to maintain this level throughout the day. As decisions and life occur I may be more prone to react quickly with emotion and reap the consequences of hasty or ill-thought words or actions, thereby raising my stress level even more. The physical effects of prolonged stress alone on the body are well documented. What is not perhaps, as front page, are the effects on a society as a whole; what this drives us as a humanity to do or not to do, for and to each other. Sensual mediation is a primary tool for increasing one's own consciousness, maintaining it and carrying it out into the world. Without the proper tools, it is impossible to plant a beautiful garden or tend it. It is the same here. All the wonderful seeds and the best intentions will not bring flowers if the gardener is not committed to his purpose and task.

6.7 The Seminars

The awakening seminars are gatherings of Raelians. These events take place in various parts of the world and bring Raelians together as a community. They offer an arena for stepping beyond dominant cultural paradigms and into a place that cultivates sensuality, positivity and deeper human connection. Mr. C describes the seminars as exemplifying an ideal for the rest of

society to follow. Ms. D reveals the role of the seminars in helping one develop and practice consciousness. An explanation of how the seminars are structured is provided by Mr. E. He also goes into detail regarding common misconceptions about what goes on at the seminars and what people can expect the first time.

Mr. C

Let me give you an example of one of the sessions at the most recent seminar. In one small group exercise, each of us was asked to teach something (anything) to the group for one minute. Then each member gave feedback on the performance, but we were only allowed to give only positive comments. You could see some of the participants literally grow taller as they received the comments from the group; especially those who were shy or had problems with self confidence. I couldn't help thinking, "if only this were part of society at large."

Ms. D

Absolutely the best way to know what is taught at a seminar is to experience it for your self! We begin each morning gathering together early, around nine, with a meditation, given by one of our Guides. The meditations fill us with sounds and images which evoke the infinite in us, joy and love for our creators and each other. You feel your whole body relax and as you breathe deeply the oxygen you take in feeds each cell in your being, nourishing you. We feed the small worlds, the infinitely small within us with each breath. The meditations are always different and so thoughtfully prepared and beautiful. At the end of your meditation, you "awake" in essence refreshed and full of this feeling of love, ready to take in the teachings from our Prophet, Rael, or one of the Guides responsible. They impart to us information which helps us to re-establish the consciousness which is so very necessary if we are to remain filled with this love and harmony. The world is very *un*-conscious. It is full of actions and reactions each full of emotion, but not much thought. No wonder we are spinning out of control in so many areas.

Mr. E

The seminar itself is like free time. To begin, they have meditation in the morning from 9:00 to 9:20, a couple announcements like, "Hey, so and so, move your car, you're blocking somebody!" Then they have teachings for two

to two and a half hours. Lunch is about three hours long; a good old, long lunch break. Then they have afternoon teachings or workshops for a couple of hours, and then dinner is a good three hours. After dinner, there will be a show or a party or something like that. A lot of the experience is being in the same environment with people from all over the world in a philosophy without mysticism, openness, consciously choosing to be happy and to develop and grow ourselves in an atmosphere of just total love and respect. So, interacting and getting to know each other, or for those who just want to be by themselves and be in a meditative state, the environment allows you to be who you want to be. It allows you to explore that and decide in which ways you would like to push yourself to grow. It is really nurture-some. A lot of people think they are going to get there and it is going to be really rigid; people hear how deep the experience is for some folks and they are like, "Wow." Let me be honest; some will probably get there and be a little disappointed because they are going to expect some overwhelming psychological thing; yet the magic of what it offers is very simple. You are going to get there and you might think, "Well, this is great; I feel at home, I love everyone, and everything feels totally cool," and so, you do not realize how special it is until you leave. You go back home and are back in your environment and all of a sudden you notice the negativity in the people around you: in work, in school, wherever you go. You realize, "Wow! Last week was incredible!" *Then* it hits you!

The first seminar I ever went to in Canada, I went with a buddy of mine. He was working on a project at the time and would be going back and forth all week. I offered to drive him to the bus station while we were there. It was the middle of the week, my first seminar ever, and he had to go for a day or two. Another friend of mine and I drove him to Montreal, which was a couple hours away, and put him on a bus. We decided that while we were there, we would walk around the city and check it out, as we may never be back. After about an hour, we started to notice people's faces; we looked at each other and said "Let's get back to the seminar!" You really sense how unhappy people are, how stressed people feel, and when you are around an environment where that just does not exist, it starts to get normal. What happens to people is that in our environment, everyone is so stressed that it becomes normal. We think that someone getting stressed, raising their voice, or being angry, upset or hurt or sad, is normal, that it is a part of life. Raelians do not believe that. We do not think that is normal. We think that is sick. We think that it is a sign that something is very wrong. We think that anything other than feeling good all the time, feeling happy, having fun all the time, anything outside of that means, "Oh, something is wrong here, gotta fix the harmony!" But you cannot really get that understanding until you have had a tangible experience in an environment that nurtures what we consider to be normal. For me, experiencing a seminar felt like it was the first time in my life I had been around that many people with no negative energy coming at me from anywhere. Your body just hits a level of relaxation that I cannot even explain.

Everything is optional; you can go to clubs and you can sleep late. No one cares what you do. It is totally laid back, totally. There is some structure, but it is your choice; you do what you want. One time, I overslept and thought, "Oh well, I'll miss the morning and show up a little later." I got there and sat down and I heard people saying, "Wow, could you believe what Rael said, he's never said anything like that before!" and I thought to myself, "I'm not missing anymore!" You do it because you really want to and you realize how much fun it is as opposed to feeling any kind of pressure or hassle or those kinds of things.

Some people interpret the Raelian thing as "Hey, let's all go out and have sex with everyone we can find." That is ridiculous. For me, the whole thing is about love. I have been married twenty years and it is a funny thing for me to talk about this because I am a most conservative, monogamous Raelian. That has worked for me; I have been happy in that situation. I have been to seminars and been approached by women who were very attractive and who wanted to spend the night with me. To be honest with you, once I was comfortable with it, it would have been a natural thing for me to do. But, for example, when talking to a woman, what I feel is, I really do care about her as a person. Though we may not have known each other long, I really do love her. But I do not think the most loving thing for me to at that moment would be to be in bed with her. For me, it is more loving for us to sit down and talk; let us explore who we are; let us see what we have to share on this level right now. That is where the consciousness comes in. It is like giving kids the freedom to eat whatever they want; it does not mean you gorge yourself on candy. It means you have freedom and you think with love and intelligence and choose wisely. And always choose with sensitivity to everyone around; not just for yourself. I mean, if I were to talk a young lady at some point, I am thinking about how this affects this person if she has someone in her life, like a special lover. But it is important, at the same time, if I cut it off, what I have learned is, what might I have shared with her because I stuck to this primitive belief system that we were raised with? Maybe I would have given her a good word. Maybe I would have shared with her something about health that might have helped her mother who is dealing with cancer. Something as off the wall as that. It is one very tangible thing that will make a difference on the planet, and the movement is the only group I have seen that really emphasizes that. This is why the seminars are important, because we are living and experiencing a different paradigm. A friend of mine, when he came to his first seminar, he said, "Oh man, I don't know how you got me here; I don't know what I'm doing here." He woke up the first morning and within an hour or two he was hugging me, saying, "Man, thank you, . . . I can't believe this. I never believed this was even possible! To meet this many people and feel how I'm feeling now, and I just got here; I didn't think this was possible."

It is great to know that this kind of connection can exist, and to be open to it. One of the things the Messages says is it is primitive for us to walk

around and have defenses up and be concerned about what it is this person or that person wants. The natural way to greet a human being should be a smile and a hug. Anything else is not natural. We are not there yet as human beings, but it is our job to help bring it there. I would have to say that is probably one of the most important aspects of the movement. The technology: it is coming along anyway. For me, it is the human element that touches the most.

6.8 Cellular Transmission

Cellular transmission is a special ritual for Raelians. It signifies one's acceptance of the "Messages" as the truth, and the recognition of the Elohim as the creators of humanity. According to Mr. A, he went through with it more out of curiosity than consciousness. While Mr. C points out that cellular transmission does not ensure immortality, Ms. D discusses its significance to individual Raelians and the importance of being able to consciously choose his or her own beliefs, comparative to other religious practices. Mr. E details the specifics of the cellular transmission process and explains it as a simple step in the evolution of Raelians' personal understanding and growth.

Mr. A

I must say, coming from a Jewish background, all the baptism stories did not really mean much to me. When the time was considered right for me, which was a few months after I read all the books, I decided to do it a bit more out of curiosity more than full consciousness. To my surprise, the experience made me dizzy and I had never felt this way before. Of course, this is my personal experience. Some people feel nothing, some feel a lot. I wish I could do it again with more awareness of this important moment.

Mr. C

Does cellular code transmission guarantee immortality? Nope. No more than getting baptized is a guarantee into heaven. You still have to live your life for the benefit of humanity, and even then, who knows?

Ms. D

In making the decision to have our transmission, each Raelian, with consciousness, apostasizes their previous religion, if they had one. It is a choice, not a requirement. Mine was performed one year after I joined the Raelian movement and I took that year to continue to explore my commitment to the movement and also my commitment within myself to what living the Messages would mean to my life. Each of us comes to our transmission in a different way. Some wait. Others are so full of the knowledge that they want immediately to do this, that it is right for them. What is most important to know is that Raelians do not believe in the baptizing of children or those too young to choose. The children of Raelian parents are given as much information as possible about all religions and when they are old enough to make an informed and conscious decision, they may do so, to become Raelian or other. Their decision is respected.

Mr. E

I did mine back in 1994, on October 7, to be exact. This is a special day in the heart of every Raelian, as it represents our formal acceptance of the information given in the Messages. We are formally recognizing the Elohim as our Creators, and formally recognizing Rael as the Prophet. The ceremony is simple, and relatively painless except for the intense electric shock and the fainting. Just kidding! *Really, I'm kidding.* An initiated Guide, or sometimes Rael himself, stands in front of the person who is having the transmission done at 3:00 pm local time on one of the four selected days: August 6, October 7, December 13, or the first Sunday of April. The two stand peacefully, and the Guide (or Rael) dips his hands in water and places one hand on the forehead and one on the back of the neck for a few seconds. Then, it is over! The Elohim record the genetic code of the person, thus accepting his or her conscious acceptance of the Raelian philosophy. This ceremony basically clarifies the original meaning and intention of Baptism, and water is used for one simple reason: it is a good conductor, therefore allowing a good “transmission” of the genetic information. We now have people dunking people in rivers, dripping water down on the forehead, and all sorts of odd variations because they have lost the original meaning and purpose of this ceremony! It is important to understand that having one's transmission done does *not* commit that person in any way to the Raelian Movement. The act is very personal, between the person and the Elohim, simple as that. We might never see him or her again, just as Christians often get baptized and then never go to church. Total freedom!

6.9 The Angels

The Order of Angels is a group of women in the Raelian movement that act as Rael's aids and train to welcome the Elohim back to Earth. Palmer (2004) gives an in-depth study of this aspect of the movement, which has a structure of its own. In the following excerpt, Ms. D discusses her role as an angel, the impact it has on her life and the significance of the concept of femininity within the Raelian movement.

Ms. D

Some years ago Rael established the Order of Rael's Angels, for he tells us (and we agree!) that femininity is the future of humanity. There is so much that women can bring to this planet, if we do this with love and consciousness. Being an Angel gives a Raelian woman the opportunity to develop with her Angel sisters her own femininity, her power as a woman, if you will; by doing this, she develops within herself the ability to become an Angel. We are also given the opportunity to be closer to our beloved Prophet and in very small but important ways to assist him and those close to him. Ultimately, when our creators return to us, to the Embassy, it will be Angels who will be close to them, also, assisting them. So while that may be many years away, there is still this world to change and our Prophet to help and younger Angels to train. It is a very busy and happy thing being an Angel.

Each week or so, I create a visual meditation to send with another Angel to our sisters. It is just something I love to do and hopefully it is enjoyed when it is received. Those Angels close to Rael assist him with his daily responsibilities. They are not paid (no Raelians are, even Rael) but function much as a personal assistant might. When not at seminar, we all work to support each other in "actions" we take occasionally (by marching or demonstrating) to make the world aware of our message of femininity. You may recall the peace marches in Washington and Los Angeles in March 2002, where Angels were photographed by the world media disrobing quietly and with religiosity, to read a prayer and then pray for peace. This is a beautiful example of one of these actions.

6.10 Consciousness

Consciousness is an essential concept of Raelianism. The development of

consciousness is the key to the sought after paradigm shift, which relates specifically to humans relating to each other. It also relates to the human/nature relationship and humans' place within the infinite universe.

Mr. A gives a brief description of consciousness within the movement. Ms. D and Mr. E describe the role of consciousness development in changing human attitudes towards each other and the connectedness of all things.

Mr. A

What makes sense to the individual is most important. It is up to each individual to go on their own journey and find out what makes sense to them. No form of convincing, no preaching, no converting, but the use of consciousness is required to be part of the Raelian movement. Consciousness of oneself, of the effect we have on others and what is around us.

Ms. D

In our earlier emails, we spoke of changing humanity by changing ourselves; this is how: to be conscious, always. To use the tools which we are taught at seminar, meditation and information (about our physiology and psychology, based on what science is proving) to be as fully conscious as we can in all that we do. To not just "react," but be deliberate and thoughtful. To love with consciousness too, with compassion and detachment. These are just a few things that we take home with us from seminar, refreshed and full once more of the harmony which makes us Raelian and inspired to take this to the world and to those waiting to hear.

Being conscious is, in part, factoring emotion out of our actions, and being thoughtful in all that we say and do. It is more than that, however. It is a way of being, of living. To awake with peace and love in your heart, and grasp this beautiful serenity and harmonize yourself with it fully: this through meditation upon waking. A meditation places you always in relation to: the infinity of which we are a part, both large and small; to the Elohim (at which time I always send all the love I can generate in my being); to my immediate community of family and friends; to my larger community and this world in which I live; and to myself. Then go about your day with this awareness. Thinking first and not reacting, but acting with consciousness to all that you encounter. The world is very unconscious, in my opinion. It is full of

mysticism and action driven by emotion, fear being the predominant one.

Does this consciousness have anything to do with being rational? Yes, it does. To me, demystifying my world means taking out the concept of an all powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, invisible deity who is everywhere, in everything, at all times and replacing it with science. This gives me the freedom to live my own life, to make decisions based on what is rational and not what is based solely on “belief.” I want to tell you that at times living consciously is quite a challenge for me. I am very loving by nature and this emotion is quite enjoyable. I have a tendency, therefore, to lead with my heart first and my brain second; it is not wise. As enjoyable as it is, sometimes I express my love in a thoughtless way, and even that can be hurtful to others. I will not even discuss how rotten I can be when I am not being loving, so each day, I strive to the best of my ability to live with consciousness. I detach from the emotion which comes at me from others or wells up in me when I react to them, and I do my best to see what is happening with detachment and then I respond with love and compassion if I can. If I cannot, if what I am faced with is just “crap,” then I step around it as much as possible. Sometimes I am not as aware as I should and sometimes I must clean off my shoes. Trying to live this way makes a huge difference in how much joy I experience in my daily life, and the degree to which I have energy to give love to those I hold dear, and the world around me.

Mr. E

For me, consciousness is simply being keenly aware at *all* times of *everything* one thinks, feels, or does, as well as being aware of our relationship with *all* that surrounds us and *all* that composes us. As explained in Sensual Meditation (2002), the word consciousness comes from the Latin word “*consciencia*,” which means “know together.” To explain the first part of my understanding of the word, I might say that I am vegetarian, and you might love to eat meat of all kinds. I would never impose my diet on you, but I would like to know that you have *consciously* chosen to eat as you do, purely for your own reasons. Then, even if our choices are different, they are both made with full consciousness, or full awareness and understanding of *why* we each chose as we did.

In this world of ours, very few people are conscious in this way. Most simply repeat the patterns of their parents, friends, peers, religious leaders, or whoever else impacted them in their environments as they matured. To be able to look at your self objectively, take stock, and then deliberately push yourself to gain different experiences and exposure, seek new information, and then intelligently and intuitively choose a way of being. That is consciousness.

The second part of my concept of consciousness is a bit more elusive. It has to do with understanding and *feeling* the connection we have with the infinitely large and infinitely small. We are all connected – all of humanity, all life, all matter, all energy, everything! There is a beautiful line in Sensual

Meditation (2002) which says that the truly awakened person is even aware of the effect that one simple move of an eyebrow has on the entire universe! Wow! Yet, it makes total sense, since everything really is connected. To be conscious is to be aware of these connections, and to act with this awareness, always striving to increase our sensitivity and become even more aware.

6.11 Science and technology

Ms. D and Mr. E reveal a side of the movement that one rarely finds in stories of Raelians, specifically in regards to science and technology. Their approach to such subjects is rational and logical; science and its application are significant to solving many of the world's problems. Their responses echo of the moral debate between supporters of technology and those who fear it for lack of information.

Ms. D

As for the clones, Dr. Boisselier is a Raelian Bishop and also the head of Clonaid. Other Raelians are also on staff there, but we as an organization do not financially support Clonaid. We give our resounding support philosophically and rejoice in the successful births of the healthy babies it has created for loving parents on our planet. For reasons of security for both the babies and their families, no one outside of Clonaid knows who the surrogate mothers are/were or who may have donated eggs. After Eve was born in December 2002, it became acutely obvious to me that the world was worse off than I ever imagined. For it greeted the news of this beautiful baby girl with a reaction much like the news of a "Frankenstein" baby. At the time I wished I could do something to support the efforts of Clonaid. If anyone ever expressed an interest in my eggs, they would be welcome to them, but no one has and I doubt they will. For there are egg donors the world over and while I do not doubt that a few other Angels felt as motivated as I did. I have no personal knowledge of any who donated, though I would not be surprised at all if several did.

Cloning is just one other (now) available option to parents seeking to have children in the traditional sense. For a Raelian couple, who, with consciousness, deliberately create a new being together, nothing is more beautiful. This little being will be raised in a home with parents who chose to have it from the moment of conception onward. If a Raelian desires the possibility of being recreated on the Planet of the Eternals after their death, then they are not forbidden to have children (cloned or traditional), but it is advised that they limit their number. As with all things Raelian, it is a personal

choice and of course re-creation is not promised to us, it is just a possibility. But then, all things are possible.

The developments in technology and science give me so much hope. Each time we “ooch” forward just a bit, I see a chance for old notions to be cleaned away like so much dust. As each is cleared, I see a bit of light take its place; and with that light, a chance for humankind to begin to understand the world in rational, rather than emotional terms. For me, science *does* replace religion. It gives hope and possibility, which is rooted in something palpable and real.

I am not a scientist, so I could never enter a debate purporting that all scientific discovery is excellent, grand, wonderful, or “the answer.” But I will tell you that I do see each discovery as necessary. Just as a child must learn to walk one step at a time, so must we continue to advance. Yes, we will totter and fall from time to time as a species. But if our sights are set forward and not backward, if we progress with the knowledge that each step *is* possible and that one will follow the other, then we will have a sense of purpose that is grounded and optimistic. We will no longer sit and be afraid to stand and take a new step, simply because we have a fear of the unknown, or of change. I truly believe that science and technology are a candle in the dark – one day we will walk out of the dark and begin to run and skip and play into a sun-filled day. This is our future.

Mr. E

As Raelians, we promote genetically modified foods. I would have been one of the guys standing against that not too long ago. I eat only organic foods, and fruits and vegetables; my wife and I only eat organic stuff. We do not like pesticides. But to understand the difference between pesticides and genetic modification is significant. To understand that it will help the planet to develop in a way that can feed everybody.

6.12 Misunderstanding and Marginalization

Being part of a fringe group may necessarily bring with it experiences of marginalization and misunderstanding. Mr. A offers that he has experienced such things, but sees a bigger picture. According to Mr. B, most Raelians come to the movement as outsiders anyway. Ms. D elaborates on how she has marginalized herself through both her strong involvement in the movement, and in her attitudes towards certain aspects of life.

Mr. A

I have experienced marginalization as a result of my beliefs; even more, discrimination and mockery, but mostly in Europe. Here in Canada, it is more of a tolerant world, but what does not kill you makes you stronger, right? If you are a part of a group designed to wake up the sleeping and greedy world, there are a lot of chances that you may not be necessarily appreciated. Only conscious and interesting people are looking at us with different eyes. Those are the most important ones, anyway. The movement is bringing love and consciousness on every level and the world is being governed by people who do not want us to be too conscious in order to better control us and to reign in fear.

Mr. B

The Raelian movement is an assembly of people considered to be black sheep. All the Raelians that I know were considered this in their families or with their friends.

Ms. D

I enjoy my work for the movement and so in that way my lifestyle has changed and I am not involved in some things as I once was. I still socialize with my friends: meals out, shopping, films, visiting and taking trips. But on a day to day basis, I put what I want to do for the movement first. I think they sense this and for some it has been frustrating. My old friends, some of whom I have had since childhood, as a mixed bunch. Some are very right wing Christian Republicans and some are more moderate Christian Democrats. One is a Unitarian and my spouse is studying Buddhism. For many reasons, when we gather, politics and religion are not discussed, unless we are really in the mood to see the fur fly! I know my beliefs are not shared, not only religious, but socially and politically, too. That is a bit sad to me, but I respect them and they respect me, and so the old ties and friendships hold. At work, I am not obtuse when I ask for time away for seminar or to travel to vacation with Raelian friends. So, there is respect there as well and I am not questioned or marginalized in any way. My family has varying opinions on the subject of my being Raelian. I would say my remaining parent discounts it and persists in calling it my "cult." This is said with humor, but obviously I am not laughing. If I seek to talk about the wonderful teachings I have received, I am usually met with generalized, almost dismissive responses, and so I do not try to have this conversation too often. My spouse is accepting of my being a Raelian, but he does not believe in it himself. He remains respectful and curious though, so I hope he will accompany me to a seminar one day and see for himself what it

is all about.

Lastly, I must confess that I have set myself apart a bit by my own thinking, too. I question why I must use currency that says, "In God We Trust," when I do not, and so many others feel the same. Or why children are made to feel they are being non-compliant if they simply refuse to say the pledge of allegiance. I am governed by a president who is the embodiment of all things that I am against. He has led my country into a war which I find horrific and while doing so, continues to pillage our nation's rights as a marauding force with no resistance given by those other elected officials we have place in Washington. My American Spirit, my love for the USA, is diminishing by the day. In part, it is because of its leadership, and also because I am a Raelian and have awakened and I choose not to be a part or party to it. So I am marginalized most by my own hand; for me it is a vital as oxygen. I cannot think of breathing a clean breath, should I fall in step with the masses with yellow ribbons tied around their trees and slack-jawed viewing of the nightly news, ready as infants to accept the "pabulum" that is served up. I resist it with a passion and find that the best place for my passion is the Raelian movement. For certain, the phrase, "change your self, change humanity," is the one I hold dearest at present.

I am very fortunate in that those I have spoken to who are of a different opinion, even a derogatory one about the movement, have not been too disrespectful towards me and my life, my love and livelihood have never been in jeopardy. It is far easier to be Raelian in the USA than in most places on the globe. Even in Europe and Canada, Raelians are ridiculed in the press freely, at times by name. It is not unheard of to find that Raelians who are treated so in the press are then without a job or encountering difficulties as a result. There are never any apologies made, just more papers sold. As a group, we are safe to make fun of and depersonalize; we quickly become those nuts who are barking crazy and believe in aliens and UFOs, some sex cult, and more papers sold. When there is violence visited upon us it is not met with horror or worry but quite the contrary. This desensitization and campaign of disrespect lay the grounds for acts of violence. If we are marginalized as a group, we become ripe targets for those who feel they have a bone to pick, or who simply want to carry out violence with minimal consequences. We are being marginalized as a *whole*.

6.13 Faith, Spirit, and Religious Comparison

If only this were part of society at large:
Connectedness with the self,
With other humans,
The planet,
The cosmos,
Infinity.
THIS IS SPIRIT!
(It is not necessary to posit supernatural phenomenon to be spiritual)
(Mr. C).

The Raelian movement shares aspects with other religious forms such as Buddhism and Aboriginal spirituality, especially in their world outlook. The following narrative selections touch upon the issues of death, as in the case of Mr. C, and life, as explained by Mr. E. Both give further insight into Raelian philosophy and practice.

Mr. C

Here is a story of the passing of one of the leaders of the movement in Montreal, a former academic turned successful businessman who for years had been organizing the summer seminars. Last spring, he was diagnosed with cancer and at the seminar in July gave one of the most enlightening, funny speeches I had ever heard, about his relationship with his cancer. There were lots of death jokes that week, and he enjoyed them all. At his death recently, his attending physician, a fellow Raelian, told him a joke just as he was on his way out. He died smiling. In his will, he asked to be buried in a clown costume, and Rael, who officiated the service, also wore one out of respect, and to show that death is not a time of sorrow but of joy. For Christians, it is that the person has acceded to heaven; for Raelians, that they might be created on the Planet of the Eternals. The Raelian position is similar to Buddhist detachment: live fully in the moment, but do not get emotional about the past or the future.

In 1990 a close friend died of AIDS, just when my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. When she died, another friend was diagnosed with melanoma that killed him six months later, not long before my mother-in-law died. So it was a year of death, and enlightenment. It certainly reminds one of one's mortality. When my mother came home from hospital after her diagnosis, she would lie in the screened porch and admire the garden as if seeing it for the first time. She was taking in every molecule of life that she could in the time she had. *That* is spiritual.

Mr. E

What is the purpose of life? Life was made to be enjoyed. Period. We really are here to enjoy our lives. Be happy now, and have fun! What a beautiful, simple truth.

If a person chooses to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Mormon, simple atheist, or whatever else, I only hope that he or she enjoys this wonderful gift of simply being alive. There are no guarantees after we die, but we are here, now, alive. We can see the sky, taste an orange, smell a rose, feel the cool breeze on our skin, and hear the music of life all around us. We are also telepathic, and as we develop this sense, we can communicate with others in a most beautiful and profound way.

We live in a world in which people externalize blame for everything. We are taught to feel guilty for experiencing pleasure, and we are taught to pray to a God who was conceptually forced upon us before we had the chance to try to understand. I know so many wonderful people who are Christians, Muslims, or Jews, and I love them dearly. Yet, I watch them suffer because they choose to believe in things they do not understand, yet they tend to be afraid to even glance beyond their current paradigm. Many Christians believe that their “loving God” will condemn their good Muslim or Buddhist friends to eternal hell simply because they believe differently. I have actually asked my Christian friends if they believe that Gandhi will go to hell, and some said, “Yes, because he was not a Christian!” Of course, others had a hard time with the question, despite the clarity of their teachings.

We Raelians believe in intelligence. We believe that everyone should study ALL major religions before choosing one. Some people do not realize that the word “God” never even existed in the original Scriptures – the original words in the Bible and Torah were “Elohim” and “Yahweh.” Ask any educated minister or pastor, and they will confirm this much without hesitation. Still, however, they use the improper word “God” out of habit, which I find amazing. Most people don't even take the time to learn, yet they base their lives on beliefs which have been dictated by their society and traditions.

For example, even people who do not consider themselves religious seem to generally have the same concept of marriage and relationships that our society has imposed through the church. I have told many of my friends that if I could only share Rael's teachings on human relationships, forgetting everything else, the planet would be transformed. How many people do you know who would be happy if only they could find the right romantic relationship? Why is this so elusive for so many people? Is it possible that our paradigm, our expectations could be wrong? Should we perhaps question the notion that jealousy, possession, and fidelity can somehow be equated with love?

The Raelian philosophy is the basis for the organization, so it means everything to me. It is a philosophy of freedom and love, a philosophy of being. It teaches us that we can just be ourselves, and that we really do have the

power to transform this planet into the paradise in can be. Even more, it gives us specific, practical instructions to do just that. Best of all, this philosophy encourages us to enjoy our lives *now*, in the present moment. So, instead of just waiting for some “reward,” we choose to enjoy each moment of our lives right now, whatever our circumstances. If we are one day re-created for eternal life, that will be great, but we understand that this is not a guarantee. In this sense, we Raelians are *much* more grounded than nearly every other religion, since most religions put their emphasis on what comes after we die.

I defy anybody, anytime, to find me a more comprehensive single philosophy on the planet. It does not exist. We cover everything. Human cloning, human sexuality, ancient history, where we are going in the future, all this technology, nanotechnology, all of these things. It is such a broad spectrum of things, nothing else.

6.14 The Significance of Raelianism in Today’s World

Why do these individuals, like so many others, constellate around the Raelian philosophy? As Mr. A explains, the movement’s outreach and goals for humanity are broad. Mr. C relates that fear, a prevailing concept of our time, is something that needs to be addressed. Ms. D talks about the level of violence in our world and how it is the Raelians’ goal to help spread a message of peace and respect throughout the world. Mr. E puts it in the perspective of a larger picture, highlighting simplicity, pleasure, the present, and the inevitability that we all shall return to dust.

The movement also offers a place of psychological refuge for people concerned for the plight of humanity, from a perspective that looks forward to and appreciates a future technological and humanistic utopia.

Mr. A

Generally speaking, right now, our aim is to do everything we can to stop war, raise the level of consciousness, love and respect the differences of individuals, whether it is racial, religious, sexual, etc. The Raelians are always taking action to stop injustices no matter if it is politically correct or not. We

participate in as many events around the globe as possible. It is a revolutionary organization of love.

Mr. C

Fear? It is the greatest disease, making the person incapable of thought as it puts the organism into survival mode, with tunnel vision (literally) and readiness to defend oneself against the threat. The neurophysiology of it is well known. This is why politicians and tyrants always use fear and unhappiness to control their populations. It is how Bosnians and Rwandans who were neighbors one day – babysitting each others’ kids, dating, inviting each other over for dinner – the next day were killing each other. It could happen here. This analysis comes after questioning Rwandans and Bosnians at length as to how such genocide and ethnic cleansing could take place in civilized societies.

While this is well understood, what is unusual about the Raelian philosophy is the antidote: Pleasure and Happiness. In a state of well being, the organism is capable of weighing the consequences of actions and making an informed decision. It also makes one resistant to fear. Happy people are not controllable, which is why despotic regimes keep their populations in a continual state of unhappiness.

Ms. D

Living in a violent world is a 24/7 commitment. If you take violence as simply one thing that has the capacity to obliterate our world, then it is clear to me why being a Raelian and spreading the Raelian message is so important. We are the only ones who can save ourselves. The Elohim will not return to save the day. We are the only ones who can destroy ourselves, as well. The Elohim will not return to “zap” us into oblivion either.

If humankind can detach itself emotionally from the need of a paternal deity, or from a grand scientific theory (e.g The Big Bang Theory), then it has a chance of seeing the wonder of the infinite and the possibility of all manner of things scientifically, not in the least our own creation. For example, one glorious day the world begins to question the need for mystification and deification. Then science begins to bring fact and reason to their thought processes, replacing in many ways those things which were handed over with consciousness to the divine. I hope I am here to see the excitement that this freedom brings, for it would be the unraveling of the political and religious forces of man-made boundaries and chasms that deform our present world. To live free with this level of consciousness, as a being that does not mystify or deify, one is free to choose to be a pacifist and this is a key to living that we advocate. We are told we may never kill or be aggressive. If we or those we love are threatened we may defend only and then only to immobilize, never with a desire to harm or kill. The tool which enables humankind to do this is

consciousness, for faced with aggression it is hardwired into us to react with primal fear and other emotions. Only consciousness may act as the circuit breaker and a “reality-refresh button.”

Mr. E

We have so much to appreciate on this beautiful planet of ours, and we also have the possibility of making it even more beautiful – we can create paradise, right here. If only people would realize the wonderful joy of simply being, there would be no fighting, no hostility or aggression, and no jealousy, greed or anger. We are only dust, nothing more, yet we have the gift of our own consciousness. This life, this consciousness, could be gone in an instant, so we should appreciate and enjoy what we have, right here, right now.

6.15 Walking in Illumination

These final narrative excerpts provide a summary of the role of the Raelian movement and its teachings. Ms. D reiterates the simple Message. Mr. E also stresses the importance of consciousness and perspective. He concludes with a story that really embodies what the Raelian movement ultimately wishes to teach.

Being Happy, A Philosophy for Life: Ms. D

When I read the Messages and when I live our philosophy, the purpose of my life, I think, is to simply be happy. It sounds simplistic, but if you boil all that is said down to a nugget, this is in fact what we are being told. Everything that comes to us in Rael’s teachings, and from the Elohim in his writings, bring us step by step to this goal; it is a goal not only for ourselves in our daily lives, but for humanity as well. As Raelians, we are here to be of service to Rael in his work to simply spread this Message. It is simple thing also; life need not be complicated, though it is perhaps human nature to do so.

A Lesson in Happiness: Mr. E

Raelians are here to save the planet. We have information that no other “religion” or scientific discipline has all in one place, from one source. Yet,

rather than feel “burdened” with the weight of such an awesome responsibility, we understand that the most important thing we can do is to simply have fun and enjoy every moment of our lives, and encourage others to do the same, whether or not they believe as we do. Through our own personal development and experiences of pleasure, our odds of actually saving this place are increased substantially. Do we not all do our best work when we enjoy it? Imagine enjoying everything you do, because you live a philosophy which teaches just that!

We believe that being happy is important for every human being. When people are happy and feel fulfilled, they do not want to hurt anyone. So, we imagine a world full of happy people, and we work, or, to be more accurate, “play” together to create such a world. The first step lies in taking responsibility for our own lives, and for our own happiness. As Raelians, we love Rael because he is the Prophet of our time, and because of who he is as a person. Yet we do *not* blindly follow him, nor would he want us to. He teaches us to think for ourselves, and to take responsibility for our lives. We alone are responsible for our happiness -- this is the greatest gift of the Raelian philosophy, as it empowers every individual to be him/herself.

I know that many people feel that they have good reasons to be unhappy, and maybe some do. I was at the bank not long ago, at an ATM machine. It was dark outside, so I was a little cautious. I heard a man approaching, and he was singing loudly from a distance, “Daylight come an’ me wan’ go home!” As he got closer, he spoke to me, asking if I had any spare change. My back was turned, so I could not see him, but I wanted to sound a little tough, just to be safe. “Give me a minute, man,” I said, “I’ll see what I’ve got when I’m done.”

He responded in a strong, happy voice, “No problem, sir, take your time.” I took a little extra time, thinking he might leave. Where I live, there have been occasional problems in the neighborhood, so I wanted to be safe. The guy kept singing, but he was *not* leaving. When I turned around, I saw this guy for the first time. He looked up, smiling, from his wheelchair -- he had no legs! I gave him some money, and then talked with him for a while. He had lost both legs in Vietnam, but he said that *nothing* could take away his happiness. I will never forget that wonderful man, who understands fully why he is here. He takes whatever comes and makes the best of it, enjoying every person he meets. He does not drink alcohol, and doesn’t smoke. He said that it would be nice to have legs, but he does just fine, and after watching his friends die, he is just glad to be alive, so he fully enjoys each day.

It has been a while since I have seen him, but I can still picture his face, singing, so full of life, with that bright, warm smile. He has less material possessions than most people I know, and no legs, but he *chooses* to be happy - - while so many others do not even realize that they have such a choice.

The Raelian movement's goal is to teach consciousness, to help individuals to live fully in a way that is respectful to others, and to improve one's individual self-awareness and self-respect. Through presenting the stories of these five individuals, this chapter has illustrated the character and significance of the movement.

Chapter Seven

AS GODS AND CHILDREN

In the ordinary creativity of moving through the world, we are both gods and children. (Bateson, 1994: 10).

The Raelian movement is one of conscious intellectualism. Its meaning in the lives of its members seeps into all aspects of modern life. The philosophy is self-transforming and in that, it seeks to transform the world. Despite the argument of this movement as non-mystical through the proponents of scientific rationality, it does have a thread of mysticism. R. S. Underwood explains:

[Beyond] the sham [of specific definitions of mysticism in science] lies the reality of patient, respectable scientific thought of today—and what do we find there? Why, a new sort of mysticism—a legitimate sort. We may describe it roughly as attempted explanation which awes and baffles because the universe itself happens to be awesome and baffling; and which apparently violates all common sense simply because the so-called “common sense” is not infallible (1943: 171).

Take Underwood’s observation and apply it to a group of people who follow the teachings of unknown extraterrestrials. This is the mysticism this paper argues. In terms of my interpretation of the Raelians, this alternative type of mysticism is not derogatory, nor is it limiting. In the previous chapter, the term “mystical” is used several times by participants. They repeatedly emphasize that the movement is non-mystical. By no means is it my intention to alienate Raelian readers at this point by interpreting the movement as having “mystical” elements. I hope that my intentions will be made clearer as the discussion develops.

7.1 Troeltsch Takes a Ride in a UFO

Mysticism alone does not completely explain Raelianism because it encompasses

specifically the relationship between the divine and the soul. Raelians believe in neither God nor soul, so it could be argued that mysticism is not a relevant theoretical concept in this case. However, Troeltsch suggests that “mysticism is a radical individualism” (1950: 743). The Raelian movement’s website summarizes the Raelian “revolution” as “a fearlessly individualistic philosophy of non-conformism” (rael.org). From this parallel, a discussion of technical mysticism follows. First, however, I will elaborate on how and where Raelianism fits within Troeltsch’s theory.

When Troeltsch says, “mysticism is radical individualism,” he means that “mysticism lays no stress at all upon the relation between individuals, but only upon the relations between the soul and God” (1950: 743). In Raelian philosophy, consciousness plays a direct role in recognizing the connections between the individual and the Infinite. Troeltsch is talking about metaphysics. Raelians are talking about science and psychology. In distinguishing between sects and cults, Troeltsch talks about the significance of “spiritual religion,” and how Christian cults are “loose,” ahistorical and “formless . . . without any sense of inward necessity” (1950: 744).

The sect characteristics—personal confession of faith in Christ, the ever-renewed creation of fresh forms of fellowship through the mutual influence of individuals upon each other—are absent (Troeltsch, 1950: 744).

I would argue that although Raelians do not require a personal confession of faith in Christ, at the time of their individual “cellular transmission,” they must proclaim their acceptance of “the Messages” and the existence of the Elohim. The seminars provide an avenue for fellowship and mutual influence. Troeltsch goes on to say:

Instead, there is simply a parallelism of spontaneous religious personalities, whose only bond of union is their common Divine origin, their common spirit of love, and their union in God . . . In itself, this kind of spirituality feels no need for sacraments or dogmas, for a ministry or for organization (1950: 744).

Certainly, the movement could be described (and celebrated!) by the above quote's first sentence, only the word "Divine" could be eliminated and "God" could be replaced by "Infinity." The Raelian Movement, being weird and wonderful, transcends Troeltsch's limited definition. Campbell observes that "the key to technical mysticism is its theory of the Divine Seed or Divine Spark" (1978:232). The term "divine" is somewhat problematic, but for the sake of the following sections, in order to better apply Troeltsch's theory to the movement, I hope that the reader will interpret "divine" in a much looser way, as referring to something of higher order than humanity (be it God or extraterrestrials).

7.2 Sensual Meditation and Cultivating the Mystical

Troeltsch distinguishes "technical mysticism" as a "narrower" more "concentrated" version of mysticism, relating to the *philosophy* of religion, not the institution of religion (1950: 734). He describes it as a type of mysticism existing beyond time and history, "the real universal heart of religion" (Troeltsch, 1950: 734). How does the Raelian movement, a new religious movement that uses science-fiction ideas, proclaiming to be atheist and using science as its religion, embody "the real universal heart of religion" (Troeltsch, 1950: 734)? It does so in its cultivation of "consciousness" through sensual meditation.

Aside from "The Messages," the most important text that Raelians use is Sensual Meditation (Rael, 2002). It is essentially a self-help manual, an aid for "deprogramming" the human mind and body to bring out the best in humanity (Rael, 2002: 57). As a significant text for Raelians, and as a major aspect of the Raelian philosophy, it describes the human as an

inefficient machine that needs to be re-programmed efficiently, resulting in heightened consciousness. Consciousness, in this case, refers to a greater sense of awareness of the self, which translates into a greater awareness of others and the world. The practice of sensual meditation to develop one's consciousness demonstrates precisely what Troeltsch is talking about. Campbell reiterates that "technical mysticism includes a technical process for the realization of the mystical experience" (1978: 232). Honing one's level of personal awareness, recognition of one's infinite nature and connection to all other living things through sensual meditation, contains an element of protest against traditional religious practices, or "[ambivalence] to established religion" (Campbell: 1978:232). For example, the movement encourages breaking out of the predominant paradigm of not questioning historical methods of authority (in knowledge and religion and normative cultural behaviours). Sensual mediation and the development of consciousness speak directly to what Troeltsch describes as "draw[ing] back into the living process" (1950: 730). Consciousness relates to how Raelians relate to the world, how they treat others and the degree to which they enjoy their lives.

Though most Raelians would probably disagree with my interpreting the movement as having mystical features, I reiterate Troeltsch's point that mysticism is "something secondary, something which has been deliberately thought out" (1950: 730). In reaction and "hostility" towards popular major world religions, the Raelian movement has borrowed practices, concepts and structural elements from other religious traditions to create this new, seemingly "artificial" organization, which highlights certain "paradoxes" within the movement itself (Troeltsch, 1950: 730-31). That being said, a modernized religious perspective might benefit from the use of traditional and recognisable elements as a feasible alternative to what potential members have been used to. For example, the Raelian movement uses the structural hierarchy of priests and

bishops in the organization; sensual meditation, which mimics forms of Buddhist practices; and cellular transmission, which parallels baptism.

Whether Rael derives the structure of the organization from the Elohim is beside the point. The paradox remains that the practices and structure of the movement as similar to Catholicism correspond to the features that Rael condemns. In this sense, the organization itself may not be the most important aspect of why people are attracted to it. From my interviews with Raelians, it is the message of the movement and the sense of humanity that emerges that is most significant. According to the interviews, technology will continue to advance naturally, but it is human attitudes and human relationships that require the most attention. Consciousness offers us a place to start. Sensual mediation is the knowledge that leads to self illumination, the technique of technical mysticism.

7.2.1 Raelianism and the Concept of divinity

Troeltsch uses the concepts of “divine seed” and “divine spark” to talk about technical mysticism (1950: 738). However, the idea of divinity does not quite correspond with the Raelians’ belief in our extraterrestrial origin. We could argue about the existence of God and extraterrestrials all we want, but it essentially comes down to the same thing. The Elohim equal the Raelian sense of the divine in that they are other-worldly (e.g., they live on another planet), they originated life on Earth (highly intelligent and technologically creative) and watch over humanity (omnipresent and omnipotent as their scientific enlightenment allows them to be).

The following observation by Troeltsch is particularly relevant. He discusses the immanence of the Divine within the self.

[The doctrine of mystical union with God] needs to be taken into account as a means of establishing the mystical impulse towards an interior life, and of breathing fresh life and energy into objective religion upon a general theoretical scientific foundation. This basis is held to be that universal cosmic process, which is also the ultimate underlying truth in the Christian experience of salvation, of the descent of the Absolute into the finite world of sense, in which however, God remains the Ground of the Soul, the Seed and the Spark even of the Creature, which in selfishness and sin asserts its right to an isolated independent existence. This is the great doctrine of the Divine Seed, of the Divine Spark which lies hidden in every mind and soul, stifled by sin and by the finite, yet capable of being quickened into vitality by the touch of the Divine Spirit working on and in our souls (1950: 737-738).

This citation has significant relevance to understanding the Raelian movement; however, it needs as much re-interpretation as does the account of the Bible by Raelian standards. What follows is my re-interpretation, based on what I have learned about the movement through its members.

The doctrine of the sensual and infinite connection to the universe needs to be taken into account as a means of establishing the individual and necessary impulse towards an interior life, and breathing fresh life and energy into objective religion upon a general scientific foundation. This basis is held to be that universal cosmic process, which is also the ultimate underlying truth in the human experience of worldly preservation, of the descent of the absolute into the infinite world of sense, in which however, the Science of the Elohim remains the source of human existence, providing the Seed and the Spark of the Human Creature, which in primitive intellect and unconsciousness asserts its right to existing isolated from, but entirely dependent upon, the Creator. This is the great doctrine of the Divine Seed and Divine Spark which lies hidden in every mind and body, stifled by unconsciousness and by the finite, yet capable of being quickened into vitality by the touch of the Divine Spirit working on and in our selves.

This re-interpretation provides several alterations to the original text. To understand the

concepts of “divine seed” and “divine spark” which I believe are relevant to Raelian analysis, this re-interpretation is necessary. I left those terms, as well as “divine spirit,” because I want to preserve those concepts as developed by Troeltsch to maintain some congruence with him, even in this alternative analysis. I will go through my reinterpretation step-by-step.

The teachings (or doctrine) of “The Final Message” stress the importance of sensual meditation as the means to raising human consciousness to better human relationships and to recognize the connections inherent in all levels of life on Earth (Rael, 1998). The “individual and necessary impulse towards an interior life” refers to the importance of each individual meditating on the senses to heighten one’s consciousness. Meditation becomes not only a means of achieving consciousness, but an occasion for consciousness to break through. This is to improve on one’s abilities to handle stress, relate to others, and to act accordingly. The purpose of sensual meditation is also to deepen one’s level of pleasure, of sensuality, to make one happy. If one is happy psychologically (internally), this reflects outwards to the world and in relationships with others. This sense of “consciousness” challenges historical forms of religion. Those centered on a deity place human determinism upon the will and whims of an omnipotent and omnipresent spiritual being. Science offers the key to de-mystification of the human condition. All life on Earth is attributed to the Elohim’s technological knowledge. Therefore, the key to humanity preserving itself lies within our grasp of the Elohim’s technology. In recognizing the infinite connections between all things in the universe (and the relationship of our universe to other unknown universes) through sensual meditation, Raelians can maximize desired human characteristics. Working on these desired human characteristics refers to the “elohimization” of humanity (Rael, 1998). As an elohimized society, the development of consciousness to enhance human well-being (of the self and in the interactions with others and the environment) are of key

importance. In raising human consciousness, humans will develop technologies that enhance human well-being and eradicate those that do not (Rael, 1998). “Elohimization” also means a decrease in aggressive behavior that leads to war and destruction, and the elimination of economic exploitation of the many by the few (Rael, 1998). The family, a form of enslavement, will be abolished; and patriotism as well, as it only enforces competition between peoples that is a waste of human energy (Rael, 1998).

7.2.2 “Divine seed”

The point of my analyzing Raelianism within Troeltsch’s theory is not to try and push Raelians into some kind of religious or sociological box. I simply want to highlight the parallels between Troeltsch’s ideas of technical mysticism (which are steeped in Christianity) and the major tenets of Raelian philosophy. Through determining elements of “technical” mysticism within the movement, it is possible to relate the Raelian philosophy to the universal religious imperative towards an interior life, or the significance of meditation and prayer. In my opinion, there are two distinct attributes of the movement. In one aspect, there is Rael and his seemingly bizarre adaptation of science fiction to explain the connection between religion and science (which he does quite convincingly), and his establishment of a highly organized and hierarchical organizational structure. Secondly, there are the ideals for humanity that seem to make the greatest impression on the members. Regardless of whether Rael is making it all up, the philosophy of sensual meditation and consciousness and its direct influence on humanity is highly valuable. This is not to say that there is disdain for Rael, for that is certainly not the case, as the narratives demonstrate. Even if his stories of extraterrestrials and other planetary worlds are not true, the impact of his ideas makes him worthy of a following. The members I talked to

all spoke reverently of Rael, in awe and utmost respect and admiration. This significance of the philosophical tenets of the movement, specifically its teachings of sensual meditation, inspires a link to Troeltsch's ideas of the "interior life."¹ The "divine seed" is one aspect of this.

The "Divine seed" is what Troeltsch refers to as "the source of all religious longing for and awareness of God" (1950: 738). When I read this statement for the first time, it seemed to resonate with the participants' accounts of the importance of sensual meditation and the relationship to the Elohim. Troeltsch continues:

Simply quickened by the historic revelation, this "seed" is developed into complete power of overcoming the world Here all the emphasis falls upon the present, immediate, interior religious movement of feeling and of thought, in contrast to all external authority, all literalism in faith, to all theories which would make salvation dependent upon historical facts and upon the individual's knowledge and acceptance of these facts. . . . All that is ecclesiastical, historic, dogmatic, objective, and authoritative is changed into a mere means of stimulation, into that which arouses the personal experience which alone is valuable, and on which alone the hope of salvation is founded (1950: 739).

Raelianism is very much grounded in the physical world and a purely rational interpretation based upon what is tangible. The focus of salvation is the here and now (and in the hope of being cloned in the future), only humans (those intelligent and "enlightened" by "the Messages") can make the proper decisions to ensure humanity's survival and longevity. If the divine seed is the source, then the "Divine Spark" is religious motivation (Troeltsch, 1950: 738). When comparing the above quote to Raelianism, a certain conflict emerges. What Troeltsch asserts is that this "interior life" is of the utmost importance, existing mainly in feeling and thought, as transcending specific forms of the human world. What Raelianism asserts is that this "interior life" is not separate but integral to everyday life. The significance of reprogramming the self through sensual meditation (in other words, pursuing the interior life) is that it helps release

and reveal one's consciousness. Being conscious refers to being constantly aware of the self in relation to the world (and vice versa). Consciousness transcends politics, religion, patriotism, etc. The effects of the "Divine Spark," or motivation, are embodied in the transformative nature of sensual meditation.

Sensual meditation asserts the importance of individual reprogramming, and this has group effects. The experience of cultivating the sensual, an awareness of the body and the self as a whole and relative to others, is exceptionally meaningful within the movement. This common denominator is what Troeltsch refers to as the "Divine Ground," which is "the source of all personal religion and the unity of aim which binds souls together as one" (1950: 744). Awareness of the body and the mind, and recognizing that the human body can be reduced to the molecular level, invite the realization of Infinity. The universe, which contains an infinite number of universes, is part of a chain of a larger Infinity itself. If an entire world can exist in a single cell of the human body, then perhaps our own world is but a single cell within a complete organism existing far beyond this world. Each individual is a grand universe in itself. This notion of Infinity is the connection between science and science fiction. The Raelian "Divine Ground" parallels the nature of the Infinite as the source of and continuation of human consciousness. This is the esoteric face of the movement.

The Raelian movement combats traditional authority in many ways. Putting aside sexual taboos is part of the equation. The role of self-eroticism within sensual meditation is prevalent, and it is spun innocently as a part of self-exploration, but is highly meaningful in itself. Orgasm and religious experience become inextricably linked. Troeltsch states:

Above all, eroticism here plays a leading part, since either the sexual stimulation is also used to stimulate religious enthusiasm or the latter strengthens and expresses itself in sexual stimulation . . . On the other hand,

this immediacy of feeling likes to escape from the finite world of sense through a spirituality which either threatens it with an indifference and ignores it, or removes it to a distance by means of ascetic mortifications (1950: 731-2).

Raelian philosophy takes this eroticism literally. “Enlightenment” comes through physical and psychological awareness. “Spirituality,” in Raelian terms, exists in the joy and pleasure of human experience, within the realization that we are only a small part of the Infinite. This gives Raelians permission to bask in pleasure and cultivate happiness and joy, because these things are transferable to human relationships and to the overall human experience. According to Raelians, our senses connect us to the Infinite and to the spiritual. Asceticism is wrong because it denies the Infinite.

7.3 Scientific Mysticism and Biotechnology

Cole-Turner states:

In assessing the theological significance of biotechnology . . . the most immediate concern is not the distant object of our evolutionary fantasies, but the present objectification of ourselves (2001: 37).

To understand human cloning in Raelian philosophy is to understand that the objectification of human body is not relevant. Because humans can be reduced to molecules, in essence, cosmic dust, objectification of the self is hardly the point. The point is that it does not matter. What matters is that humans have the capacity and the responsibility to develop technology in ways that benefit humanity. On the other hand, cloning for the purposes of immortality speak to cloning’s theological dimensions. However, Cole-Turner’s quote only reiterates the point that religion and technology are inextricably connected. Religion’s versions of the afterlife speak of this same objectification of our selves; that some “thing” that defines us

must exist eternally.

The Raelian movement is not simply a reaction to mainstream religion. It could be interpreted as a proactive reaction to the state of the contemporary world that uses rationality as a platform. Their philosophy embodies a way of living that hopes to rejuvenate and challenge the cultural world as we know it, across geographical divides and sociologically and anthropologically defined boundaries. In cultivating the senses, one necessarily connects mind and body. This connection is transferable to the conceptualization of the Infinite, and the self's relationship to it. The key to social change is personal transformation through self-awareness. Technology and the divine element of the individual are reconciled to the point where the application of technology, as an extension of us, becomes necessary as an extension of human divinity.

Endnote

- 1 I would translate the Raelian meaning of this term as “existing in the mind, with a spiritual dimension.”

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

What are the lasting impressions of this study of the Raelian movement? A seemingly strange idea can translate into a comprehensive and transformative perspective on modern life. Specifically, the cultivation of human consciousness in action and purpose is a necessary task for the betterment of our world. Disregarding the debate over human origin, be it intelligent design or otherwise, what is most important is how human beings can learn to appreciate one another, our Earth, and the capabilities of technology to improve our lives as an extension of humans' divine nature.

8.1 Thesis Summary

The Raelian movement embodies a particular aspect of mainstream culture, specifically an aspect that reconciles contemporary spiritual fervor and human technological motivation. The relevance of this study was in exploring individual Raelian stories and discovering the ways in which these stories paint a picture of mainstream culture. In review of relevant literature on a variety of subjects, this thesis has demonstrated that a socially marginal religious perspective, based on a technological interpretation of human origin, has contemporary significance as humans grow in their knowledge of science. Using science to replace the “old” ideals of religion, this translates into a changing dynamic between our applications of science and our understanding of our selves. The idea of a technological utopia is one that embodies humans' desire to create a world where they feel safe and secure – one that mollifies the fears of living in an age where we have the capacity to completely destroy ourselves. Using the epistemology of

narrative inquiry and discussing the complexities involved in creating and interpreting narratives, a basis for the methodology of the “virtual interview” was elaborated upon. Open ended, semi-structured email interviews allowed both participants and researcher to be more self-reflective throughout the interview process. Some comparisons between telephone and email conversations were drawn, and certain ethical issues were discussed. An overview of a key Raelian book, Sensual Mediation (Rael, 2002), provided a template for organizing the narrative based on the stages of awakening. The narratives themselves gave an inside look at the importance of the book and the key concept of “consciousness.” Five narratives were presented. These narratives elaborated on central issues and concepts within the movement itself.

The concept of “consciousness” was integral to the interpretation of the movement within the theoretical framework of Ernst Troeltsch’s technical mysticism. The Raelian movement can be conceptualized within illumination and instrumental ideal cult types, maintaining a component of the service-oriented type, as well. The potential for social transformation through self-awareness and connection to the Infinite, founded on scientific principles, was built upon. Utilizing Troeltsch’s concept of “technical mysticism,” this thesis argued that the Raelian Movement is “technical” in that it is based upon divinity within the self and the motivation to cultivate consciousness as a way to transform human relationships.

8.2 Contributions

The Raelian movement encapsulates a concrete reflection of mainstream culture. Everything beyond the fringe is explicated by the fringe itself, giving a not-so strange look at the current state of the world. As we move forward in the twenty-first century, we encounter the possibility of radically altering our ethical perspectives, as they relate to technology. The Raelian

movement embodies the concept of secular religion in that it seeks to transform the dominant culture through cultivating consciousness. Emphasizing the divine in the individual and the sacred in the everyday, Raelians wish to spread happiness, pleasure, personal empowerment and freedom of personal expression. This sloughing aside of old paradigms, norms and taboos is necessary to improve human relationships and overall human existence. In addition, they assert that there is no need to fear technology, because it is a mere extension of humanity's desire to improve our lives. This mutual embrace of technology and religious perspective has the potential to transform the human experience, beginning with the individual. The Raelian movement constitutes strong friendship ties, individual to individual, the most enduring of connections. The movement expresses great optimism towards future developments in science and technology, as well as human relationships. For the Raelians, "ethics" refer only to how to treat fellow human beings, not how and when we should apply technology to our lives. The movement highlights the concept of simplicity as one of the keys to self-transformation. Like children, we must laugh and love, experience pleasure, and view the world in wonder and respect.

In taking a narrative inquiry approach, this research provides a perspective of the world from the inside of the Raelian movement. The research is not only a picture of a fringe group, but a look at the greater socio-cultural climate as a whole. Using the technique of the "virtual interview," this study has tapped into a useful and relevant tool for sociological inquiry, especially in its focus on a pro-technology social movement. It also highlights new and interesting facets of qualitative study. Email correspondence, while similar to telephone interviews, remains strikingly different in the level of response – response that is highly introspective and self-reflective. The written text differs significantly from oral reporting, as witnessed through the use of both telephone conversations and email correspondence. The

troubles encountered in this research using recording technology are a testament to this.

8.3 Considerations for Further Study

There are a number of ways I would consider for further study of this movement. In conducting religious comparisons, a more ample picture of this movement in world religious culture could be extrapolated. An analysis of movement literature, including “raelscience” e-magazine and website, public events and affairs could also be useful. If I could spend more time on this research, I would attend seminars to experience the movement myself, conducting in-depth participant observation. Further exploration into the power structures within the Raelian organization would give an additional picture of the movement. The interviews alluded to some kind of power relationships. A dissection of Rael’s leadership role might round out this research, though it would be difficult to do.

8.3.1 Methodological considerations

Email correspondence, as a novel form of social research, produces some questions in terms of the accuracy and reliability of the resulting responses. The inability to experience the virtual interview in “real time,” in direct contact, visual or audible, is problematic because responses can only be assumed genuine. I do not, however, believe that the interviews conducted for this research were in any way dishonestly constructed by participants, alone or collaborated. I can only treat these interview responses as genuine, based on email interaction between myself and the participant, and in addition to a supplementary phone call, in one case. The single telephone interview not included in this presentation due to transcription difficulties did resemble in many ways the responses that were presented here; therefore, I do use this experience as a

gauge when judging the genuineness of the other interviews.

In further use of this method, I would suggest triangulation of methods: email, telephone, and focus groups. Online chat groups might also be used. Using the internet to communicate with people has become commonplace in our culture. It is becoming as natural as any other form of communication: Face to face, through the telephone, and through group discussion. Anyone willing to be dishonest through email would likely be the same on the telephone or in a personal interview. This is one aspect of social research that we cannot control in any case.

8.4 Final Thoughts

The Raelian movement offers a profound and interesting interpretation of life in the world, of the role of science in understanding humanity, and of the cultural assumptions of technology stemming from the Enlightenment. In addition to the importance of furthering technology, an equal task is the necessary change that humans must make in their attitudes towards one another for the survival of our species. Humans are fully capable and absolutely responsible for doing this. The Raelian revolution offers up a solution to religious, social, political and personal malaise in the world. Though their philosophy is based upon the supposed teachings of extraterrestrials, what is most significant is how they seek to transform the world and the actions they take to try to do this. Mainstream society may warn of the dangers of supporting ethically questionable issues such as human cloning, but, as Raelians say, the technology will advance in its own time. It is self-consciousness and human relationships that need the most attention right now. The Raelian movement strives to help individuals achieve a kind of personal transformation that seeps into the grooves of every day existence. This self-transformation is the means to social change. Live consciously, so that others may be inspired to do so: A noble ambition, to be sure.

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