

THE ONE IN THE MANY: Expressions Of Rastafari Spirituality

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ABSTRACT

This social psychological research takes interest in discovering what spirituality and the concept of “oneness” look like as expressed by members of the faith of Rastafari. Rastafari is a diverse social, cultural, political, cultural, and a spiritual movement that has made the concept of oneness/one love known to the world through the legendary figure of Bob Marley. This study takes a social scientific look on spirituality as lived reality and foundation for everyday life by members of Rastafari.

The data in this study consist of semi-structured interviews, non-formal conversations, and speech produced and yielded from the internet by members of the faith as well as field notes and text. 7 Rastafari took part in interviews, most of them Jamaican-born while 2 of them African Rastafari residing in Finland. The study is conducted and handled with an ethnographic method. The most relevant topics seen to the subject of the research are compartmentalized into themes. The themes are analyzed to form a picture of the experiences the members hold on spirituality and oneness. This phase of the process is carried out with content analysis.

The study makes use of theories on spirituality and oneness. The most prominent point of reference is Kenneth Gergen's theorization on the relational nature of the self and reality. Theorizations on spirituality in research as well as outside of academia are used as important sources to contextualize and reference to in addition to the study material focused on the phenomenon of Rastafari.

Spirituality and oneness are seen by the informants simultaneously other-worldly and grounded in the everyday experience and activities. The research shows that the Afro-centric phenomenon of Rastafari draws also from eastern spiritual tradition in its expression. The movement has grown from local Jamaican phenomenon to a worldwide culture and faith. The forms it takes are thus many and different. With this, the message of the movement has gone deeper from its original “only African” freedom cause to a spiritual path of realizing the connectivity of all irrespective of one's life story or background. While Rastafari appears as a highly communal phenomenon, it is also experienced as a deeply personal path and a process of endless transformation.

Key Concepts: Rastafari, Spirituality, Oneness, Gergen, Relational, Eastern Thought, Ethnography

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1. Introduction

This research explores contemporary Rastafari spirituality and the concept of oneness. I seek to describe and analyze these themes through the ethnographic research of a spiritual practice that claims roots of ancient tradition while seeking to detach from typical notions of religion. The interest in going forward into a journey of research with Rastafari came from the personal dedication to a life-long learning through what is most often described as spirituality, as well as the deep fascination of the learning processes taking place in the lives of the members of the movement. The study has been used as a reflection surface to my own unfolding while finding the descriptions of Rastafari spirituality plentiful but superficial in social sciences.

The Jamaican-born socio-political movement of Rastafari was inspired by the anti-colonial interests while protesting the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Rastafari is about acknowledging one's African roots, leading a certain type of way of life and of seeing Emperor Haile Selassie I as the father-figure of the movement. Rastafari is divided into houses/mansions, but not all rastas identify or belong to any specific house, or may identify with all of them simultaneously. The houses differ to some extent in their expressions of faith (how strictly they follow "the divine order"/certain doctrines). The informants of this study belong to several different nationalities and cultural backgrounds each with a unique way of attachment and relating to these houses.

The focus of this study is spirituality and the concept of oneness; finding out what they mean, how they are lived and experienced by the Rastafari informants. The study is interested in locating the spiritual core of Rastafari through an in-depth inquiry. As a Rastafari Studies professor, Jalani Niaah (2013, field notes), suggested, there are many Rastas in the "spiritual periphery" of the movement, but not so many in the core. This research aims at mapping out Rastafari as a spiritual tradition, and finding out how it places itself in the spiritual marketplace of this postmodern day. With the help of the data I ask "*What meanings are given to spirituality and oneness?*" and "*What does spirituality entail in one's everyday life?*"

Additionally, there is another, macro-level research interest that asks "*Can spirituality be de-mystified?*" For as we will come to see, there is a veil of mysticism over this difficult to grasp and, in my opinion, unpopular subject. I will be using the help of contextualizing Rastafari the way I see most relevant to this study, and by using theories of spirituality on the one hand, and social

scientific viewpoint on the other. Though this is not a comparative study, I am interested in seeing the connections between these different approaches to what appears as one subject. This research thesis will hopefully serve as an opening to seeing spiritual action and experience from a point of view that is grounded in the everyday experience rather than other-worldly and most often inescapably foreign to the science community.

I will be using some key concept as entry points to the subject of spirituality as a lived practice in Rastafari. It is also of importance to be informed of the Rasta way of life as well as the speech and bodily gestures that complement the expressing of one's spirituality. These shall be presented when familiarizing with the subject. The field work conducted in the years 2012-2014 has given tools and viewpoints necessary to the formation of the positioning of this study.

Throughout the thesis I will be using "Rastafari" or the shorter "Rasta" term to signify both the phenomenon/movement as well as members of it. I won't be conjugating the word according to its reference point (except for the plural) either. I am aware that elsewhere the term is often conjugated into "Rastafarianism" and "Rastafarian" to name the most popular ones. However, I feel most comfortable, and find it most respectable for the topic and informants (some of whom find e.g. "isms" offensive/incorrect when attached to their faith), to use the original word. Explanations to other Rasta words will be opened up where it's necessary in the course of this paper. I will additionally be referring to Rastafari as a movement, a phenomenon or faith. I use these terms interchangeably, finding it suitable for the purpose of this study. This research is not focused on Rasta as a social movement per se, but on the spiritual phenomenon and movement it represents.

Though this paper may at first glance seem like a study for the department of theology, it has a deeply social scientific, and more specifically social psychological viewpoint and purpose. This research paper is not about religion. At its essence it is about a phenomenon called spirituality, and how this phenomenon that is based in an experience unravels in individuals who represent a certain community. I will be using the concepts "spiritual", "spiritual tradition" and "faith" to refer to Rastafari and other similar lifestyles, instead of speaking about "religious" or "religion" though many of the members of the movement, and most certainly scientists and "common folk", use this word. However, I find that "spiritual tradition" is the closest pair of words to describe the phenomenon. In my opinion "religion" does not accurately depict the nature of the lifestyle adopted by most of the informants in this research. Additionally, Rastafari is seen as an anti-religion by some as it opposes set, western-based institutions. The study also serves as an outlook to science

from science by way of suggesting an unfamiliar starting point to the way reality generally is perceived.

To be very honest, even the word “spirituality” feels less than perfect to describe what this study is really depicting, since it carries a burden of what it represents that often misses the mark. As an acquaintance once noted of an opinion I expressed: “*But that is not how spiritual people should think*”. So I ask of the reader to leave all preconceived ideas of spirituality at the door and allow for what reveals page by page to form the meanings and the window to what spirituality feels like to the people involved in the study.

While focused on social psychology, the research is carried out also with a strong anthropological flavor. This flavor comes from the way in which the materials used have been collected and organized. Ethnomethodology plays a central role in the process of painting the picture of Rastafari spirituality without which I find it simply wouldn't have been possible to capture as comprehensive of an image on the subject.

The journey begins with an introduction to Rastafari with a brief overview on the movement's history. This will guide the reader to discover how the social and political climate of the time of its origin has molded the movement with its crisscross of agendas present in the members' experiences. The characteristics of Rastafari as a phenomenon are presented as they relate to the research topic. I will then present some previous research done on Rastafari to contextualize and locate it initially to the field of social scientific research.

2. The Phenomenon: Rastafari

The name Rastafari comes from the uniting of the words Ras (head) and Tafari (feared, respected) which is a title given to Ethiopia's emperor Haile Selassie I, born Lij Tafari Makonnen (Copley 1998). The baptism name of Haile Selassie also bears significance, and though it is a common name in Ethiopia, Chevannes (1995, 9-11) notes that the meaning of the name in the language of Amharic is “the Power of Trinity”. Selassie also had the titles of “the Conquering Lion of Judah”, which was a metaphor used by the prophet Isaiah to refer to the Messiah, as well as “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords” by the apocalyptic visionary in the Book of Revelations.

The origin of the Rastafari movement is often traced back to 1930s, and more specifically to the date of 2.11.1930, when the focal figure, Haile Selassie I was crowned the emperor of Ethiopia. What is sometimes overlooked, however, is that Rastafari has its roots deeper and earlier in the

Jamaican experience of oppression and anti-slavery resistance. Chevannes (ibid.) argues that religion has been closely bound with resistance in the Caribbean region. Michael Mullin (1994) argues that when African slaves arrived to the “New World”, some of them immediately started to look for ways to get back home to Africa. He also notes that resistance was a way for the Africans to define the self. Indeed, though the Rastafari phenomenon can be seen as a multi-dimensional expression, the thing that all Rastas have in common is Africa.

Chevannes (1995, 1-2) argues that in Jamaica religion was the main driving force for the peasants after emancipation in 1838. He classifies all the religions found in Jamaica into three: European based, North American based and African based religions. Under these categories, there are seventeen named denominations. One can thus argue that Jamaica has a very rich religious foundation, which offers the background to looking at Rastafari originally as an African-Caribbean spiritual tradition. This foundation may further help understand the reasons for the different connotations Rastafari takes globally in its manifestations.

As noted previously, it can be argued that the movement came about as early as the 1920s at a time of slavery, in response to European colonialism in Jamaica. After emancipation the movement’s resistance broadened towards the system of social, cultural, and economic oppression on which the Jamaican society was built. The movement’s basis is in the belief that members of Rastafari and all Africans in the diaspora are exiles in “Babylon” (Western, white and corrupt culture in general), destined to be delivered out of captivity by a return to “Zion”. Zion refers to the Rastafari the motherland Africa, the land of the ancestors, and more precisely Ethiopia, “the seat of Jah¹”. This belief led to the central theme of repatriation for Rastafari. (Chevannes 1994, 1). Repatriation symbolizes the return, either physical or spiritual, to home Africa.

Charles Price (2003, 31-32) argues that Ethiopianism has offered a racial, religious and moral framework for comprehending history, the social world, and especially racial and economic inequalities. He states that Ethiopianism, though worldwide, has deepest roots in Jamaica, where many pro-black and pro-African groups, such as Rastafari, have originated. Rastafari can be seen as morally-rooted in Ethiopianism with its sense of black identity and black redemption with the view of white society and institutions as oppressive and evil. As a worldview, Rastafari draws from biblical evidence to their claims of black supremacy by re-interpreting the Western ‘white bible’. Price notes that some Ethiopianists see Africans and blacks in general as having special qualities that differentiate them from other races, especially whites. In their view, Africans are seen as

¹ “God” in Hebrew.

spiritual, close to nature and God, communal and capable of industriousness (in the form of self-help). Whites are seen in opposite terms, most relevantly here as hypocrites because of calling themselves Christians.

As Ethiopianism can be seen as one root of the movement, the other influences come through some charismatic figures presented further in the text. Clearly, the theme of fighting oppression of different kinds is central to Rastafari. With this comes also the topic of alternative which is what the movement has offered with its ideology, worldview and way of living.

A Rastafari author, Yasus Afari (2007, 191-192), notes that Rastafari has suffered persecution, suspicion, resentment, brutality, ridicule, hatred, marginalization and misunderstanding, especially in the movement's early years. Rastas were commonly referred to as "black heart man" (at a time when black was scorned and Africa despised) and perceived as mad or criminal. According to Afari, it was a common belief that the Rastas would attack people and eat them. The reason for their resentment, he argues, is that Rastafari was clearly opposing the prevailing world order and demanding change. It can be argued that all progressive social, political and religious movements have been confronted by strong resistance, opposition and persecution due to an innate reluctance to change by the wider society. Through the knowledge that the preachers of the movement spread, Rastafari grew in numbers and mobilized further in their demand for justice.

The Rastafari story is thus one characterized by struggle and fight for justice. Though the social conditions have changed in Jamaica, and in the world, many Rastafari still remember the wrongs of the past. Afari (ibid. 160—164) writes that the colonized peoples struggled to regain and retain their divine human rights and dignity when facing the assaults on their civilizations. The ideas of reparation and repatriation represent the demand for compensation for damage done. Afari argues that in the context of colonialism the European and American colonialists are duty-bound to make reparations to the nations and peoples who have been wronged and diminished by the acts of slavery and colonialism. The principle of repatriation means the act of implementing a system that restores or returns a person or people to their native land.

With this brief historical overlook we move to look at some of the symbols relevant to Rastafari and to this research. There are many other symbols left un-presented due to their lack of importance to the subject as comes through in the analysis further on.

2.1 Symbols of Rasta

While it is quite easy for one to assume to recognize a Rastafari based only on by appearance, there are as many styles of living it as there are rastas. This chapter goes through some of the basic symbols of the movement which helps to cover context for the analysis that makes use of these aspects.

Carole Yawney (1979) depicts the “making of the sacred” in Rastafari. This sacralization is seen by her as a collective effort to protect and strengthen the transcendent framework of understanding. She argues that sacralization is thus a process, and that Rastafari sacralizes their “Babylonian” environment. Yawney also speaks of the sacralization of language, and the relevance of the concept of “InI”. The sacralization of everyday life is a theme that comes close to the subject of this research, as the members express views on their relationship with the self and the society through different aspects.

While the focus of this research is not that of Yawney’s in describing the process of sacralization, I find it important to note that this is one possible viewpoint to the topic at hand. Though the entrance point is different to Yawney’s, I similarly look at the experience of negotiating between the spiritual and the earthly in the Babylonian environment.

Ennis B. Edmonds (1998) notes, that Rastafari has never been a homogenous movement. This goes for both individuals and the different mansions as well, as there is no formal organization that unites all elements of the movement, no leadership hierarchy exercises control, and no established creed prescribes and ensures orthodoxy. Edmonds argues that the movement does nevertheless have its own complex and enduring forms of social organization and exhibits distinctive features in comparison to other groups (e.g. Christians) in the Jamaican society. Indeed, it is quite easy to detect the simultaneous distinctiveness of the members of the community in comparison to non-rastas and the different outlooks that rastas can still exhibit inside the community. Yet, in spite of the diversity, Rastafari constitutes a cohesive movement with identifiable structures and a shared ideological-symbolic-ritual ethos (ibid.).

Edmonds (ibid. 354) notes that “*ital livity*” is an important commitment to Rasta, and *ital* signifies “springing from the earth”, earthy, natural, or organic. *Livity* in this context means living according to the strict principles of Rastafari, as living *ital* is the commitment to using things in their natural or organic states. As opposed to this, one of the problems with Babylon is its departure from naturalness and its commitment to artificiality. Rastas thus wish to escape this artificiality and

return to nature. Rastafari ideal proscribes the use of synthetic materials and chemically treated foods alongside alcohol and tobacco.

According to rasta ideology, the universe is organically related and that the key to health, both physical and social, is to live in accordance with organic principles, as opposed to the artificiality that characterizes modern technological society. Rastas are thus basically vegetarian. In addition to the commitment to a vegetarian diet, there is a commitment to use various herbs that are known to promote well-being.

Yasus Afari (2007, 142–144) also notes that according to Rastafari philosophy man is seen as spiritual, mental and physical. This means that that the spiritual vibrations one absorbs feed the spirit-soul, the mental substance and intellectual knowledge that is ingested feed the mind, and the physical substances one eats feed the physical structure. Food is seen as the fuel for the vehicle of human body. This body houses the mental and spiritual faculties that together constitute the living man. Rastafari thus sees it logical to cultivate and nurture the being that one is. This way of thinking results in a view that suggests one should live, eat and think in a nature-friendly and holistic way that is in harmony with the ecological balance that promotes life, health, collective growth, development and survival. Food is seen as medicine and medicine as food. Main sources of food and nutrients for Rasta are gained from vegetables, herbs, whole-grains, fruits and nuts. The foods are prepared as naturally and simply as possible, and raw foods are valued. Oil, animal products, sugar, honey, processed foods, and made seasonings and spices are avoided according to the guidelines.

Though it is true that there are guidelines to how one should eat, there is also a lot of variation among the members of the group as to which food stuffs are “allowed” and which are not. While it is appreciated in the community to have a vegan, or even raw food diet, every member decides for themselves what to consume. This *holistic* view and way of life is studied further in the paper to see the possible similarities between rasta and other spiritual traditions.

Rastafari is not the only tradition that has adopted the *dreadlock* hairstyle. It can be argued that the immigrating *sadhus* (hindu holy men) from India brought the style to Jamaica. The Indians made the god Shiva with his long hair familiar on the island during the 1800th century. On another note, the MauMau warriors of Kenya battled the British colonialists in the years 1952 to 1960 which has claimed to be an inspiration for the Rastafari in Jamaica at the time. (Kosmos 2007, 77.)

The locks were not the only eastern influence for rasta. Another Indian base comes from the name *kali weed*² for strong ganja consumed also by rastas. A further connection to the Hindu tradition is that rastas do not pray to their god in the traditional sense, but greet him by calling out “Hail Ras Tafari!” and “Jah Rastafari!” that remind the hails devoted to Hindu gods/goddesses (e.g. “Jai Bhagwan!” and “Jai Ram!”) According to the mystical explanation for the dreadlocks they are antennas that rastas “catch” high vibrations into their consciousness. A respected elder and Rasta doctor Bongo Hue teaches that the foundation of the earth was created by the “Mountain Timon”, where rastas would fly carried by nothing but their locks. (ibid.)

The mystical reasoning for the locks being “spiritual antennas” is still very prominent in the movement. Many say the locks connect them to the other, unseen dimensions of creation. On another note, it is often said by rastas that locks do not make one a true rastafari. The subject of the locks as well as the eastern influence in rasta are studied further with the help of the informants’ experiences in the analysis.

Another symbol that is easily attached to rastafari that can be connected to India, is the “holy herb”, cannabis, ganja. The consumption of the marijuana herb is very common in the Jamaican society; it is smoked (or steamed), used in cooking and for the preparation of teas and other beverages. This “healing of the nation” has an important place in the traditional folk medicine in Jamaica, but rastas are the only ones (known to) using it for spiritual purposes. The ritual smoking of the herb can be compared to the Christian churches communion sacrament (also seen in the naming of the pipe as *chalice*). (Ringvee 2001, 171–172.)

Rastas generally feel that the smoking of ganja releases the person from the shackles of Babylon. It is also seen by many as the most natural and straight way to connecting with the divine. This herb of wisdom is considered food for the spirit, and used as a tool for learning to know God, the self and the world more deeply. Many rastas use the herb as an aid for their spiritual ponderings, also called *reasonings* when performed in a group. The justification for the smoking of the herb, is found in Bible, where Rastafari argues God has ordered the plant for the use of man. Naturally, Rastafari considers the herb to be far from the “drug” it is claimed to be by the larger society. And because ganja is yet illegal, the laws against drug substances have been taken advantage of in order to persecute rastas in Jamaica and elsewhere. (ibid.)

² Kali is a Hindu Goddess of destruction and creation.

The central concept of Babylon has come up already in the paper, as it is something connected to what members of Rastafari stand in close relation to. Ennis B. Edmonds (1998) suggests that the term Babylon has several levels. Firstly it is referred to as the cause of economic hardship and political marginalization, as well as cultural alienation. It is the experience of suffering and alienation in the African diaspora that makes the concept Babylon appropriate (referring to the experience of the forced deportation and servitude of the ancient Hebrews under the Babylonian world power). Babylon is also referencing to the ideological and structural components of Jamaica's social system, which can be seen to institutionalize inequity and exploitation. It is thus a complex of economic, political, religious and educational institutions and values evolved from the colonial experiment. Rastafari holds the view that Babylon extends further through the British-American alliance, which has been the benefactor of colonialism and international capitalism. Babylon seen by the movement is thus "the whole complex of institutions which conspire to keep the black man enslaved in the Western world and which attempts to subjugate colored people throughout the world"

Globally Babylon represents that worldly state of affairs in which the struggle for power and possessions takes precedence over the cultivation of human freedom and the concern for human dignity. On a general level Babylon is considered as the portrayal of the forces of evil organized against God and the righteous. These evil forces are not seen as metaphysical entities; they are human attitudes and activities that are out of touch with the divine, natural order. One example of this could be the destructive tendencies and exploitation of the environment that people are engaged in.

One of the themes in this paper studies the role of Babylon in the informants' lives; what it represents to them. When asked, I received the same answer as the definition above reads. However, what is behind those definitions in a concrete way, was what intrigued me. This is also a subject, or at least a viewpoint to it that hasn't been done research on previously. The next chapter examines yet another important symbol for the Rastafari; the language used by the members of the movement.

2.1.1 Rasta Talk

Marcia Douglas (2011) claims that rastafari is much more than worship of Ethiopia's former ruler Haile Selassie I. She says rasta is a way of life that seeks liberation from the programming of colonialism by claiming back and re-formulating identity. This is visible in the way a rastafari relates to his/her body, nature, as well as in the particular way language, art and music are

approached. Douglas presents the unique way in which rasta has formulated a language that describes the movements' experience. She notes that the birth of the lexicon, as well as the form it has taken connects with other languages in the Caribbean region, which all share a background of histories erased and the struggle of survival.

Kari Kosmos (2007, 20) notes that in addition to *patois*³, one can hear the Rastafari language of *Iyahrick* or the “*InI*” speech in Jamaica. The foundation of this I-lexicon is the emperor Haile Selassie I⁴. Rastafari uses the term “*InI*” to express the we-spirit and represent the collective consciousness. Rastas are never apart from their divinity which is why I and I (the lower and higher self), “cosmic rasta”, are one.

The rastafari “*InI*” can refer to numerous things in addition to signifying both an emphasized first person singular, as well as plural, when it refers to unification with God/Divine/Selassie (and sometimes nature or the community). I is also a concept that signifies always an actor position, and can never be an object (e.g. “The man gave the orange to the I”) It is also used to replace the separation creating syllable “u” (as in “you” and “me”) and thereof becomes “I and I”. Latin-based words are also replaced with a reformulation, where the first syllable is often substituted with an “I” (e.g. “higher” becomes “Iya”)

Kosmos (ibid.) states that rastafari created their *InI* language in order to speak freely with each other without the people of Babylon understanding. The *I-talk* is also a way of bringing the everyday exchange of words to a divine plane which gives the daily life a strong ritualistic element (cf. Yawney 1979). *InI* is a central concept that strengthens the speaker's subjectivity as well as connection to other beings and forces of life. The experience of oneness is a profound way in which life is understood, and the source of spiritual energies for rastas (Yawney 1979, 170).

It is considered important for the Rastafari that the words used represent what is being said. Therefore, understanding becomes *overstanding*, creation is *I-ration* and oppression is naturally *downpression* to name a few.

Something I would notice during my stays in Jamaica, was that the *I-talk* is not something used by all rastas, all the time. Of course the fact that I am a foreigner to the culture must have affected to some degree on why rastas would not always speak by using their own terminology, but I was surprised by how little it was spoken. The African rastas in this study were not familiar with the *I-*

³ Jamaican Creole, a language based on English and (West-)African languages

⁴ Pronounced, and signifies “I” or “eye”, the all-seeing eye of the Creator and of the third eye of the mystics and yogis, used to look into the invisible energetic world.

talk. The Jamaican informants would most often speak patois or Standard English to me, which will be discussed further on in greater detail.

2.2 Rasta Globally: The “Reggae Phenomenon”?

It is quite unique that what started out as a local phenomenon in the small island of Jamaica, has become a worldwide movement with communities in almost every corner of the world (largest ones in England and U.S). This chapter presents some of the ways Rastafari has become as popular as it is which gives background for further analysis on the reasons behind its appeal.

Carole Yawney (1995, 58) notes the surprising fact how Rastafari has become a global cultural force since its inception in the 1930s. What makes the movements popularity surprising, is the fact that it is a theocratically oriented spiritual movement that lacks a fixed institutional structure and centralized forms of organization. The message of Rasta can be seen to have conveyed by untypical means to many religious practices. Yawney further notes that the phenomenon has also not been welcomed by the state, media or dominant culture where it has manifested. Somehow the movement has gained popularity among people of differing social, political, cultural and spiritual backgrounds. Similarly to Yawney, Barbara Makeda Blake Hannah (2006, 126) further states that by living the message of “One Love”, Rastafari demonstrates the true Christ spirit of the movement’s teachings, and as a result, people of different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have been drawn to the movement to live its practices and be identified as Rastafari.

While rasta has gained popularity among different people, and though many rastas argue that their spiritual tradition is a universal tradition for all people, some see it as a predominantly black heritage. The theme of exclusivity is relevant to this research, as it is interested in how the concept of oneness is perceived by the rastafari informants. The chapters in the analysis present how the members of the faith located geographically in different places experience this.

Kosmos (2007, 179) argues that it is thanks to Bob Marley that reggae and Rastafari are seen in the western world as related, if not identical, phenomena. In Jamaica reggae was never purely rasta music, and after Marley’s death the reggae-culture conclusively came out of the frame of rasta (with the onset of dancehall music). Jalani Niaah & Sonjah Stanley Niaah (2005) further note that though Bob Marley was aesthetically a rasta symbol, and not only a representative of Rastafari globally, but of reggae, resistance, and Africa in addition to others the name has been attached to.

Music is definitely an instrumental part of the movement, and many rastas, and some of the informants used for this study, are involved in the art of music. Michael Barrett (1997, 27) suggests reggae music has been an important means of transporting the message of Rastafari. The musicians have become the messengers. Reggae message crosses international borders and deals with themes that cut across all aspects of human existence. The music evokes and conveys the message of universal suffrage and, spreads a theme of class consciousness to the poor, illiterate, and oppressed. Barret argues that it still serves as a social medium through which oppressed peoples express their discontent.

Not only discontent, but contentment (often as appreciation of nature) is often heard through the contemporary Rastafari music. These artists, at least the newer generation, might not even call themselves reggae artists, and the genre is not straight reggae to them. They are often some sort of fusion artists, mixing multiple styles with reggae, calling it perhaps rasta music.

I have come to see during my stay in the field (especially in Jamaica) that ritualistic drumming and chanting can be a very powerful experience, especially when practiced at specific rasta festivities e.g. at binghis⁵ Verena Reckord (1998, 241—242) remarks it is said that real rastas don't live far from a drum. This is due to the fact that music is a vital part of the life of the devotee, as rastas attach great religious importance to the drums. The drum reminds one of their doctrinal values. The “riddims” also comfort at times of frustration, and the music gives hope through the spiritual uplift it provides. She suggests that some rastafari consider there to be healing powers in the drumming and chanting. Most of the time the music played serves a highly religious purpose, and is regarded as the best way of giving thanks and praises.

Music, and especially drumming and chanting can be seen as a spiritual component in Rastafari (as well as other traditions), and there are many musical artists that identify themselves as rasta. And however pivotal reggae music has been in delivering the message of the movement across the globe, the focus of this study is more in the actual message than the medium of the music used to convey it. Thus the relevant point of reflection is, why has the message of Rastafari been appealing to a variety of peoples regardless of socio-economic background. This shall be studied in the chapters to come. The following takes a look on the different currents found in the one Rastafari stream.

⁵ Binghi is a Nyahbinghi gathering at, what is called a binghi-yard (a holy yard), generally with a tabernacle elevated from bamboo and cloth with symbolic Rastafari colors. The drumming, chanting and dancing are accompanied with a fire burning all night through. (Kosmos, 39.)

2.3 The Houses of Rastafari

Since Rastafari is a spiritual movement, often referred to as a religion, it is important to see what the belief system in the movement is based on. Chevannes notes that Rastafari came about from a line of Christian-based religions that have originated in Africa. Rastafari has, as a result, adopted features from African based Myal and Revivalist traditions, but is not a straight continuum of either. (Chevannes 1995). It is essential to notice here that the movement, though based on Christianity, differs in an essential way of the European system of belief. Rastafari interprets the Bible in fact as a story of Africa and the Black Christ (see e.g. Chisholm). This implies that the re-reading of the Bible is an essential component in Rastafari.

Ennis. B Edmonds (1998, 350) argues Rastafari spirituality to be characterized by radical individualism that de-emphasizes dogma, sacrament, and social organization. Instead rasta focuses on the individual's connection with "Jah" and with the cosmic energy called "earthforce". Though the faith can be seen at this individual level of "exercising" one's spirituality, the "houses" or "mansions" of Rastafari describe another, social aspect of being a rasta. Houses can generally defined be small, informal groups of members who maintain an ongoing relationship by gathering voluntarily. Yasus Afari (2007, 203) notes that though the history of the movement is relatively short, it has developed many prominent and active groups that have served as pillars and supporters of the movement.

Though these houses can be small, there are also larger, more organized ones that have tens to hundreds of members. The biggest ones are *The House of Nyabinghi*, *Ethiopian Black International Congress Church of Salvation* and *the Twelve Tribes of Israel*.

The Nyahbinghi⁶ house is not only the biggest but probably the most known of the houses. It is the oldest as well, out of which all the other major houses diverged from. Nyahbinghi rastas follow the Old Testament's Nazirian law that instructs one not to cut one's hair or beard, nor to comb them as a sign of commitment to God. The locked hair is also a symbol of a natural lifestyle. The Nyahbinghis hold elders in high respect, and many see them as authorities in matters of faith and livity. What is central to this house is the nyahbinghi ritual which is a gathering of drumming, chanting and dancing for "the fall of Babylon" and victory of justice. Nyahbinghi rastas are more individual-oriented than the representatives of the two other main houses. (Ringvee, 170.)

⁶ *Nyahbinghi* refers to Queen Nyahbinghi who ruled in Uganda in the 19th Century, and fought colonialism.

The Ethiopian African Black International Congress Church of Salvation is the home of the *bobo shanti*⁷ rastas. The house was led by the founder, and returned Christ, for the bobos, Prince Emmanuel Edwards. The bobos are generally known to be peaceful. I must add, however, that my experience the bobos is somewhat different. The bobos are quite militant, and compared to the not-so-organized rastas, can be intolerant to different views and lifestyles.

A visit to the Bobo Hill⁸ revealed the aggressive nature of the message of some of the members of the house. I also found that the bobos living in this tight community did not appreciate questions/questioning which to me, is not typical to rastas in general. The attitude some of the bobos had towards other houses of rastas was critical; I was told the bobos are the only “true rastas” for their order is the correct one to follow. Characteristic to the bobos appearance are the tightly wrapped turbans covering the hair, and long robes. The members’ lifestyle seeks to emulate the Old Testament Jewish Mosaic Law that governs the observation of Sabbath (from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday) and laws for menstruating women. Jalani Niaah (oral account, 2012) suggests that Bobo Shanti is often misinterpreted because they do not emphasize the scriptural roots of their practice in their *livity*⁹. Niaah notes that the bobos derive the instructions for their lives from the original texts, not the misinterpretations that have come after, where the menstruating woman is seen contaminated.

Twelve Tribes of Israel can be seen as the coming together of Christianity, Kabbalistic numerology, Judaism, genealogy, astrology and Rastafari (Barrett 1988, 228). Out of all the houses of Rastafari, Twelve Tribes is the closest to mainstream Christianity with its emphasis on Jesus Christ. One must join the Twelve Tribe organization to become a member, and it was also the first of the houses to embrace white and female members. It is considered the most liberal of the houses, for the members are free to worship in a church of their choice or privately at home. The house has also founded a colony in Shashamane Ethiopia, where some Jamaican rastas have repatriated to.

In addition to these largest groupings in the movement, Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one that calls to be mentioned. It can be seen by some Rastafari as the original most “authentic”, as it is an African church, thus also the only institutional reference point for the Rastafari.

One can see from this short description of the different houses of Rastafari that there is clear and outspoken variation to how rasta is practiced and experienced by the members. I still find it

⁷ *Bobo* signifies *black*, while *shanti* refers to an African tribe from Ghana.

⁸ The residing and worship place of the community in Bull Bay, Jamaica.

⁹ *Way of life* in rasta language.

important to add that there are many rastas who do not identify with any house in particular, or identify with all of them in differing degrees. One can thus freely choose the elements that fit one's own view and lifestyle, and live under the umbrella-term Rastafari. Such is the case with almost all of my (Jamaican) informants; they didn't identify strongly with one house (though most commonly Nyahbinghi was the closest call), but could reference to multiple sources for inspiration and instruction to life. When it comes to the African Rastafari in this study, they would merely call themselves rastas without any need to go deeper into the definition. So though there are generally speaking differences in the houses' spiritual practices, most notably with the bobos, since all the informants in this study do not count their membership to a specific house as relevant, the focus of this study is elsewhere.

It is interesting, how in spite of the message of one love, the different houses are not co-existing seamlessly. This is understandable given the fact that individual freedom has always been characteristic to Rastafari. The movement doesn't have any central organization to exercise authority over independent groups or individuals. This free mode of organization has also been seen as the reason why the movement has survived through many forms of persecution over the years, for there is no central organization to wipe out (Tafari 1980, 11). Through the years there has also been efforts made in Rastafari to unite the different branches into one single movement by different leaders. However, the members usually speak of the ideal of "increasing cooperation" rather than uniting the houses.

After presenting the different spiritual "institutions" in the movement, it is fitting to get to know some of the individuals behind the uprising of Rastafari. The following chapter thus takes a look at some of the most influential figures in the movement. This will give context to the spiritual background and history against which one can consider the current experiences of the members of Rastafari presented later in the paper.

2.4 Leaders and Prophets

"Spirituality is a network linking us to the Most High, the Universe and each other" states a placard on a tabernacle wall in the indigenous Rastafari village in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The words are a quote by Haile Selassie I, the former emperor of Ethiopia.

Eleanor Wint (1998, 159–160) argues that Haile Selassie's speeches are read by many Rastafari as spiritual scriptures equivalent to that of Christ. Indeed, he is considered by many Rastafari as the reincarnated Messiah. Haile Selassie I thus embodies to the fulfilling of both Old and New

Testament Scriptures in the movement. His coronation as Emperor Haile Selassie I (Power of the Trinity), the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, King of Kings, of Ethiopia is seen as the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. There is agreement of Selassie's place in history, but there is no unanimity on his biblical standing. Some recognize Selassie as a great man and a Pan-Africanist, others as a prophet. Many Rastafarians consider H.I.M as the son of God, who comes from the Root of David. Many Rastafari find that there is evidence of His Majesty's divinity throughout the Bible and other prophetic texts.

Wint (ibid.161—162) argues that to speak of Rastafari without acknowledging the centrality of H.I.M. to the faith is like talking of Christianity without Christ. Evidence of this is in religious texts, which foretell the second coming of the Christ in Ethiopia from the divine Solomonic blood line. According to Wint, Selassie noted that the African blood, no matter where it is, is the basis for greater unity, and encouraged people in the diaspora to help each other in expanding education in order to raise the standard of living. Selassie was considered an exceptionally "modern" ruler, who was focused on developing the country through infrastructure, education and different reforms. He was also argued to be a devout Christian, and would encourage these values during his time in power.

In a speech given in 1965 in India, Selassie describes the significance of unity of humankind in the following words: *"Today more than ever before man realizes the bond of unity that exists within the (human) race; he is endeavoring to employ the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the ages. He is employing modern science and technology; he is reaping the benefits, however limited, of political and economic unity; and to that extent, he is transcending the age-old barriers that have divided humanity so long and is endeavoring to reflect on the welfare not only of himself and his immediate neighbor but also on the welfare of all of the human race."* Later in the speech he speaks of religion pointing to the *"unity of spirit in the mystic traditions of different religions"* (5.9.2008) and further on the unity in a speech in 1966 in World Evangelical Congress in Berlin: *"Since nobody can interfere in the realm of God we should tolerate and live side by side with those of other faiths"*

Though Selassie is the central, father-figure of the movement, there are other charismatic leaders who have paved the way for Rastafari since the beginning. It can also be noted that Selassie never actively commented on the adoration of Rastafari towards him, and would merely opinion to have a friendly and brotherly relationship to rastas while being shy of the movement (Kosmos 2007, 37). The significance of "role models" to one's spiritual life is studied in greater detail in the analysis,

and it is important to present the influence of the generally thought of as central figures in the movement.

Rastafari has acknowledged 4 significant prophets or preachers that took on the spreading of knowledge about the Black Christ and repatriation:

The revival preacher Alexander Bedward came to be known originally as a spiritual healer. The focus of his proclamation was the view that a new world order was coming, where the blacks would rule over the whites. He encouraged his followers to actively change the colonial system. He ended up in the mental hospital in 1920 after stating that he was Christ, and that the end of the world was near.

As noted previously, race was a prominent factor in determining ones social standing in the Jamaican society. In the beginning of the 20th century there was a radical rise in racial self-consciousness among the black population. It often had religious expressions, one of which was Bedward's religious millennialism. Some rastas may still gravitate to this reading of the reality, where the end times are at hand. One of the informants expressed this view in his statement: *"It's absolutely obvious that we are living the times of what is spoken if in the book of revelations. It doesn't mean that the world is going to end, but that there will be a new beginning."*

The expectation of a new beginning got other forms besides the religious ones. The Jamaican Marcus Mosiah Garvey founded an organization called Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914. The goal of the organization was the improvement of the social standing of the population of African descendants. He furthered his endeavors in New York, and by the beginning of the 1920s, the association had approximately 5 million members and branches all over the world (Levine, 1982, 127) Garvey pushed strongly for Black Nationalism and repatriation. He is known for his idea of *"Africa for Africans"* which many rastas ascribe to.

Rupert Lewis (1998, 145-146) argues that many interpretations of the origins of Rastafari have focused on two events during 1930s: the coronation of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I as emperor of Ethiopia in 1930, and Marcus Garvey's writings on the significance of this coronation for people of African descent. After the coronation he wrote a description of the event and this 'modern' Emperor, who had come to create change. Garvey wrote that the Psalmist prophesied that *"Princes would come out of Egypt and Ethiopia would stretch forth her hands unto God"*. The coronation was seen by him as a symbol of black pride and hope for a reign based on modernity within the framework of Pan-African solidarity. It is easy to comprehend that the emphasis placed

on the coronation of Haile Selassie I was important in a colony where the British monarchy was the supreme symbol of power.

Clinton Chisholm (1998, 166-167) states that the alleged prophesy by Marcus Garvey of the crowning of a black king in Africa, and the worldwide significance of the coronation that did happen, was a kind of turning-point in the founding of Rastafari. He argues further that because of the movement's interest in the Bible and in Africa, the lineage and divinity of Haile Selassie, and the outlook of Ethiopia as the new Zion (destined homeland for all Black people) are the two most enduring doctrines of Rastafari.

Leonard Howell was yet another highly influential preacher in the movement. The anti-colonial content of his preaching was clear in his message that black people's only true King was Emperor Haile Selassie. Interestingly, Garvey rejected and even found Howells claims of Selassie being God embarrassing to his own Christian thought. Garvey and Howell thus differed in the opinion of whether H.I.M was divine or not. (Chevannes 1994). *The Promised Key* (Howell 1935) is a text by Leonard Howell that gives "instructions to life" for members of Rastafari. *The Promised Key* talks quite specifically for example of the different gender roles. Women are described as African queens, Queen Omegas, and men as King Alfas.

Rastafari has had other significant founders and preachers besides to these presented, but I do not see it necessary for the subject of this study to go more into detail in this respect. The purpose of this chapter is was to offer another angle on the background from which the movement has emerged.

2.5. A Window to Rasta in Research

I was told by a retired Finnish anthropologist and a "former"¹⁰ Rastafari that to conduct research on rasta was on his opinion lost effort, because everything had already been studied. I disagreed. And agreed at some points of performing the study, but those were the desperate times naturally part of the process. So it is true that the subject of Rastafari has been the interest to many other researchers before, yet this "*movement, not a stayment*", as noted by a famous rasta dub-poet Mutabaruka, keeps taking new form with time.

The Jamaican professor Barry Chevannes has done extensive research on Rastafari. His book "*Rastafari: Roots and Ideology*" (1994) gives the overview of the phenomenon going through all of

¹⁰ He disclosed to me in a conversation that he no longer wanted to identify as Rastafari, because he felt the movement had gone far from the ancient tradition it used to represent.

its significant aspects and development. The fact that the author is Jamaica, I argue, gives a specific “insider-view” for the research as the structure and history of the Jamaican society has had significant impact on the movement.

Rastafari identity is probably one of the most studied subjects. This has been so assumedly, because Rastafari claims an African identity that forms the base for the movement and is closely tied to its origin. Identity is somewhat related to the subject of my research, but my main focus is not so much to delve into the meanings the informants give to themselves as Rastafari, but to the way in which spirituality and the central concept of oneness is experienced in everyday life. Barry Chevannes (2006) studied Rastafari identity connected to the intellectual quality that is often attached to its members. He describes Rastafari as “folk philosophers” of their time. Further in the paper we will see if and how this reputation possibly appears in the data.

William M. Van De Berg (1998, 159) in his ethnographic study “Rastafari Perceptions of Self and Symbolism” sees Rastafari as a religion, and is interested in how the study subjects make meaning and understand their identities through various rituals and symbols. This goes for how spirituality and devotional life are seen as well. Berg did note that his subjects made a distinction between those who display physical symbols of Rastafari identity, and those who have internalized the deeper meaning of those symbols. This is a relevant point in my study, since Rastafari in general advocates oneness, yet there seems to be division inside the movement as well as in opinions of who should be included/excluded. Though I don’t intend to look at rituals and symbols per se, but the meaning-making of spiritual livity as one’s “regular practice of life”, I argue that there are different levels of depth in the internalization of the symbols. This will be studied in more detail with examples from the data in the analysis.

Carole Yawney (1999, 154) is a western, non-Rastafari academic, who has done considerable amount of ethnographic research on Rastafari. Her research article “Only Visitors Here: Representing Rastafari Into the 21st Century” looks at the globalization of the movement, and brings out the challenges she sees the expansion of the movement places on an ethnographer studying it. She argues that members of Rastafari experience a history of misrepresentation in academic studies as well as in social media, which makes it difficult to generalize on the movement while the processes of globalization are affecting the forms this heterogeneous phenomenon takes. This research takes Yawney’s warning into consideration, which is seen in the fact that the focus of the study is not to make generalizations of the movement, but to describe and make way for further

social scientific explorations. Some generalizations can be drawn from the experience of spirituality and oneness as a post-modern phenomenon, not so much from the diverse phenomenon of Rastafari.

I find it beneficial to the movement that there is a considerable amount of Rastafari academics¹¹ and researchers that are interested in studying the different aspects. However, there are pro's and con's to this; the insider can be too close to the subject whereas the outsider cannot comprehend internally what the experience world and ideology of a person or group is while an insider can easily presuppose things because they feel obvious or result in interpretations that fit the ideology of the group. It might thus be fruitful to assume research positions that are based on collaborative efforts and knowledge.

James Clifford (1998, 491) suggests different styles of authority in ethnographic research. His note on polyphonic mode of writing refers to plural authorship, which I find firstly bridges the gap between the researcher/subject and informant/object. What has it ever meant to “give voice to” someone without allowing them to speak with their own voice? Though my research does not have multiple authors, the informants are offered the opportunity to and are encouraged to read and comment things written on them and the community they ascribe to. I also look for establishing transparency in the relationship through being as open as possible, which I find increases the trust of the subjects in me and vice versa. This implies for example that where there are contradictions in speech and/or behavior, I can approach them straight, giving the person an opportunity to interpret for themselves the reasons to the possible discrepancies.

The following chapter introduces the concept of spirituality and oneness from a non-rasta reference point. This is to offer important background and comparative material to the study material ahead.

3. Spirituality and the concept of Oneness

Spirituality is a concept often either paralleled or opposed to religion. Some Rastafari insist that their faith is not a religion, and often express irritation for they feel “*Rasta has become like a religion. When it's an ancient tradition*”. On another note, other rastas naturally attach that term to their faith. This research refers to rasta as a spiritual tradition, as I've mentioned before. I also see it considerate to keep in mind that though spoken of a singular spirituality, I refer to multiple and differing spiritualities, as it is not accurate to refer to a single experience shared by a group of people. This chapter examines some of the research and theories made of spirituality (paired with

¹¹ E.g. Arthur Newland, Jalani Niaah & Charles Price.

the term “New Age”, as well as views the subject by presenting some eastern expressions on the topic that have common ground with Rastafari.¹²

3.1 Spiritualities of the “New Age”

Spirituality has been a trendy subject of research from the 1980s on. In the West the interest has often been towards what is called New Age spirituality. A lot of the research, I find, emphasizes the “marketability” of spirituality, and places traditional spiritualities in opposition with the new forms that have been named “New Age”. Fredrick Drobin (1999, 229–230) suggests that what the new waves of spirituality are offering, is nothing new. What he refers to are the claims these spiritualities make of ancient wisdom and mystic knowledge. Authenticity is justified with arguments of the practices and ideologies pre-dating Judeo-Christianity.

Drobin (ibid.) paints the picture of the understanding he argues the so called New Age movements have on spirituality as an escapist and achievement-oriented practice that is concentrated in finding higher levels of “feel-good states”. He sees Marx’s statement “*Religion is...opium for the people*”, and the ideas of spirituality as a tool for survival (mainly for the poor) as the precursor for where we have come in the late modern era.

These new forms of spirituality are thus interpreted inauthentic compared to traditional religions with their interest in feeling good over the fearful adoration of the almighty. I find the view to be too narrow to be applied to a great variety of traditions, not to mention their practitioners, who undoubtedly represent differing views and practices not thoroughly investigated, not to mention understood by representatives of sciences.

Since I started familiarizing myself with Rastafari, having had certain experiences with what could be named as New Age spiritualities, I noticed similarities between these practices. Though I disagree with Drobin’s confined characterization of the spiritual traditions named ‘New Age’, it is relevant for this study to present some basic things theorized in scientific research on the subject. Spirituality is, after all, a key concept in this study. And not only that, but as noted lines before, there can be seen similarities to Rastafari spirituality and the New Age spirituality phenomenon. Though I am quite convinced the members of Rastafari (at least some of my informants) would not necessarily be pleased of the comparison to “New Age movement”, I feel the need to show the

¹² I use the terms New Age spirituality/ies and New Age movement interchangeably, though there is a difference as the word “movement” refers to something that can be defined and applied through the characteristics of a specific group while spirituality/ies does not assume clear borders for the definition.

connections where there are obvious ones. Also, my purpose is not to suggest that Rastafari is a New Age movement, but to display the context and spirit of our time as a playground of various “New Age cultures” that I experience it to be.

The short history of new age spirituality can be depicted as a timeline with romanticism starting from the mid-1600es, spiritualism from 1840s, counterculture from 1960s, and finally new age spirituality from the late 1970s. What these eras have in common according to Anthony D’Andrea (1998, 5–24), are the elements of counter-reaction to mainstream modern-universal-scientific institutions as well as religious dogmatics and ascetics. Another common trait is the focusing on the individual’s inner self, which was present e.g. in the era of romantics as the importance of developing oneself.

It can be seen that Rastafari possessed these traits with its oppositional ideology and worldview, as well as the importance of realizing one’s true self. Both of these topics will be studied further through the experiences and views of the informants later in the analysis. The next paragraphs will theorize on the characteristics of new age spirituality from one point of view.

Wouter Hanegraaf (1996, 333–344) lists 5 characteristics that he feels signify a new age movement. The first one is an idea of *holism*. Holistic view sees the universe as a whole, where the globe with its people are only small part of. In this whole, everything is inter-related, and thus everything affects everything. Furthermore, the different levels of reality from microcosm to macrocosm and spiritual to material form a seamless entirety. A part of this view is that the human being has with his action and ideologies disrupted what used to be an intact whole, where the demand for overproduction, adoration of the material and the rational, with the too strict doctrine created by Christianity has caused the balance to shatter. Hanegraaf opinions that new age spirituality offers an answer to repair the damage; spiritual and social revolution, New Age.

The second characteristic Hanegraaf (ibid. 442–462) sees is the expectancy of a new era. The new era has to do astrologically with the era of Aquarius, which represents changes in the society e.g. in relation to technology and nature. According to Hanegraaf, these changes are also seen as spiritual; bringing forth well-being, and the new era is expected to brake the patterns of old societal models while it opens new horizons through individuals’ spiritual development. He argues new age spirituality can further be seen to be characterized by an interest to study religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism. This interest has to do with an idea that every religion has a common source, and thus each religion entails the truth. What is sought from religions and the thoughts of native peoples’ is authentic and original models for thinking and acting.

The fourth theme Hanegraaf (ibid. 462–513) sees, is a *religious idea of evolution* that refers to a view according to which the humankind has a goal. As one recognizes one's stage of development, one can start acting with determination towards achieving this goal. The idea of re-incarnation is included in Hanegraaf's view on this evolution, and it speaks of the spiritual evolution achieved in this, and other, worlds in the course of one's lifetimes. The last feature of new age spirituality in his opinion is *the psychologization of religion* that has to do with positive thinking and connecting to divinity through the self. It also refers to a view that thoughts create inner and outer reality, and so what one thinks ultimately has an effect on the world.

Accompanied with the characterization that New Age movements claim of anciencey, these traits presented fit quite well with Rastafari. There is a common goal of social revolution and a holistic outlook on viewing the self and the environment as we have come to see from the previous chapter. There is also an interest among the members to other spiritual traditions, as well as the idea of realizing "the god" in oneself. The following chapter goes more into detail into some of the thoughts also found in the Rastafari worldview.

3.2 Eastern thought; teachers and teachings

"I have come to remove the divisions between all religions. I have come to unite people regardless of their origin. There is only one humanity." -Haidakhan Babaji¹³

The thing that connects spirituality and religion is that they both deal with faith of some kind, and seeing the reality of existence as something ultimately beyond the reach of scientific processes of manipulation. There is an element of an "unknown" force that governs life. It is however impossible to draw clear lines between what can be considered spiritual or religious; they are matters of personal experience though manifested in multiple social ways.

Spiritual teachers can be characterized as people who have a message that they convey to followers. Put in religious, institutionalized terms, these teachers are close to priests. The difference seems often to be that spiritual teachers speak from their own experience and process of opening to an unknown reality, while priests convey their churches' interpretation of the relevant scriptures to them. Spiritual teachers don't usually have an authority position, though certainly many people enter the spiritual arena and market with a lust for power of some kind. The spiritual teachers and teachings I've encountered have in the best cases been people who have offered pointers and

¹³ An indian saint and a spiritual teacher who taught publicly from 1970 to 1984.

questions for one to find answers to through self-inquiry, instead of handing over fixed truths to accept (which is not even possible as far as I know).

The purpose of this chapter is to give context to the phenomenon of spirituality. As noted previously, while Rastafari has its roots in Judeo-Christian tradition, the research has shown a connection to the east as well when it comes to the language and concepts that have come up in this research.

A spiritual teacher called Ram Dass remarks that the rise of psychedelic drugs brought with it an explosive interest to spiritual experiences and a shift in reality that effected the religious systems of the time by giving people the experience of being inter-connected to the whole universe. He finds that this is how some discovered a spiritual path, a new concept for the westerner yet ancient in places like India. (Dass (audio), 6.8.2014). Many Rastafari speak of their experience of connectedness, and it is often aided by marijuana herb. Though I don't intend to suggest that the psychedelic drugs and the cannabis plant are coequal, the similarity is in the effect of opening a person to another reality or state of consciousness. This shall be discussed further in analysis.

The idea and experience of everything ultimately being one, seamless, inter-connected web, if you will, is a central theme in a lot of eastern thought, prevalent also in Buddhist and Hindu traditions. Many of the spiritual leaders and teachers base their teachings to this view, and have different ways of showing the students "how to get there". Though the principle of oneness as a profound truth is mutual to a lot of traditions, many teachers and leaders do not ascribe to any religion in particular. Even if their background was with a certain institutionalized form of practice, they often see this as meaningless to their message.

Adyashanti is an American born spiritual teacher and author, who has his spiritual roots in both Zen Buddhism (east) and in the Christian tradition (west). His influences thus come from different directions, but he notes that though both of these backgrounds have served him in pursuing "*an interest in the nature of reality that I was born with*" (Spirituality & Health 2013), what he is interested in cannot be found from the outside world of different forms or practices though they have served him to a degree. In being familiar with his teachings more deeply, I suggest that the core of his interest is learning to see the truth of oneness, which characterizes this *nature of reality* he is speaking of.

Adyashanti also speaks of something called spiritual autonomy as an attitude or point of experience from which to act and react from. The following quote depicts this perception that came up also in the research material:

“By spiritual autonomy, I mean a kind of certainty-not egoic¹⁴ certainty, but one that comes from your essential nature, from the level of the divine being. We find this spiritual autonomy very clearly mirrored in the figure of Jesus. Jesus walks through his life knowing who he is and what he’s doing, even though his disciples don’t understand him, the authorities don’t understand him, and the Pharisees don’t understand him...This is a mythic portrayal of what spiritual autonomy looks like and how it moves in the world of time and space...The egoic state of consciousness literally has no capacity whatsoever to understand it, because this autonomy is functioning from a different dimension of being. Jesus spoke of being in the world, but not of the world; this is real spiritual autonomy in action.” (Adyashanti 2014, 46–47).

The spiritual autonomy Adyashanti is speaking of, was a topic I feel relevant to my Rastafari informants. Adyashanti is interpreting the Jesus story as it describes a person who functions according to a different type of knowing that all the people around him, and in spite of their lack of understanding. It is interesting that Adyashanti uses the example of this biblical figure to describe the experience of one standing on one’s own feet in a spiritual sense. What to *be in the world but not of it* can possibly mean in the context and experience of Rastafari will be studied further in the analysis.

Dr. M.V Nadkarni (2011, 75) argues the spiritual leader Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi’s spirituality was not a philosophy-centered star-gazing, but something extremely practical for it pervaded the dimensions of the personal and the public, individual, and the social as well as the political. Gandhi’s outlook was that any individual could always find fulfilment and realization of truth or God, and that personal salvation was not to be sought in isolation, but in the world, struggling against poverty, hunger, tyranny, and injustice. The name of the religion did not matter to him, because his outlook included all of them. Nadkarni suggests Gandhi’s religion was a religion of *humanism*.

It can be argued that some leaders and freedom fighters of the world have followed Gandhi’s example in their practice. Martin Luther King can be seen as one such figure, a leader relevant to

¹⁴ *Ego* references to the separate, illusory sense of self. The spiritual journey is most often depicted as the journey of one awakening out of this separate sense of self, out of the “dream-state” into wholeness.

the cause of the Rastafari with his cause for equality and justice independent of racial or social background.

A spiritual leader, called Amma Amritanandamayi, has similar view on the path of development that should happen in the world. She has over 30 million followers around the globe, and is considered a saint by many. From when she was a teenager, she has been hugging people for consolation and as a form of blessing. She claims no religion other than *love* though her background is with Hinduism. Amma says: “*I don’t have a message higher than my own life.*” (Conversations with Amma, referenced 27.1.2015) Her life is about selfless service, and she has dedicated her life to helping the needy in different ways (she has multiple charities, has built hospitals and development schemes in addition to embracing people). In an interview, she was asked how we could bring greater understanding between religions, since all of them preach love and compassion, but are very different in social practices. Amma viewed that the mere study of scriptures won’t bring peace among religions, but that “*only by living these values will unity surely be established.*”

The intention of living the principles one preaches is one of the key things Rastafari generally advertises. This is where the role of the *livity* comes to play, as rastas often argue their spirituality not to be a religion, but a way of life. The analysis chapter will study in practical terms what it means to the informants to live out their ideology. The presentation of some teachings found present in Rastafari as well as other tradition has served the purpose of showing the possible similarities between these viewpoints. As noted previously, it is only natural for there to be non-African elements in Rasta when one considers the cultural history of the movement in Jamaica. Based on the research material, I would still note that the younger generations of rastas are generally more open to considering and incorporating non-African viewpoints to their faith.

“Usually, people answer the phone by saying, ‘Hello! I am so and so speaking’. Everybody says ‘I am’ while answering the phone. ‘I am’ is universal. The ‘I’ is the indwelling consciousness.” – Amma

The “I” is seen as something different to the “me”¹⁵ in many of the spiritual approaches of today. Eastern traditions often speak of “ego” when referring to attitudes and action drawn from or expressed by the “lower, illusion of a self”. These egos are seen as different from one another, as they are expressing different “karmic packages” and life stories, and experienced as the true centers of one’s identity and existence. What is considered same in each individual and being in general, is

¹⁵ Cf. Freud’s concept of the ego and superego.

the “I”. Since the concept is very much present in Rastafari faith, it is relevant to study this concept as it expressed by the members of the movement further in the analysis.

3.3 “Alternative” Science

A lot of the scientific research on spirituality seems to view the topic as a nonsense psychological mind-tricking, there has been “serious” research done that does not exclude the possibility of alternative methods for viewing reality. As with these researchers, it seems that one has to be a sort of an insider to the culture or practice one is conducting study on, otherwise there is a great danger of mis-interpretation due to the lack of understanding a phenomenon in its entirety.

Njoki Wane and Barbara Waterfall (2005) acknowledge forms of indigenous knowledge legitimate and valuable with their epistemological foundation in spirituality. As academics, they find it important to bring spirituality to their research and educational practices as a tool for growing a sustainable global future. They speak for “*a circular ontology, that of a holistic understanding of being*”. This perspective includes spiritual, mental, emotional and physical realities, and sees all existence as parts of the whole of creation. The relevant point in this kind of ontology is that it can simultaneously see difference and sameness, as everything is a part of the whole/one. Therefore, as knowledge can be situated, it can also be seen to have a core of universality. From this perspective, it is possible to look beyond the power games and agendas of different actors, and act from the experience of wholeness instead of separation.

Wane & Waterfall (ibid. 48) argue that spirituality is the science of the soul, and science as part of the creation is permeated by spirituality. Technology in one form or another is the outcome of creation. In this time, there is debate on what kind of technology is destructive. They refer to indigenous technologies having their base in, and functioning in harmony with the natural ecology. So why can't we, dwelling in the modern societies, have a similar, noble outlook? The authors also note that these indigenous peoples do not separate technology from the spirit of the community. The authors suggest a framework for action that sees human entities as ultimately connected and related as human family. They further suggest that what is needed from us as humans is to “embrace our diversity and come together” (ibid. 49.)

Mei Zhan (2012) discusses the topic of *oneness* through the example of Chinese medicine, a holistic method of treating symptoms rather than a disease as in traditional western medicine. She focuses on how the idea of oneness “comes alive” through the reinventions of traditional Chinese medicine.

Zhan argues that the concept of oneness is itself a way of asking critical questions and of cultivating new ideas by doing, thinking and being in the specific and the multiplicitious. She claims that though other ways of thinking and being are not new to the study of anthropology or broader humanistic inquiries, they have remained “*invisible and practically unthinkable as possible analytical frameworks for social analysis*”. Zhan notes that to think of oneness seriously as an analytic would oblige us to examine our own everyday practice in constructing intellectual genealogies and linkages as well as to ask serious questions branching of theory and analysis on the one hand and the phenomenon to be analyzed on the other. She suggests that oneness be “worlded”, made visible and thinkable through and as cultural analysis.

Zhan’s (ibid. 109—110) study of Chinese medicine is an exercise to achieving this goal. Her research is based on fieldwork in San Francisco and Shanghai through which she discusses the question of “*how uneven translocal encounters with science, biomedicine, and modernity, tianrenheyi (principle of “heaven and human are one”) generates new ways of thinking, doing and being while going through a process of obscuration, bifurcation, reanimation and refiguration in the ever-shifting discourses and practices of Chinese medicine.*” The writer has conducted the study by first examining the Daoist thought of oneness, and its intersections with Western academic discourses with emphasis on philosopher Martin Heidegger’s ontology. She argues that Daoist thinking has been seen merely as an object of analysis rather than analysis in its own right due to its exclusion from European intellectual genealogy.

Zhan further claims that oneness worlded “*as an analytic in an of the immanent*” poses a challenge for social scientists and cultural critics to reimagine analytical hierarchy and allows us to “*engage rather than explain and to co-imagine rather than circumscribe specific and creative ways of making and being human*”

Zhan’s study seeks to describe and validate the “unseen spiritual reality” of her informants by showing the ways spirituality truly pervades their everyday experience.

Jeffrey Moses (1989, preface) states his research of the universal message of unity has taken place over multiple years in which he has studied the scriptures for many of the world’s religions, collecting relevant sayings. The book thus gathers the messages of different religions according to themes, and compares them to each other. Moses argues that the message of unity was clear in all of them. He also claims that the sayings can be used as practical tools for inner development, as well as forming the base for how to form one’s life to live happier and achieve success and spiritual fulfillment. This, he sees, will also be the formula on how nations can live together peacefully.

Moses thus offers a practical guide for life based on spirituality. Oneness can be seen as the truth foundation held by many religions.

This can be seen relevant to my study, as Rastafari is seen as spiritual path that emphasizes the way of life a person has, their *livity*. It is of central interest to see how the informants seek to live from their understanding of spiritual guidelines, and further, what can be said of the nature of spirituality and oneness in Rastafari. I suspect the opening of theoretical framework shall give more context to what it means to explore this “nature of spirituality and oneness”.

Peter Sutton (2010) argues that the native people of Australia have adopted a dual-cosmology that allows them to simultaneously rely on traditional while acting in the post-colonial setting. He states that it is the nature of their original cosmology that made it possible for them to embrace the Western model, while this was not possible for the colonialists. Sutton notes that the phenomenon is not a matter of syncretism, of merging between two cosmologies, but truly a holding of two different views at once without a problem. Similar issue rises with Rastafari, which can be seen as an ancient tradition while it continues to transform and adopt influences from elsewhere, not the least from the western culture it seeks to criticize. The analysis of the research material will go deeper into these influences, especially for the adoption of eastern ideas that seem to co-exist with the African foundation in the movement.

The examples presented represent a new type of outlook and a necessity to consider spirituality perhaps differently than before in social sciences. On a broader view, I'd like to question the inherent division of “religion” and science, which is a topic already brought up by the chapter gone. The following chapter presents the theoretical background utilized for this research. While the study is highly material oriented, the theories introduced give another point of comparison and this way tools for analysis.

4. Theoretical Points of Reference

The theoretical framework of this study consists of social psychological theories of the self as an inter-connected formulation. This is justified, because Rastafari view on the world/life is often expressed as an experience where the self is not seen as a separate entity (e.g. speech, mannerism). The self as a relative compilation of different degrees is not a new discovery to social scientific research, and this study utilizes some of these views.

On another note, the research places Rastafari into a broader, post-modern framework, and examines it as a post-modern spiritual phenomenon. Therefore, the study will map out how the experience of spirituality and oneness is perceived by the post-modern individual that identifies as Rastafari. The research seeks to open new areas for conversation in social sciences by questioning the otherworldliness of spirituality. The following will go deeper into what this means and what implications the view has for the current research. There are hardly any social scientists to have theorized on the nature of spirituality (and oneness) itself. Most often spirituality is dealt with as a background variable in relation to some other aspect of personality or behavior (e.g. “addiction and spirituality”). I see this as a tremendous shortcoming in the field of social sciences, where the attempt for many is to not only to understand different forms of life, but to contribute to the wider understanding of differences of experiencing life in its very foundation.

The opening up of the theoretical background begins by presenting the larger framework as the context in which the spiritual mode of living and experiencing is taking place. Thus the study takes place in a post-modern environment which possibly has implications to the experience of the informants. However, this is only loosely considered, as the focus of this study is not post-modernism per se, but the experience of relationality in this time. The more central part of the theoretical framework is therefore formed by theorizations on the nature of reality and the self as relational experiences. The focus is almost entirely in the ideas of the sociologist, Kenneth Gergen, as he can be seen as a revolutionary on this area of envisioning a new way of looking at the reality.

4.1 The Self of the Post-Modern

This research is not about the current time’s influence on the person, or even an endeavor to say something about post-modern identities; it is still good to remember the spirit of the environment in which the informants are operating in. Rastafari is an Afro-centric phenomenon that derives much of its content from Africa, idolizing the members’ Motherland in many ways. Though it can be noted, as Bauman has, that there are hardly any modernized places on the globe, there are still non-westernized places. Generally speaking the African way of life and outlook is very different from the Western, and has remained traditional in many ways and places on the continent.

Zygmunt Bauman (2012) has introduced the idea of “liquid modernism” to describe the nature of this post-modern era. Bauman acknowledges that we find ourselves in a place, where the old ways of doing things do not work anymore, the old learned or inherited ways of life are no longer suitable for the current human condition, but when the new solutions and ways of doing things have not yet arrived to replace the old dysfunctional ones. He notes that the challenges we are facing today are

more urgent than ever before which leads to not having a clear picture where we exactly are going unlike before. Bauman claims that though forms of modern life can vary considerably, what unifies everyone on the planet are the features of fragility, temporariness, vulnerability and tendency to continuous change. Flexibility (liquidity) has thus replaced solidity as the optimal condition to be pursued of things and affairs. How this is reflected on identities, is that they are constructed by taking advantage of multiple sources and elements in a creative way, and by avoiding “solidity” and permanency. Identity is experienced as a continuous, reflexive project.

Indeed, as noted in the previous chapters on New Age spiritualities, they are characterized by the freedom to mix and match from different sources, used for purposes of self-development and spiritual growth. How much of this can be applied to what the members of the movement are going through will be seen in the course of this research.

Similarly Roy Baumeister (1986) claims that in pre-modern times our current emphasis on individuality was absent. Furthermore the idea that each person has a unique character and special potentialities that may or may not be fulfilled has, according to him, been alien to pre-modern culture. Baumeister reminds that the “individual”, in a certain sense, did not exist in traditional cultures, neither was individuality highly valued. It was with the rise of modern societies and with the differentiation of labor that the separate individual became a focus of attention. The self can be argued to be not only a reflexive project, but also a trajectory of development from the past to the future.

The idea of *continuous becoming* in Rastafari brought up by Carole Yawney (1999, 153), seems to have common ground with Baumeister’s view on the self’s development. There is an interesting tension between the ancience the movement holds valuable, and not having a very long history as a spiritual expression which makes it viable for suggestions of a late modern phenomenon of spirituality.

It can be argued that because the nature of modernity is to have no foundation, it faces the individual with a complex variety of choices and, at the same time offers little help in deciding which options should be selected. One is not only following lifestyles by will, but in an important sense is forced to do so. According to one definition, a lifestyle can be a more or less wholesome set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices have use value, but because they give material form to a specific narrative of self-identity. (ibid. 80–81.) Yawney’s (1979) idea of Rastafari sacralizing their environment and daily practices present another interesting

angle on the subject of why the informants give the meaning they do to the practices or views that come with their choice of lifestyle.

Lifestyles can be seen as routinized practices, the routines incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting and preferred environment for encountering others; but according to the flexible nature of the time and perception of the self, the routines followed are reflexively open to change. The more post-traditional the setting in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and re-making. Lifestyle is not a term that has a lot applicability to traditional cultures, because it implies choice within plurality of possible options, and is “adopted” rather than “handed down”. (ibid.) The process of the informants’ “adoption” of Rastafari is one of the themes studied in the analysis. This has happened in different ways, and only so far as it has come by way of heritage can be spoken of handed down tradition.

How the self is experienced in relation to everything else is thus central to this study. The data will show how flexible is the take of the research subjects to their way of life. As mentioned by Yawney, Rastafari emphasizes the theme of ephemerality, in other words being-in-transition. This constant becoming can also be seen as the temporary nature of all events in life. As noted previously by the theorists, this becoming is seen as result of modernism. The research will evaluate the role of this in the informants’ experience and views on the self.

It can be argued that what is characteristic to this post-modern time in many areas of social life, including the domain of the self, is that there is a lack of determinant authorities. When it comes to specific institutions of authority, religion quite clearly has had a leading place. Religious authority created mysteries while simultaneously assured to have privileged access to them. This, however, creates now a contradiction to the past. Different forms of traditional authority have become only authorities among others, parts of a vast array of expertise. The expert (or the specialist) is somewhat different from the traditional authority. Authority is in this situation no longer an alternative to doubt: in assessing the claims of rival authorities, the lay individual tends to utilize that principle in the skeptical outlook which pluralistic circumstances almost inevitably presuppose. (ibid. 194–195).

Rastafari is a movement that has no institutionalized leadership structure. There are multiple leading figures that have greatly influences to the movements rise and sustainability, but no unitary opinion on the authority. It is relevant for this study to examine the research subjects’ views on authority, since Rastafari has generally taken a very critical stand on “public authorities” such as the police or the (Western) church institution.

4.2 The Relational

Different fields of social sciences (social psychology, sociology, developmental psychology, contemporary psychoanalysis and post-modern social theory) all seem to agree that the self is not as unitary as it is multiple. This phenomenon is also seen to be now more present than it ever has before. (McAdams, 1997). The topic of the relational nature of reality has also been popular with a lot of social interactionist (see e.g. James 1890, Mead 1934, Cooley 1902). The limits of this concept have been tested and stretched by these theorists, and this study can possibly be seen as one such attempt as well. Kenneth Gergen (e.g. 1997, 2009) is a social-psychologist who gives credit to many, what he calls, “textual companions” that have influenced his work, and the “relational epiphany” that has so far ended up in his ideas on the nature of reality as completely relationally constructed. His concept is suitable for this research as it presents a radically different type of conceptualization on the self that goes beyond the boundaries of limited, separate entities.

Gergen (2009) argues that the prevailing individualistic worldview divides things, and most importantly people, into separate wholes. The self is in this way seen as foundationally separate entity with its detached history, experience and mind. Human action is believed from this view to originate in a mental interior which further strengthens the belief in the idea of what Gergen calls *bounded* beings. He suggests that this view be questioned, and sees everything stemming from relationship instead.

The individual “I” is thus a *relational* being that cannot ultimately be separate from anything or anyone else. Actions of this being are the outcome of past and present circumstances in relationship. He further argues that by seeing reality this way, as seamless webs of relationships, gives a new foundation to perceiving what seemed to be “the other” outside of the self. Gergen speaks for alternative knowledge, claiming that knowledge production today that is based on the reality of separate minds, leads to appreciation of certain types of knowledge over others. The age of individualism as the “era of enlightenment” celebrates the triumph of the human mind in expense of the relationship. The subject of this research being Rastafari spirituality and oneness studies this relational foundation of experiencing reality through the experiences of the informants.

As noted previously, Gergen is not the first, or the only social scientist to speak of the subject of relationality. William James was one to make a theoretical distinction between two fundamental

notions of the unity of the self. He differentiated the “I”, the root and bare experience, from the “me” that represents the unity that comes from the transformation that comes from one’s mismatched and disorganized self-conception into a meaningful life story (McAdams, 47–48). In the field of philosophy, he argued for “radical empiricism” and the power of *pure experience* as the only way of truly knowing anything. In his theorization, multiple subjects can know the same object (James 1996). Thus he, like many other socially oriented theorists, still sees separate entities, while in Gergen’s theory subjects and objects are not really relevant, for it goes beyond this differentiation while focusing on the relating. Just how relational is the view and experience-world of Rastafari will be studied in the analysis.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1979, 59) has also argued that Western the idea of “*the person as bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole*”, is quite a foreign concept to many of the world’s cultures. Indeed, it can be argued that the African view on the individual and society differs greatly from the Western idea. Rastafari is an Afro-centric phenomenon that draws significantly from its African foundation when it comes to the ways in which the world/life view is constructed. One the themes studies the different influences present in Rastafari which can provide information also on the reasons for adopting certain views in the first place.

This research follows Gergen’s idea on the relational being, as it intersects with the concept of oneness and spirituality that is based on this type relational foundation. The idea of the relational being (rather than self, since it carries the connotation of separate entities) assumes that knowledge is produced in co-action and relationship. The process of coordination in gergenian sense precedes the very concept of the self; the existence of an isolated self or a fully private experience is simply impossible. Gergen notes that though his theorization of the relative being has been influenced by many other theorists, and symbolic interactionism in particular, his view is radically different in its foundation. What makes it different is that though many socially oriented social interactionists and others in the field of social psychology view the self as inter-connected, they still remain in the foundational premises of separate entities. Gergen moves beyond this separation by assuming the relationship as the preceding *state of being*.

The intersection to what in many of the world’s main religions and spiritual practices hold central and foundational to, the idea of some form of “higher power”, is very interesting, and I think the key to “grounding spirituality”. In the West there has not been scientific attempts to understand the

deeper dimension of being itself, and Gergen's perspective, not meant for philosophical ponderings or science purposes only, but to be applied to one's life with others. Rastafari is applying a knowledge system of its own in its efforts to make clear of reality. This research will present the possible similarities and differences of these approaches to some fundamental elements in being in the world.

"One of the greatest, most fundamental problems all religions face in our times is their relationship to science" (Keiji Nishitani). Gergen (ibid. 354–356, 364) is an academic who includes spirituality to his considerations with the hope of softening the separation between these dimensions. He does this by suggesting the possibility of "co-creating good" with non-foundational ethics by way of relational responsibility. Gergen argues that in the West the moral unit is seen as the individual, which means the tradition of the moral worth creates a reality of separation (me vs. you). And in a world that is founded on separation, personal well-being is the center of relevance, though Western moral codes place high emphasis on "doing good for others". As we are reminded of *"do unto others..."* we are also reminded that we are separate, and that the natural instinct of a self is self-gratification. Gergen suggests that moral value spring from collaborative action, where there are no acts of evil in themselves, for the meaning of all action is derived from relationship. Individual responsibility is thus replaced by relational responsibility.

What will be studied, is the connections these foundationally radical ideas have in a spiritual tradition. To what extent do the informants express and experience unity with other forms of life and possibly "god"? It will also be studied if the moral unit can be seen as the individual in this counter-western expression of spirituality, or if there is another approach.

4.3 From Relationships to Unities in Science?

Gergen (374–375) admits his account of relational being is only one possible way of breaking the boundaries of separation, and shedding the light on the potentials of relational existence. He in fact refers to the metaphor of procreation in its capacity to *"generate a powerful sense of oneness in the here and now"* of daily life. He argues reproduction is a very evocative metaphor in the West, as it is connected to a spiritual dimension. Sexual union thus suggests not only a joining of bodies and spirits, but all of humanity, covered with a veil of mystery.

From people and objects, relationality can also be expanded to cover the relationship of humans to other living matter. It can hardly be debated that our survival is a matter of broad interdependence, and the planet can be seen as a life-form in which there are delicate balances of temperature,

oxygen, and the like, that are sustained (to some extent) by the human and plant activity (see e.g. Lovelock 1979). Deep ecologists argue such relational awareness demands an entire re-thinking of our cultural values and institutions. What is needed according to this view is the abandonment of the value of self-gain replaced by a fundamental commitment to sustain the habitat as a whole. This notion links the human to the environment in a compelling way. It is also suggested that there are significant spiritual implications within ecological metaphor, for in nature there is a spiritual presence, an indwelling of God. (see e.g. Wilbur 2001, Wallace 2005). (ibid. 382–383). The attitude of care toward the earth and animals is very prevalent in Rastafari ideology as seen previously in the presentation of the phenomenon's characteristics. Just how predominant and similar are these views in the informants' experience is explored in analysis.

In addition to other alternative suggestions to experiencing reality and the relationality of it, Gergen (ibid. 386–387) also refers to Buddhist views that do not agree with the reality of a bounded or remote God, but resonate with the idea of co-action. The division between self and non-self is not only misleading, but contributes to the character of our suffering according to this view. Over time (and lifetimes) one becomes conscious that there are no independent objects or events in the world, but that these are mere human constructions. In the practice of suspending these illusory constructions in the mind, as for example meditation, one enters a consciousness of the whole or a unity. In Buddhist terms, one enters consciousness of *codependent origination*, or the sense of pure relatedness of all. Nothing we recognize as separate exists independent of all else. One can consider the waves of the ocean, where each wave is ultimately within all others (see e.g. Kwee et. al. 2006).

The paragraph above presents a very similar outlook as what has been seen previously in the chapters familiarizing the theme of eastern and New Age spiritualities. Of course, Buddhism is an eastern philosophy, and represents identical view to those lacking of academic evidence.

So we can recognize that the idea of oneness can be seen to have come up as the idea of *relatedness* in social sciences. This research seeks to test some of these concepts to see how the manifestations of one spiritual practice match with scientific notions of fully relational reality, and what this possibly looks like in the lives and opinions of the informants. The idea of oneness in eastern spiritualities can be seen as very similar in that it precedes the individual experience. The research attempts to find out if, and in what ways the experiences and views of the informants can describe the experience of *living from* a spiritual vantage point and oneness. The more general question of whether spirituality be *grounded* or de-mystified is also reflected upon.

5. The method and methodology: Ethnography

The method for collecting processing the data in this research is conducted through an ethnographic process. This was found to be the most appropriate choice for approaching data of this nature, where the goal is to understand and describe as deeply as possible how the informants experience their spiritual lives. Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007, 2) note that due to the complex history of the evolution of ethnographical research, ethnography does not have a standard, well-defined meaning. Each disciplinary context has reinterpreted and re-contextualized it in various ways to deal with particular circumstances. What comes to the collecting of the data, however, usually ethnography involves the researcher participating in some way to the people's daily lives for an extended period of time watching what happens, listening to what is said and perhaps asking questions through informal or formal interviews, and collecting documents and artefacts.

Hammersley & Atkinson suggest that usually ethnographers draw on multiple sources of data, but may sometimes rely primarily on one.

Ethnography as a method for data collection in this study means semi-structured, theme driven interviews, participation observation and taking field notes whenever things worth remarking happen on the field. The interviews play a significant role in the research, as the goal is to gain understanding of the lived reality of spirituality as a member of the Rastafari community. The interviews make it possible to ask questions that point to the specific interest of the research. Theme interviews are carried out so that same themes are gone through with all the informants while still leaving room for variations in the order and structure of the questions. Theme driven way enables for the interviewee to emphasize what he/she feels is important as opposed to the researcher strictly directing the speech (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2010, 47—48). I felt this was important as I didn't want to direct the interview in a strict way, but allow the meaningful things to the informants' to arise in their speech. Another significant tool to capture relevant moments has been field notes written based on observations and informal discussions on the field,

The issue of seeing the study subject as the "other" has also been a popular theme in social sciences and ethnographic research. Akhil Gupta & James Ferguson (1992, 342—343) note that the increasing attention to representational practices in anthropology has led to better understanding of processes of objectification and the construction of other-ness. The writers also problematize the, what can be argued as cultural critique's way of viewing cultural difference as a separation of "us" and "them", and further, the unity of us and otherness of the other. Rastafari as a highly varied and geographically dispersed phenomenon is not easily identifiable as a "unified other". Furthermore, I am not a completely other to the group as we share multiple points of reference. People from very

different cultural, socio-economic and personal backgrounds identify with the movement, so it is reasonable to ask, is it necessary to attempt to define a group like this (or any group), and make a distinction between “what I represent” and what “they represent”?

As a social psychological, ethnographic study, this research also sees the relevance of viewing the phenomenon (Rastafari spirituality) in its local and global contexts. Carole Yawney (1995, 58) who has done noteworthy amount of ethnographic research with Rastafari, raises an issue regarding the spread of the movement across national borders; To what extent does Rastafari have the capacity for developing a universal cultural appeal beyond its local, Caribbean-based, specifically Jamaican, Afrocentric orientation, without fundamentally altering its premises, and what type of tensions does this globalization create within the movement. Rasta is thus a global phenomenon, but the forms it takes are local, as seen through the examination of the data. In this research the interest is to study closely on those local manifestations of Rastafari, the cases, if you will. I seek to be as informed of each of the informant’s personal context in order to get a clear understanding of the matters that have influenced their experience. It is not always practical for the purpose of this study to open up these histories in the text, but at some situations it is relevant for the subject/theme studied.

As remarked above, my position in this researcher is two-fold; Though the strongest emphasis in on conducting ethnography by focusing on the informants expressions, there is a hint of autoethnography in this study due to the relationship, and thus “access to” the movement. Tony Adams, Arthur Bochner & Carolyn Ellis (2010) note that autoethnography can be briefly depicted as an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience so to understand cultural experience. Autoethnographic view challenges conventional ways of conducting research and representing others. It treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act. A researcher uses principles of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product. Further in the text I will go into more detail what the using of autoethnographical view means in this research.

The next chapter will first present the process of collecting the data, handling the materials and depiction of the field more accurately. After this I will write open the way in which I first came across with the subject and the research subjects. I will also reflect on some of the dilemmas and benefits that have arisen in relation to communicating with the informants in this ethnographic research along the way.

5.1 The Data, the Field and Content Analysis

The research makes use of multiple sources while emphasizing the data collected through semi-structured, thematic interviews, as well as field notes of informal conversations with members of Rastafari movement. The interviews comprise of approximately 10 questions, taking from 1 hour to 2 hours depending on the session.

Other material used as sources of information on the subject comprises of material found on the internet, where members of the faith express their views. The context in which the movement has evolved forms another part of secondary data. This includes the exploration to the historical and socio-political climate that was the spark for the movement to come about in Jamaica. The purpose of taking the secondary data into consideration is to offer explanatory background to what comes across in the main materials. This does not however suggest that there is a straight causation between the geographical location and experiences and views expressed by the informants. When primary (interview) material is used, I often refer to the informants through their place of residence or origin if it seen as relevant to the topic at hand.

The research with the interview materials it includes is located in multiple geographical sites. The primary ethnographical fieldwork took place in Jamaica and Finland. I call this primary, because the research includes interviews not recorded by me in other locations as well. All the primary interview material as well as the field notes of situations and interactions with different Rastafari has been collected in between fall 2012 and 2014. 12 months were spent in Jamaica, 3 months in the summer of 2014 which is also when the interviews with the rastas living in Jamaica were carried out. There were a total of 7 Rastafari participating in the interviews.

One of the 5 Jamaican residing study subject is Nigerian born, while the rest are Jamaicans. There is some variation to the socio-economic backgrounds of the informant's. Some of them have higher (university) educations, while some do not, some have travelled while other have not. While these are factors that, like any life experiences, affect the viewpoints and opinions the informants express, the reach of this study cannot cover a deeper analysis into how much these factors can in fact make a difference. All of the study subjects clearly value opportunities for self-employment as much as possible which fits well with the ideal of self-sufficiency in the movement. The Rastafari community is much larger and tighter in Jamaica than in Finland. In fact, there isn't much of a community in Finland as far as the informants' experiences go. According to Tuomas Äystö's (2012) graduate research, there were about 100 rastas residing in Finland in 2010. The information

was based on his inquiries from Finnish rastas, who seem to be leading a more communal lives than the immigrant-based rastas in the country.

The 2 informants in Finland used for this research are African; one Ghanaian and the other South-African-Zimbabwean. Both have lived in Finland for several years, brought here by family ties initiated in Africa. Both of these informants are musical artists, though that is not their primary means of earning a living in Finland at the moment. As noted previously, the Rastafari residing in Finland are individual cases, and might not even know other rastas. One of the informants told me he didn't know any other "*real rastas*" here, only those who imitate Jamaican Rastafari. The interesting subject of perceived authenticity is studied in the analysis further.

As all the other research subjects I've done interviews with, the ones living in Finland are male. The reason for using only male informants, is that it was significantly easier to wake the interest of doing interviews with male rastas. This seems somewhat natural in the context of Rasta, as the next quotation from a Jamaican rasta shows: "*There was one time, when everybody was saying that, research this... How when white people used to come to Jamaica, because nuff black woman in Jamaica never want a rastaman, unless him have music or nuff money, you know what I mean? So when a white woman come to Jamaica, because they see the truth, they know the positive, they see... They jus gravitate to the rastaman.*" Though there were plans of meeting with female rastas met through my social circles, the women happened to be busier and due to crossing timetables we could not make the interviews happen. The male rastas were also more accessible simply due to the fact that there are more males "out there" on the streets whether it be in Finland or Jamaica.

I have met most of the informants that I've done interviews with either in Jamaica or Finland more than once, and have had multiple conversations with them. I find this important to this type of ethnographic research, where I am interested in hearing the people's true, personal experiences and observing their actions and manners of speech. Because of the fact that almost all of the informants were familiar to me before the interviews, the recorded sessions would also be flowing quite effortlessly. I noticed this when I was doing an interview with someone I had only met once before, and the conversations was significantly more challenging.

The interviews progressed according to a set question base (see 8.3 Appendix), giving room to go deeper into the subjects that were interpreted as central to the interviewees in respect to their views on and experiences of spirituality. The conversations would begin with a clarification on the point in time and lives of the informant's when they realized they "found" themselves as rastas (only one of the informants came from a family heritage of rastas). This would often naturally progress and

shed light on the next subject of relevance. I would ask about their opinion on different symbols of faith (God, Christ), general Rastafari concepts, and the relationship of everyday life and spirituality. The relating would often also naturally touch upon the topic of racism, as there were questions of difference and separation asked. Though racism can be seen as quite a relevant topic to Rastafari, it is also a large one. I therefore didn't have an opportunity to delve into those depths in the premises of this research.

In addition to the primary research subjects, there were other rastas that I spent a lot of time with but would not have a recorded interview with. As part of the secondary data I take advantage of statements made in documentaries by Rastafari residing in Toronto, U.S.¹⁶ and in Sweden¹⁷. I find it uneasy to call the ones who answered the interview questions main informants. Any informant that expresses their experience about the topic is relevant to the research, so there is no need later on to separate the "main informants" from the other research subjects (unless it is relevant for some other reason). Many of the relevant and meaning-rich situations came about unexpectedly in casual conversation which gave the researcher no choice but to rely on taking notes. Also I find that though most of the informants interviewed were familiar with me, the tape recorder always altered the freedom of expression to some extent. One of the informants even wished to do the interview again, as he was unsure if I was happy with his answers.

The field of this research comprises not only of these two physical places where I met and related with the research subjects, but of the communication kept over the internet. The field is also divided according to the communities the informants locate themselves. Entry to the field thus takes different forms depending on the ideology the particular informant ascribes to. As noted previously, two of the informants interviewed live in Finland, and are not connected to any Rastafari community in Jamaica or elsewhere. The majority of the Jamaican subjects, on the other hand, are a part of certain community. The influence of the location and "geographical background" to the experience can be seen relevant. As noted previously, the goal, however, is not to generalize, but to explore the seeming simultaneous division and oneness in the movement. It is thus justified and useful that the informants represent Rastafari from different geographical locations. All of the informants I have spoken to are originally from Jamaica or Africa, and the significance of this will be reflected on as is seen relevant further on in analysis.

¹⁶ Rastafari Documentary 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7KPAfIRW8g>

¹⁷ Från Sverige till Himlen, Taivasteillä (Aired 7.3.2014) www.arena.yle.fi

After the data was collected and interviews transcribed, the materials were further compartmentalized according to themes. After this phase, themes related and relevant to the research objective have been chosen. Analyses of these themes are carried out by way of content analysis which is a method of textual analysis in which the text is categorized and summarized, and the differences and similarities between categories explored. A thick description is formed of the studied phenomenon, where the results are linked to the wider context of the phenomenon. Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2002; 105, 109—116) note that content analysis should be conducted either in data-oriented, theory-oriented or theory-based way. This research is clearly relying on data in its orientation with analysis which is justified with the nature of the research goal and materials used. The aim is to understand and describe the experience and meaning-making of the Rastafari informants of their lives as spiritual beings. A person's experience of their spirituality can be best acknowledged and depicted in this kind of ethnographic research by way of allowing the material (and so the person) to speak for itself as much as possible. This also enables the process to be transparent which I see as something of great value especially in research that seeks to give the study subjects an opportunity to speak their experience. The benefit of analysis for the informants and other readers can be the structured way in which the themes are presented and interpreted from a different, researcher's social scientific point of view.

The next chapter will give a closer look on how the research process got started. This breathes life into what *field* actually means in this research. The place of the researcher is also reflected on in relation to the research subjects. This helps to comprehend the different challenges and process of negotiating suitable proximities to the informants.

5.2 Getting to Know and Relating to the Informants: Ethical Considerations

The introduction to the field and the subject began in fall 2012 as I was studying Rastafari in Kingston, Jamaica. At the time I didn't have it in my thoughts to do a master's research on the subject, but very early on was familiarized with this eclectic movement. I was identified with many aspects and the experience world of the members of the faith I met, and was driven to find out how much of it I could relate to. There was thus a lot of interaction with Rastafari, and through my studies I had opportunities to visit sights and events that hold significance to the community. I wrote notes on these field trips as well as when interacting or coming across with situations that seemed meaningful to my interests. I made friendships that later on became also researcher-informant relationships for this study. Thus, some of the informants interviewed or informally "reasoned with" for this research, are people I know from my first introductory trip to Jamaica.

Due to the objective of finding out the differences and similarities in the members' experiences, I did not want the research to be confined to Rastafari in Jamaica. It was also part of the research composition to see Rastafari as a global movement which is why informants from different countries have been involved in the study. The biggest challenge for me in this regard was that needed to find Rastafari in Finland. I had not met any rastas in Tampere, and was finding it difficult to get in touch with members of the movement locally. I kept my eyes and ears open, and finally encountered a rasta on the streets of Tampere. To find more I went to reggae events in Tampere and Helsinki. One more person ended up taking part in this research. It was clear to me though that the nature of the community, or the lack of it, was something very different compared to what I had seen in Jamaica. The rastas in Finland were individual cases, and they did not have connections to other Rastafari in Finland. In Jamaica, every other person claims they are a rasta. The community, and communities, of rastas are plentiful and easy to find. The emphasis on this research turned out to be on Jamaican Rastafari simply because there was much more data for me to acquire. To access the communities with a research interest was a bit more complex as we shall see next.

The difference of how familiar the research subjects were with me played a role in how they would respond to questions. The ones that had only met or spoken to me once before (2 of the informants), seemed to first see me as a person of no knowledge of the subject, and would start educating me on the basis and history of the movement. In fact, it was very common that they first spoke not from their experience, but the ideology itself, with the voice of the general Rastafari view. There was always also a transition to more personal view as time passed. Thus, if they knew me quite well from before, they would also know how much and which type of things I knew of Rastafari as well as what I was interested in and where I was coming from with my questions.

As noted previously, Carole Yawney (1999, 154) has argued that Rastafari experience a history of misrepresentation in academic studies and in social media. This history was present on the field for me as well. In this study when encountering possible research subjects, the members of the faith would "test" me for what I knew and what I wanted. Some of them would rather speak to me if I identified myself as a rasta. One bobo priest would ask on our first encounter: "*Do you love Rastafari? Do you love Haile Selassie I?*" Another elder who I wanted to meet through a professor of Rastafari studies in Jamaica wanted to know: "*Has she given up scissors, comb and meat?*" As a researcher wanting to go further into knowing their experiences while staying true as a person, it was difficult for me to answer. I knew they would be more likely to open up if I confessed as a rasta too. I feel what they, and probably the other informants as well in their own ways, wanted to know, was how I relate to Rastafari, am I a rasta. "*And I say I come to see you, so that to see if you are*

real rasta. If you are into real rastality, or just being there. Or just growing the hair. Or that time you didn't have even locks on your hair. So from there I know there's a link of rasta." The last quote is from an informant living in Finland, describing his motivation to agree to meet me after the first encounter. Clearly it was of some value to the informants what meanings they attached to me when deciding to take part in the research.

There was not an issue with this kind of testing with the rastas that I had time to get to know over a longer period of time, when the interest began as personal (though I do not think these interests can be separated). They knew I did not identify myself as a rasta, but that I held similar views and experiences of life with them. This is also where the boundaries of who is rasta became visible and vague, as I was identified as rasta from outside while not directly attaching the definition to myself. The following chapter goes deeper into the negotiations between holding a research position while partially identifying with aspects of the movement.

5.2.1 Who Am I in This Research? Mixing Auto to Ethnography

This research has an autoethnographical stance to it though it is not an autoethnography. Heewon Chang (2008, 3—4) notes, autoethnography as a method of inquiry takes advantage of the researcher as a cultural agent and a source for data. The goal of this method is to find cultural understanding that lies beneath autoethnographical experience. She argues that auto-ethno-graphy should be ethnographical in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation and autobiographical in its content orientation. Chang advises that for the ethnographical emphasis to be achieved, autoethnographics go through the research process of collecting the data, analyzing the data and writing the report. The data is collected in the field through participation, self-observation, interview and document review. The data is verified by means of triangulating sources and contents, analyzed and interpreted through deciphering the cultural meanings of events, thoughts and behaviors; of which the autobiography is finally written. Data is examined critically and analytically to be able to interpret the underlying cultural meanings of what is told, recalled and observed of them. Autoethnography seeks a through self-examination within its cultural context, where the result is to gain cultural understanding of the self and others.

While this research is not focused on what can be drawn from me as a cultural agent in Rastafari, I do want to consider and make visible the possible ways in which my position as a researcher, as well as other visible signs of personal history such as color, play a part in encounters with the subjects of the study. This implies the description and reflection of the nature and "layout" of the encounters, and in some cases (where/if seen relevant) discussions of the matter with the

informants. This research thus has an autoethnographical flavor in so far as the methodological approach is concerned. The researcher in this case can be seen to represent a person of difference from the point of view of the informants while being identified to some aspects of what the subjects represent. The personal (socio-cultural) background of someone doing research on Rastafari, can be seen as of relevance to the data that gets produced. From which angle the informants interpret and evaluate the person doing research on them clearly affects the experienced freedom of expression of one's views and experiences. Instances in the data have proven that this can be seen to be so. Transparency to a degree as high as possible, is therefore a useful approach and foundation for an ethnographic study such as this.

Yawney (1985, 1) remarks the challenge of “going native” versus obtaining a clear researcher position when trying to understand the way of life and worldview of the study subjects. She claims that spiritual knowledge itself can be legitimately motivating action, and should not be explained through an assumption of deprivation (e.g. people are spiritual to get by in life). The boundary between an “insider” and “outsider” can be very vague, and Yawney suggests it is of great importance to assume an insider position when studying Rastafari. I felt both an insider and an outsider to this community, and agree with Yawney in her remark of the importance of assuming a position of an insider in a community that is political and has experienced misinterpretation by scientific researchers before. And to truly understand someone else's view, one must be open to see with the eyes of another. I feel it is thus also a personal quality of a researcher in terms of how open they can be to something “different”. For me this was somewhat easy. I didn't feel all that different, and that feeling was, I trust, shared with the study subjects.

While it can be easy to “get inside” and earn the trust of the informants, one must simultaneously be aware of not slipping into a position that jeopardizes the research. Thus, holding appropriate distance to the study subject was of vital importance. The more relaxed and “themselves” the informants are, the more rich material the researcher gets. However, if the researcher gets too relaxed, the nature of an encounter can turn too casual or position the researcher in an uneasy way (especially when faced with ethnic and gender differences). The negotiations in these situations were always delicate, as I wanted to keep the person as an informant but was not willing to go over personal boundaries of comfort to do so. Also, in matters of spirituality/religion, one must be quite discrete in approaching positioning the questions.

Allaine Cervonka & Liisa Malkki (2007, 2—3) discuss the issue of research ethics and personal lives meeting in “the emotional process of field work”. The writers note the closeness of ethics and

emotions in fieldwork as not only social situations packed with tension, but as dilemmas that are noted in the body. During my fieldwork, I have been faced with situations that bring about this issue. One such instance was when I was gathering background information of an informant. We were reasoning through social media, and conversations could get quite personal at times. The boundary of the relationship turning from researcher-subject –relationship to friendship started to blur, and that brought about ethical questions of what is appropriate and what is not. How much should I consider my words, how far can I go from the “research position”? This is particularly tricky when one specifically seeks to establish a relationship that is not hierarchically positioned in order to get as close to “natural” material as possible from relaxed informants while simultaneously keeping the relationship “professional”.

This research project is an attempt to show as transparently as possible the relationship and intertwining of theoretical and empirical knowledge. The study subject represents a “form of knowledge” typically not seen as valid in itself (spiritual knowledge). The theoretical background that informs it is critical theory that allows the different ways of producing knowledge and being in the world to emerge onto the paper. Ethnography as a method is a central tool for this kind of new form to appear.

The only times that the personal and open approach I had proved tricky, were the times when the informants read different meanings to the communication than what was intended from my side. There were situations with some of the subjects that the interaction and interest was given romantic meanings to. In these situations, again, the worry was how to keep the informant engaged while making it clear the interest was purely professional or friendly. I see that there was no way I could’ve gotten as rich of data with a more impersonal style. Owning the trust of the research subjects was crucial in a subject as delicate as one’s spiritual views and experiences. It is still worth a note that in this particular faith members are generally not shying away from expressing their opinions, but are very out-spoken and comfortable talking about their spiritual views. All the informants were also willing to have their names disclosed in the research paper. However, I have anonymized the characters to some extent, as I did not see the benefit of using the informants’ names etc. in this research.

As noted previously in this paper, Rastafari is a very open tradition in terms of who can claim their membership to the movement. It was a whole process of its own to make it clear to myself who I define as Rastafari in this study, for that determines who is “qualified” to be an informant. I ended up looking for informants based solely on their identification with being a rasta. There were

occasions when I was recommended a person for the interview, but after speaking with them, turned out they were only categorized as rasta from the outside without being identified as one themselves. This comes to show the relationship of Rastafari as a personal faith versus rasta determined by other. This delicate balance is considered throughout the analysis. The next chapter presents the data with its analysis. As noted before, the selected themes have proven to inform something on the topic of spirituality, oneness, as well as the opposites of what can be seen as earthly and divided.

6. Spirituality and Oneness through Rastafaris'

The data is presented and analyzed through themes that are seen most significant from the point of view of the "daily spirituality" in Rastafari. It should be emphasized further that no broad generalizations can be, or is even necessary, drawn, as the interest and focus of the search is elsewhere. The aim is to examine the different themes as representations of the relevant topics in this research. There is also overlapping between the themes, which only come to show the highly interconnected nature of the subject matter. As noted previously, the themes are operationalized to show and make visible what and how it is that the informants experience spirituality, and what it is that oneness means to them. Over the course of the research it has proven that the informants connect various different things to their understanding and experience of the subject, and the core topics were chosen to represent the themes. Spirituality, as we will come to see, does not function as a separate or clear defined sphere. Furthermore, as suggested in the presentation of the Rastafari phenomenon, members can report very differing, even oppositional, views and experiences on the same subjects as the movement itself is very heterogeneous and open ended in this respect.

The different types of data from interview materials to notes of open conversations and opinions expressed by Rastafari outside of this research are all used as seen fitting to the themes. When quoting what someone has said, I see it important to use original material instead of linguistically corrected, Standard English versions. This is relevant especially with interviews with Jamaican Rastafari, who often speak patois (see chapter 4.1.1). Though it might be easier to translate patois into Standard English, I want to respect the cultural heritage of the research subjects' mother tongue that they have chosen to use when relating.

Though "the spiritual vibe" is somehow apparent and felt when communicating with rastas, it was fascinating to see that the subject, when brought up in the form of straightforward questions did not have ready-made answers waiting. Well there were answers waiting and expressed very similarly by many of the informants. But according to my experience, the first answers were the superficial ones

they had been used to repeating. Going deeper into the subject, and with the help of clarifying questions, it was easier for the informants to understand what I was really asking. Another issue was that all the interviewees would not straight away speak of their personal experience, but what I interpreted as “the general rasta view”. A reminder was often needed that I was interested in *their* personal views and experiences.

The first theme is an introduction to the realm of finding and claiming oneself as a Rastafari. It can be seen that this point in the informants’ lives is most often the starting, or at least a turning point, in one’s spiritual journey. The following chapters present the chosen themes most often as counterparts. This represents the paradoxical nature of the experiences, and how that comes across in the material gathered. Despite the manner of presenting the themes, I find it relevant to remind that the topics are more like continuums and interlocking realities uniquely expressed by each individual than fixed truths based on people’s reported experience. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, there is a continuous undercurrent throughout the themes, of the negotiations between what can be seen as “personal paths” and the social world, whether they be other members of Rastafari or people of the mainstream society.

6.1 Entry Points and Negotiations

To come into terms with who exactly can be named as a rasta is a pivotal starting point in discovering the dimensions of Rastafari spirituality. It was interesting in this respect to find out how the informants had come to know themselves as rastas, and how they signified rasta in other people. The way the informants have “found” rasta has been through different paths. There was either a family background accompanied by upbringing that familiarized them with the culture, or contact when growing up with people that somehow represented Rastafari values and lifestyle, which then were adopted by the informants as something natural. What is similar to all these stories is a foundational openness or ripeness to change. Clearly, if there is no such openness, nothing new can ever be adopted.

Almost all of the interviewees first point out the locks when asked how they recognize a rasta. But going deeper into the markers of Rastafari, they point out the secondary nature of the hair and other visible traits. Ennis Edmonds (2009, 32), however, argues that dreadlocks (the hair) have multiple levels of significance for Rastafari. Aesthetically, dreadlocks indicate a rejection of Babylon’s definition of beauty, especially as it relates to European features and hair quality. Ideologically the hair expresses the belief and commitment to naturalness. They also function as a “psychic antenna” connecting Rastas with the almighty and “earthforce” that is immanent in the universe. Edmonds’

talks on the general view of the movement. The meanings given to hair in the data of this research suggest various different outlooks. The study begins with finding out whether the hair itself represents rasta:

“No, you can’t just know it somebody pass you and ave locks pon di head and wear red, green and gold, “Oh yes, him a rasta”...But it’s more than that, just the red, green and gold and the locks, it’s about the livity ones can adapt to, other one can learn to, other one can see the truth and grasp up from deso.”

“When you see the person with the hair, you know it’s a rasta. As soon as you are talking; you know that this is not a deep rasta, this is just a shallow rasta.”

These informants are both making note here that one’s way of life and mindset coming through in one’s actions and words tells more than simply the outer signs when determining if one is called a *true rasta*. It can thus now be argued, that for some of the Rastafari, there is a difference between a “shallow” and a “true” rasta. But what is the difference?

“Rastafari is within I...So most definitely if...Dem character and dem attitude, dem lifestyle overall. You can’t have on the covenant, which is the locks, and say that you are not rasta. Because even if you say you is not a rasta, someone standing over there sayin “who you talkin, that rasta man or that rasta woman over there?” Because having locks on your head signify that you are a rasta. (Q: So when you see someone with locks, you say, that’s a rasta?) Yes, that’s a rasta. But to know a true Rastafari, I would have to socialize with him and see.”

So the informant is saying two things: One is seeing someone as rasta through the hair (and/or other outer signifiers) by the people in the society. But to know if someone is a *true rasta*, one would have to talk to them personally and see “*how they move*”. This is a matter I ran into more than once; I felt I was evaluated in relation to rasta based on how I dressed, spoke and “sat”. A Swedish-born Rastafari in the secondary data ranks the hair even lower in relation to the trueness of the faith: *“Many people think that rastas are pot smoking hippies who play reggae and get a dreadlock-hairstyle. Pot-smoking or locks have nothing to do with rasta faith. This is my hairstyle.”*

This rasta, with his knee-long dreads, is speaking in personal terms what the hair means to him. The connection of the hair to the faith is downplayed. It can be stated that the hair has played some part in the process of negotiation of Rastafari identity for all of the interviewees’ experience, as it is an outer marker of something that is experienced as deeply significant and central in one’s life. An African rasta experienced the hair in a very different way from the previous:

“So I cut the locks, and I relax from rasta. And be myself and started to eat fish and leave the meats. And I was there for long time, living, working. Before I realize, I’d come back to rasta (hair) again. And I ask myself, “I cut the locks. But I’ve grown it again?” Because when I cut my locks, I always keep afro. But I’ve come back to rasta. I’ve made rasta again. So that means, this is the track I have to be in. So I started, now I’m not gonna cut it no more. No matter what I go through, I’m not gonna cut it. I will just keep it. If maybe to trim just my beard and. And I’ve kept it til now that I’ve been rasta”.

Whereas the locks were seen previously as quite a shallow determinant of whether someone is a rasta or not, here they are seen almost as a tool for conveying and showing the person what he is to decide in terms of adopting a rasta lifestyle or not. This informant depicted elsewhere in the interview that when he grew his locks for the first time, it was not accepted, and the people around him (family members, friends) would tell him to cut the locks off, which he then did. The excerpt above tells the story of what happened after he followed their wishes, and how that helped him make up his mind on rasta.

The hair can thus be seen as something relevant in one’s spiritual journey for it is an outer sign of a choice to follow certain principles and lifestyle. When one chooses to adopt certain visible signifiers, it is also made known to others what one represents. To some informants in the study material, the locks do function as spiritual antennas as described by other academics as well. The interesting thing is that in some cultural contexts, just the locking of the hair is not often seen as a sign of someone claiming a rasta identity, let alone is seen as possessing spiritual powers through. For example in Finland, where rasta is a significantly less known phenomenon, a (white) person with locks might generally be interpreted as a “hippie” rather than a rasta. Perhaps this cultural context has influenced the stark outlook of the Swedish rasta, who saw the hair very irrelevant in rasta faith.

The question of what kind of a person is a true rasta is an impossible and irrelevant question to ask. It is nevertheless interesting to consider the justifications and borders of what it means to the informants to carry the crown (locks), as they say, for it can be seen as a spiritual symbol. It can be proposed that the hair is spiritually relevant to many, especially in the beginning of adopting the faith. The other outer signs were far less spoken of, and thus less important as far as I can see. The

exception to this, however, might have been with bobo and female rastas had they been interviewed.¹⁸

6.1.1 Authenticity and Pretense

As a researcher with “western appearance”, I found that though it was possibly easier to get into the community with certain hairstyle, later on that became irrelevant to how “western”, and thus different, they perceived me as. I felt it was useful for the purposes of the study and for my credibility in the community to be aware and consider the “appropriate” ways of presenting myself. It was better for me to be classified as a rasta than a tourist. The topic of differentiating true rastafari from fake ones also points to an issue many of the Rastafari spoken with brought up: The commercialization of the movement. All of the interviewees referred to this as a problem in the community while separating themselves from the “commercial” or “rental” rastas.

“But I understand the thing where you say “we include everybody”. Yes, that is the problem with Rastafari right now. And certain things soften towards the image from Bob Marley a sing bout it, and dem started using it inna tourism, as to say this whole image of blackness can be used to make money. Rasta-ting can make money. That is the difference mi say, between me and them (some other rastas). Them use Rastafari to push forward this earthly thing.”

By *earthly*, the informant is referring to this commercial aspect that has, according to many Rastafari, come about with the rise of the movement. Commercialized or not, Bob Marley has come up in the research as a figure who has also shaped or initiated the spiritual journeys of some rastas:

“Bob Marley is always a doorway into Rastafari still, you start to get into Bob, start to feel the music, feel him you say: “What’s this guy all about?” So I started the research, from there all Bob’s mysteries and Rastafari what he was saying and doing I said I had to know so. It start with Bob.”

In the framework of seeing Rastafari as a journey of continuous becoming, there has thus with each person been a doorway of some kind with entering the movement, as the previous informant describes. Furthermore, multiple discussions with members of Rastafari have shown that rasta itself has been a doorway to what are experienced as deeper dimensions of life and reality: *“Investigating this whole Rastafari thing, is what opened me up to my spirituality.”*

¹⁸ The bobos are known to cover their hair which itself has spiritual meaning (also familiar to other spiritual traditions). The rasta, and especially bobo, women pay attention to clothing, for covering of certain areas of the body can be experienced significant.

Yet, on multiple occasions in different parts of Jamaica, I was invited to purchase goods or services that were presented as more reliable or better in some other ways because the person selling said they were a rasta. There is definitely a certain image and reputation with the members of the movement locally, among tourists, and worldwide which can at times be beneficial and at times harmful to those identifying as Rastafari, depending on whether they care being identified by others as a true “faith” rasta or a commercial one.

The following theme is a central one to this thesis, as it studies the bearing of eastern traditions in this faith that generally only accentuates Africa in its expression. The topic of spirituality, I claim, brought with it interesting reference points to other traditions in the course of this research, some of which are studied next.

6.2 Africa and Eastern influences in Rasta

It is known, yet in my opinion an understudied area that though Rastafari is a movement based on Africa, it also draws from other worldviews and philosophies, as the presentation in the beginning of this paper also suggests. I found it interesting in the course of my familiarization with the culture of Rastafari that while the members were very much emphasizing Africa and spoke of themes central for the cause of the movement (e.g. repatriation and reparations), they would also refer to concepts familiar from ancient eastern (Asian) philosophy. In fact, as noted previously in the paper, the idea of oneness and one love, though from a general reference point of Rastafari is a concept introduced by Bob Marley, can be seen as a construct used in other traditions and religions as well. The fact that Rasta came up in Jamaica, which as I have posed previously, is itself very much a hybrid culture¹⁹, has influenced the flow, growth and adaptation of the movement outside Jamaica as well. The next paragraphs study the eastern and African flavors of spirituality in the movement through the informants’ viewpoints.

“Rastafari before we, you know. It’s just we taking it out of Africa and bringing it here and putting it back out in the world. So it’s a packaging, if you want to look at it from a marketing perspective. The package is different for people overseas, and it encourages them to look at their own blackness. And then certain things come out of that whole search, because Jamaica, main role in this world, reminding them of who they are.”

¹⁹ Reflected also in the country’s “Out of many, one people” –slogan describing the historical foundation of multiple nationalities becoming as one Jamaican people.

As mentioned previously, many of the informants describe how Rastafari for them has been a gateway to going deeper, or finding one's spirituality on a new level. The faith thus seems to function as a tool in one's growth, instead of being some sort of an ending point. Usually Rastafari serves the purpose of finding oneself as an African as one African informant put his desire: *"I wanted to be myself as an African"* While another informant saw a point of criticism towards the larger society in this respect: *"My hiccup is that black people pon a whole, don't know themselves."* To be authentically oneself was according to my interpretation without exception deeply rooted in the experience of being and knowing oneself as an African which has been noted before by many academics before (see e.g. Chevannes 2006).

For some, knowing oneself meant knowing one's cultural heritage regardless of the origin:

"We have all different races; Chinese, Japanese, you have the white race, you have the black race... You know what I mean? But we are all one people... Each individual must study root, where they coming from. That will make them more wiser and more stronger going forward in the future. Know where you're from so you could know where you're going. It's good for you to know where you're roots are from. That will help you, to show you, to come to the realization that we are all one people, no segregation."

Even though Rastafari is generally and historically known for its pro-black cause, multiple research subjects found it important for a person to know their heritage wherever they may be from.

Knowing one's roots was seen as one of the determinants of rasta regardless of one's geographical heritage:

"This is not my outlook that... Our spirituality as Rastafarians is something that is reserved for the black people or people of color. It is for the spirits and the souls that seek righteousness and equality and justice. There are racial barriers for those who construct racial barriers in their consciousness. But how could the worship of the creator be a racial thing when the creator created all race? So you have ignorant people, and you have people who are brainwashed, and you have other people who have different concepts and ideas, and different spiritual outlook of life, and different expectations from their spirituality. Being that they imagine in their selves that "my God is this way, and he only loves black people and doesn't love white people". I can't stop a man from imagining that, he has his own imagination. In my reality that is not a reality."

The viewpoint of this informant seems to represent many others in the study material. The informants simultaneously emphasize the, what feels to me like, superiority of things African or

black, while simultaneously quoting the movement's father figure Haile Selassie I "*Until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes..*" which refers to the ideology that all people are essentially of the same. I see this as one of the paradoxes present in rasta that has been negotiated in different degrees by the members of the movement. The clearest answers came from rastas that seemed to have given time or perhaps personal experience in negotiating racial matters. The following citation depicts the global aspect of the message of rasta. The speaker is a Canadian-born (mixed) rasta, which can be argued once more to influence the outlook the person is expressing:

"Anything spiritual can't be raced. Anything divine doesn't deal with race, anything spiritual transcends race so although Rastafari is rooted in ancient Africa, rooted in the African diaspora, it's a global thing. And you see people from all walks of life white, Chinese, black, brown, everyone interested in it, so it transcends, it's subconscious, it's psychological, spiritual so, one of the biggest things we need to do is to see beyond that. We can't escape the fact that it's quote on quote rooted in the African experience but it's global. So that's just showing you that it's rooted in something deeper than that...this thing transcends time, space, geography, nationality, gender, age."

One's spirituality is thus seen as something that *transcends* the differences found on the surface levels of a person's life story. Another way of looking at this underlying view is from the perspective of the multiple views of spiritual traditions besides Rastafari:

"So dat means if you wan name Buddha, if you wan name Allah, if you wan call him Krishna, Him a gon manifest a way inna you. And dat a the true energy wea hol everybody together. Rastafari is not just the one thing, Rastafari is a gateway to that source of meditation fi see how life really a go."

What the informant is saying, is that each tradition basically has the same function. He is explaining the way in which rasta can be seen as one form of the many different options to go deeper into discovering the mysteries of life and existence.

Some rastas do not even feel the necessity to call themselves Rastafari, probably sometimes so, because that would identify them also with the commercial rastas that are considered not-as-true by some. Many of the rastas I've met are not wishing to confine themselves with this term. One of the research subjects pointed out: "*Why do I need to call myself a rasta. Am a being*". The comment shows that not all rastas are deeply identified with being called a rasta by others, even though they are happy to use terms of themselves. According to my encounters with rastas, it almost seems that

some identify themselves as rastas when it's convenient or serves a particular purpose for them. The informant that made the previous comment would for example in the beginning of the same conversation strongly emphasize that he most definitely is "*an I-thiopian*". The tendency to emphasize oneself as an African was not present elsewhere in the interview material. The reason is probably because, as noted earlier in the paper, I was quite familiar with most of the interviewees by the time of the interview. And the emphasis placed on one's "African-ess" was put to first encounters, exemplifying the general rasta view spoken of previously.

One of the informants, an African rasta pointed out that there are people in Africa who do not call themselves rastas but have a very similar outlook to Rastafari. He called them *okonfu*, spiritual people. "*It's the same as the bible is saying that dedicate yourself at the period of this thing. Don't cut your hair, no combing, no cutting. You just have to be yourself. And you don't eat some things. It's the same way as our ancestors do. And even some of the rastas, they call themselves konfu. Konfu are to them...Like you are spiritualist. Okonfu is the person. Konfu, it's somebody who is like...Prophets. Ashanti language which is mostly spoken in Ghana, we call it konfu. Spiritual person, they don't cut their hair, they have this, and they always like this local stuffs, the don't like to put on white man things, try to... (Q: But are they rastas?) They don't call themselves rastas because they call themselves konfu and spiritualist. But they have the hair and this thing, they also belong to the tribe of rastas.*"

To this informant, rasta appears as something flexible that is negotiated through one's spiritual and natural way of life while drawing from the bible for guidance. So a person, to his view, doesn't have to call themselves a rasta, as the way they live determines the spirit of Rastafari. Elsewhere in the conversation, I found that what spirituality entailed to this person, was practices such as connecting and working in the spiritual realms, what I would perhaps call, telepathy. Those these practices could in some, e.g. eastern traditions, be described as spiritual powers, they were also seen by many as natural, not something unfamiliar to humans to possess. This is a connecting point of Rastafari and new age spiritualities, where concepts like healings of different alternative forms and clairvoyance are seen valid methods and experiences.

Another African rasta referred to the concept of *Ubuntu* as something that he feels is actually the spirit of rasta. Ubuntu was described by him as an outlook and attitude of caring and coming together in the African tradition. This was his connection to rasta, and he actually would not name himself as rasta, but would accept the term because that was how people had labeled him. Later it came up in the conversation that Ubuntu could be the African equivalent of oneness.

This informant would also criticize the Jamaican rastas for imitation of Africa. This is an interesting viewpoint, and one that is not new. It has been discovered before that Jamaican Rastafari “repatriating” to Ethiopia are not always warmly welcomed or appreciated for claiming their Ethiopian identities. What is more, is that the Jamaican members of the movement emphasize their African identities most. This is of course understandable from the point of view of Rastafari ideology which is based on the re-discovering oneself as an African. Some Jamaican Rastafari are vigorously rejecting being anything but African, and there is definitely a sense of pride felt with this, and the process of re-discovering oneself.

Rastafari is clearly an African expression. What the chapter came to show, was an aspect of the connections the movement has ideologically to eastern spiritual traditions in the form of how spirituality and oneness can be seen. The following reflects further on the same subject through different viewpoint.

6.2.1 God in the many forms

The similarity of Rastafari to some other, eastern traditions, is the view, that God is in man (or everything, depending which rasta you speak to). This points to the experience or at least ideology that the divine dwells inside each person.

“I is in him and he is in I. I just have to accept what he say unto me, and do what he say. (Q: Is it always like that?) No cause sometimes you disobey the spirit. And most times when you do, things go wrong. You just have to accept the truth.”

“But deep within, by living and experiencing, and what they say is spiritual, that is your inner self. So you talk within yourself. So you know there is something greater than just mankind, or just human being can say words. Knowing yourself is part of spirituality cause it’s communicating with the most high, the divine being.”

The informant describes how important it is in his view to follow one’s inner guidance, or spirit, and be faithful to it. The ability to listen to oneself is something I see as relevant in terms of the personal processes and growth the informant is going through.

“What is the highest principle? Self-respect. When you respect yourself, you think you can’t do wrong to others because you wouldn’t want others to do bad to you; it’s oneness. The youth need to see each other as God, need to see yourself as God. Would you want to hurt God?”

This ability can also be seen as getting to know the God/the divine in oneself, and learning to express from that. Many of the informants would also speak of the connectedness of humans and the natural environment as something valuable:

“Let’s give praise to the animals, they never change from oneness”

“So me and the tree is inna oneness...You get oxygen from the tree...We interact. We are science, we are one. As I said, life. Cause if I see tree as its purpose, mi respect the tree...And I see the cow and I respect the cow purpose, I don’t eat the cow. I don’t mess with the calf, I don’t mess with her milk.”

The previous excerpt shows the ramifications that come from the view of having respect to other beings and nature. Due to this respect and the view that we as humans are living in a holistic ecosystem many people, and many rastas, are vegetarians or vegans, as noted in the introduction of the movement. This view is thus not original to Rastafari, but adopted by many cultures and traditions as means for promoting sustainable development and growth as well as merely out of respect for other forms of life.

“The whole spiritual I-ration a interact. One can learn from I-ration you know. I-ration teaches yourself, so long you can learn. Learn off of the animal from them, learn off from the every living thing.”

“The wise man jus think about the principle of life still, and nothing else”

These principles of life the informant is speaking of, are some very simple guidelines to how one should go about in life. According to my interpretation the discussion connected to this phrase reveals the yearning a lot of the informants have for natural, simple way of living. The following chapter takes a look at one of the meanings spirituality can be seen to have for Rastafari. The study happens through looking at the relationship the members have to traditional religion.

6.3 A Religion or a Spiritual Tradition?

“I was grown up as a catholic and...I didn’t feel right, I had questions that did not sit right with me. For example in elementary school when the children, when we’d have to go for confession. In front of a priest. To confess our sins. Im like... Why am I gonna go in front of a next man to confess my sins? I should just pray. To the almighty, and ask for forgiveness. And also. I saw that as blasphemous. Because, if the almighty says: “Put no other god before me” then who is the priest acting as? Why is the priest there?”

The informant is describing her experience by pointing out that the presence of a middle-man (the priest) in her relationship to God was offensive. Clearly, in Rastafari she has found a faith that allows her the kind of straight connection to the divine as she wishes. For some, the term of *God* was ultimately misleading, as the following comment depicts:

“Ultimately the supreme, there’s no name. It’s nameless... We like to put these labels. God is really jus “dog” spelled backwards”

“For me god is...Just the dictator part. God is just, one create it, or him, or...Jah is the same thing. God used, on a international scale, used pon such a wide scale, so many people use ‘god’ ...terminology; I cause I couldn’t wanna speak...Somebody who see god pon a different level. Through dat him see love and him see unity and...Oneness.”

The informants are describing the divine as something beyond words, as well as the tendency for us as humans to make effort to name things that are perhaps beyond the mind’s capacity to understand. This is another way of seeing how Rastafari spirituality offers the members a grounded way of leading a spiritually conscious life by way of not presenting god as something out of and separate this world as is the case with many of the world’s religion. I would often run into negative views about religion when relating with Rastafari. The following quotes voice this view well:

“I actually didn’t set out to become a rasta. I really set out on a... What I perceived then, as a quest to find God. I had received a book from my daddy about science of mind. So that got me on a quest of a living God. So I didn’t really set out to become a rasta“. This experience shows an interest in connecting with a “higher being” that then leads to the discovering and taking on Rastafari way of life. I found similar stories of underlying drive to connecting with something deeper than what meets the eye, and all the informants have obviously found that “something” in Rastafari.

“Religion is different from Jah. Religion is a tool to create an image of Jah. Jah can’t be created because Jah is infinite. Jah has created us. So I say no to religion. Religion and politics represent Babylon. They will fall. What will remain is that which is authentic and eternal.”

Religion is seen here as something corruptive and bad. The following depicts how the informant views some elders of the movement have been more religious coming from their institutional backgrounds. He opinions that for such a person it is difficult to accept other ways of perceiving things in spiritual sense:

“Where dese man emerge to and from. And that’s deso now that make them more aggressive in themself on a religious perspective... You have no space for the new one.”

However, when it comes to spiritual background and upbringing, some prefer to simultaneously hold to their roots as members of other institutions while claiming rasta faith:

“I was baptized one time as Adventist, so Im mostly in the Christian form. Yea, that’s where my worship would be, in the church, like the Adventist church. Not really where rastas are beating drums and all of dat. Cause I never really grow up that way, but if I grew up that way, maybe that would be a part of my custom.”

Rastafari thus comes in different forms even outside the classification of the movement in houses. One of things I was interested in field, was how these different houses came along behind the affirmations of *“In my father’s house, there are many mansions”* I would hear from time to time. Not to my surprise, when spoken to new Rastafari, they would often view that the houses come along great and the movement is unified. If this was questioned with examples and the conversation would further, the views would however also change. As noted previously in the paper, different houses have differing takes on what Rastafari should look like, and it seems like based on the study material that the human tendency to feel *“I am doing it right, you are doing it wrong”* sometimes takes over the mutual cause and willingness to agree to disagree.

On another note, it is interesting that some of the members of Rastafari find no conflict in identifying with rasta while belonging to an institutional (religious) organization. Yet some rastas have found just the thing they were missing in traditional religion with Rastafari that emphasizes individual process and journey of discovering. Generally Rastafari emphasizes the re-reading of the bible which can be seen to give room for both individual and group interpretations. The following quote depicts how Christ can be seen as regular person. It also describes the love-aspect as a Christ-quality according to the Rastafari view of Selassie originating from that bloodline:

“If I was a movie director, and I was going to look into my environment and say alright, Im gonna do a movie of the bible. And Im looking around me to see who could act that part there or who could act that part there. When I really look for the Christ I see a rastaman because he kind of lives that Christian life, that Christ-like livity.”

The things that make rasta a critical tradition is that there is a tendency to question prevailing conditions. This is seen both in individual and societal levels. One of the informants described how growing up in his early teenage he used to belong to a small group of friends who carried a lifestyle

quite different from Rastafari. Slowly one of the members of the group had started making a *transition* by altering his way of clothing, food ways and subjects of speaking (he started speaking of Selassie). This informant described first trying the meatless diet, and having a good experience with it. Then he was introduced to Selassie's picture that seemed familiar to him. However, the transformation this informant made was not quick to happen. In fact, all of the informants interviewed, as well as many of the Rastafari voices in the secondary data suggest that Rastafari is a continuous *process of becoming* (cf. Yawney 1999).

“If something doesn't open up inna you (with rasta) it's either of two things: discredit rasta, or move into another enlightenment. But the thing is, you gon have to go through that transformation de. My transformation is through Rastafari.”

Almost all of the interviewees as well as other rastas spoken with used the word “*growth*” to depict the experience of becoming in Rastafari. The way I have interpreted, these people see their faith as a continuous process of renewal. A part of this renewal was for one of the informants being critical of oneself. All of the interviewees also opinioned that what matters is the *way* in which one does things, rasta or not. This way of doing things is closely associated with how one treats not only fellow humans, but the nature. As a matter of fact, spirituality and oneness were most often spoken of in relation to how one connects with the outer world, especially the non-human world. What was difficult for me grasp and the informants to describe, however, was what it meant to continuously become.

To the Rastafari in this research, their faith is experienced as more of a spiritual tradition than a religion. I argue that detaching from the religious framework gives room for individual discovery and criticism found also in the eastern traditions as well as coinciding with the theories of the late modern opportunities of the self. The following chapter views the societal aspect of questioning and becoming. I interpret it as something tightly connected to individual autonomy in a world experienced as functioning on a destructive autopilot.

6.4 Leaders and Followers

One of the important aspects for Rastafari is self-sufficiency. This came up in the course of the research in multiple ways. As presented previously, many informants seek to be, or are, self-employed. Further than this, many also find it important to be internally autonomous:

“We have to feel out ourselves and answer our own questions within ourselves in everything. Whether food, lifestyle. You name it. The type of relationship with your woman, everything. It's a

personal livity, where you have to answer, you have seek answers for yourself, from your God or from your creator that set your heart and mind at ease.”

The informant depicts how, to him, ultimately the guidance used for decision-making in anything in life should ultimately come from within. This exemplifies the quality of autonomy in life that some rastas as spiritual aspirants practice and call forth. I argued previously this to be a quality found in other spiritual traditions as well as a characteristic of the new age spiritualities, as they emphasize self-governance and freedom to “mix and match” in spiritual matters.

A Swedish rasta was asked how he, as a white person, could identify with the story of black oppression. His answer reflects the sentiments of many of the rastas I’ve met during this research: *“The physical shackles have been cut, but not the shackles of the mind. We are not just wheels on the wagon of the society system or ants in the beehive. It’s about mental slavery above all. If a child asks at school what are the options for a “nine-to-five” –lifestyle, the teacher cannot answer that because there are no alternatives. Everyone should live according to the same pattern, and that’s mental slavery.”* Rastafari is an alternative worldview, where one is encouraged to think for themselves. This comes across in a lot of the research subjects’ opinions. This type of an attitude can be seen to naturally guide one into entrepreneurship, as the options are to work for a system that cannot offer a “holistically satisfying” employment.

What I noticed very early on in the field, is that the larger society in Jamaica (and possibly in other regions with rasta communities) has sort of a dual relationship and attitude to rastas. On the one hand it might still be harder for a rasta to get certain employments due to their appearance (mainly hair), and many people seem to look down on rastas and conceive them as “lazy” or “unadjusted”. On the other hand, there is this admiration. Rastas are also looked up to, and perceived as these mysterious and wise members of the Jamaican society.

“It’s not good for you to follow. It’s good for you to lead. And when you know where you’re coming from you could lead yourself, you don’t have to wait and say “Hey, Im gonna follow what him is...” In thinking in your mind that what him is doing is the right thing. But you do your inquiry, you do your research and you know that this is the right thing.”

“Rasta is supposed to be different. Mi nuh follow nobody, mi nuh follow hype. Church is already here, I leave goin to synagogue to you. I’m here to teach you.” The comment not only describes the attitude to religion, but more relevantly here the will to be different, which came up earlier in relation to other rastas, and can be seen here in the individual’s attitude in relation to the rest of the

society. This is interesting, because rasta has usually been different in a negative sense, but comes to show, how an individual can in fact use this difference to empower oneself which is exactly what rasta has done.

A lot of Rastafari spoken to in Jamaica see themselves as teachers or leaders of the society. This is supported to some extent by the rest of the society, and as noted before, rastas are often considered as folk philosophers of some sort (see Chevannes 2006). In an informal conversation one of the African informants opined that Haile Selassie to him, was not a significant leader; that there were so many others in Africa, who have just not been recognized by rasta. He also wished to make a differentiation between Jamaican rastas, and himself. He described them as imitators of the real African thing. Interestingly enough, this was not the first time I've heard the Jamaican rastas not being all that accepted by the Rastafari in Africa.

Though most of the informants would not refer to Selassie as their personal role model, his name, as well as some other Rastafari leader's, would come up in almost every interview. But again, the informants sometimes started off by referring to the general view the movement holds, but when the questions required personal answers it was not common for informants to bring up Selassie's name which can be considered surprising as he is regarded as *god* by many rastas.

During my studies of rasta in Jamaica, I was driven with finding out to what extent are Rastafari open to critically looking at themselves and not simply being satisfied with pointing fingers to (what seems like) the world outside of their community. After multiple conversations with different people I came to conclude that Rastafari as a spiritual movement can be seen as a continuum, where on the other of the line are these commercial rastas who attach their rasta-hood to outer signs such as hair or language. When moving to the other end, rastas get more critical and analytical as well as philosophical. However, many seem to stick to this; a spiritual and intellectual comfort zone, where things can be explained through the alternative of rasta system of knowledge, often combined with other philosophies as well. Then there are these rastas who look inside not only out to doctrine for answers. The continuum is thus formed through the gathering of knowledge from out to in. Rastafari has been naturally gravitated towards finding out who they are, and somehow the quest often seems to stop to the discovery of an African identity.

The difference in comparison to eastern thought and new age spiritualities thus generally seems to be that for most, Rastafari is the way to going deeper in the discovery and celebration of the African identity, while these traditions place more value on *losing all identities* (or the identification with them to be more precise). What is claimed to have found in both cases is the divine essence, "*god in*

the flesh” as rastafari say. The following chapter looks into the challenge the journey offers to maintaining one’s spiritual outlook while operating in a society that predominantly views life from another angle.

6.5 Balancing the Human and Divine in Babylon

“We all know our humanity all too well. That is why we put the focus on recognizing that part of us that isn’t in the human-ness. Not to deny the humanity but to bring a balance about.” - Ram Dass

As I have come to know different spiritual traditions originated in the East (Asia), they often recognize the importance of finding out who/what one really is, and living from a place of oneness and unconditional love. Thus when I first met rastas, there was a recognition of something I was familiar with from another context. Many of the informants mentioned a necessity of finding *a balance* in one’s life:

“It’s very hard to find a balance, a karmic balance because of your dharma (right way). What you have to do a day time, as in everything you do every day. It impact on each other...Like, you live in a household. Sometime your spirituality loses out. Especially when dealing with human beings.”

There was an effort to balance the aspects of “regular” life and spirituality. Balance was a word that would often come up in the speech for many of the informants; balance and harmony was sought into everything in life. The balancing of earthly life and spirituality can also be seen as something not entirely personal as depicted by the following statement:

“You can jus go too spiritual, and people start see it that oh, now a too spiritual but they say you go off, because you have to balance at all times. In everything you do.”

The issue of being too spiritual came up multiple times during the research as a negative thing. As mentioned before, it was connected to the necessary evil of having to live in a “Babylon society” that can be argued to be experienced as a hindrance to spiritual growth by way of forcing people into a certain structure that deprives the less fortunate while serving as the playground for the elite.

I hence suggest that Babylon can be seen to represent the secular dimensions of life that somehow draw one distant from realizing and actualizing one’s divinity²⁰ as reflected in the next quotation:
”Most rasta go move up inna di hills to maintain the livity and the spirituality in a balance, away

²⁰ Cf. (Edmonds 1998) Definition on Babylon.

from Babylon. But urban youth like me were born inna di city wea you have to find a balance, day to day...Cause Babylon rule.”

Many of the Rastafari I spoke to, seemed to also experience spirituality separate from other dimensions of life though on the other hand it was highlighted that the nature of man is of divine essence (and one could say that there can be no separation). It seemed like an interesting paradox to have informants speak of the importance of *how* one relates and moves in the world, while still experiencing a difficulty in negotiating one’s spirituality and *livity*.

“I as a youth used to do less spiritual livity. Round hereso in a Babylon. It’s like the physical livity is mostly...Have them probably on a balance. Some of the time, we probably even have the physical to triumph.”

These previous excerpts show the experience of division and a problematique with going about in everyday life while maintaining a deeper outlook in which to operate from. Many of the informants viewed *Babylon* as a challenge to one’s spirituality that one needs to negotiate in one’s everyday life. One of the interviewee’s had a solution to this challenge of balancing the different aspects:

”The spiritual and the secular or the earthly, the InI, they’re all connected. The more we keep them connected, the more beneficial they proof to us.”

The informant suggests adopting an outlook of seeing these dimensions as connected realities rather than separate and contradictory elements of life. Here, I see is the challenge of whether something has been internalized, or is merely held as an *idea* in one’s head. I suggest that the process of becoming in Rastafari is an internalization process of aspects found ideal by the person in question. The next chapter studies the core

“The way you live enhance your spirituality. So according to how you get up in the morning and the vibration that you giving off, that’s really what I consider you spirituality, your energy vibration, you know? So the things that you do affect your vibration.”

The difference between a rasta and a non-rasta to all of the interviewees seemed to be their way of life. Way of life refers not only to what someone eats, how they dress, or they manner of speaking. It was seen by the informants as a deeper way of being connected to how life itself is approached. One informant used the expression *“how you trod, is what makes you a rasta”*. He later specified *“living in love”* as something that can be seen as defining the way in which one goes about in life.

I did notice, however, that the African informants did not hold diet as important as the Jamaicans did: *“If I want to be more spiritual, I abstain from meat and fish for like for one month and be there for only vegetables and this thing for one month. After that I start to eat (meat). I’m pan-African rasta.”*

I assume based on my conversations with these informants that the fact of living in Finland has some effect on their lifestyles and especially diets. It can be argued that it is in some ways easier to maintain a vegan or vegetarian diet in warm climates, as it is known that meat enhances heat-production in the body which is why some people living in cold climates eat fish and other meats during the winter while abstaining from them during the warmer seasons. The mention the informant made of being a Pan-African rasta, was also to emphasize the smaller significance of the diet for him (as his emphasis was on Pan-Africanism while in Finland). Also, one of the informants smoked cigarettes which he explained to have been “forced” to do because of the relative difficulty of acquiring ganja in Finland.

The challenge in this chapter was posed as maintaining a balance in an environment that is not experienced as supportive to one’s spiritual well-being. Negotiations are thus made to maintain a balance between one’s “spiritual” and “earthly” lives. While these concepts are juxtaposed by many informants, a simultaneous experience of inter-connectedness of *everything* is expressed. The next chapter looks into this more carefully.

6.6 Connections and/or One Love?

“Everything is connected. We are all one.”

As we have established by now, to many of the informants, oneness is some sort of an experience of connection. This view of being inter-related was depicted in the following ways:

“My oneness is really just a connection. It connect me to the table and the lamp. And, it connect me to the fan. And it make me aware of...It connect me to you, without touching you, and it’s not the breeze or anything like that, but, somewhere inna di fibre of...Me no know, matter. It connect the whole of us. And it sometime in sync and sometime out of sync. I think Rastafari understand it, but it get bamboozed with this one love thing. Because we want to care for everybody, we want everybody fi feel nice, smoke weed and be happy.”

“Like now. Something I’m going through, that is oneness. But this is oneness which has affected me. Because, if I play music, my fans all are with it, is oneness; we are one. They love my music, it

touch, they have things linked to it, they have it. It's from me, it's me living in them. But we are one. It's like my fans are me, I'm my fans."

Both of the above descriptions are referring to a similar experience of being connected. For the following informant oneness is something else, something on a more general level:

"Oneness is everybody believing in the same thing, you understand? It's like, you would have the nyahbinghi, they burn fire, and stuff, to praise his majesty and worship. That is their oneness of livity. One love is like, one people. It's like, out of all the countries in the world, and all of dat, it's just like, everybody just one. One love is the same love that God have for us, brother to brother and sister to sister. So that is one love. And oneness is just like everybody believing in the same thing. Two different thing. We are all one cause...As Bob Marley say, you know, "One love, one heart. Let's get together and feel alright"

The informants thus related the word oneness to connectivity of different degrees, while the concept One Love reminded of Bob Marley and the verse by him "let's get together and feel alright". One of the informants saw this as a 70s' fantasy catch phrase that has no correspondence to reality. This is to say, there is no such thing as one love, but as a marketing trick of Rastafari:

*"This one love thing..it could've (not) work you know. It could've work in the 70s, everybody had come outta Woodstock and is...(*singing*) Happy. It nah work. Babylon system and this one love...It's only when it suit them. It don't work. We don't have love amongst one another."*

Here one can see a critical outlook on not only the idea of *one love*, but of Rastafari as the messenger of that. One love to this as well as the previous informant refer to a Bob Marley tune, and is not taken that seriously. Oneness on the other hand is reality of connection between things which was mentioned by all the interviewees to some extent (people believing in the same thing or something that comprehends everything in creation), and an idea found in both eastern traditions, new age spiritualities as well as in Gergen's theorization.

"Is jus when everyone see themselves on a one accord. One life, everyone have a life to live. That would be a oneness. And if you can accept everyone within what they do, then you have a oneness. But if you're not gonna do that, you're not gonna have a oneness. So I don't see no segregation and separation in that. Whenever you get to accept...that's why you talk about tolerance. Cause if you see yourself with tolerance then..people even have different ways of doing things and we still have to interact with them whenever it's possible. I don't have to...onto your space to know that oh yea,

you're there, we're cool, we have no problem. So that's a oneness for me. There's no beef, there's no way you're supposed to pree (stare at) me..."

As noted, oneness and one love revealed, to my surprise, signify different things. Informants were also seeing the connectivity of oneness slightly differently. Though the cultural export of one love was criticized, the importance of having a tolerant and loving attitude which I see as connected to the experience of oneness, was expressed:

"You see that caring fi people, even before mi say Rastafari. Mi give, and it's not to say "yea, mi give people things and...No" The people dem wea you see around me a find dat, if mi de mi coulda take advantage of dem. With ease. And have the acolytes behind me. But mi realized that's not what Rastafari is supposed to be. It supposed to be by a lifestyle and how we live, people look at you and say "you know I would like to emulate this person because of his lifestyle. Not a forceful push."

The excerpt also shows the way in which rastas often reported a feeling of obligation to *do the right thing*, and how an individual person is also a member of a community, and should act as a role model to others. I also noted that the members of the faith would express opinions they felt made of them by the people of the society which seemed like form of being closely related to the community while operating from a different place of reference. When asked if *Truth* and *Love* point to the same experience, an informant opinioned:

"Truth... What is true today, may not be true tomorrow. Better we just deal with love"

The quote above expresses the difference of facts²¹ and love. Love can be seen as something quite abstract and hard to grasp, and it was a definite challenge to get the informants to describe their concrete experiences of oneness/one love. I had heard dozens of times different Rastafari hailing "*blessed love*" and "*One love*", and always wondered if they actually mean what they say? In the course of the study I found time and again that it was difficult for the interviewees to answer some of the core questions. Also, I had assumed that the concepts of oneness and one love refer to the same thing and can be used interchangeably. As mentioned, it turned out this was not the case.

An informant inspired me to question the Christian notion of rewards and punishments that came up in a conversation. He opinioned that it is better to do good than evil, for one will be held accountable for the wrongdoing (he even referred to the eastern idea of the law of *karma*). That made me think of the foundation of love that many of the members of Rastafari emphasize; one is to

²¹ What I called "Truth", was experienced as referring to "facts" by the informant which I find to be two different things.

love in fear of punishments or bad karma gathered by bad thoughts and actions? In the eastern thought one is to love because it entails the truth in itself, as is with the idea connectedness of everything.

I also found a difference in what I would call a spiritual experience compared to an outlook which is a more profound and consistent *way of being*. The following informant describes a spiritual experience aided by “the herb” which depicts a similar thing as oneness:

“I personally had a revelation one day, when I was smoking some marijuana, sitting by the beach, and then the revelation really, I started to feel the vibe that everything in the universe was connected and seeing how all these things were affecting me. And all these things that had influenced my life were there for a purpose, and that’s when I really got to recognize the true significance of rastafari and it’s meaning... When I was starting letting that vibe out and becoming, reaching my potential, I started growing my hair . It was all a process you know. As it still is a process.”

When studying Rastafari spirituality, the nature of the herb (cannabis) was not so much emphasized as a “spiritual tool” as it was as a way of “*freeing-up*” more generally, though obviously the informants were aware and may have in their speech referred to it as something sacred. However, when inquired more deeply, the herb wasn’t seen as something necessary in spiritual sense (getting connected): *“If one can’t get connected without the herb, one is off-base. What’s gonna happen to him who doesn’t have herb? He can’t connect to God?”*

To some the herb has played the function of opening oneself up spiritually in the beginning through the experience of not being limited to the separate body-mind one generally experiences. I have asked multiple rastas if the herb is necessary for them to the feeling of connectedness. Most rastas I’ve spoken to express a preference to not having to use this, even though natural (as I’m always reminded) substance to get connected. However, very few claim that they are living in a 24/7 experience of inter-connectedness with everything.

One of the informants, an elderly rasta, had given up the herb decades ago due to an experience he had after being in a car accident. He walked me through a memory of lying there in a hospital bed, deciding out of nowhere, that it was time to give up “*the spliff*”. He had tried smoking again once after that, but had a bad experience with it. I had an opportunity to participate in the life of this person, and can note that I’ve not witnessed such visible inner peace accompanied with mental clarity in any other rasta before.

As mentioned in the presentation of the movement's relevant symbols, Rastafari uses the concept of InI, to refer to the divinity in another as well as the self. *"There is a creator, a supreme being. There is the you know, the "large I" and "little I". So mi a recognize myself jus a small being within this great manifestation, yet being connected to that supreme being. I am the creator (the "big" I), I am the little I. And the balance and the connectivity"*. But when asked about the significance of using this term in everyday life, it was most often not considered meaningful. Additionally, some of the informants viewed that they would only use that term with other rastas. I would then often question why there was a separation made between non-rastas and rastas in this regard, if the ideology points to an experience of *everyone* being divine by their true nature. The conclusion seemed to be, as one of the informants noted, that it just feels useless to refer to someone with a term they are not necessary familiar with.

"Cause if you wanna embrace life, like how I do embrace life, and unity amongst all life, and oneness. The heat and the air and the water would be one of the main factor right there."

Finally, the connectivity of everything is seen as a foundation or a "law of creation". The "heat, air and the water" refer to *"a holy triune"* to this informant, and is thus detached from the concepts regular, religious sense. The connectivity viewed and experienced by the informants, brings with it an ideal to express a loving attitude and feelings towards others, as everything is inter-related, and both the good and the bad *"put out into the i-ration"* are seen by most of the informants to come back in equal measure. The thing I was left wondering was, if loving attitude comes from deep realization and through that, compassion, or if it is a matter of calculated rewards and punishments, as many informants would refer to the concept of *karma* known again from eastern philosophies. Yet, it is a subject for another research if these adopted concepts are used in their original meanings or creatively mixed with one's own viewing.

7. Gatherings

"There is nothing that can be attained spiritually without suffering in life" (Gurdjieff²²)

The collective story of Rastafari is based on suffering. It is clear that the tendency to seek change often comes from the experience of pain of some kind; when one is in enough pain the motivation to improve one's condition in life is found even in the darkest of nights. The trans-Atlantic slave trade can be seen as one of the lowest points in the human history and evolution. Rastafari

²² David Gurdjieff is an Armenian philosopher.

originated out of the struggle to claim human dignity in discriminating, sub-human conditions. A whole ideology and worldview was formed around the empowerment of the oppressed ones. The central figure of the movement in a spiritual or religious sense is Haile Selassie I. Could the movement have “survived” had it not been for a personification for this ideology? Perhaps not, but the research has shown that spirituality in Rastafari goes beyond the worship of a god-like figure that characterizes the movement. Spirituality seems to be simultaneously other-worldly and rooted in this world and everyday experience for the members of the movement. Furthermore, it is both a personal process of deepening or growth and a collective journey of people with similar orientations in dimension or another.

It can be argued that it is easy to adopt rasta as a lifestyle in Jamaica. The culture celebrates these conscious pioneers, so to become a rasta, can to some, especially from people of lower social standings, be a very appealing option, as the larger community respects Rastafari in a specific sense. But to adopt rasta as a spiritual, personal path of discovery seems much more rare and challenging, as it requires the willingness to see beyond the boundaries of the limited self. Seeing beyond these boundaries is the challenge also posed by Gergen with his idea of the relational self that does not exist outside of relationship. This challenge, as proved by the research, is also cast by eastern spiritual traditions that emphasize the importance of “finding one’s true Self” present in each individual yet covered by egoic illusion of the separate self.

It puts some Rastafari off that the movement has changed from a “black people thing” to a worldwide phenomenon. Some would prefer the more doctrinal approach, how else is rasta going to be different among these passing New Age fads of spiritualities?

On another note, there is clearly a message of unity of *all*, not only humans but the natural environment and other beings. The oneness of Rastafari appears as a connectivity of differing levels that is seen in the approach to fellow-humans, the natural world, and as the unique way of speaking (I-talk). It can thus be seen that similarly to what are often named new age spiritualities and eastern philosophies, some members of Rastafari find “god”, in the lack of a suitable word, to reside in the human form as well as other forms of life. This view, I (and Gergen) argue, when internalized into experience, can have a radical influence on the way a person goes through his life treating other people, nature, and the things that come out of their mouth. Rastafari has generally been considered as mystical, philosophical and wise figures at least in the Jamaican society. I claim that partially this view comes from the observers “picking up” something from the *being* of who they are observing, in this case, a certain rasta (not saying that all rastas have internalized this view in a profound way).

The paragraph above can be read as a “spiritual interpretation” of what oneness means in Rastafari. What is called oneness in Rastafari and in a lot of other spiritual traditions, exemplified by some eastern though, can be in scientific terms seen as the connectedness Gergen is speaking about. He speaks of the seamless inter-related webs of connection which according to my interpretation refer to an existence of *one*. This, again, is a radical exit from the regular, individual-oriented perspective in science, as it is the reality-experience of most of the people.

The change, however, has to begin with, in Gergen’s arguments as in the Rastafari and these other comparative spiritualities’, case in the individual. Rastafari has begun as a journey of the African descendants fighting for equality in a white-dominated world. As it has globalized, I argue, the message has also altered, and gone deeper into another agenda relevant for *all* of humanity from the African-identification process it began as.

According to the research at hand, the origin or country of residence seemed to make some difference in the experiences of spirituality and oneness. The difference in these subjects was that for the African Rastafari in this study, there was more “space” to adopt according to the (social) living environment while their Jamaican brothers were quite strict and opinionated on everyday things like diet. Jamaicans also would always referred to the oneness of the community first or only (unless I suggested something else) while for the African informants the experience of oneness was not defined to the community of Rastafari. In fact the relevance of the word “Rastafari” was felt by me less personal or meaningful to the African informants, possibly because they were African “already” without having to negotiate or struggle for this identity in the same way as the Jamaican Rastafari.

I find it important to note that most, if not all, of the examples of the themes could be read from the sacralization of everyday life –perspective introduced by Yawney (1979). The way in which Rastafari approaches life, by holding an ideal if not an experience, of everything being ultimately of one divine essence, can be seen as sacralization. I suggest, though, that when looked at from the Gergenian point of view and more importantly the outcomes he suggests come from changing the current foundation for experience characterized by individualism, what is commonly regarded as sacred (which has a flavor of religiosity or spirituality) can also be seen as relativity given another word. For the Rastafari, the outcome is an outlook of respect towards the multiple forms of life.

The paradox of the individually centered orientation typical to the late modern era can be seen in the informants’ expressions. I say paradox, because though the quest of personal growth is a trendy subject even in the spiritual arenas of today, I argue that there is a difference between the ego-

driven search and the search that is embarked for the sake of “truth”. This is also what I see the Rastafari continuum of “commercial” rastas to “true” rastas refer to. As noted previously, not everyone is willing for their personal ideologies to be questioned in order to come to a more all-embracing place where the little me is not the fixed center of one’s experience. After all, if everything is an expression of the *one*, how could there be a separate me outside of that?

As much as I find the conducting of this research to be a journey that gave me much understanding on the subject of Rastafari spirituality, a lot remained yet undiscovered. I find the topics of spirituality and oneness such large, or rather deep, realms that a research this size hardly covers the depths of the informants’ full experience. That is why if I was to conduct research with Rastafari again, I would envision it to be a very co-operational study, an action research perhaps to involve members movement in the spirit of “*each one teach one*”. This would require longer periods of time spent with the subjects, as was shown with this research, where I find the familiarity and time spent in the field with the informants to be a necessity.

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8.3 Appendix

INTERVIEW BASE

Background Information

How/When did you realize you're a rasta?

When does it become visible that one is a Rastafari?

Do you identify with the general community of Rastafari or a certain house?

What is the difference, in your experience, of a rasta and a non-rasta?

Theme I: Oneness/One Love and Spirituality

How would you explain the concept of Oneness?

What is Oneness/One Love/Unity in your life and experience? Examples?

How does one come to the realization of Oneness?

Do you cultivate or invite Oneness into your life somehow?

What does the concept of "InI" refer to in your knowledge and experience? How is it used?

How would you explain God/Jah/Truth? Can these terms be used interchangeably?

How would you describe Christ?

How would you describe the connection between livity and spirituality?

Theme II: Divisions in Babylon

What is Babylon to you?

Is there a separation between what is "sacred" and what is "secular/earthly"?

Would you say that some people or actions are more sacred/secular than others?

How unified do you see the movement? (locally, globally)

What is mental slavery to you?

Additional clarifications

What is Holy Trinity?

Do you have some kind of a point of view or experience on Haile Selassie I?

How important is a doctrine as a guideline to ones livity? Divine Order?

What is the significance of using proper (rasta) language in your experience?

The consuming of the “herb” is considered by some rastafari to be a highly sacred ritual that supports spiritual connectivity and growth. Do you have any view on this, what part does the herb play in your experience?

What does it mean to become “more conscious”? Is there a way to determine a conscious person or action?

Tutkielmaan liitetään 1-2 sivun pituinen **tiivistelmä**, jonka tulee sisältää tiedot tutkimusongelmasta, aineistosta, käytetyistä tutkimusmenetelmistä ja tärkeimmistä tutkimustuloksista.