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THE END OF 'NEW AGE'

> The church dissatisfies me. I know all the things they teach. I want more, you know?
>
> (Alison, Unit of Service, 1997)

> We are trained to listen to experts in our culture and not to ourselves. The premise of the New Age is the other way around.
>
> (Spangler 1996: 184)

> The whole point is our journey, not our destination.
>
> (Edwards 1993: 63)

Recapitulation

In this book I have reconstructed the genealogy of a multivalent emblem, 'New Age', within interconnected networks of 'alternative' spirituality from the 1930s to the 1990s. In the first part, called 'Emblem', I examined Peter Caddy's career in the Rosicrucian Order, the activities of Sheena Govan's group and the early years of the Findhorn settlement. I found evidence of other networks active in England, New Zealand and the US in the late 1950s and early 1960s – George Trevelyan, the Heralds of the New Age, the North American 'subculture' delineated by David Spangler – for whom 'New Age' was an apocalyptic emblem within a cocktail of occult, psychic and spiritualistic ideas and practices. In this early period the expression had objective historical status among communicants: a 'New Age' was imminent, its apocalyptic harbingers were on the horizon and groups had to prepare themselves spiritually in response.

In the second part, 'Idiom', I traced the diffusion and disintegration of this emblem in the 1970s and beyond under the influence of a youthful counter culture and a concomitant decline in the authority of grand narratives (Lyotard 1979) in the culture at large. 'New Age' became, as it were, adjectival, a loose 'quality' of a person, act or social process rather than a negotiated emblem. As a

sign of this shift it became self-consciously problematised by both participants and observers – one informant in Lowe and Shaw (1993: 227) said vehemently 'I hate that cliche "New Age" '. It was increasingly rendered in inverted commas ("New Age") or lower case (new age) and it came to qualify everything from an adumbrated religiosity to entire – sometimes mutually contradictory – lifestyles: 'alternative', 'yuppie', holistic, 'traveller'.[1] Significantly, the ethnography of the last three chapters is notably thin in use of the emblem although rich in genealogical association and folk memory. The international 'New Age' showcase, Findhorn, is now increasingly reluctant to deploy the term, preferring to describe itself as a 'spiritual community' with 'no formal doctrine or religious creed'. 'New Age' surfaces only serendipitously in holistic health circles, and if it underpins Alice Bailey's writings, it is veiled in Lucis Trust discourse as we enter the twenty-first century.

But I have also uncovered considerable empirical evidence of social networks sporadically associated with 'New Age'. The reconstruction of these has been one task of the present book, rescuing real emic histories from the false etics of a 'New Age movement'. These networks are manifestations of an 'alternative' spirituality that is self-consciously dissenting with regard to established religious institutions and post-Enlightenment rationality alike. Created by self-taught practitioners, amateur thinkers and 'do-it-yourself' seekers, this kind of spirituality has been moulded by populist values and popular culture. It is radically elective – supremely a 'religion of choice' – although constrained by social variables of class, gender and ethnicity. Thus we have a series of interest groups associated with 'New Age' that yet lack sufficient complexity of organisation or public programme to constitute a social movement in any meaningful taxonomy. In fact, far from amounting to a 'movement', the defining properties of 'New Age' at any one time are largely the sum of the activities of *x* number of mustered seekers: a 'buzzing hive of virtuosic individualists' (Sutcliffe 2000a: 32).

In this final chapter I consolidate my critique of the concept of a 'New Age movement'. Simultaneously I reconstruct the organisational processes that shape the constituencies of actors elided by this concept. This requires further discussion of the role of 'seeker', the act of 'seeking' and the nature of the preferred ideology, 'spirituality'. Finally I argue that the immediate future for seekers – the metaphorical 'children of the new age' – is qualitatively rich but quantitatively limited. By this I mean that inbuilt constraints in the institution of spiritual seekership restrict its political impact compared to the scale and complexity required to achieve the kinds of radical social change invoked in the popular rhetoric. At the same time key features of spiritual seeking and the ideology of spirituality redirect our attention to so-called 'softer' cultural spheres of feelings and relationships – and subjectivities in general – that may play a more significant role in the reconfiguration of contemporary religion in the longer term. The legacy of 'New Age' remains for the time being an ameliorative, domesticated and localised Anglo–American

discourse on spirituality, despite its often extravagant claims of universal consciousness and global transformation.

The 'New Age movement': laying the ghost

In Chapter 1 we saw that most commentators understand 'New Age' to be a movement of some kind. I questioned this position then and probed it further in Chapter 5. The historical and ethnographical evidence of the remaining chapters has added considerable cumulative weight to my argument. Let me consolidate it now.

First, emic affiliation with 'New Age' is optional, episodic and declining overall. A good index is the titles of representative source texts. Hanegraaff's (1996: 525ff.) formidable selection of one hundred and eleven primary sources yields only six titles actually featuring the expression 'New Age', and none mentioning a 'New Age Movement'. In Bloom (1991: ix–xii), only two out of fifty-one titles employ the term; in Satin (1978: 221–33), only one out of two hundred. This pattern of marginal usage was confirmed in my fieldwork. In a simple questionnaire I circulated during Experience Week at Findhorn, only two out of ten respondents identified themselves as 'New Age' and even then it was with qualifications: Martine from Brazil used the by-now familiar inverted commas while Patrick, the Irishman, described his identity as 'New Age and still searching'. Nor are the founders of the Findhorn colony keen to invoke the emblem. Dorothy Maclean told me: 'We did not use the term "New Age" much in the early days', and Eileen Caddy likewise wrote: 'No, Peter, Dorothy and I did not think of ourselves as part of a New Age Movement'.[2] In sum, historical, ethnographical and autobiographical evidence strongly suggests that a 'New Age' identity is and has been restricted to the predilections of discrete groups and individuals, instead of defining the agenda of a substantial collectivity, let alone an operative movement.

Certain bodies, of course, have persisted with the expression. The Arcane School continues to offer the 'training in new age discipleship' it began in the 1920s. But such idiosyncratic projects only prove a general rule. Similarly, individuals sometimes invoke the emblem while on other occasions they wear a different hat. Button and Bloom (1992: 17) exemplify this *laissez-faire* approach when they write: 'During the last ten years, "holistic thinking", "the green movement", "new paradigm thinking", the "new age" – *whatever we choose to call it* – has become a significant force' (emphasis added; also note the indeterminacy conveyed by all those inverted commas). Despite Button and Bloom's implicit disavowal, taxonomies matter: they inscribe (or deny) power and legitimacy in social collectivities. The ambiguities and qualifications in their formulation directly reflect political uncertainty. More forthright is David Spangler's confession: 'I have personal doubts that there really is something called the "New Age movement". The New Age *idea*, yes, but a *movement*, no –

at least not in any ideological, organised sense' (in Spangler and Thompson 1991: 64). But how could there be a 'movement' without ideology and organisation? Elsewhere Spangler spills the beans:

> There is no dogma, no orthodoxy, and essentially, no agreement on where the boundaries of the movement are and who is or is not part of it. In this sense, it is not so much a movement as a sprawl.
>
> (Spangler 1996: 34)

The notion of a 'New Age movement' is also problematic in etic terms in that the phenomena lack the requisite sociostructural features to differentiate a distinctive 'New Age' project from looser, slacker types of collective behaviour such as the models of 'crowd', 'fad', 'craze', and 'public' proposed in Turner and Killian's *Collective Behaviour* (1972). Certainly several types of 'movement' have been advanced historically, particularly new religious movements (NRMs) and new social movements (NSMs).[3] Part of the problem in this important but strangely neglected definitional endeavour is that scholars on 'New Age' have generally avoided specifying their usage – York (1995) is an honourable exception – or else, like Melton (1988), have proposed such an eccentric model that 'New Age' is *ipso facto* rendered unique. But the 'New Age' field as a whole is actually deficient in the typical features of NRMs and NSMs. It lacks a distinctive corporate body, a legislative mechanism, historical consciousness, organisational infrastructure, boundaries, and other indices of membership and belonging, and, crucially, unambiguous self-identity and concrete goals. The absence of these features sharply distinguishes 'New Age' from the mass of post-1960s movements and associated fields of study, to which the 'New Age Movement' taxon confines it through a basic category mistake. This point becomes clearer if we contrast 'New Age' with prominent NRMs such as the Church of Scientology, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness or the Unification Church. It is obvious that 'New Age' lacks a founder like L. Ron Hubbard or Sun Myung Moon, has no corporate body to seek tax exemption or 'religious' status (or which could qualify as a 'church' or 'society'), has no equivalent conversion identity to the 'Moonie', no dress code like the Krishna devotee's, and no unique argot like Scientology's terminology of 'clears', 'thetans' and 'orgs'. The comparison fares little better when we turn to examples of social movements. Byrne (1997), for example, bases his analysis on the 'green', peace and women's movements in the UK. These certainly share with 'New Age' characteristics of cultural diffusion and polycentric organisation but they do have in each case a consistent signifier and referent as well as an explicit political platform of self-identity, theory, method, and goal. 'New Age' – taken as a collective behavioural field – has none. Certainly a few organisations tagged 'New Age' might individually meet these criteria, such as Findhorn or the Lucis Trust, but that is an argument for qualification as a

NRM or NSM, not for extrapolating from these very distinctive cases to a generic 'movement'.

I conclude my argument on this score by addressing the most persuasive organisational model so far advanced for 'New Age': the 'SPIN' or 'segmented polycephalous integrated network' advanced in Gerlach and Hine (1968, 1970) and adopted by York (1995). Gerlach and Hine offer a loose yet nuanced definition that appears at first sight promising for 'New Age' studies. For them, a 'movement' is

> a group of people who are organised for, ideologically motivated by, and committed to a purpose which implements some form of personal or social change; who are actively engaged in the recruitment of others; and whose influence is spreading in opposition to the established order within which it originated.
>
> (Gerlach and Hine 1970: xvi)

Despite an unhelpful terminological vagueness, there are resonances if we apply this definition to 'New Age' in the 1950s and 1960s at least: the emphasis on the 'group' as the organisational unit, the ideological motivation provided by an imminent, concrete 'New Age', the active networking with sympathetic others; and the subcultural stance. But the evidence suggests that 'New Age' in its early, emblematic period was only ever 'in opposition to the established order' in its abstract rhetoric of a planetary 'apocalypse': it actually attracted most support from a relatively privileged, occasionally aristocratic, social base and participants clearly expected to be among the elect salvaged from the predicted planetary destruction. Conversely, the later, idiomatic period shows just how easily a countercultural discourse of 'work on oneself' could be recuperated by popular and middle-class cultures increasingly shaped by postmodernising forces (Harvey 1989; Lyon 2000) in which the adjective 'alternative' is as likely to refer to consumer choice in the spiritual marketplace (Roof 1999) as it is to signify political opposition. The fate of the SPIN model is settled once we know that the empirical examples chosen by Gerlach and Hine were Pentecostalism and Black Power, two clearly-demarcated social movements organised according to sustained materialist programmes of recruitment and advancement. As such they are anathema to 'New Age' instincts.

Indeed, one might say that the politics of change pursued by Byrne's examples in the UK and Gerlach and Hine's in the US have been almost completely absent in 'New Age', where a preoccupation with subjectivity, interpersonal relationships and the general quality of experience has sidelined questions of political mobilisation. This methodological individualism has the effect of severely downplaying the historical potency of institutions both to maintain and to resist the social order. Rather it has promulgated – with uncertain results – a popular model of the percolating power of individuals, networks and groups as a kind of 'spiritual yeast' in the social order.

Seekers and Seeking: the popularisation of an identity and a strategy

> Writers [to Alice Bailey in the early 1920s] asked for guidance in their search for truth without being subjected to the usual limitations of dogmatic creeds.
>
> (*The Arcane School: Entrance Papers*, Lucis Trust, London, n.d, p. 2)

> I began to question many of the things that had been taught by conventional religions, and started my own search for the truth through many 'ologies' and 'isms'.
>
> (Peter Caddy *c.* 1933, remembered in Caddy 1996: 25)

> For the world, the only hope is for individuals to explore their own journeys.
>
> (Healer Jill Rakusen, in Coniam and Gibson 1996: 35)

The typical actor in 'New Age' is a religious individualist, mixing and matching cultural resources in an animated spiritual quest. Standing in sharp contrast to traditional participatory roles in Anglo–American religion such as 'member', 'communicant', 'congregant' or 'convert', we can call this actor a 'seeker' and the sum of her or his cultural ploys, 'seeking'. The attendant social institution of 'seekership' raises issues of agency, identity, common culture, and impact.

There are both advantages and disadvantages in employing the term 'seeker'. In its favour, 'seeker' is a term widely known and used among practitioners themselves and has its own rich stock of theory and lore. So it carries emic authority. But it can also function as a comparative anthropological category connoting subjectivity and reflexivity. The impact of various social variables on seekership can be mapped and analysed. These include class and ethnicity but not gender: seekership in theory and practice carries weak gender ascription, in contrast to the emergent popular discourse on spirituality (which I discuss below). Seekership also crosses age cohorts and infuses autobiographical narratives in suggestive but largely unexplored ways. And finally, not least, the term is parsimonious. Negatively, 'seeker' has overly pious or 'earnest' connotations and may suggest a theological judgment or a neo-colonialist interpretation (derived from orientalist fantasies of the 'mystic East'; cf. King 1999) of what the proper approach to 'religion' should be. We must beware of naturalising a normative role of the 'seeker' as a particularly holy or morally righteous individual. Nor should we cast the seeker as a role-playing obsessive or as a systematic theologian in disguise, since in practice the role may be lightly carried or the person may not construct of her or his behaviour in these terms, and values and practices are likely to be derived from popularised and syncretic forms. In any case the boundaries between seeking and other roles and practices adopted in the life course – in education, relationships, health care, work and

leisure – are often quite fuzzy, as we have seen. In this book, then, 'seeker' functions as an anthropological role, not as a soteriological prescription.

Seekership has its own history; strategies change over time. The act of seeking formerly demonstrated strong affinities with unusual biographies and elite social class, as the examples of Annie Besant (Bevir 1999) and Ronald Nixon/Sri Krishna Prem (Haberman 1993), or Alice Bailey and Sir George Trevelyan in 'New Age' genealogy, amply demonstrate. But globalising cultural flows have democratised and popularised what were previously largely leisured, elite forms of identity and self-expression. The loosening of traditional kinship and community ties during and after the Second World War, particularly in urban and metropolitan centres, compounded already high levels of social and geographical mobility among the general population, and these were stimulated in turn by wartime refugee crises. We can posit that a measure of reflexive seekership in individuals' self-representations emerged across the cultural spectrum – bolstered by middle-class traditions that esteemed the value of qualitative experience and the character-building work of self-reflection – as a strategy for managing the population displacements and exponential 'pluralisation of life-worlds' (Berger *et al.* 1974) characteristic of the post-war world. Early 'New Age' seekers' culture, for example, was in no way pure or *sui generis*. It was a mongrel spiritual culture that, as we saw in Chapters 2 to 4, incorporated occult ideas such as the existence of secret 'Masters' and Indian teachings on karma and reincarnation alongside popular psychological techniques and neo-Christian piety. These and contiguous ingredients can easily be found in other spiritual microcultures of the period, as can the social functions of group interaction, popular reading and the experience and wisdom derived from the 'university of life', displayed as a lay antidote to scientific rationality and the hegemony of 'the experts'. The only really distinctive element in seekership culture, as I have shown, was the 'New Age' emblem itself.

The emergence of the 'seeker' as an etic model of reflexive identity is largely a post-war development. In Canada in the early 1950s, for example, Mann (1962: 39–41) identified a small segment of the population he called 'metaphysical tramps'. These were 'intellectual critics of the churches' who were 'eager to discover some new slant on religion'. From Mann's data they appear to have been single, unattached and mobile; he disapprovingly considered them 'incorrigible drifters'. During the same period, Festinger *et al.* (1964) mapped Mrs Keech and 'The Seekers' in the US and Buckner (1968) later identified a type he called 'the occult seeker' among UFO groups. Lofland and Stark (1965: 868ff.) derived a loose social institution of 'seekership' from their analysis of spiritual consumers in California based on a cognitive model of 'problem solving': that is, the search for 'some satisfactory system of religious meaning' to 'interpret and resolve discontent'. Lofland (1977) subsequently developed a simple typology of 'veteran' and 'freshmen' seekers: the former were typically aged over forty and hence, like the 'New Age' pioneers in Chapters 3 and 4, born in the interwar period or earlier; the latter were implicitly part of

the post-war baby-boom generation discussed in Chapter 5. Importantly, Lofland noticed the 'multi-directional, tentative seeking' of the 'freshmen' seekers, which might just as easily lead to deeper commitment as to fresh conversions or even to another kind of cultural 'deviancy' altogether (ibid.: 170). In other words, the trajectories of this new generation of seekers had unstable arcs and unpredictable impact, and were already transgressing boundaries between 'sacred' and 'profane' domains. By now the seeker signalled an emergent type of reflexive cultural identity with diffuse, institutionally destabilising effects.

Further analyses followed in the 1970s. In a seminal paper on the post-Sixties 'cultic milieu', Campbell (1972: 127) found its major institution to be the loose, fluid 'society of seekers'. Straus (1976) sought to rescue seekers' agency and creativity from the reductive, even pathologising, accounts of the 1960s; he also contextualised the phenomenon, like Lofland, within broader processes of cultural change in which 'the quest to change one's life' (ibid.: 269) was now paramount. In a similar vein, Balch and Taylor (1977) explained the 'metaphysical seeker' as a socially-oriented problem-solver, rather than the fantasist or sick individual portrayed in Buckner's dismissive account of UFO seekers. Rehabilitation of the term as an etic construct was completed in the 1990s when Roof (1993) labelled the entire cohort of baby-boomers a 'generation of seekers' and Sutcliffe (2000a) pointed to the entrenched function of seekers and seeking as the biographical motor of 'alternative' and contemporary spiritualities.

As we have seen in this book, seekers' quests are simultaneously projected onto the social world through travel, pilgrimage and social interaction, and introjected within the self to create an expanding field of subjective, qualitative experiences. Exploration of both realms is deemed vital: as Alison from the Unit of Service says, 'the search without will prove little without the inward search'.[4] For example, before setting up 'Gandalf's Garden' in London, Muz Murray (1989: *x*) spent seven years travelling widely, 'sifting the sands of many spiritual cultures for guidance'. Hollywood actress Shirley MacLaine (1983: 90) demonstrates the diffusion of the model into popular culture when she writes, 'I've always thought I was looking for myself whenever I travelled. Like a journey anywhere was really a journey through myself.' Seeking can cover a wide geography, from regularly visiting a nearby fair or centre to making journeys of, say, several hundred miles to visit an international colony like Findhorn. Judith Boice (1990) narrates a five-year pilgrimage through several international settlements including Findhorn, Auroville in India and the Bear Tribe in North America. Similarly, *Journey: An Adventure of Love and Healing* (Tattersall 1996) chronicles an intense episode in the author's life: an American living in Italy, he visits Findhorn for Experience Week and then travels to Norway with a German man and a Norwegian woman to resolve a series of emotional and spiritual crises. These and other journeys replay Anthony Brooke's international travels or the wanderings of the Findhorn founders, but

in a more somatic and affective idiom where bodily contact and emotional expressivity are affirmed as touchstones of spiritual authenticity.

When mapped out reflexively as 'inner work' (Caddy 1988: 84), seeking transforms the self into a portable institution: a rich storehouse of subjectivities with which to interpret the passing world. The books of Alice Bailey are instructive in this regard, since they chart a satisfyingly complex 'inner' world of subtle bodies, angelic forces and unfolding hierarchies of relationship. Similarly, the field of holistic health is replete with esoteric anatomies and aetiologies: meridians, astral and etheric bodies, chakras and zones, the circulation of *chi*, *prana* and *kundalini*. And human potential discourse encourages the seeker to harness the energies of his 'inner team' (Waters 1996: 115) through reflexive processes of 'self-audit', 'self-awareness', 'self help', and 'self-talk', to cite a few entries in a dictionary of 'personal development' (ibid.: 178ff.).

Of course, the notion of intense searching and questioning to resolve specific dissatisfactions, or perhaps a more general anomie, has a long pedigree in theology, literature and folk tradition alike. I am thinking here of Augustine's seminal Christian *Confessions*, the apocryphal wanderings of Siddharta Gautama, or the virtuosity of Hindu yogis, as well as the great variety of reflexive 'journals' and 'confessions' in the modern period. And an implicit search may, consciously or not, propel quite secular biographies in the 'pursuit of worldly success, health or consolation' (Campbell 1972: 124). But the significance of the social institution of seekership in contemporary spirituality lies in its popularisation and diffusion of a previously elite, specialist role, which has specific consequences for Anglo–American corporate religion. So Walker (1994: 27) characterises 'New Age' by its insistence that 'spiritual insight is not just given to a few theologians, adepts, priests or shamans, but is available to all' and in Bloom's (1991: xv–xvi) rhetoric, 'New Age' is merely 'the visible tip of the iceberg of a mass movement in which humanity is reasserting its right to explore spirituality in total freedom'. In 'New Age' discourse and increasingly in popular and middle-class cultures, the 'spiritual quest' is no longer the prerogative of a social elite – superiorly educated monks, clerics and philosophers with commanding cultural capital, or even the aristocratic pioneers of 'New Age' – but a populist norm. This development suggests that the intellectualist model of seeking as a rarefied 'problem-solving' perspective, a strategy to reduce cognitive dissonance among the spiritually sensitive and restless, needs to be contextualised within a wider culture of popular practice in which the 'seeker' is now a familiar and accessible role model. Indeed, evidence from other studies of popular religion (Schneider and Dornbusch 1958, Roof 1999) indicates that a pragmatic heterodoxy and customisation of practice and belief among the 'people in the pew' is more widespread in Anglo–American Christian cultures than ecclesiastical history has allowed. This in turn suggests that a modified seekership culture may be less alien to institutional religion than might at first be assumed.

Two basic dynamic expressions of seeking can be distinguished: 'serial' and 'multiple'.[5] A 'serial' seeker has changed religious or spiritual allegiance, typically more than once. Adhesion to each 'spiritual path' may last months, years or decades, and any number of sequential affiliations may be pursued over the course of a lifetime. This mode of seeking is well illustrated in the biographies of the pioneers of Chapters 3 and 4. At a minimum count, Peter Caddy passed through the Rosicrucian Order, Sheena Govan's neo-Christian piety and UFO prophecy. So orderly was his progression that he himself noted that 'each major change in direction is accompanied by a change in partner' (Caddy 1996: 368). Dorothy Maclean was initiated into Western Sufism, then explored a variety of 'spiritual groups' in the 1950s (Maclean 1980: 13) before establishing contact with the nature spirits at Findhorn. George Trevelyan studied Alexander Technique and Anthroposophy before promoting his eclectic esoteric syllabus at Attingham Park. Liebie Pugh, we are told, had 'travelled along or knew of most spiritual paths' (Caddy 1996: 234). A steady progression of sources of guidance appears in the Heralds of the New Age bulletins from the 1950s to the 1980s. And each of these figures or groups appropriated in some fashion, and for varying periods of time, the 'New Age' emblem.

Seriality remains a feature of 'New Age'. The trajectory of David Icke's 'spiritual journey' in the UK recapitulates early 'New Age' patterns in his sense of 'being guided' (Icke 1991: 13ff.). Olsen (1991: xv) introduces her compendium of alternative health treatments in suitably reflexive mode: 'This book represents just the early phases of my personal health odyssey. I expect to continue exploring health care options for as long as I live'. And McGuire (1998: 116) reports that a 'not atypical' member of one American alternative healing group 'tried (and was generally pleased with) rebirthing, crystal healing, colonics, meditation journals, shiatsu, and dance therapy'. Serial seeking dramatically reflects the impact on autobiography of an expanding cultural menu. Nevertheless, in this mode of seeking one is not so much interested in the thrill of the chase as resolving the quest: reaching closure of some kind. As Gill Edwards (1993: viii) puts it:

> For fifteen years, I had followed personal and spiritual paths – from dreamwork to TM, from Gestalt therapy to yoga, from Buddhism to the Quakers. But while each had enriched my life, none had led to the transformation that I was seeking. I began, day after day, to call out to Spirit, saying that I was 'ready'.

A hankering for certainty instils a teleological undercurrent in the serial search: not just to seek, but to *find*. In contrast, multiple seeking proceeds multi-directionally and synchronically: an array of spiritual resources are exploited more or less simultaneously. Ideas, methods and techniques are decontextualised and reconstituted in new settings and adventurous juxtapositions. The practice

of multiple seeking has a particular affinity with late 'New Age', when, according to Bloom (1993a: 82) 'all the spiritual traditions and cosmologies are now available to us'. Data in Rose (1998: 15) support this hypothesis: of some nine hundred *Kindred Spirit* subscribers, he found that fully two-thirds 'follow more than one teaching at any one time'. Of course, serial and multiple tacks on spirituality are not mutually exclusive stances: many seekers alternate between episodes of each. But the multiple strategy seems particularly well-suited to the task implied in the discourse of assembling a customised spiritual 'kit' of ideas, values and practices. Hence Bloom (1993b: 21) advises the tyro: 'Spiritual practice is something that you and you alone can put together for yourself'. *Journey Towards Healing*, the 'personal search' of alternative therapist, counsellor and channeller Lori Forsyth (1993: 7), epitomises this attitude. By her mid-thirties Forsyth had already tried out yoga, alternative medicine, spiritual healing, psychic prediction, spirit guides, and Findhorn, to name just a few resources, and she had also changed her name by deed poll the better to express her personal sense of autonomy and originality. Similarly, McGuire (1998: 95) reports that participants in one healing group 'wove together complex, eclectic, and continually changing strands from several approaches for their personal beliefs and practices'. One respondent vividly illustrates this customised approach to daily practice:

> Her meals were selected for particular nutritional benefits; she used mini-meditations during her hectic moments at the office, applied acupressure and visualization to counter a headache [and] employed breathing techniques and visualization at each stoplight to handle the stress of a difficult commute home. At home she used a mantra, crystal and visualization to 'centre' herself during and after an argument. . . . Most days she spent one hour on exercise followed by stress-reducing visualizations in the sauna . . . Later she had a cup of herbal tea and meditated for half an hour.
>
> (McGuire 1998: 184–5)

Here an inventive mix of spiritual, dietary and exercise practices has permeated everyday life. Closure is spurned: practice remains open and mutable. This is clearly useful in times of rapid cultural 'turnover', allowing new ideas and practices to be slipped into the mix as and when they become available. As Shirley MacLaine has remarked, 'every time I think I've got the answers I think it's different a week later'.[6] Likewise William Bloom (1991: xviii) describes his 'spiritual enquiry' as 'an exploration' whose end 'I cannot now even begin to sense'. Hence the multiple seeker refines a customised lifestyle through pick and mix and trial and error in the 'spiritual marketplace' (Roof 1999). In contrast to the earnest, ascetic lifestyle of the 'New Age' pioneers, multiple seeking can be light, laid-back, even fun. 'Be playful', suggests Spangler (1996: 181); Bloom advertises his talks as 'enjoyable' and 'fun'.[7] Not so much pilgrim's *progress* as

pilgrim's *process*, seeking itself has become the end. Gill Edwards (1993: 63) acknowledges this: 'The whole point is our journey, not our destination'.

We can say, then, that a sense of history and alterity marks off the serial approach from the hyperactivity of multiple seeking, which tends to scramble boundaries of time and place. Although a spontaneous eclecticism implicit in the earliest networks undermines a strict dichotomy between serial and multiple dynamics, for analytical purposes we can usefully differentiate the two. This ploy allows us to see a rough fit between early 'New Age' and serial seeking, and late 'New Age' and multiple seeking. The careers of Mary Swainson and Lori Forsyth respectively exemplify this rough template. Swainson, born in the Edwardian era, progressed carefully and selectively through life: she was thirty years old before she joined an esoteric group and almost fifty before she began her 'New Age' work (Swainson 1977: 204, 208). By contrast, Forsyth was born in the late 1950s and her career ranges hungrily in both time and space. Her packed narrative comes to rest when she is still only in her mid-thirties, at which point she has already covered more ground than most serial seekers attempt in a lifetime, nonchalantly concluding: 'My whole life has been an experiment, hasn't it?' (Forsyth 1993: 255).

In practice, both serial and multiple seekers must manage a trade-off between choice and constraint, depending on factors such as whom one meets and where, what one reads, which event one happens to attend, and how 'available' one is to exploit a given opportunity. Here is the route Mary Swainson (1977: 204) took to contact one particular group:

> One day when I was about thirty, I was browsing in a public library. Somehow my hand seemed led to touch an unknown book (many seekers have had this experience). It turned out to be the first publication of an esoteric group which, at long last, 'felt right' for me, at that time.

Notice how Swainson locates this carefully-nuanced act in a social anthropology of readership. 'Many seekers', she casually remarks, 'have had this experience'. Here the outcome is positive: according to her own account, Swainson is proactive and available, and jumps at the chance. But the rationale of seeking can also accommodate negative experiences. A participant in a workshop at Findhorn told us that he had been a long-term member of one esoteric group whose leader was 'exposed' in a scandal. Far from becoming embittered for having followed a corrupted practice, he reported that the leader's exposure had been a profound learning experience on the need for him to repudiate powerful *gurus* on his 'spiritual path'.[8]

These examples also show that seeking is neither naive nor antinomian behaviour, but eminently social, legitimated by a wider cultural institution of 'seekership'. Indices of this diffuse cultural institution in action range from interpersonal networks and small groups to the popular readership tapped by

lifestyle directories such as *The Many Ways of Being* (Annett 1976) and *The Seeker's Guide: a New Age Resource Book* (Button and Bloom 1992). Certain reflexive linguistic tropes also operate, such as 'path', 'quest', 'seeking', 'higher self', 'energy', being 'centred', and 'getting in touch', establishing a semantic range nuanced towards American vernacular speech. At Findhorn, one resident speaks of 'a quest, a search for myself'.[9] Across the Atlantic, Mark Satin (1978: 13) confesses to his own 'inner search'. Back in the UK, David Icke (1993: 85) writes: 'It is the *seeking* which expands the mind'. Simmons (1990: 81–2) neatly summarises the gist of this popular discourse:

> Each of us has his or her own path. At any given time we must choose the sources of knowledge and experience that seem intuitively right, moving on to other books, disciplines, and scenarios when the time comes.

These normative claims beg the question of the strength of seekers' agency and its historical impact. There are several possible angles on this. On the one hand, the act of seeking implies some basic level of discontent with religion: a 'lack' or 'loss' of some kind. As Alison from the Unit of Service put it bluntly: 'I know all the things they teach. I want more, you know?' Whether or not they come from socially and financially advantaged backgrounds (and many do), seekers may still feel a lack of more tenuous cultural goods such as security, satisfaction and belonging. In this sense the thesis of relative deprivation holds good enough: that is, seekers feel themselves disadvantaged in access to scarce cultural goods. Another possibility is that seekers have become caught up in the thrill of the chase, with submission to a satisfying process overtaking achievement of a particular goal (cf. Campbell 1972: 127). The mystification imputed to seekership in earlier accounts stems from this interpretation, pathologising the culture by portraying its actors as people 'floundering about among religions' (Lofland and Stark 1965: 869). It is certainly possible to find evidence for this theory in some actors' lives, although we need to proceed from specific instances. Roof (1993: 88), for example, steers his assessment of Mollie Stone (whom we met in Chapter 5) in this direction when he concludes that 'life for her remains a quandary, her quest unfulfilled'. But a more positive interpretation must take seriously (although not unreservedly) seekers' testimony to real empowerment in the social world. This view sees seekers reclaiming a hitherto marginal or avant-garde role whose personal reflexivity and social flexibility actually equips them nicely for the 'pluralisation of life-worlds' inherent in postmodernity. Hence Straus (1976: 252–3) models the seeker as a person 'acting creatively in order to construct a satisfying life', an agent who develops 'tactics' for exploiting 'happenstance situations and encounters'. Likewise Balch and Taylor (1977: 851) propose replacing the tired model of the 'personally disoriented searcher' with that of a role 'socially oriented to the quest for personal growth'. Here seekers are not so much 'at sea' in

religion as attempting to refashion the self as an appropriate vessel – organismic, reflexive, relational – for navigating the rapids of contemporary culture.

I do not wish to settle this issue one way or the other – indeed, this would be to draw as false a dichotomy between models of mystification and empowerment as that between serial and multiple seeking – but rather to call for nuanced, reflexive accounts of particular instances such as I have attempted to provide in the present book. In any case, whether as agents or subjects, actors or dupes, seekers and their strategies are relational and contextual. This carries implications for the collective structure and function of seekership, a consideration that returns us to a central morphological issue. If certain collectivities, like those associated with 'New Age', depend entirely on the associative and disassociative impulses of *x* number of individuals, they function as purely strategic assemblies to gather, affirm and disseminate an aggregate of the same. The collectivity itself has no intrinsic identity, no essential purpose or goal: the ceaseless seeking undermines any overarching agenda beyond the mutual exaltation of spiritual paths. It follows that testimony of belonging to a dynamic, purposeful collectivity will be ambiguous, temporary, and necessarily contingent upon passing moods, needs and instincts. And this is exactly what we find when we look for evidence of clear self-identification as 'New Age' or for signs of a *bona fide* movement. The collectivities associated with 'New Age' resemble simple aggregates of self-reflexive individuals. Indeed, a movement of seekers must be an operative contradiction, since one's subjective freedom – indeed, *imperative* – to 'seek' inevitably relativises congregational commitments and boundaries.

Seekers at large: the structural dynamics of 'New Age'

> The right ordering of the New Society can be seen as a pattern of group relationships, from the small cell of a few closely-linked individuals to the world society of nations.
>
> ('The Significance of the Group in the New Age', October 1965, Attingham Park Prospectus)

Since I argue that there is and has been no 'New Age Movement' it may seem perverse to have given over a good deal of this book to a genealogy of historical collectivities connected with the emblem. But a distinction between collectivity and movement is vital, and the sociology of collective behaviour can help here. As Turner and Killian (1972: 5) explain:

> Although a collectivity has members, it lacks defined procedures for selecting and identifying [them]. Although it has leaders, it lacks defined procedures for selecting and identifying them. The members are those who happen to be participating, and the leaders are those who are being followed.

Contingency has replaced necessity in this account of collective interaction: no one is irreplaceable and agenda and outcomes are left substantially to chance. Such a collectivity may be 'compact' or 'diffuse' (ibid.: 111). The 'compact' collectivity, or crowd, gathers only at particular places for the duration of a specified event, whereas the 'diffuse' crowd is scattered across time and space, articulated partly through genealogies of relationships and partly through popular media. Both types interact in 'New Age' culture, whether we think of the compact collectivities of groups, workshops and conference gatherings or the dispersed networks of seekers. Common characteristics of compact and diffuse crowds, according to Turner and Killian (ibid.: 114), are uncertainty, urgency, the communication of moods and images, constraint, suggestibility, and permissiveness. As with the early analysis of seekership, it is not necessary to swallow the implicit disapproval inscribed in the language of these traits, which with just a little (emic) imagination could be re-described as the recovery of the subjectivities of choice, passion, emotional expressivity, self-control, openness, and tolerance. What actually obtains in a particular case will doubtless mix and muddy the purity of these polarities. But enough has been said to show that Turner and Killian's model allows for a realistic play between agency and constraint in the socialisation of the seeker. Hence

> the individual encounters expressions of the same sentiments, witnesses the same behavioural models, and quickly acquires the sense that he is part of a collectivity, sharing uniform sentiments and encompassing a large number of people.
>
> (ibid.: 114)

In the specific terms of a genealogy of 'New Age', I am arguing that this emblem enjoyed an episodic career as a 'fad' (ibid.: 129) within a diffuse collectivity of seekers in the 1950s and 1960s but dissolved into a loose idiom after the 1970s. Again, we need to read 'fad' not derogatively but anthropologically, for the exposition makes clear its application in explaining the crucial hermeneutic shift from emblem to idiom discussed in Chapter 5:

> A fad does not consist of simple, unimaginative imitation. It has *collective enthusiasm for a wide range of individual innovation around a common theme*, in behaviour that is performed in association with others.
>
> (Turner and Killian 1972: 130; emphasis added)

In other words, thinking of 'New Age' in terms of a social 'fad' or 'craze' allows for substantial latitude of belief and practice while maintaining a minimum common reference point, supplied here by the emblem itself. In short, 'New Age' has been a discursive emblem used *within* certain networks of alternative spirituality rather than constituting an entity in itself, which also means that diffuse collectivities of seekers have predated, and will outlive, 'New Age'.

We must now identify the mechanisms through which this collectivity or diffuse crowd of 'New Age' seekers is articulated. Chapters 6 to 8 show the ubiquitous forms of social organisation associated with 'New Age': the group, the colony and the network. These structures function as secondary institutions to regulate the collectivity, occupying an ambiguous zone somewhere between traditional primary institutions and the virtuosic but unstable displays of innumerable 'wandering stars' (Sutcliffe 2000a). I do not propose to say anything more about 'New Age' colonies here. Although frequently upheld as the premier international 'New Age' settlement, Findhorn is better designated as one of very few colonies, perhaps the *only* colony, for which a sound case can be made for classification as 'New Age'. In other words, the colony is an unusual form in 'New Age', and Findhorn features in the genealogy of 'New Age' *not* because the colony is representative of a wider type but because it is the particular historical outcome of a seminal 'New Age' group. Indeed, as Chapter 7 demonstrated, small interactive groups are effectively the building blocks of Findhorn's organisational structure. So I will concentrate here on developing remarks I made in earlier chapters on the function of networks and groups in socialising the seeker.

First developed in anthropology and in the sociology of the family (Barnes 1954, Bott 1957), the term 'network' has been deployed enthusiastically in 'New Age' studies, Melton *et al.* (1991: 416) describing it as 'the single most important New Age organisational form'. The most sustained treatment is York (1995), who understands 'New Age' to be on the cutting edge of a vast 'emerging network' of postmodern religion. A more modest approach can be made following Mitchell (1969: 12), who makes a simple but useful distinction between 'interactional' and 'morphological' characteristics of a network. Interactional characteristics concern the internal dynamics of networks: the differentials of power among individuals and groups whereby authority is wielded and political agendas are set. By contrast, morphology treats the shape and structure of networks in relation to other patterns of organisation. I brought out the interactional dynamics of the early networks in my discussion of the acceptance and then repudiation of Sheena Govan's authority by the proto-Findhorn group in the late 1950s, in the construction of a common apocalyptic discourse on 'New Age' in the 1960s and in the hermeneutical shift in 'New Age' in the 1970s. The morphology of the networks emerges in the ethnographies of the Unit of Service and holistic health in Chapters 6 and 8, where I showed through my own entry into the field how insertion into a local network can quickly lead to a series of interactions and exchanges.

My own experiences are broadly confirmed by other accounts of social networking in action. In London, Barker (1994: 330–2) briefly plots her passage through what she calls the 'extraordinary "intercommunication" of the New Age scene'. And Luhrmann (1994: 36) has delved into magical networks in the English capital. Her impression of the dynamics of networking is particularly apposite:

> I became part of a complex, dense network which kept doubling back upon itself: I would meet someone independently, who turned out to have been initiated by someone I knew and whose name was known to other people I also knew. I was familiar with groups at the centre of this network and at its edge. . . . No matter what my point of entry had been . . . I would have ended up in contact with many of the people I know now.

Networks also function at a regional level. In England, 'North East Network' bulletin, subtitled 'Link up with New Age activities in the North East' and targeted at the 'consciously expanding group of individuals' practising 'personal development and natural/holistic therapies', has been published since 1994 in Sunderland. Since 1993 the more populous and socially-advantaged Bristol–Bath–Glastonbury triangle has had *The Spark*, a forty-page free newspaper of co-operative, ecological and entrepreneurial listings focused very broadly on 'creative solutions for a changing world'.[10] On a larger scale, a similar kind of 'intercommunication' characterises holistic health in California (English-Lueck 1990: 25) and 'New Age' in South Africa (Steyn 1994: 308).

This consensus suggests that a network model of alternative spirituality could function as a predictive tool in plotting the trajectories of selected seekers through an identified network, charting the effect of the network's social and ideological constraints on the development of seekers' careers. As the individual enters the network, a series of options becomes available: at a talk by a teacher at a holistic health fair she buys a pamphlet with an address on the back; she visits this centre to attend a workshop; a study group emerges from this workshop and one evening it is led by a facilitator from a long-term group, which she joins and where she makes a new friend who duly invites her on a spiritual retreat at another centre. In the course of time, to paraphrase Luhrmann, she begins to 'bump into' people, to recognise 'familiar faces', to hear news through the 'grapevine' and in turn to be socialised into the network's norms and values. She may also extend the network by introducing friends and family. In the most attenuated version of networking, intercommunication itself becomes the ritual act. Hence during his talk at an alternative health fair in Glasgow in 1996, Patch Adams said, almost as an aside (and recalling Anthony Brooke's international efforts), 'I correspond regularly with about 1600 people around the world'.

But care is needed with the network model. If 'New Age' is not a movement, neither is it – by the same evidence and logic – a network, for the latter is a dynamic web or process of communication and interaction rather than a material entity. Hence 'New Age' is a term *within* a network, or networks, and should not be confused with the properties of the network itself, which are in any case hardly the preserve of alternative spirituality but a ubiquitous feature of modern culture – 'the institution of our age, an unprecedented source of

power for individuals', as Ferguson (1982: 43) puts it. Fields where networking has been formative are as diverse as business marketing, the world wide web, clandestine operations and the so-called 'old boy network' in British public life (Heald 1983). The boundary-crossing and variable-blurring properties of the network can create the impression of the diffusion of a discourse, and a diaspora of exponents, far in excess of what actually obtains. This helps explain the attraction of network imagery in 'New Age' discourse. Melton *et al.* (1991: 416) sketch this exaggerated effect well:

> The very existence of the networks creates an image within the New Age community of a growing movement, permeating mainstream society, and of a public, far beyond the boundaries of the movement itself, which is participating in the creation of a New Age without knowing it.

It is ironic that this exposure of 'New Age' rhetoric problematises the authors' own analysis of a 'New Age movement'. For 'New Age' networks are dynamic, unstable processes of discursive intercommunication and exchange, a mechanism whereby a sense of collective belonging can be generated among otherwise fissiparous individuals and groups. In this way

> the diffuse collectivity creates a sense of permissiveness and of constraint, which aids the individual in resolving the uncertainty that deters him from acting solely on the basis of his own judgment.
>
> (Turner and Killian 1972: 117)

Parameters of behavioural and ideological tolerance and restriction are primarily established face-to-face in couples and small groups, but norms and values are also disseminated via newsletters, mailing lists and telephone trees, and more recently via e-mail, discussion lists and web pages. A scattered matrix of small buildings, rented premises and private houses functions as the set of material nodes in the network, offering seekers places to gather, interact and express their solidarity.

When participants get together, social interaction invariably takes the form of small groups. A few remarks on 'New Age' group culture follow to close this section on the structural dynamics of the field. First, the group is pervasive: it structures all sectors of the spiritual culture associated with 'New Age' now and in the past, whether we look in holistic healing, Findhorn and meditation practice today, inspect the bulletins, meetings and gatherings of the 1950s and 1960s, or unpack Alice Bailey's oligarchic ideology of the 1930s. Groups may be one-off gatherings, formed for a day, week-end or (exceptionally) week-long 'workshop': that is, an experiential, participative learning forum. Examples include the firewalking event at Westbank, the 'New Age' group leaders

gathering at Attingham and 'Experience Week' at Findhorn, respectively. Groups may also meet regularly, either for a limited series, such as the various teaching groups run at the Salisbury Centre, or indefinitely and with considerable commitment, like the Unit of Service meditation meetings, or the Rosicrucian Order's week-end gatherings in the late 1930s. Second, the groups tend to be small, meaning for present purposes 'a group all of whose members are known, at least by sight, to everyone of them' (Phillips 1965: 14). There were fourteen in Experience Week, six on average at full moon meditations, eight at the Alice Bailey Sacred Dance day, and five in Sheena Govan's Pimlico group. Low numbers encourage intimacy and interaction among varied, sometimes antagonistic personalities ('chalk and cheese' is how Eileen Caddy described herself and Dorothy Maclean in Sheena Govan's group). As Lucis Trust spokeswoman Jan Nation put it in a workshop at Findhorn: 'groupwork entails the coming together of individuals with completely different points of view, each fulfilling a different function'.[11] The facilitator at the Sacred Dance workshop considered that the optimum group size was between ten and twenty: any less meant insufficient 'energy' was generated, any more and the group might break up or sub-groups hive off. Larger groups in which I participated included twenty-one people at a Bach Flower Remedies day, thirty at the firewalking event at Westbank, and thirty-six at the 'Inner Ashrams' workshop mentioned above. These were more anonymous events, incorporating structured teaching, formal exercises, and firm leadership by a designated 'expert'. But even here participation was encouraged and small group interaction was used to break down a potentially intimidating mass. As firewalker Hazel Price explained, 'no one will be able to stand back – it will affect the energy'. Jan Nation put this more forcefully: 'someone who is critical can be a poison in a group'. In any case size was, in theory at least, no barrier to intercommunion: Nation also claimed that 'if the group in this room had meditated together for ten years we wouldn't need to discuss anything'. Third, a diversity of group leadership and decision-making models can be found, from the relatively modest directives given us by our Experience Week focalisers, and the gentle shepherding by Alison in the Unit of Service, to the rousing poetics of George Trevelyan, the presidential style of Liebie Pugh and Peter Caddy, and the increasingly authoritarian decrees of Sheena Govan. Internal group dynamics varied accordingly: sometimes consensus prevailed, at other times 'spiritual rivalry' might break loose and leaders get toppled or groups disband. In the most sophisticated contexts a transparent obsolescence is built into groups, for example at Findhorn.

The discourse of 'New Age' spirituality

> I have never met anyone engaged in any kind of New Age activity who has thought of herself or himself as having joined a new religion.
> (Spangler 1993: 79).

As Spangler says, the emic position actively repudiates 'religion' and 'religiousness'. 'I'm not talking of religion',[12] writes Alison of the Unit of Service. MacLaine (1983: 8) says: 'The religions of the world didn't seem to explain or satisfy our spiritual needs'. Trevelyan's (1977: 2) book *A Vision of the Aquarian Age* is emphatically not about 'a religious movement, but a spiritual awakening'. Religion may not only be shunned but positively attacked. William Thompson calls it 'one of the greatest forces for evil at work in the world today' (in Spangler and Thompson 1991: 176). 'I had little respect for the religious institutions and priestly hierarchies', writes Bloom (1990: 2), describing his school vicar as 'an extraordinarily boring man!' (Bloom 1993b: 18).

'Organised religion', then, is constructed in the 'New Age' idiom as unimaginative and socially constricting at best, pathological at worst. It is contrasted unfavourably with a vivid, vital 'spirituality'. In *The New Age in a Nutshell*, Lorna St Aubyn (1990: 84–5) defines religion largely in terms of 'mundane rules', 'Church control' and 'excessive dogma'. Spirituality, on the other hand, is 'not just for Sunday mornings' but 'for all day every day'. Children raised in particular faith traditions, she thinks, have been 'vaccinated by religion' and are thereby 'immune to spirituality'. According to Liz Hodgkinson (1993: 108) in *The Personal Growth Book*: 'You can be genuinely spiritual without ever going near a church or place of worship and, conversely, go to church, synagogue or mosque several times a week without ever understanding what spirituality is all about'. David Icke (1993: 12) encapsulates this impatient discourse when he writes: 'Religion has hijacked spirituality'.

Sometimes the enemy is merely damned by faint praise. Patrick in the Unit of Service told me: 'Without spirituality, there would be no religion, but not vice versa'. Walker (1994: 27) explains that Findhorn is not 'a religion' but 'a context within which all aspects of life, including religious observance, are taking place'. Alternatively, 'spirituality' simply prevails by default. Thus Simmons (1990: 11) portrays a 'new spiritual awakening':

> Traces of this movement are everywhere if one wants to look. Every week now, I hear about another group or activity or institute involved in things spiritual, and they are scattered throughout the entire Western hemisphere.
>
> (ibid.: 204)

This kind of discourse proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s and can now be found widely in newspapers, magazines and popular conversation. If we look back at the ethnographies in this book, we see that an ideology of 'spirituality' underpins the general discourse. In Chapter 6, Patrick privileges spirituality over religion in the work of the Unit of Service while Sinclair (1984: 46) characterises the Bailey work in general as 'the art of spiritual impression'. In Chapter 7 we saw how Findhorn now typically calls itself a 'spiritual' rather

than a 'New Age' community, and in the questionnaire I conducted there, 'spirituality' was overwhelmingly preferred by respondents to 'religion'. The latter was associated with ideas like 'the system', 'dogma', 'organised belief', and 'narrow' outlooks, whereas spirituality was linked to 'living experience' and to 'open', 'inner', 'inclusive', and 'natural' discourse.[13] In Chapter 8, nearly three-quarters of respondents to the same questionnaire at an alternative health fair juggled these terms and categories in very similar fashion (Sutcliffe 1995) and the chapter showed that in networks of healing and well-being as much as anywhere else in the general field, talk of 'spirit' and the 'spiritual' was plentiful, of 'god' and 'religion' scant. Firewalker Stephen Mulhearn, for example, made no references at all to the latter pairing; his most explicit theological claim was 'we're not human beings being spiritual but spiritual beings being human'.

Nor is the 'spiritual' merely a contemporary fad. In Chapters 3 and 4 we read how Dorothy Maclean (1980: 12–13) explored avowedly 'spiritual' groups in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Eileen Caddy (1988: 19) recalls of husband-to-be Peter that ' "religious" was not the way to describe him. I knew he didn't go to church, but I sensed a commitment to something spiritual.' In the interwar years, too, we find substantial traces of this discourse. In his very successful book *God is My Adventure*, Landau (1935: vii, 148) addressed himself to 'contemporary spiritual life' and 'modern spiritual pursuits'. And talk of 'spirituality' permeates the *Occult Review*. In 1932 an editorial proposed setting up a 'Spiritual League' to 'weld together' the many 'scattered spiritual units' among its readership while in 1935 the editor remarked approvingly that 'the type of literature which deals with the spiritual quest is becoming increasingly popular'.[14] An article by a Mrs Featherstonehaugh in 1932 concluded that 'the real problem' of the world was 'a spiritual one' and was not adequately represented in the plight of religion, for 'only to the superficial do the empty churches represent the spirituality of the age'.[15] Alice Bailey, too, used this kind of language. In 1925 she wrote that 'behind all subjective phenomena' is a 'latent spiritual cause' which is the proper focus of 'the spiritual man' (Bailey 1991b: 392). And in 1936 she described the vanguards of the 'New Age' as

> not necessarily people who could be termed 'religious' in the ordinary sense of that word, but they will be men of goodwill, of high mental calibre . . . free from personal ambition and selfishness, animated by love of humanity.
>
> (ibid.: 393)

In sum, since at least the First World War 'spirituality' has developed as a discourse set over and against 'institutional religion'. In contemporary culture 'spirituality' has emerged as a hybrid discourse constructed from 'alternative' and 'popular' sources. Indeed, practising 'spirituality' is no longer confined to denizens of aristocratic, avant-garde or subcultural enclaves: it is increasingly

done in the culture at large. An informant in Ferguson (1982: 401) could claim by the end of the 1970s that 'a person is no longer an oddball because he is known to be on a spiritual quest'. By the 1990s, significant percentages in one American survey were describing their identities as explicitly spiritual *and* non-religious (Zinnbauer *et al.* 1997). These individuals were reported to be 'less likely to evaluate religiousness positively' and 'less likely to engage in traditional forms of worship such as church attendance and prayer'. In contrast they were

> more likely to be independent from others . . . to engage in group experiences related to spiritual growth . . . to characterise religiousness and spirituality as different and nonoverlapping concepts . . . to hold nontraditional 'new age' beliefs [and] to have had mystical experiences.
>
> (Zinnbauer *et al.* 1997: 561)

Roof (1999: 177) concurs with these findings, emphasising the reflexive and popular qualities of Anglo–American discourse in which the word 'spiritual' is 'invoked positively as a basis of self-identity' by a heterogeneous constituency who simultaneously use the word 'religious' as a 'counter-identity for clarifying who they are not'.

This emergent 'spiritual' discourse demonstrates significant biographical continuities across the decades, from the interwar seekers targeted by Alice Bailey, through Sheena Govan's post-war Pimlico group and to the new seekers of the late-Sixties counterculture and beyond. It has three broad qualities or instincts: it is dissident, lay and functional. First, it remains a dissident discourse, although increasingly in latent rather than manifest function. The agenda is consistently one of finding or constructing an alternative to institutional religion: something *other*, something *more*, something *better*. 'I decided to give up organised religion', says an informant in Tomory (1996: 86). 'It suited me perfectly that I could have a spiritual understanding and basis that was nothing to do with religion', writes Lori Forsyth (1993: 76). 'The church dissatisfies me', says Alison from the Unit of Service, 'I want more, you know?' Other institutions are similarly scolded for their repression of populist freedoms. 'People here have a *right* to be suspicious of academics', an American told me at Findhorn. A related strategy is to prospect further afield for a replacement for the enemy 'organised religion', particularly in 'Eastern', 'esoteric' and indigenous sources. Hence in the interwar period Alice Bailey located her *guru* in Tibet (following Blavatsky), Paul Brunton prospected 'secret Egypt' and 'secret India', and the White Eagle Lodge sought legitimation in a native American spirit guide. More recently, Bowman (1993b) has charted the creative reconstruction of 'Celtic' spirituality while UFO groups have looked to extraterrestrial realms – perhaps the ultimate 'alternative' source (Melton 1995).

Anti-authoritarian rhetoric seasons the mix. Icke (1991: 127) writes:

> The new spirituality involves a one-to-one relationship with the Godhead and the higher intelligences. We will no longer believe that all our sins can be forgiven by a priest appointed by the Church hierarchy. Why do we need a human to arbitrate between ourselves and God when we have our own personal link?

Similarly, Bloom (1990: 8) says: 'I advise people not to be cowardly about their own spiritual authority'. But even these statements reproduce an established message in the genealogy of alternative spirituality. Krishnamurti, for example, told the *Occult Review* as early as 1932 that 'authority is the antithesis of spirituality', Landau (1935: vii) acknowledged 'something sacriligious' behind the intent of *God is My Adventure* and in the late Victorian period Helena Blavatsky is reputed to have said, 'I wouldn't be a slave to God Himself, let alone man'.[16]

Second, the instinct is lay and populist, seen clearly in the theatre of operation, which is largely everyday lives and interactions in Anglo–Amercian culture. This ethnodomain has traditionally (and unaccountably) received little scrutiny from academics but here it takes centre stage. Among holistic health practitioners in California, for example, English-Lueck (1990: 138–9) noticed that 'conversations flip casually between discussions of hairdressers, spouses, and massage oil to reincarnations, sensing auras, and chatting with one's spirit guides'. Gill Edwards (1993: 178) speaks of 'the spirit of everyday life', William Bloom (1993a: 59) of 'housework and daily yoga'. The chapters of the Crotona Fellowship gathered in members' suburban houses; Sheena Govan's group met in her Pimlico flat; groups associated with Liebie Pugh and the Findhorn founders met in hotels; Trevelyan's 'New Age group leaders' met at an adult education college; and the Findhorn colony began in a caravan park. Contemporary projects typically continue this pattern of domestic operation, such as the Westbank Centre, a family home, and the Unit of Service, which invariably met in Alison's flat. And Findhorn now owns the hotel and caravan site.

The domestic setting undermines traditional boundaries between public and private space: everyone prepared to cross that threshold and muck in, is welcome. In Marilyn Ferguson's 'Aquarian conspiracy' – which she sees simply as a vast networking of like-minded spiritual activists – the key point is that 'a conspirator can be anyone' (Ferguson 1982: 21). Now, this is a direct populist appeal, and Worsley (1969: 242–4) has identified two cardinal features of this syndrome: 'the supremacy of the will of the people' and the desire for a 'direct relationship between people and leadership, unmediated by institutions'. Translating these from politics to culture – more specifically, to contemporary spirituality – is a self-explanatory move: the former feature neatly captures the collective institution of seekership and the latter addresses the demand for

immediate access to the source of spiritual vitality. Populism's inclusivity is particularly salient here: Worsley explains that it can embrace a variety of small-scale, entrepreneurial, marginal and even disgruntled identities that otherwise repudiate or evade primary institutions. To these and other mobile identities, populism offers 'a new communal transectional identity' (ibid.).

This brief account of the mechanics of cultural populism helps to explain the popular appeal of 'New Age' spirituality. Consider various prominent notions uncovered in this book: that self-identities or 'labels' fundamentally mislead; that anyone can join; that 'doing it' rather than 'talking about it' is what 'New Age' is about; that spirituality is innate and 'instinctive' (Bloom 1991: 221) and that our passions, enthusiasms and feelings – our manifold subjectivities – are clues to its genius; that unmediated experiences of gnosis and charisma are within reach of everyone; that 'spirituality' can function as a unifying factor (a 'universal link') across the world; and that institutions – particularly religion and education – only thwart it. Hence David Spangler (1996: 220) thinks that 'anyone can become a birthforce for a new world', that 'we may all become champions'; and Gill Edwards (1993: 192) declares dramatically: 'It is time for *everyone* to become a shaman, a metaphysician, a dream-weaver, a walker-between-worlds'. Following on the heels of Alice Bailey's prototype 'true Aquarian' of the 1930s (Bailey 1991a: 416), the ultimate 'transectional identity' has been proposed in some 'New Age' quarters: the 'planetary citizen' who cultivates a 'planetary consciousness' for a 'planetary culture'.[17]

Disciplinary control of knowledge and traditional educational credentials are eschewed in these and other expressions of the emergent spirituality, a stance that feeds a self-taught ethos. As Ross (1992: 539) remarks, the discourse urges 'everyone'

> to become the engineer/architect/designer of his or her own environment. Reskilling oneself . . . can be seen as a way of reappropriating, from the experts, folk skills that were once everyday knowledge.

The authority to interpret is reclaimed by practitioners themselves, who are typically not specialists trained by traditional institutions, but lay 'doers' and 'thinkers': 'amateurs' in the literal sense of 'lovers' or 'enthusiasts'. In this manner specialist discourses on psychology, physics and religion are retrieved from university libraries and laboratories and factored into popular teachings on the healing power of positive thinking, the importance of matching IQ with 'EQ' or 'emotional intelligence', the scientific basis of holism and the perennial teachings at the heart of all religions.

Popular culture may also directly trigger amateurist spiritual reflection. For example, an initially sceptical Peter Caddy (1996: 370) describes his visit to Florida's Disney World in the company of George Trevelyan:

> I saw Disney World through his eyes, as if through the eyes of a child, and so entered into the spirit of the place. I felt that I'd learnt an important lesson: 'Except ye be as a little child, ye can no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven'.

David Spangler (1984: 131) cites Richard Adams's epic fantasy novel about a rabbit colony, *Watership Down* (1972), as a favourite book. And in the mid-1990s he kept three miniature models on his desk for inspiration: Mickey Mouse as the sorceror's apprentice in Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1939), Yoda the wizard in *Star Wars* (1977), and Merlin the magician from Arthurian folklore.[18]

As well as the shamanic and the spectacular, more ordinary daily tasks and transactions are brought to attention. Roof (1993: 64) found Mollie Stone understood 'spiritual' to be 'something very worldly, having to do with relating to the earth and sky and animals and people; and something very bodily, having to do with health, happiness, and feeling good about herself'. In the Findhorn magazine *One Earth*, William Bloom (1993b: 18) lists various everyday activities as opportunities for 'practical spiritual practice' such as 'listening to music, making love, having a baby, painting, fasting or weeding the garden'. Notice how his list casually, even innocently, reclaims intimate and profane acts of everyday life as the stuff of spirituality. In her paperback manual *Stepping into the Magic* Gill Edwards (1993: 179ff.) pursues a similar line, listing some simple everyday tasks through which practitioners can 'connect with Spirit': taking a bath or shower is 'an opportunity to "cleanse" yourself of the past'; mealtimes are a chance 'to remember that the Earth has given this gift of food'; glancing in the mirror is a moment for speaking an affirmation like 'Today, I am open to miracles'; and even such simple acts as climbing stairs can be used to 'affirm that you are reaching for a higher perspective on your life'. Domestic space itself receives special attention, and at the time of writing there is a boom in *feng shui*, a traditional Chinese practice repackaged for Anglo–American culture that deals in the harmonious management of interior environments. The popularisation and diffusion of *feng shui* can be seen in a glut of publishing: one feature in *Here's Health*, a British popular health magazine, is called '20 Ways to Heal your Home' and proposes approaches such as 'light some candles', 'make a small shrine', 'harness crystal power', 'get the "vibes" right', and, simply, 'love your space'.[19]

The tedious side of human domesticity also receives attention. Bloom (1993a: 60) says that 'one woman I know always washes the dishes with divine awareness' and 'another woman taught me how to wash and clean the lavatory with love'. This sacralisation of housework is a persistent strain in Findhorn spirituality: the central aphorism in the colony in the mid-1990s was 'work is love in action'. But despite (or perhaps because of) this celebration of what has traditionally been regarded as 'women's work', an equivocal gender ascription is at work here that exemplifies some wider political ambiguities inherent in 'New Age' spirituality. A full analysis of different stages in the gendering of power in

'New Age' spirituality requires further detailed research, but by exhuming and at least sexing a largely buried field, I hope to have made some empirical inroads. Work traditionally ascribed to women – housework, childcare, emotional labour – has certainly been revalued in 'New Age', even brought to the centre of attention in the case of the incorporation of emotional work into the 'expressive ethic' of the late-1970s onwards (Heelas 2000), seen particularly in Experience Week. Findhorn's domesticated habitat partly explains its persistent popularity for women, and this holds true for 'New Age' circles in general: in crude terms, this is where women's expertise has been confined by a dominant gendered discourse based on the segregation of women to the 'private' domain and men to the 'public' sphere. But determining the actual power wielded by women in 'New Age' circles is complicated by several factors. On the one hand, women are prominent in the sex profile of 'New Age', typically in a two-to-one ratio, and this is confirmed by my own findings: the 'core group' in the Unit of Service, Experience Week participants at Findhorn and my questionnaire sample at an alternative health fair in Edinburgh repeated this two-to-one ratio, and at a Bach Flower Remedies workshop and a talk by firewalker Stephen Mulhearn, it increased to three to one. Rose (2001: 330) also found in his *Kindred Spirit* questionnaire that nearly four out of five alternative therapists were women. On the other hand – and here's the rub – he also found in the same survey that female teachers were 'outnumbered two to one' by men as role models and authoritative sources (ibid.). Now, this is just one study, but its implication is that women may predominate as participants and 'coalface' practitioners (Reiki healers, Findhorn group focalisers, firewalk instructors) without attaining parity in higher-profile leadership.

This pattern is substantiated in my genealogy. On the one hand Alice Bailey can justly lay claim to being the modern ideologue of 'New Age'. But playing the role of 'secretary' to her Tibetan 'Master' effectively inscribed a familiar, hierarchically-gendered relationship at the heart of 'New Age' epistemology. In a different vein, Sheena Govan and Liebie Pugh each became a messianic figure in the 1950s and 1960s – a female Parousia, in effect – but who now remembers them? Sheena Govan's historical memory is almost entirely mediated by Peter Caddy's autobiography (1996) and Paul Hawken's hagiography (1990), and it was Caddy who finally usurped her authority as public face of the group, as we saw in Chapter 3. As for Pugh, she leaves almost no historical footprint. And who remembers women networkers such as Sheila Walker of the Scottish UFO Society, who first put Peter Caddy in touch with George Trevelyan, or indefatigable international correspondents such as May Harvey of the Heralds of the New Age? Likewise, Myrtle Glines was David Spangler's associate when he arrived at Findhorn, and her practical experience in counselling and groupwork evidently grounded the crucial shift in 'New Age' discourse from apocalypse to self-realisation, but her part has been soundly eclipsed by Spangler's role. Likewise Findhorn was settled by more women than men (three to one, if we include Lena Lamont with Eileen Caddy and Dorothy

Maclean) and yet it was the man, Peter Caddy, who was the colony's face to the outside world up to 1979. And while George Trevelyan has been called the 'father of the New Age', I know of no claims for a 'mother'. More recently, Marilyn Ferguson (1982) found in *The Aquarian Conspiracy* that only two out of thirty-seven inspirational figures in a small Californian survey were women, while the Findhorn Foundation continued to be represented by men as overall directors into the late 1980s. The ambiguity of gender roles in 'New Age' is encapsulated in the transgendered economy at 'God's Hotel' in Forres in the late 1950s, where Peter Caddy managed the operation (using his intuition and hunches) and Eileen Caddy changed nappies and cooked (while obtaining hierophantic guidance).

So far I have discussed two qualities or instincts of the field: the dissident and the lay. Third and finally, I wish to point out the functional dynamic of 'New Age' spirituality. That is, the 'New Age' seeker is largely preoccupied with the rational–functional application of spiritual skills. She wants a spiritual practice that will *do* things, that will make things *work*, whether on the intimate scale of biographies and relationships or on the global scale of co-operation and social unity. Hence a problem-solving, 'working' approach to life characterises the 'New Age' ethos, emphasising short- and medium-term achievement of goals and the active creation of meaning in everyday life. Here is Bloom (1993a: 84) again on the ideal method:

> If we commit ourselves to career retraining or returning to formal education, we do so with great care and thought. We research the areas in which we are interested. We taste what they are like before we make long-term plans. We should have the same approach to spiritual education.

In other words, individuals should assess risk and opportunity and make appropriate plans and adjustments in spirituality as much as in anything else. Implementing spiritual strategies is a matter of empirical trial and error, conducted on oneself as the experimental 'site' but duly worked out in relationship with others. Claims have even been made that such an 'empiricised' spirituality upholds scientific method. Bloom implies as much in a typically populist statement on the convergence between spiritual experience and science, which supposedly is

> coming to a more fluid understanding of nature and the cosmos, in which there is a continuum between consciousness and matter, and an understanding that everything is made up of energy in different forms.
> (Bloom 1996: 18)

This actually sounds more like a metaphysical than a scientific statement.[20] From Alice Bailey's texts to contemporary takes on holism and energy, imagery

lifted from the popular science of the day has invoked the authority of scientific data and method, whether in terms of light waves, electricity, atomic power, nuclear radiation, or extraterrestrial life forms. At the same time, it is not clear that sufficient expertise (or even interest) exists among seekers to evaluate such a statement properly. Yet science connotes modernity, and the effect is to establish 'New Age' as a cutting-edge discourse.

But at the end of the day, personal experience – construed as pure and irreducible – is the touchstone: as Bloom (1996: 18) also says, 'if you have not experienced it, why should you believe it?' Such functionality calls forth an intense pragmatism among seekers. 'Anything can work', says Ferguson (1982: 91). 'Do some sampling of ideas and images', suggests Spangler (1996: 181). 'Do something, anything, to deepen your relationship with the sacred', urges Bloom (1993b: 18). This approach can veer towards a prosperity teaching. 'If you embark on this path you will never actually want for money, friends, or good relationships', says Hodgkinson (1993: 26). Lori Forsyth (1993: 130ff.) lists a new job, a new car and a new home as cumulative examples of 'the way life flows when one works with Spirit'. But material success may also be an intrinsic goal of spiritual practice, as in the Findhorn practice of 'manifestation'. Eileen Caddy recalls that

> sometimes it took a while after the thought was put out to achieve the physical reality, but often it would happen quite quickly. . . . When I received guidance about something, I knew it would come, and often just the right object or amount of money would be given to us.
>
> (In Walker 1994: 191)[21]

Learning and perfecting spiritual practice can be a highly technical matter. Bloom himself (1993b: 19) speaks of 'spiritual technology'[22] while Ferguson (1982: 91) introduced the term 'psychotechnologies', meaning techniques and systems designed to trigger 'a deliberate change in consciousness'. In *A Guide to the New Age*, Stuart Wilson (1989: 51ff.) offers nearly eighty different spiritual techniques and strategies, including Peter Caddy's advice to eliminate 'if' and 'can't' from one's vocabulary, adopt a vegetarian diet, take up meditation and regularly use affirmations. In a clear summary of the lay functionalism informing practice, he concludes: 'We should feel free to *use* any combination of techniques for change that seems *right to us* and gives us good *results*' (ibid.: 66; emphasis added). Finally, several self-styled resource books and catalogues substantiate the 'do-it-yourself' ethos of alternative spiritual practice. Compendiums like *The Whole Person Catalogue* (Considine 1992) and *The Seeker's Guide* (Button and Bloom 1992) list groups, ideas, teachers, techniques, products, courses, and treatments across the spectrum of meditation, healing and personal growth circles. 'Take time to look around', advises Spangler (1996: 181). 'Give yourself plenty of time to dip and to discriminate', suggests Bloom (1993a: 83).

The end of 'New Age'

> What was once a mystery is now understandable.
>
> (Wiseman 1979: 113)

> I'm a spiritual person. I'm fascinated by all sorts of religions and I pick from them what I want.
>
> (Evelyn Glennie, musician)[23]

> Local variation *is all there is*!
>
> (Martin 2000: 282)

The title of this last chapter has deliberately carried a double meaning. We have reached the 'end' in the sense that 'New Age' as a collective moment of utopian change is over – as indeed Findhorn kindly informed me when I began this work. But we have also reached an end in the sense of arriving at the kind of popular, functional, everyday spirituality which is, in significant part, the legacy of 'New Age': a product of its genealogy.

In this book I tested the consensus that New Age is a 'movement' and found instead a diffuse collectivity of questing individuals. These seekers have certainly used the expression 'New Age', and between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s they briefly organised themselves around it, treating it as the emblem of an imminent apocalypse. Apart from this, affiliation has been sporadic and ambiguous. At the same time I have exhumed, described and analysed a series of small groups and networks of seekers from the 1930s to the early twenty-first century. I have also discussed the popular discourse generated in the field. This has in part addressed the timing of an apocalyptic 'New Age', but has increasingly dwelt since the 1970s on the promise of a pragmatic, world-affirming 'spirituality'. As we examine the archive material informing Chapters 3 and 4, the popular literature of Chapters 2, 5 and 9, and the ethnographies of Chapters 6–8, we see that this discourse of 'spirituality' increasingly displaces 'New Age' and inherits the controlling instincts of dissidence, populism and functionality outlined in this final chapter. By the early twenty-first century this diffuse and popularised discourse of spirituality has become fairly comfortably established across the cultural spectrum as a symbolic repudiation of 'organised religion'. It has an almost entirely white, middle-class demography largely made up of professional, managerial, arts, and entrepreneurial occupations.[24] It is also well-represented by women by dint of its reclamation of skills and attributes traditionally consigned to domestic realms and predominantly gendered as 'feminine', such as emotional empathy, bodily awareness and interpersonal skills. However, notwithstanding superiority in numbers (and also in spiritual gifts, according to some emic accounts), the relative social power and status of 'New Age' women remains an unresolved issue.

The demography underscores very real constraints around this spirituality. Despite its rhetoric of inclusivity, it is clear that certain sectors of the

population are more likely to get involved than others. Nevertheless, the norm – and in a globalised age, the appeal – is of a universalised lay spirituality, open to all, yet with no stigmatising label or fussy membership criteria. The apparent paradox of how such an amorphous discourse can be learned and transmitted is explained by the role of the seeker, located in a diffuse collectivity of peers and mentors. No other social role has the requisite combination of reflexivity and interdependence to generate the modicum of institutionalisation required while simultaneously sabotaging levels of organisational complexity beyond the most simple. We have seen how 'New Age' seekers resourcefully sift and splice their sources. Consequently the presenting profile of individual (and group) is constantly changing in line with the migration of ideas and techniques (and individuals) in and out of the biography (or collectivity) in question. Should stronger collective identity or mobilisation be sought – when an aspiring leader emerges – there is inbuilt resistance at the heart of the phenomenon, for the logic of seeking encourages movement laterally (to 'share' and 'network' with peers and colleagues) rather than vertically (scaling a hierarchy). Clearly such lateral diffusion does not translate easily into sustainable policy, as we saw in the case of 'New Age' in the 1960s, and as still haunts Findhorn's attempts to come up with a consistent self-identity. Indeed, the history of 'New Age' is littered with temporary groups and mutated identities, which is both a source of the restless, passionate creativity of its actors as well as a factor in its elision from cultural history. As institutions crumble and regroup (an apt term), seekers stand revealed by default, if not by choice. And currently there are rich pickings for seekers: the cultural panorama of the early twenty-first century provides a variegated spiritual landscape for those with sufficient cultural capital, perhaps unique in the history of religions in its sheer range of groups, quests, paths, and trips. In this sense we can see that the instinctual drive of 'New Age' spirituality towards a simple, direct and useful practice (Maldonado 1986) not tied to any particular host institution, is the pre-eminent expression of popular religion in contemporary culture.

But such a spirituality must be inherently unstable. Indeed, the career of 'New Age' exemplifies the fickle public impact of this new spirituality. The restlessness and mobility of its key agents militates against the level of institutionalisation required by a viable NSM or NRM, as I have repeatedly argued, and the fiercely subjective values and experiences of seekers are in any case hostile to institutional recuperation. The revealing advice of Bloom (1990: 8) 'not to be cowardly' about one's 'spiritual authority' returns us to the sociostructural indeterminacy haunting 'New Age', for which the following observation, derived from the work of Max Weber, remains highly pertinent:

> Given the absolutistic moral fervor, the revolutionary disdain of formal procedures, and the inherent instability of the lack of provision for

> succession, charismatic activities and orientations because of their close relation to the very sources of social and cultural creativity, contain strong tendencies toward the destruction and decomposition of institutions.
>
> (Eisenstadt 1968: xix)

'Charismatic activities and orientations' perfectly encapsulates the spiritual seekership, groupwork and networking at the heart of 'New Age', and this immediacy and spontaneity must be a major source of the biographical attraction and resilience of 'alternative' forms of spirituality. But in structural terms, this instinct is also the gravest obstacle to the lasting inroads on the primary institutions of the modern world that this spirituality would dearly like to make. For its reflexive biographies, its loose collectivities and its one potentially explosive emblem – 'New Age' – lack a viable level of collective focus and mobilisation effectively to deliver its challenge.