Hiding in Plain Sight: The Organizational Forms of "Unorganized Religion"
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There has been much debate over whether New Age spirituality (NAS) is a useful category

and, if so, how best to characterize the phenomena clustered under that heading. Historically

minded scholars generally agree, however, on the value of distinguishing between narrower and

broader uses of the term "new age." In the narrower sense, it refers above all to ideas in the

writings of post-Theosophist Alice Bailey (1880-1949), which were picked up by the new age

networks of the 1950s, many of them UFO related, and transformed into a more activist form by

1960s utopian communities, most notably Findhorn. The movement, narrowly conceived, was

British-based and relied upon occultist traditions that had long been influential there (Melton

1995; Sutcliffe 2003; Albanese 2007; Hanegraaff 2009, 345). In a more general sense, scholars

have used "new age" as a catch-all term for the much more extensive and complex "cultic

milieu" of the 1980s and beyond, which was dominated "by the so-called metaphysical and New

Thought traditions typical of American alternative culture" (Hanegraaff, 344-45). Sutcliffe

depicts this as "a popular hermeneutical shift in the meaning of 'New Age' … [such that] at the

turn of the 1970s, … 'New Age' as apocalyptic emblem of the near future gave way to 'New

Age' as humanistic idiom of self-realisation in the here-and-now" (2003, 5). Although many

people self-identified as new age in the general sense in the 1980s, the number of self-identified

"new agers" declined in the 1990s with most becoming just "spiritual" as the movement moved

"from its traditional status as a counter-culture" and into the mainstream (Hanegraaff 2009, 345;

Albanese 2007, 496-516; MacKian 2012).

In this more general sense, scholars tend to characterize new age spirituality in terms of (1)

individualism, (2) shopping, spiritual supermarket, (3) seeking, and (4) in-built resistance to

organization (Hanegraaff 2009, 351) or at least to vertical (hierarchical) organization, as opposed to lateral-networked organization (Sutcliffe 2003, 224-25).

For Hanegraaff, the central feature of NAS broadly defined is "a basic mythology that narrates the growth and development of the individual soul through many incarnations and existences in the direction of ever-increasing knowledge and spiritual insight" (2009, 352). Attention to one's own "inner voice" is not only central to the myth, as Hanegraaff depicts it, but the means by which the individuals navigate their way through the spiritual marketplace. As researchers, we should acknowledge, however, that practitioners do not characterize themselves as consumers (Heelas 2008, 81-96). In so far as our goal in drawing upon the marketplace metaphor is to illuminate new lines of inquiry and not just to disparage practitioners, the single minded scholarly focus on practitioners as consumers is unduly limiting. Markets are not simply made up of consumers, but also of producers, who create businesses, manufacture and promote products, and compete for the loyalty of their customers.

When Matthew Wood argues that much of what is commonly referred to as new age spirituality should not be viewed as a distinct area of belief and practice, he does so on the grounds that these beliefs and practices are "non-formative" (2007, 9). In making his case, Wood again highlights the NAS resistance to organization but he does so, at least tacitly, from the point of view of producers and promoters. Because people are free to pick and choose based on their own individual tastes, "authorities [are unable, he argues] … to shape people's and organizations' subjective identities and habitus" in any definitive way (Wood 2009, 243). Theoretically, he suggests, authorities could do so in three ways: (1) by structuring legitimation by "providing common standards for practice, belief, dialogue and contestation," (2) by managing experience, "especially through what may be called control over the means of

possession," and (3) establishing careers of participation "that enabled those involved to be classified, assessed and treated in appropriate ways" (Wood 2009, 243). The ability of authorities to shape subjective identities and habitus in these ways, thus, presupposes structures that legitimate standards, authenticate experience, and authorize specialized roles.

Wood characterizes channeling, which he views as central to NAS, as non-formative based on his attendance at two one-day channeling workshops conducted in Nottinghamshire by pseudonymous American channelers (Wood 2009, 101-119). Anthropologist Adam Klin-Oron (2011) reported similarly superficial effects of a one-day channeling workshop in Israel. Klin-Oron, however, followed up on the one-day workshop by participating in a ten-week training class. In contrast to the one-day workshop, the ten-week training class was designed and did in fact train people to become [professional] channelers and, in doing so, it managed experience, formed practitioners, and established careers of participation. It was, in short, formative in terms of all the criteria that Wood sets out. This suggests that simply referring to NAS as non-formative is too simplistic.

Sutcliffe, as already noted, takes a more nuanced position on the organizational question, highlighting the presence of "a large amorphous collectivity, insufficiently institutionalized or internally cohesive to develop singular goals or a falsifiable boundary, [that] remains to be accounted for. Its typical fora are lectures, workshops, small groups and societies, and calendrical and ad hoc gatherings; a few dedicated buildings, including the administrative centers of groups and societies, as well as libraries, bookshops, and other commercial premises; and the open-ended networks of association — that loosely articulate these relatively simple, but immensely flexible and resilient, cultural institutions" (2004, 479). Sutcliffe is right that we have not accounted for this amorphous collectivity well-enough. If formation (or formativeness) is

linked to authority and structure, we need to look more carefully at how this "amorphous collectivity" is organized in order to assess the extent to which it has the capacity to form individuals or groups.

Research on new age, metaphysical, and occult traditions (e.g. Hanegraaff 1998, Albanese 2007, Hammer 2004), however, has emphasized the history of ideas and largely overlooked the history of organizational forms. Sociologists of religion still tend to discuss "organized religion" in light of variations on the church-sect-cult/NRM typology, although they have shifted in recent decades to the marketplace analogy (Roof 2001), and, most recently, to the idea of networked religion (York 1995, Sutcliffe 2004, Campbell 2012). As Wood points out, these phenomena can be studied in either of two complementary ways, by focusing on networked interconnections between individuals, groups and events as a whole or on the different groups and events, each with their "own histories, social organizational and authority structures, beliefs and practices" (2007, 4). While the former is particularly suited to ethnographic methods, the latter requires an investigation of routes of dissemination across time and space. As the contrast between Wood's and Klin-Oron's research on channelers suggests, the formativeness of channeling practices cannot necessarily be decided based on what is available in a single location. Following Sutcliffe's lead (2003), we will learn more if we look at the actual organizational forms adopted by the traditions that fed into NAS whether narrowly or broadly conceived. Doing so, will not only allow us to return to the question of formativeness with a more nuanced eye, but will also allow us to reassess the way that narrow conceptions of what constitutes "organized religion" have blinded us to the historical range of "religious organizations."

The groups that fed into what has been called "new age spirituality" tended to draw on organizational forms that historically coexisted alongside and interpenetrated rather than

competed with "official" religious organizations. While attitudes toward "organized religions" varied among these groups and among the individuals within them, most of the organizations were esoteric and/or universalist in their theology and, thus, generally viewed their organizations as compatible with membership in "organized religions." They, thus, constituted an organizational "third way" that with some exceptions did not adopt a formal "church" structure, did not view themselves as "organized religions," and for the most part were not viewed that way by others. Characterizing themselves variously as nonsectarian, spiritual, metaphysical, or occult, they viewed themselves neither as "[organized] religions" (the first way) nor completely nonreligious (the second way). Preoccupation with the church-sect-cult typology has hidden them from sociological view, obscuring the extent to which organizations of this sort not only provide the deep structure of the amorphous collectivity we call "new age spirituality" but also prefigure many of the features of the "networked religion" of the internet era (Campbell 2012). As scholars, we have been unduly captivated by these traditions' rhetorical critique of "organized religion" and failed to recognize the various alternative forms of organization they adopted in order to distinguish themselves from it. The argument unfolds in three parts in which we consider the organizational forms adopted by several ostensibly "unorganized" groups, first, in relationship to the "organized religion" of their era, then in relation to extant concepts in the sociology of religion, and finally in relation to their capacity to form individuals or groups.

Part 1: Organizational forms

There are many places we could begin with an analysis of this sort, but since the need is for greater historical and contextual specificity, we will focus on three movements — Spiritualism,

Theosophy, and Metaphysical Healing — that had their proximate origins in the United States and are widely recognized as contributing to what we call NAS and then consider the organizational form developed by Alcoholics Anonymous in the twentieth century. Alcoholics Anonymous and the twelve step movements derived from it are not usually linked with new age spirituality but definitely adopted a 'third way' form of organization and, thus, provide an illuminating comparison when considering the formative potential of these practices.

Spiritualism: The rappings produced by the Fox sisters in 1848 in upstate New York are generally recognized as launching the modern spiritualist movement. The characteristic form of the movement, however, took several years to emerge and resulted through "the fusion of *ideas* about spirits of the dead and the *practices* of animal magnetism" (Taves 1999, 166-173). The practices associated with animal magnetism or mesmerism, in which practitioners demonstrated the effects of an unseen force (whether magnetic, mental, cosmic, etc.) of one person on another, took three basic forms: public lectures and demonstrations, small groups (circles or séances), and therapeutic dyads. In the 1840s and 50s in both England and the U.S., peripatetic lecturers publicly demonstrated the power of mesmerism and related phenomena, such as phrenology and clairvoyance. Lectures were typically held at literary, scientific, or "mechanics" institutes, lyceums, and guildhalls, rather than at churches. They often precipitated the formation of small groups intent on investigating the phenomena for themselves as well as dyadic consultations between a practitioner and a client (Winter 1998, 109-24, 137-62; Oppenheim 1988, 216-19). All the practices, which ranged from diagnosis and healing of disease to displays of information regarding individual lives or unseen objects, were viewed as experimental, investigatory, and demonstrative. Modern spiritualism, as a movement, built on these practices, placing small group meetings (referred to as circles or séances) at the center of spiritualist practice (Oppenheim

1998, 217-27; Carroll 1997 ch 6-7) and utilizing lectures, often held in lyceums, as a means of publicity and recruitment. Like their mesmeric predecessors, Spiritualist lectures were generally held in non-church venues, while circles met in domestic spaces. Spiritualist circles enabled different levels of involvement. Investigators could attend intermittently out of curiosity. Others could attend regularly to establish and maintain contact with spirits through the mediums in the group. Still others could discover mediumistic abilities, cultivate them within the context of the group, and launch into a mediumistic career giving public lectures, founding new groups, and/or advertising their services in spiritualist periodicals (Braude 1989, 82-98, Taves 1999, 177-180).

Spiritualists held varying attitudes toward the churches. Most were critical of "organized religion," criticizing religious organization as "inherently tyrannical and antirepublican" (Carroll 1997, 39). They were particularly critical of the perceived "formalism" of religious institutions, as well as their reliance on professional clergy. Like many present-day groups their rhetoric was individualistic and anti-organizational. Despite a great deal of anti-ecclesial rhetoric, Spiritualists attitudes toward "organized religion" were not monolithic and did not necessarily preclude membership in the organizations they criticized (Carroll 1997, 39-44). Some severed ties with their congregations and denominations, while others did not. The more liberal denominations, such as Unitarians, Universalists, and Quakers, were generally more open (Braude 1989, 43-49, Carroll 1997, 45-47) and many Spiritualists remained within their denominations in order to promote a spiritualist interpretation of Christianity (Taves 1999, 181-90). The spiritualist interpretation of Christianity was universalistic, which was one of the reasons, along with its populist membership, that spiritualism made greater inroads into Universalism than other liberal churches (Braude 1989, 47). But many Spiritualists went beyond Christian Universalism to view Spiritualism as a universal form of religion and the spirits as a

universal doorway to the other world and the common denominator of all religions. In doing so, Spiritualist promoted a new understanding of universality as persuasive testimony to truth rather than as a degrading lack of uniqueness, thus, modeling a universalistic stance that other third way organizations would adopt as well (Taves 1999, 190-200, 348-51).

Spiritualists in the U.K. and the U.S. were slow to organize beyond the state and local level. Ann Braude analyzes the heated debates over whether to create a national organization at the first national convention in 1864 (Braude 1989, 162-73). Some Spiritualists in Britain and the United States eventually began to form churches, some of which affiliated with national organizations such as the National Federation of Spiritualists, founded in the UK in 1891, and the National Spiritual Association of Churches (NSAC), founded in the US in 1893. NSAC, which incorporated as a nonprofit religious organization, touts its status as "a legitimate religious organization" and now limits membership to persons who are "not a member of any other Spiritualist Church, or Spiritualist organization which grants certificates, or a member of another denomination"[1] NSAC, in other words, has become an "organized religion."

Theosophy: The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky and Henry Olcott, followed a different pattern, choosing to adopt the lodge structure of the fraternal organizations (e.g. Freemasons, Oddfellows, Knights of Pythias, the Grange) and build on the esoteric ritual foundations already developed by the Freemasons. The fraternal lodges that flowered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were derived from medieval craft guilds of the stonemasons, whose lodges provided housing while working away from home (Campbell 1980; Greer 1998, 1-22; Mazet 1995 253-262). The lodge structure was subsequently adopted by a number of esoteric groups with connections to Theosophy and Freemasonry, such as the

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[1] http://www.nsac.org/nsac.php (accessed August 21, 2012).

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, some forms of Martinism, and the Anthroposophical Society.

Other esoteric groups that draw from Theosophy have adopted an educational format (Campbell 1980). Heindel's Rosicrucian Fellowship (founded in 1909) organizes its students in centers and study groups. Steiner reorganized the Anthroposophical Society in 1923 around the newly founded School for Spiritual Science. Alice Bailey set up the Lucis Trust as an educational charity in 1922 and founded the Arcane School, which uses a correspondence school format, as a subsidiary in 1923.

These organizations are universalistic in their theology. Guild structure presupposed a training model that proceeded in stages beginning with apprenticeship, fellowship, and then mastery. The educational model was also structured around levels, such as classes and grades. Both the guild and educational models were easily recast as spiritual training programs. The combination of universalistic theology and spiritual training within a "non-religious" organizational format allowed them to create a recognizable legal entity, differentiate themselves from "religions" and "sects," and conceptualize dual membership. Mazet (1995, 248) illustrates a typical conceptual pattern when he states: "Freemasonry is definitely not a religion, but its members must be religious men. They may belong to different religions, and they must be tolerant of others' opinions. It is forbidden to discuss religious matters during masonic work." At the same time, he continues: "They [Masons] must all believe in God, the Great Architect of the Universe, and in the immortality of the soul. They must also believe that God reveals himself to humanity in the volume of the sacred law, which is for each of them the sacred book of his own faith, on which he takes the oath that bind him to the order." In parallel fashion, the Constitution and Rules of the Theosophical Society (1891) stated that the Society was

"absolutely unsectarian, and no assent to any formula of belief, faith or creed shall be required as a qualification of membership; but every applicant and member must lie in sympathy with the effort to create the nucleus of an Universal Brotherhood of Humanity" (Olcott 1891). The Anthroposophical Society and the Arcane School both describe themselves as nonsectarian and offer membership regardless of religious affiliation[2]

Metaphysical Healing: We can identify another basic organizational form – the dyadic relationship of healer and patient -- which, like Spiritualism, also built on mesmeric practice, but focused more on the healing powers associated with the unseen (mesmeric) forces than on contacting spirits. Phineas P. Quimby (1802-1866), who described himself initially as a mesmerist, then a mental healer, who used the power of mind alone to heal, is often cited as the father of the metaphysical healing tradition that encompassed both Christian Science and New Thought and deeply infused NAS broadly conceived. As an independent practitioner, Quimby taught Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, as well as Warren Felt Evans, whose writings, which drew from Christianity and Theosophy, informed the New Thought movement. Eddy's renegade students, Ursula Gestefeld and Emma Curtis Hopkins, in turn taught others. Hopkins, who blended Eddy with Evans, was particularly important, training scores of students, who in turn founded New Thought schools, churches, associations, and periodicals (Satter 1999, Albanese 2007, 283-329).

The metaphysical healing tradition centered on teacher-healers who positioned themselves in relation to various recognizable professional roles – author-publishers, teachers, medical healers, and clergy – and, given their orientation, created books and periodicals, fee-for-service healing practices, schools, associations, and/or churches. While church-like organizations

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[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthroposophical_Society#Principles (accessed August 18, 2012) and http://www.lucistrust.org/en/arcane_school (accessed August 21, 2012)

founded by metaphysical healers, including Mary Baker Eddy's Church of Christ, Scientist and
New Thought denominations, such as the Unity School of Christianity, the Church of Divine
Science, and the Church of Religious Science, are typically treated as organized religions,
scholars have had difficulty categorizing metaphysical healers who adopted other organizational
models. As Paul Johnson (1998, 1-3) has noted, independent practitioners, such as Edgar Cayce
(1877-1945), whose influence on modern religious history was arguably as great as many
founders of religious movements, have posed a particular challenge.

With the rise of the holistic healing movement in the twentieth century, some metaphysical
healers have adopted medical models of professional organization and training. The National
Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine distinguishes between five healing
modalities many of which involve some sort of spiritual component. Those classified as "energy
medicine" draw from the metaphysical healing tradition and are often discussed under the "new
age" heading[3] (http://www.ahna.org, accessed August 19, 2012). Therapeutic Touch and Healing
Touch illustrate the new organizational possibilities available to metaphysical healers who align
themselves with the holistic health movement. Therapeutic Touch, co-developed in the seventies
by Dr. Dolores Krieger, who has a doctorate in nursing, and Dora Kunz, a "natural healer" and
Theosophist, has a membership organization, the Therapeutic Touch International Association,
with a board of trustees that oversees a credential process for TT Practitioners and TT Teachers
(Albanese 2007, 508-9; http://therapeutic-touch.org). Janet Mentgen, who began developing
healing touch in the 1980s, established a certificate program, certified by the American Holistic
Nurses Association in 1993. She founded Healing Touch International as a non-profit
educational and membership organization in 1996 and the Healing Touch Worldwide

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[3] http://www.ahna.org (accessed August 19, 2012).

Foundation, a non-profit charitable organization in 1997. Healing Touch sponsors classes, certifies Practitioners and Instructors, and holds annual regional and worldwide conferences. HT courses are open to "all nurses, massage therapists, body therapists, counselors, psychotherapists, physicians, other allied health care professionals as well as individuals who desire an in-depth understanding and practice of healing work using energy based concepts and principles"[4]

Alcoholics Anonymous: In the 1930s, the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith created a distinctive organizational structure built around small groups, initially modeled on the evangelical Protestant Oxford Group, adapting the Oxford Group's "Six Principles" to create AA's "Twelve Steps." In editing the Big Book of AA and the Twelve Steps outlined within it, participants in the movement explicitly debated how they wanted to position the book. According to Bill Wilson, who produced the initial draft,

> Fitz wanted a powerfully religious document; Henry and Jimmy would have none of it.
> They wanted a psychological book which would lure the reader in … As we worked
> feverishly on this project Fitz made trip after trip to New York from his Maryland home to
> insist on raising the spiritual pitch of the A.A. Book. Out of this debate came the spiritual
> form and substance of this document, notably the expression, 'God *as we understand Him*,'
> which proved to be a ten-strike. As umpire of these disputes, I was obliged to go pretty
> much down the middle, writing in spiritual rather than religious or entirely psychological
> terms" (Anon. 1957, 17).

With the publication of the Big Book in 1939, AA positioned itself as spiritual rather than religious (Fuller 2001, 112-15) and, with the substitution of "awakening" for "experience" in the second printing, the Twelve Steps were expressly conceived as a path to a "spiritual awakening"

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[4] http://www.healingtouchprogram.com.

(Step Twelve).

The most distinctive innovations in organization form, however, came in the 1940s with the formulation of the Twelve Traditions (Anon 1952). Developed through a process of trial and error (and a desperation born of addiction), they place the "common welfare" of the group as a whole above that of the individual (Tradition One). As AA commentary explains, however, AA explicitly rejected a top down hierarchical structure governed by a central authority as a means of maintaining the unity of the group, instead locating authority in "a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience," that is, in the "conscience" of the local AA group (Tradition Two). Group membership was open to all who wanted "to stop drinking" (Tradition Three), regardless of "race, creed, politics, and language" (141). Tradition Nine proclaimed that "A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve." The commentary on the ninth tradition declares AA an exception to the general rule that "power to direct or govern is the essence of organization everywhere" (172-73), arguing that those elected to serve local, intergroup, or worldwide level were caretakers and expediters who could at most make suggestions. While AA's claim that it is "a society without organization" (175) seems unwarranted, characterizing itself as "without organization" served to position it among the third way organizations.

Whether these organizations are considered "new age" or not (and AA and other 12 Step programs generally are not), they all involve some sort of spiritual or esoteric practice, accept members regardless of religious affiliation, and, with a few exceptions such as NSAC, position themselves in contrast to "organized religions." They vary, however, in the emphasis that they place on local groups, therapeutic dyads, and public education. While Healing Touch practitioners meet with other HT practitioners in the context of training groups, conferences and

continuing education workshops, their practice is primarily dyadic. HT stands in marked contrast to AA and the other twelve step programs, where local groups constitute the heart of the movement. Although AA produces a great deal of literature and periodically holds conventions, "working the program" means going to meetings. Nineteenth century spiritualist circles and fraternal orders were also small group oriented. Theosophists and the more occult groups varied. Although many were founded on the lodge model, many adopted an education model instead or as well and, depending on the nature of the school and its role in the organization, placed more or less emphasis on small groups.

As we have seen, the third way type organizations generally viewed themselves as "nonsectarian" due to their esoteric and/or universalist presuppositions about spirituality and/or religion. Their organizational structure, membership requirements, and relationship with "organized religions" were congruent with their inclusivist theological outlook. The attitudes of "organized religions" toward these groups in turn varied depending on their theology. The Roman Catholic Church prohibited involvement in the Masonic and other non-Catholic "secret societies" (Gruber 1910) and encouraged the formation of specifically Catholic fraternal orders. The Second Plenary Council in Baltimore (1866) discouraged Catholics from attending spiritualist seances and the Vatican condemned "spiritistic practices" in 1898 (Pace 1910). The Catholic hierarchy did not prohibit Catholics from joining AA, however, due to AA's careful solicitation of input from Catholic leaders and their successful effort to position the fellowship as "spiritual but not religious."

Protestant attitudes toward these groups varied much more widely. During the early nineteenth century (post-1826), there was considerable Antimasonic sentiment among American Protestants, especially those in more conservative denominations with Calvinist roots (Goodman

1988, 60). Antimasonic Protestants were hostile toward dual membership and "attempted to force people to choose" (61). Still most men who joined fraternal orders were Protestant church members. Later in the nineteenth century, many Protestants not only joined fraternal orders, they also attended spiritualist seances, read New Thought periodicals, and, of course, beginning in the 1930s, joined AA.

Part II: Third Way Organizational Forms and the Sociology of Religion.

In light of this survey of a few examples of third way forms of organization, we can return to the traditional church-sect-cult typology that still structures much of the sociological discussion of organizational form. Although there have been numerous efforts to refine the church-sect-cult typology (for an overview, see Roberts and Yamane, 175-185), we focus on Stark and Bainbridge's distinction between audience cults, client cults, and cult movements, since their distinctions are embedded in a larger theory of religion and are often used to characterize new age spirituality.

Audience cults: Stark and Bainbridge (1985) characterize audience cults as "the most diffuse and least organized kind of cult … Sometimes some members of this audience actually may gather to hear a lecture. But there are virtually no aspects of formal organization to these activities, and membership remains at most a consumer activity. Indeed, cult audience often do not gather physically but consume cult doctrines entirely through magazines, books, newspapers, radio and television" (126). None of the groups just discussed could be characterized simply as "audience cults," although all disseminated literature and most held public lectures or workshops that would have allowed some to participate at an audience level. From the point of those

promoting these traditions, lectures, workshops, and texts can be seen as means of recruiting new members to their organizations and/or initiating a process of initiation or training. Stark and Bainbridge do not discuss those who give the lectures, write the books, or run the workshops. As producers, they might be deeply involved in an organization, regularly attending meetings, assuming leadership roles, and/or legitimated, credentialed or certified through various organizationally recognized means.

Client cults and client movements: Stark and Bainbridge's distinction between client cults and client movements is even more problematic, due in large part to their faith in Durkheim's assertion that "there is no church of magic" (1985, 214). Initially, however, they seem to characterize the client cult simply in terms of a dyadic relationship, such that "the relationship between those promulgating cult doctrine and those partaking of it most closely resembles the relationship between therapist and patient, or between consultant and client. Considerable organization may be found among those offering the cult service, but clients remain little organized" (1985, 26). So far this definition fits the format of independent metaphysical healers and Therapeutic and Healing Touch practitioners pretty well.

Because Stark and Bainbridge define these client services as "magical" and assume that there is "no church of magic," they do not distinguish between dyads and small groups. Small group participants are defined as "clients" rather than "members" as long as they "retain their participation in an organized religious group" (1985, 29). A cult movement is not born, according to Stark and Bainbridge, until a cult leader "is able to get his or her clients to … sever their ties with other religious organizations" (29). This formulation hides nonexclusive groups from view and overlooks the subjective views of participants, many of whom would undoubtedly identify themselves as group members and feel a sense of group identity. In defining

membership in terms of exclusivity, Stark and Bainbridge adopt criteria that the groups themselves do not. In doing so, they obscure the less familiar but potentially stable, intentional forms of organization we have been considering here. Although Stark and Bainbridge's elaboration of the church-sect-cult typology is only one of many efforts at refinement, the entire effort seems mired in problematic presuppositions of the sort just illustrated.

Dyads and small groups: If we jettison distinctions between sects and cults and between religion and magic and simply distinguish between dyadic relationships and small groups, we can recognize the role that dyadic relationships play and have played in many of these organizations. Thus, Spiritualist mediums advertised their services (as diagnosticians, healers, and channelers of spirits), as did other more esoteric practitioners and metaphysical healers. The twelve step programs encourage newcomers to find a sponsor, thus establishing a dyadic relationship with someone who can help them work the program. This should not detract, however, from observing the constitutive role that non-exclusive small groups — Spiritualist circles, Theosophist lodges, or AA meetings — play in many of these organization. Nor, of course, should it detract from examining how those who maintain multiple memberships characterize themselves, e.g., as Christian Spiritualists or Buddhist Twelve Steppers.

Movements and Networks: Whether and/or at what point something should be called a movement is also fraught with controversy. Given that movements are often defined in terms of networks and that both new age spirituality and religion in the Internet age are often characterized in terms of networks, we focus here on networks rather than movements. We see similarities between the way people have moved back and forth between third way and "organized religion" and the way people shift between religion online and offline. Campbell (2012) identifies five key traits of the "networked religion" that emerges as people move on and

offline — networked community, storied identities, shifting authority, convergent practice, and multisite reality. In contrasting today's "religious social networks" with "traditional religious rituals and institutions" (Campbell, 66), Campbell's modern-traditional dichotomy obscures the obvious continuities between online religion and third way organizational forms. In both cases, the emergence of new sites of activity that do not prohibit multiple membership allows for (1) the creation of loose social networks with varying levels of religious affiliation and commitment, (2) fluid, potentially hybrid, multiple and/or shifting, rather than static, identities, (3) challenges to and leveling of authority, (4) beliefs and practices that draw from multiple sources and lead to the emergence of new hybrid forms, and (5) multisite realities, such that practices in different contexts are simultaneously connected and mediated.

Taking inspiration from research on internet religion, we can bring the questions scholars are raising about the relationship between online and offline religion to the study of "organized religion" and the ostensibly "unorganized" third way sector, asking how people relate them, how they understand themselves, how authority is shifted and pluralized, and so on. In light of even this preliminary analysis of third way forms of religious organization, we can ask how new these ostensibly new Internet related developments actually are. Campbell highlights the distinctive features of the Internet as "flattening of traditional hierarchies, encouraging instantaneous communication and response, and widening access to sacred or once-private information" (68). To what degree were these features already present in some third way organizations long before the Internet? To what extent were features built into the structure of the Internet prefigured by the third way organizations' theological commitment to universalism and "nonsectarian" membership policies? Campbell suggests that the rise of online religion poses challenges to "conventional forms of connection, hierarchy, and identity management" (68). Are these not

precisely the features that have left scholars struggling to understand "new age religion" and led Wood to characterize NAS as "non-formative"?

Part III: Formativeness Revisited

This analysis suggests that, while characterizing NAS or simply contemporary spirituality as "non-formative" is far too simplistic, third way organizational forms, like on-line forms of religiosity, do raise important questions regarding both the formative capacity of organizations and the formative process itself. In considering these questions, we should resist caricaturing the formative capacity of "organized religion" and, following the lead of the Internet researchers, compare the capacities of so-called organized and third way groups. In practice, the formative capacities of the more traditional "organized religions" are also limited by various contextual factors. Thus, for example, the Catholic Church has the most power to form its members when membership is mandatory, the process begins in childhood, and the family is supportive and itself properly "formed" in the eyes of the institution. In the absence of these supporting factors, the Catholic Church also has difficulties forming its members.

Religious orders offer a more precise comparison. Both offer in-depth spiritual formation intended primarily for adults. Both allow for varying levels of affiliation and commitment. Catholics and non-Catholics can read books on Benedictine or Jesuit spirituality, attend retreats or workshops on these spiritual paths, and Catholics, if they are sufficiently motivated, can become lay affiliates or enter into the intensive formation process required of full-fledged members of the various orders. In doing so, they take on dual membership in their order and in the Catholic Church. Consideration of the difficulties that even the most traditional religious

institutions face in forming their membership should alert us to the many factors that effect formation. Most crucially, just as charismatic leadership depends as much on followers' willingness to follow as leaders' ability to lead, so too the ability to form depends as much on people's willingness and interest in being formed as it does in the formative capacities of authorities. In so far as an individual or a group can formulate a coherent formative path (or at least give that appearance), the ability and capacity to form depends largely on the willingness of others to enter into the process under their guidance or direction.

We can return in light of these general observations to Wood's claim that channelers, who in his view epitomize NAS, are unable to form either individuals or groups due to their inability to structure legitimation by (1) providing common standards (2) managing experience, and (3) establishing careers of participation (Wood 2009, 243). Channelers, however, do not need to establish common standards for channeling any more than Buddhist teachers need to establish common standards for authenticating enlightenment experiences. Buddhist enlightenment is transmitted through lineages, passed down from teacher to student; lineages may hold to different standards and do not necessarily recognize the authenticity of the transmission through other lineages.   Nor would we expect experience to be managed or careers established via one-day workshops on Buddhist or Christian practice. Although opportunities for in-depth formation as a channeler may not be available in the locations that Wood studied, they clearly are available in Israel, as Klin-Oron's (2011) research attests. Indeed, he found the training offered in the ten-week class he attended so formative that midway through he, as a skeptical, secular anthropologist, felt compelled to choose whether he was going to continue with his dissertation (and formation as an anthropologist) or throw himself completely into the training in order to become a professional channeler. Of his class of trainees, he was the only one who chose not to

launch a professional practice!

In sum, we should not let participants' antipathies toward "organized religion" nor well-worn sociological typologies blind us to the organizational forms that NAS practitioners and their historical precursors have hidden in plain sight. To assess the formativeness of these groups and practices, we need a better understanding of formative processes based on nuanced comparisons across traditions, between types of groups and practices, and in both online and offline contexts. To do justice to the organizational question, we must supplement ethnographic network modeling with historical developmental analysis.

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