

Article

“Medical Men in the New Age”: Alice Bailey’s Impact on Contemporary Energy Healing

Dominic S. Zoehrer 

Department of Religious Studies, University of Vienna, 1010 Vienna, Austria; dominic.zoehrer@univie.ac.at

Abstract: Energy healing refers to a globalising market of healing rituals that aim to stimulate the clients’ self-healing process. In the context of healing, the term ‘energy’ has multi-layered meanings and may denote physical, psychological, social, as well as spiritual principles of restoring well-being. This article demonstrates how the idea of energy as a healing agent was embedded within the occult cosmology and anthropology of the British-American post-Theosophist Alice A. Bailey (1880–1949). Applying historical discourse analysis, Bailey’s impact on the emergence of energy healing is examined. Her theory of energy is explored against the backdrop of her esoteric grand narrative. It is demonstrated how Bailey’s principles of energy formed the basis for her vision of a “medicine of the future”. A concluding discussion proves the global influence of Bailey’s ‘energetic turn’ and how it modelled the approach of major holistic actors of the later twentieth century.

Keywords: Alice Ann Bailey; subtle energies; occultism; esotericism; vitalism; energy healing; holistic milieu; seven rays; esoteric healing

“I have suggested that the medical profession in the New Age will deal increasingly with the theory of energy direction [...].”

(Bailey 1953, 218)

“The occultist works in energy and with energies.”

(Bailey 1957, 674)



Academic Editors: Haiyan Xing and Gerald Murray

Received: 29 March 2025

Revised: 29 April 2025

Accepted: 7 May 2025

Published: 19 May 2025

Citation: Zoehrer, Dominic S. 2025. “Medical Men in the New Age”: Alice Bailey’s Impact on Contemporary Energy Healing. *Religions* 16: 643. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16050643>

Copyright: © 2025 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction: Vital Energy in Occult and Holistic Discourses

‘Alternative spiritualities’ and ‘alternative medicine(s)’ have several ideological premises in common, two of which are particularly striking.¹ The first premise pertains to an anthropology that has been coined as ‘holistic’. A holistic view of the human self generally involves the triad of body, mind, and soul, if not more complex systems of subtle bodies thought to exist along the physical body. From this anthropological position, it is argued that in the treatment of illness—a person’s subjective experience of disturbed well-being—biomedical or psychotherapeutic cures are often insufficient because they neglect other, more causal levels of the human self. Responding to the apparent need for complementary, non-invasive therapeutic approaches, modalities of holistic healing have developed a rich discursive tradition over the past two centuries, accompanying the rise of biomedicine.

The second widely shared assumption by alternative spiritualities and therapies alike is ‘vitalism’. Vitalism refers to the belief in the agency of a ‘life-force’ or an animating ‘energy’ unrecognised by modern science. Biological entities are thus thought to possess a hidden resource of vitality that may be activated as a healing agent. Holistic practitioners

claim to be able to tap into this reservoir in order to mobilise their clients' 'self-healing powers' (cf. [Krabbe 1998](#), 77–78; [Sutcliffe 2003](#), 179; [Hammer 2015a](#), 375).²

In light of the socially conditioned dichotomy of heterodoxy and orthodoxy, alternative spiritualities and alternative medicine could be considered twin sisters on the heterodox side. Both bolster their respective identities by demarcating themselves from established religious institutions and the legally privileged medical professions, respectively. Not only do these two spheres share substantial and structural similarities. Several of their strands are also historically intertwined. This becomes most apparent in the contemporary field of the holistic milieu, which has not only been crucially informed by naturopathic treatments³ and non-European 'traditional' medicine⁴ but also by discourses on healing that have roots in occult thought.⁵

A salient example for the latter is energy healing, a central subfield of the holistic milieu. The British sociologists Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead observed that clients "who pursue the quest for subjective wellbeing" of "body, mind, and spirit" ([Heelas et al. 2005](#), 104) feel particularly attracted to energy healing. Over 80 per cent of respondents of their survey in Kendal, a town in northwestern England, agreed that all of life is pervaded by "some sort of spirit or life force", while more than two-thirds believe in "energy channels" in the body (*ibid.*, 25).

However, energy healing is by no means a local British phenomenon but a global, rapidly expanding market. It involves highly diverse religious–therapeutic practices that aim to stimulate the clients' self-healing process and improve the physical, mental, and social parameters of well-being. The common denominator of these practices is the conception of 'subtle energies' (to distinguish the term from the physical definition of energy) that function as the presumed vitalising agent. An optional but widely accepted feature in energy healing systems are cartographies of a subtle body including auras, *cakras* (or energy centres), and *nāḍīs* (also referred to as 'channels' or 'meridians'), which are believed to correspond to particular physical, psychological, and spiritual states or functions ([Zoehrer 2020](#); cf. [Samuel and Johnston 2013](#); [Leland 2016](#); [Cox 2022](#)).

When practitioners of the holistic milieu engage the metaphor of bringing energies 'into flow', it encompasses a qualitative, subjective aspect. Notwithstanding allusions to physics, the energy they refer to has little in common with the scientific definition, that is, the quantifiable ability of a physical system to perform work. It is rather more akin to experiences of vigour, the restoration of well-being, or the ability to live up to one's full potential. Theories built around these energies are not limited to circumscribing psychological or anthropological states, but may be embedded within ideas about the structure and evolution of the cosmos.

A *systematic* approach to the theme of 'subtle energies' already suggests an affinity with the field of occultism. Occultism, broadly understood, denotes cultural activities that are interested in the "hidden aspects of reality" inaccessible to ordinary senses (cf. [Bogdan and Djurdjevic 2013](#), 1). Whereas occult thought bears some similarity to science and religion, it belongs to neither and takes a precarious position in between both fields (*ibid.*).⁶ This structural feature applies neatly to 'holistic' models of subtle energy that typically appeal to modern science and/or ancient wisdom of a 'mystic East' as authorities of knowledge, without following the rules of scientific argumentation or scholarly historiography. To denote "contemporary alternative spirituality in the West" and building on Colin Campbell's notion of the "cultic milieu", [Christopher Partridge \(2004](#), p. 66) coined the term "occulture". This umbrella term includes inter alia holistic well-being culture, Gaia worship and eco-spirituality, psychedelics and entheogenic religion, astrology, kabbalah, Arthurian legends, prophecies, channelling, UFO religion, cyber-spirituality, New Age science, etc. (*ibid.*, 70). A problem with this etic category and its association with the occult

is that it suggests a connection between self-described occult groups (e.g., Theosophy) and contemporary spiritual culture. However, whether such links can in fact be established needs to be demonstrated on a case-by-case basis, as this article does for the example of energy healing.

Based on the observation of the systematic similarity between occult and holistic thought, this article probes whether a *historical* link can be established between early twentieth-century occultism and contemporary forms of energy healing. For this purpose, the notion of subtle energies is appropriately examined within the framework of esotericism studies, which is wide enough to encompass occultism and practices of the holistic milieu. In *Claiming Knowledge* (first published in 2001), Olav Hammer makes a cursory remark about the notion of energy in ‘esoteric’ discourse that provides some useful hints for further exploring the matter:

William James’ essay *The Energies of Men* has probably been influential in popularizing the term energies in its sense of “vital force”. Theosophy uses both energy (and the corresponding plural) and force. The latter term occurs frequently in *The Secret Doctrine*, but seems to have fallen in some disfavor in later positions, where energy (or energies) is all the more common. Energies are ubiquitous from the channeled books of Alice Bailey to various New Age texts. (Hammer 2004, 238)

In this brief paragraph, Hammer points to a typical characteristic of alternative religious worldviews that is not self-evident: the terms ‘energy’ and ‘vital force’ are semantically fused. This vitalistic position is a major point of demarcation vis-à-vis science and biomedicine. Whereas the formation and dissemination of the vitalistic conceptualisation of energy was more intricate than described in this short paragraph, Hammer’s mention of Alice Ann Bailey (1880–1949) deserves further inquiry. As this article argues, Bailey is indeed a particularly instructive case in the religious–therapeutic discourse on energy. Her thoroughly vitalistic cosmos is perfused with subtle energies, which also form the core of her occult theory of healing.

Steven Sutcliffe (2003, 138–139) remarked that Bailey’s influence for the British “‘New Age’ culture of human potential, healing, and mind, body, and spirit pursuits” was “practically nil”. In his somewhat hasty assessment, Bailey’s “books continue to exert a muted impact upon more ascetic spiritual groups”, whereas her distinctive contribution to the genealogy of the field “lies in creating and disseminating a discourse on ‘New Age’ that early on acquired a life of its own” (ibid.). However, a closer look reveals that Bailey’s impact was not only limited to the millenarian thrust of her work. Several recent studies have also highlighted her specific contributions to the development of subtle body conceptions in recent years (see, for example, Leland 2016; Cox 2022). Bailey’s Christology was demonstrated to be the chief reference of the Theosophical–ufological system of the Scottish artist and occult author Benjamin Creme (1922–2016) (Pokorny 2021). However, a systematic analysis of the immense influence of Bailey’s thought on twentieth-century and current theories of holistic healing—including energy healing—still remains a desideratum (Wolf 2005, 148).

This article examines the manner in which Bailey functioned as a hinge joint between nineteenth-century occultism and the *global* contemporary holistic milieu, a major strand of what was formally captured under the rubric of ‘New Age movement’. Its aim is to assess her impact on the broader discourse of energy in the religious–therapeutic context. Section 2 explores the landmarks of this discourse and provides the backdrop to Bailey’s own theory of energy. Section 3 provides a brief overview of Bailey’s life and core elements of her work, before Section 4 zooms in on her notion of energy in the framework of her esoteric cosmology and anthropology. This sets the ground for investigating her therapeutic theory in Section 5, including her vision of the “medicine of the future”. Section 6 moves on

to major proponents of energy healing and discusses how they were influenced by Bailey's thought and example.

2. Some Early Milestones in the History of Energy Healing

Hammer's abovementioned comment is a useful starting point to further elucidate the formation of the occult/holistic notion of energy and how this idea spurred the emergence of energy healing as a core practice of the holistic milieu. First, as indicated by Hammer, early Theosophical texts still employed the terms 'fluidum', 'magnetism', 'electricity', 'ether', and 'force' at a much higher rate than 'energy'. The idea of a mesmeric-fluidal ether as a healing agent was still prevalent among nineteenth-century occultists. In the wake of the rapid progress of physics, occultists adjusted their terminology, leading to a stronger integration of 'energy', which had become the unifying notion underlying all physical phenomena by the late nineteenth century (Zoehrer 2025b; cf. Smith 1998).

Second, William James' role in shaping the notion of "vital force" appears less innovative when viewed against the backdrop of earlier proponents of the idea. Early medical theories of the nineteenth century already postulated an inherent healing power of nature, referred to as 'life force' (Latin: *vis vitalis*) (Schott 2017, 941). The German chemist and industrialist Karl von Reichenbach (1788–1869) reinterpreted the mesmeric *fluidum* in terms of his neologism *Od*, which he imagined to be a universal agent that encompasses both physical forces and the "life force" (German: *Lebenskraft*) (Reichenbach 1849). This association was taken up by the prolific occult author Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), whose quest involved gaining knowledge of the "nature of the vital force, and how to command it" (Blavatsky 1877, 475). She identified Reichenbach's *Od* as "breath of God" and "vital fluid" (ibid., 145–146; Blavatsky 1888a: 76). A more systematic theory of *Od* was presented by German occult philosopher Carl du Prel (1839–1899) in his final work *Die Magie als Naturwissenschaft* [Magic as Science] (1899). Dismissing both monistic materialism and Cartesian dualism, du Prel imagined the speculative *Od* to be the central agent underlying magnetic rapport, somnambulism, clairvoyance, dream oracles, and other psychical phenomena. Like Reichenbach and Blavatsky, he thought of the *Od* as the substrate of *Lebenskraft* that enables both subconscious biological self-organisation as well as conscious thought processes (du Prel 1899b, 1–25). At the turn of the century, du Prel was read by leading psychologists including Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and James himself (Josephson-Storm 2017, 191). James' essay "The Energies of Men" (1907a), published in *The Philosophical Review*, discussed the problem of the subjective sense of feeling alive and how to tap into "reservoirs of energy" that animate the mind and body. Whereas James did not mention the exact term 'vital force' as Hammer implied, he dropped the notion "vital energy" in passing without developing a theory around it: The way to treat patients showing symptoms of morbid impulse was "to discover to them more usual and useful ways of throwing their stores of vital energy into gear" (James 1907a, 8; cf. James 1907b, 61).

In a revised essay for *The American Magazine*, retitled as "The Powers of Men" (1907b), James specified that energies understood psychologically comprise the aspects of both quantity and quality, which makes a purely physiological treatment of the subject impossible (James 1907b, 58). He covered a range of ways by which dormant mental and moral energies may be unlocked, including yoga, auto-suggestion, the dynamic force of ideas, religious conversions, and the optimism of the American "mind-cure movement" (also known as New Thought). Thus, James offered a heuristic psychological theory of energy based on anecdotes and his own observations of the religious-therapeutic field. While James cannot be considered a major proponent of the "life force", he must be credited for having recognised at an early stage the emergence of what half a century later would be termed 'human potential' (cf. Kripal 2007, 5, 105, 152). At least somewhat corroborating

Hammer's hypothesis, the co-founder of the Esalen Institute (est. 1962), Michael Murphy (b. 1930), indeed drew inspiration from James' texts, including "The Energies of Men" (Kripal 2007, 283). However, by the time the Human Potential Movement took off in the 1960s, also other models of subtle energies had abounded, for example, the *orgone* of the Freud-disciple Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957), *śakti* and *kuṇḍalinī* of the Tāntrikas, or the *ki* of the Japanese martial art Aikidō (Kripal 2007, 234, 283–284, 458; Stein 2024).

Third, whereas Alice Bailey was not the only link between occult and holistic discourses on energy, she championed an esoteric theory of 'energy' as only few other authors did. However, Bailey's role can only be properly assessed when contrasted with other outstanding torchbearers who contributed to the popularisation of the notion of energy in the religious–therapeutic context. For example, the American 'alternative' physician Albert Abrams (1863–1924) invented machines that prefigured both 'energy medicine' (the use of electromagnetic fields for diagnosis and cures, cf. Oschman 2000), and 'radionics' (a device-based form of distant or psychic healing, cf. Tansley 1972). In *New Concepts in Diagnosis and Treatment* (1916), Abrams laid out a medical theory based on 'vibrations', 'radiation', and 'energy'. Reminiscent of Franz A. Mesmer's (1834–1815) cosmic *fluidum* and Reichenbach's *Od*, Abrams claimed that his "iatro-physical conception" could demonstrate "the trend of unifying the various forms of force under one great principle", that is, "energy" (Abrams 1916: x, 255). He was convinced that energy is the "single agent" manifested in any physical motion and that every biological organism "is a transformer of energy" (ibid., 233). "Disocculting the occult", Abrams believed, was possible if mesmerism, spiritualism, clairvoyance, and psychometry (the ability to diagnose disease via touch) were explained in terms of energy (ibid., 9).

Abrams' scientism influenced notable innovators of manual therapies, including the Indian-French Theosophist and yogi scientist Dewanchand Varma (1872–ca. 1946), the developer of *prānothérapie*. Varma belongs to a series of authors who interpreted *prāṇa* (Sanskrit: "breath", "vitality") as an overarching healing energy, including the German occultist Theodor Reuß (1855–1923), the Hindu philosopher Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), and the American New Thought leader William Walker Atkinson (1862–1932), who coined the term "Pranic Healing" (cf. Zoehrer 2020, 2021). Partly inspired by Vivekananda and Varma, the Austrian-American chiropractic Randolph Stone (b. Rudolf Bausch, 1890–1981) introduced Polarity Therapy, which he first presented in the book *The New Energy Concept of the Healing Art* (1948), revised in 1957 under the title *Energy: the Vital Polarity in the Healing Art* (Young 2011, 13; Bernard 2025). This made Stone one of the earliest therapy designers to use the terms 'energy' and 'healing' in a book title. Yet having been self-published and mostly circulating among practitioners of his school, Stone's eclectic musings only reached a limited audience during their early phase.

In this particular discursive lineage, the role of Bailey seems negligible. However, in *Health Building* (1985), a revised collection of previously printed booklets first published in 1962, Stone reframed his therapy within a characteristically Baileyan rhetoric. In the chapter "The New Age & Polarity Therapy", he declared that "We are in the sign of Aquarius" and that the latest technological advancements were but manifestations of the dawning millennium (Stone 1985, 30). Stone suggested that the new science of energy, electromagnetism, and atom physics will confirm his Polarity Therapy—which he portrayed as being rooted in Paracelsus and "the ancient concepts of life" known as "odic fluid, mesmerism, animal magnetism, and many other names" (ibid., 30–31). Although he did not mention her in his books, Stone's allusion to the burgeoning 'New Age' discourse already belonged to the far-reaching ripple effect of Bailey's work. And as the following discussion will show, her influence encompassed much more than her millenarianism.

3. Alice Bailey's Life and Impact on 'New Age' Culture

Alice Bailey (née La Trobe-Bateman, 1880–1949) was born into a wealthy Manchester family and received a privileged Anglican education (Sutcliffe 2003, 46).⁷ Having experienced an unsettled and emotionally troubled childhood, Bailey served British soldiers as a missionary of the Young Women's Christian Association during her early twenties (Albanese 2007, 462). Following a personal crisis, she first encountered Theosophical literature around the age of thirty-five (Bailey 1973, 132–138) and became an avid reader and interpreter of Blavatsky. The twenty-seven books that Bailey published between 1922 and the late 1950s (posthumously) could be considered an extensive commentary on Blavatsky. A major political shift during Bailey's lifetime was the transition from British colonial supremacy to a US-dominated post-colonial era. The atmosphere of the 1920s and 1930s—Bailey's most productive phase—was eclipsed by the memory of World War I and the anticipation of another war due to the rise of radical nationalism. Bailey's writings were part of the wave of alternative spirituality during the interwar period that sought a global outlook, unburdened by the political entanglements of mainline churches.

Seekership and a non-aligned discourse on religion were the hallmark of early twentieth-century unchurched spiritualities of the Anglo-American brand. The function of religion saw a shift from "cementing traditional communities to legitimating new identities" (Sutcliffe 2003, 53). To Bailey, the esoteric quest was more than a matter of individual fulfilment and meant dedication to the service of humanity. Heralding the dawn of a new era, it was a form of self-empowerment to counter the emergent totalitarian ideologies on the one hand and the perceived dogmatism and lethargy of the traditional churches on the other. However, despite her progressive leanings, Bailey was not exactly anti-traditional. Against the backdrop of a steadily declining British Empire, her copious Edwardian prose with its concern for socio-political issues appeared emphatically upper-class. Bailey's ample references to 'mankind', 'hierarchy', and 'race' seem outdated to contemporary readers and differ starkly from the more inclusive style of later holistic authors (ibid., 51–53).⁸

After evangelical work among British soldiers in India, a move to North America, and a failed marriage, Bailey came into contact with the American Section of the Theosophical Society Adyar. In 1917, she moved to Hollywood, California, near the Society's (then) national headquarters called Krotona—named after the location of the ancient school of Pythagoras. She rapidly climbed the ranks, was promoted the editor of the society's magazine *The Messenger* (1913–1927), and married the Society's national secretary, Foster Bailey (1888–1977). Around 1919, Bailey claimed to be in contact with a master she referred to as "the Tibetan" (later identified as Djwhal Khul) (Hammer 2004, 384). This marked the beginning of her practice of recording clairaudient scripts, the dissemination of which would become her true calling. The legitimacy of the Tibetan's messages was questioned by the then-president of the Theosophical Society Adyar Annie Besant (1847–1933),⁹ leading to the expulsion of Bailey and her husband from the organisation in 1920 (Sutcliffe 2003, 46–47).¹⁰ Two years later, Bailey established an educational charity under the name Lucis Trust in New York. Subsequently, she set up one of its main branches, the Arcane School, a correspondence school dedicated to answering the questions raised by readers of her publications (Santucci 2006, 159).

Bailey's reach was not limited to seekers of the anglosphere. In her unfinished autobiography, Bailey recounts that in 1930 the Dutch artist and Theosophist Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn (1881–1962) visited her in Stamford, Connecticut, where her family then lived. Fröbe-Kapteyn shared her plan to establish a non-sectarian centre in Ascona, Switzerland, that would be "open to esoteric thinkers and occult students of all groups in Europe and elsewhere" (Bailey 1973, 217). Bailey supported the idea and lectured at Fröbe-Kapteyn's School for Spiritual Research between 1930 and 1932, until "German professors" beset

Ascona and changed “the whole tone and quality of the place” (ibid., 230), likely a hint to the increasing presence of Carl G. Jung (1875–1961) and Rudolf Otto (1869–1937). Following the suggestion of the latter, Fröbe-Kapteyn renamed her annual conference project ‘Eranos’. Eranos—originally inspired by Hermann Keyserling’s (1880–1946) School of Wisdom (*Schule der Weisheit*), founded in 1920—would go on to shape the spiritual and intellectual history of the twentieth century, however, without Bailey’s further participation.¹¹ Nonetheless, Bailey became a nodal point within the widely ramified rhizome of alternative-religious discourse from which later twentieth-century authors and practitioners would draw (Sutcliffe 2003, 54).

The premonition of a ‘New Age’ entered Bailey’s work as a key theme from the early 1930s onwards. Her first public mention of a ‘New Age’ appeared in *From Intellect to Intuition* (1932) (Sutcliffe 2003, 49). Whereas Blavatsky—Bailey’s revered idol—held an avowedly anti-Christian position, Bailey’s stance was anti-ecclesial but generally supportive of a basic Christian outlook. Thus, while building on Blavatsky, Bailey reinterpreted her heritage by embedding it in a form of millenarian Christology (ibid.). She gave Biblical apocalyptic eschatology a cyclical interpretation and declared that Christ’s return and the ‘Age of Aquarius’ were imminent. The precedent to this idea was put forth by the religious entrepreneur-turned-occult visionary Levi H. Dowling (1844–1911). Dowling’s *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (1908) connected the Theosophical astro-mythology of *Geometry in Religion* (1890) with the eschatological pericope of the synoptic gospels (Bochinger 1994, 349–352, 363–364; cf. Buescher 2008, 5).¹²

While not being the only messenger of the ‘New Age,’ the Arcane School contributed substantially to its diffusion in the counter-culture of the 1960s and the alternative religious culture of the 1970s and 1980s. Bailey’s direct impact on the utopian phase of British ‘New Age’ spirituality is well attested. The co-founder of the Findhorn community, Dorothy Mclean, referred to her books as “basic spiritual teaching” in the 1950s and 1960s (Sutcliffe 2003, 54). Leading figures of early British ‘New Age’ networks including Anthony Brooke (1912–2011) and George Trevelyan (1906–1996) in the 1970s and later ‘New Age’ educators such as David Spangler (b. 1945) and William Bloom (b. 1948) explicitly recognised her input (ibid., 139).¹³ In the latter half of the 1980s, the label ‘New Age’ was bolstered by a flood of secondary sources that sought a category to capture (and criticise) the popular interest in meditation, renewed forms of piety, eco-spirituality, and the intersection of science, technology, and religion (Bochinger 1994, 517).

Bailey’s thought constituted a form of back-to-the-roots Theosophy that carried its own flavour. She restated various themes of Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*, expanded upon them, and on this basis developed complex classificatory schemes and systems of correspondence, following the pattern set by the second-generation Theosophist Charles W. Leadbeater (1854–1934). While theosophically conservative, her books have made a number of original contributions, including her doctrine of the “seven rays”, interpretations of esoteric astrology, and millenarian-messianic beliefs (Hammer 2004, 65). Most relevant to our discussion, Bailey reframed an inherently Theosophical cosmology and anthropology in terms of ‘energy’—the knowledge of which the esotericist and the esoteric healer are supposedly endowed with by means of initiation.

In Bailey’s metaphysical universe, a meritocratic “Hierarchy” of masters is guiding the spiritual progress of humankind. A primary objective of Bailey’s ‘Tibetan’ was to make public the hierarchy’s existence and its work to propel the evolution of humankind’s consciousness (Borsos 2012, 33). In promoting this idea, Bailey emulated her role model Blavatsky with the major difference that Bailey’s hierarchy—as in Leadbeater’s thought—was Christ-centred: “He has been for two thousand years the supreme Head of the Church Invisible, the Spiritual Hierarchy, composed of disciples of all faiths” (Bailey 1948, 60).

The present time is “the ante-chamber to the new age”, which will begin to reveal itself following the death of the current civilisation and the ensuing reappearance of Christ and his disciples (*ibid.*, 22, 127). Bailey declared that her disciples, referred to as the “New Group of World Servers”, were cooperating with the “Hierarchy” in order to prepare the world stage for Christ’s arrival (*ibid.*, 44, 55; cf. [Albanese 2007](#), 465).

Whereas Bailey’s work is much less dense and convoluted compared to Blavatsky’s,¹⁴ both share a brand of esotericism that gave itself a distinct air of sophistication and authority. Their sense of inherited aristocracy is mirrored in their adoration for hierarchies of invisible masters. This aspect in Bailey’s worldview stands in contrast to the democratisation of esoteric teachings to which the Theosophical Society and the Arcane School decisively contributed. The mass-produced practical manuals on energy healing that started to saturate the ‘New Age’ book market of the last three decades of the twentieth century were written not for initiates but for holistic service providers. Yet, as will be shown, Bailey still enjoys a considerable degree of authority in the religious–therapeutic field, and her lavish ideological inventory remains an important reference point.

4. Bailey’s Worldview

4.1. An ‘Esoteric’ Grand Narrative

Bailey’s arcane cosmology was of totalistic scale and has been counted among the ranks of the grand narratives conceived by other early twentieth-century authors such as C. G. Jung, Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), Pyotr D. Ouspensky (1878–1947), Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), and George I. Gurdjeff (1866–1949). What makes the architecture of Bailey’s work stand out is its relative coherence, its comparably intelligible Anglo-American style, and an awareness of contemporaneous secular concerns ([Sutcliffe 2003](#), 53–54).

The imprint of the cross-cultural Theosophical programme on Bailey’s thought appears in her assertion of combining ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ elements of thought. The American philosopher Oliver Leslie Reiser (1895–1974) lauded her attempt to harmonise the inward-directed “subjectivity” of the East and the scientific, objective outlook of the West (Reiser 1954: vi)—a clichéd dualism that has become a trope in alternative spiritualities.¹⁵ Retaining the (partially positive) orientalist strand prevalent among Theosophists, nineteen of Bailey’s books are claimed to have been ‘received’ messages from the ‘Tibetan’. At the same time, Bailey’s occultism—whose formative phase paralleled the breakthroughs of atomic physics during the 1920s—has a clear scientific streak. The allusions to physics in Bailey’s work are most pronounced in her early book *The Consciousness of the Atom* (1922). As Simon Cox puts it, she “shifted her cartographies of the soul into the realm of atom consciousness and the language of physics, presaging the flowering of electromagnetic, hyperdimensional, and later quantum-mystical subtle bodies of the New Age” ([Cox 2022](#), 198).

While steeped in occult discourse, Bailey’s self-description vacillates between ‘occult’ and ‘esoteric’. Following the example of earlier occult authors, including Eliphas Lévi (b. Alphonse Louis Constant, 1810–1875) and Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840–1921), Bailey adopted the terms ‘esoteric’ and ‘esotericism’ to designate her own ideological programme that on the one hand alludes to the revelations of her master and on the hand appeals to the authority of science to explain hidden forces. Bailey conceived esotericism as a “school of thought” (Bailey 1934, 23) and the “science of the soul of all things” (Bailey 1954, 64) that builds on the presumption “that behind all happenings in the world of phenomena [...] exists the world of energies” (*ibid.*, 60). This emphasis on energies is pervasive in Bailey’s esotericism, which promised the esoteric student to gain knowledge of their nature, laws, and expressions (*ibid.*). An esotericist-*sensu*-Bailey is the initiate who is able to control those energies and thus actively participate in the cosmic evolution.

4.2. Cosmology

“Alice Bailey’s cosmology [...] can be considered an esoteric theory of everything” (Blackthorn 2020, 11). Due to its extensive and multi-layered structure, a full account of Bailey’s cosmology is not attempted here. However, three key features of her cosmology shed light on her notion of energy. These elements immediately affect her anthropology, her definition of esotericism, and her medical theory: (1) energies as the ultimate ontological substratum that forms all matter and living beings; (2) the evolution of the cosmos; and (3) a septenary scheme of principles based on “seven rays”, which give structure to the micro- and macrocosms and govern their unfolding.

Bailey’s worldview forms a synthesis of gnostic themes, a Neoplatonism- and New Thought-inspired panpsychic idealism, and post-Theosophical anthropology in which material reality is a secondary, delusive reality. All physical phenomena and human events are but expressions of an inner dimension of energy (Bailey 1954, 62). Bailey thought of energies as agents that shape the sphere of essential reality. These energies manifest materially according to their own rhythm and are only responsive to two distinct intelligent beings: the divine, ‘creative Intelligence’ on the one hand, and the initiated adept, on the other. Energies direct the activity of all matter and have their source in the “One Life”, also identified by Bailey as “Spirit”, “Monad”, and “Energy” (Bailey 1934, 23; 1957, 673).

The exaltation of this life principle is a recurring element throughout Bailey’s books. According to Bailey, the advanced esotericist has access to the “One Life”, which energises our planet and all living beings (Bailey 1954, 65; emphasis in the original). Her vitalism owed much to *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), where Blavatsky regarded the “Spiritual evolution of the *inner, immortal man*” as a basic tenet of her occult teaching (Blavatsky 1888a, 634; emphasis in the original).¹⁶ Associated with this idea of humanity’s spiritual evolution is the belief in (a) “the one Universal Life”, and (b) the host of “intelligences that animate” all manifestations of the vital principle and further their advancement (Blavatsky 1888a, 634). As later copied by Bailey, Blavatsky capitalised “the One Life”, which she related to the “law of karma” or the “effect-producing cause” that governs the world of being (ibid., 635).¹⁷

Representing various ontological (and hence anthropological) levels, Bailey discerned between physical, (individual) vital, astral, mental, and soul energies. These are hierarchically ranked, with the former constituting the lowest form of energy and the latter the highest. As Bailey regarded the soul to be closest to the divine source, this hierarchy also corresponds to the direction of evolution (Bailey 1953, 35; cf. idem.: 61). As foreshadowed in Blavatsky’s work, a central thread in Bailey’s writings is the idea of a cosmic evolution of consciousness, its journey into matter, and its ascendance back to its divine source. In line with the Theosophical understanding of evolution, she opposed the Darwinian view by assuming a teleological force that guides the gradual development of life. Bailey believed the evolution of the universe and the biological species to be the result of a creative, divine drive (Bailey 1922c, 3; cf. Hammer 2004, 229–230). Accordingly, she defined evolution as

something which drives all on toward the goal, and is the force which is gradually bringing order out of chaos; ultimate perfection out of temporary imperfection; good out of seeming evil; and out of darkness and disaster that which we shall some day recognise as beautiful, right, and true. (Bailey 1922c, 22)

Reflecting the ambitions of early Theosophists, Bailey’s teaching on evolution is embedded in a quasi-Hegelian synthesis of “Spirit and matter” that supposedly testifies to “the essential unity of the scientific and religious idea” (Bailey 1925, 103). Compensating for the weaknesses of “materialism” (i.e., naive scientism) and “supernaturalism” (i.e., creationism), Bailey suggests a third line of thought that she referred to as

Idealistic. It posits an evolutionary process within all manifestation, and identifies life with the cosmic process. It is the exact opposite of materialism, and brings the supernatural deity, predicated by the religionist, into the position of a great Entity or Life, Who is evolving through, and by means of, the universe, just as man is evolving consciousness through the medium of an objective physical body. (Bailey 1922c, 4; emphasis in the original)

“Life”, in Bailey’s terminology, thus denotes the divine being who evolves through the material universe at the macrocosmic level.¹⁸ This process corresponds to the evolution of human consciousness through the physical body at the microcosmic level. Bailey’s evolution theory is teleological in the sense that it recognises that the structure and development of the universe is oriented towards an overarching purpose. If, as Hammer (2004, p. 201) claims, the salient feature of science is the Baconian reduction to immediate causes and the dismissal of any teleological perspective (i.e., final causes), Bailey’s cosmology is decidedly non-scientific (cf. Mutschler 1990, 95). Since Bailey postulates a non-material, life-giving agency (“vitalising force”) (Bailey 1922c, 3; cf. Hammer 2004, 229–230), her cosmology is all the more reminiscent of the “living nature” in Antoine Faivre’s characterisation of esoteric thought (Faivre 1994).

Bailey’s singular principle of “one life” is refracted into seven distinct types of “force” or “energy” from which the micro- and macrocosms emerge (Bailey 1936, 316). Each of these “seven rays” corresponds to an abstract quality: (1) Will or Power; (2) Love or Wisdom; (3) Active Intelligence or Adaptability; (4) Harmony, Beauty, and Art; (5) Concrete Knowledge or Science; (6) Devotion or Abstract Idealism; and (7) Ceremonial Magic and Order (Santucci 2006, 159; Albanese 2007, 464; Hammer 2015b: 349). These fundamental qualities translate into Bailey’s anthropology, where the rays explain the characteristic features of races, cycles of civilisation, the soul, the personality, the human mental, astral, and physical bodies, and the *cakras* (“force centres”) (cf. Bailey 1936, 261). Bailey’s five-volume work entitled *A Treatise on the Seven Rays* elaborately applies her doctrine of the rays to psychology, astrology, and healing.¹⁹

Taking the seven rays as a point of departure, Bailey developed a system of correspondences which drew on raw templates that earlier Theosophical texts provided. Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) spoke of “primeval seven rays” in the thought of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and Vedas. These were further identified as a septenary principle that Blavatsky detected in the nervous plexuses of the human body, in the human races, in yoga and gnosis, in the solar cycles, the “seven planets or gods” and in the somewhat enigmatic “seven creative forces of nature” (Blavatsky 1888a, 270, 573, 635; 1888b, 69, 92, 564, 608, 772). Using her characteristically opaque language, Blavatsky alluded to “seven Forces in Man and in all Nature” and the “septenary nature” of the sun (Blavatsky 1888a, 290). This “Seven Principal Force, called rays”, supposedly emanated from a “Mother substance”, which composes the “matrix of all the living and existing Forces in our solar system” (ibid.). Blavatsky equated the “Solar active energy” with “the Breath of the *absoluteness*” and the god Viṣṇu, who is referred to as “the *sevenfold Sun*” in the medieval Hindu text *Viṣṇu purāṇa* (ibid.; emphasis in the original). Blavatsky moreover offered a model of seven principles emanating from the one source of life framed in physicalist terms, plus a mental principle of intelligence:

With the Esotericists, from the remotest times the Universal Soul or *anima mundi*, the material reflection of the Immaterial Ideal, was the Source of Life of all beings and of the life principle of the three kingdoms; and it was *Septenary* with the Hermetic philosophers, as with all ancients. For it is represented as a Sevenfold cross, whose branches are respectively, *light, heat, electricity, terrestrial magnetism,*

astral radiation, motion, and Intelligence, or what some call self-consciousness (Blavatsky 1888b, 562).

Blavatsky, the head theoretician of the early Theosophical Society, was not the only inspiration for Bailey's cosmological model. In *The Masters and the Path* (1925), Leadbeater associated each of the seven rays with spiritual masters, a "characteristic magic" and its corresponding religion, jewels, planets, "Seven Spirits" or "Angels", and various methods of healing (pp. 266–300).²⁰ Five years before, Leadbeater produced a list of "seven Rays" or personal qualities in *The Science of the Sacraments* (1920). This liturgy book for the Liberal Catholic Church, co-founded by Leadbeater and James I. Wedgwood (1883–1951), described the seven attributes of character that a devout Christian ought to develop (Leadbeater 1920, 91–93). The list is largely identical with Bailey's designation of the rays.²¹ In an earlier Theosophical publication, *The Seven Rays of Development* (1910), the British Theosophist Arthur H. Ward presented a system of correspondences between Blavatsky's seven anthropological planes and "rays" representing the virtues of an initiate (cf. Leland 2016, 472). Four of those rays (devotion, art, knowledge, and action) also appear in Leadbeater's list.²²

In short, Bailey's theory of "seven rays" constituted a specific commentary on *The Secret Doctrine* that stands in a tradition of Theosophical authors trying to come to terms with Blavatsky's often impenetrable teachings. These reinterpretations resulted in creative explorations of the human position in the cosmos and corresponding paths of spiritual development. Bailey's septenary cosmology is a prime example of how she expanded "on the possibilities inherent in Blavatskian theosophy," as Hammer put it (Hammer 2004, 53). Catherine L. Albanese reiterated this point: Bailey promoted an inherently Theosophical message with her own spin (Albanese 2007, 464). Whereas Bailey's explanations of the rays were cumbersome and often incongruent—not unlike earlier Theosophical attempts—Albanese recognised the far-reaching impact it had:

In prose that was often well nigh impenetrable and dense with occult terminology (despite Bailey's own castigation of theosophical linguistic habits), she probed the dimensions and distinctions of spiritual energy that the rays represented. Her language would continue into the late twentieth century and on, as New Age and new spirituality aficionados spoke of what rays they had 'come in' (to the planet) on and how that distinguished them as persons. Whatever the ray, though, Bailey had taught them—as had twentieth-century metaphysicians across the board—that they were energy beings (Albanese 2007, 464).

The idea that humans are fundamentally "energy beings" thus formed the core of Bailey's anthropology.

4.3. Anthropology

Bailey's anthropology was intertwined with her model of the seven rays. However, she did not follow the septenary model slavishly. Diverging concepts of the human constitution appear throughout her work. For example, in her introductory remarks to *Esoteric Healing* (1953), Bailey suggested a fourfold division of "dense physical body" and the "more subtle sheaths" of "etheric body", "astral or desire [also: emotional] body", and "mental body" (Bailey 1953, 2–4). Bailey refers to these four bodies as "mechanisms" by which the "soul" manifests itself (ibid., 2–3). She thus followed Theosophical nomenclature in describing the structure of the human self (cf. Hall 2007), omitting, however, Sanskrit terms and thereby aiming for a more reader-friendly description. But even within the same book, Bailey's anthropological model is not set in stone. Forty pages later, she presents a variation of the four-sheaths-plus-soul structure that consists of six levels: (1) the soul; (2) the subtle bodies of the mind and the emotions (equivalent to the astral and mental bodies); (3) the vital body, equivalent to the etheric body; and three systems that belong to the physical body,

that is, (4) the endocrine system; (5) the nervous system; and (6) the cardiovascular system (Bailey 1953, 46, cf. 549).

Such inconsistencies notwithstanding, at the core of Bailey's esoteric anthropology is the notion of an etheric body. Through the etheric body, "all the energies flow, whether emanating from the soul, or from the sun, or from a planet" (Bailey 1934, 105). It is composed of "force currents" and "seven major centres of force" or "vital centres" (i.e., *cakra*)—each aligned with one of the seven rays. These etheric centres are linked by "lines of force" (i.e., *nāḍī*) with the physical nervous system (ibid., 77), which connect the microcosmic etheric body with its broader environment. Thus, the etheric bodies of humanity, the planet, and the solar system are interconnected, thus explaining the effect of macrocosmic, "astrological influences" (ibid., 246). Human beings move "in a whirlpool of forces of all types and qualities" and as they are composed of energies, they are "related to all other energies" (ibid.). The etheric body receives "the streams of energy" that vitalise the physical body (Bailey 1953, 34). As the energies are able to interact with the etheric body (itself composed of energy streams), their agency determines the state of a person's vitality (Bailey 1957, 673).

An initiate of the Arcane School should aim to vitalise and master the etheric body by means of "right thinking" (Bailey 1934, 246). Thought, mind, and consciousness affect energies, and energies manifest via the etheric body in physical reality. The idea of a continuum between mind, energy, and the material world—a crucial tenet of New Thought—forms a core aspect of Bailey's writings on magic and healing (cf. Bailey 1925, 1927, 1953).²³ However, although the mental dimension was crucial to Bailey, her focus was not the repetition of verbal affirmations or other forms of auto-suggestion but visualising the control of energy.

Bailey's descriptions of the etheric body exemplify how her orientalist and scientific rhetoric shifted over time. In her homage to Blavatsky, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925), Bailey still spoke of the etheric body as the receiver, assimilator, and distributor of "prana" (Bailey 1925, 97) rather than 'energy'. In line with Blavatsky, she defined "prana" as the "vital principle", which is connoted with "life force", an animating "active radiatory heat", and "the driving force of the evolving form" (Borsos 2012, 42). A decade later, in *Treatise on White Magic*, the etheric body turns into a transmitter for generic energies, including "prana" (Bailey 1934, 372), which in *Esoteric Healing* (1953) would rank below "soul energy".

4.4. Bailey's Laws of Energy

Throughout her work, Bailey presented various formulations of her laws of energy. A posthumous book, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (1957), put them in a nutshell: "The keynotes upon which the occult philosophy is built, are: 1. There is naught in manifestation except organized energy. 2. Energy follows or conforms itself to thought. 3. The occultist works in energy and with energies" (Bailey 1957, 674).

Bailey asserted that all of manifested reality is energy: "There is naught but energy, for God is life" (Bailey 1953, 136). She believed energy's fundamental units to be atoms,²⁴ which give structure to matter by means of "more potent energies" (Bailey 1953, 35–36). When describing energy Bailey also resorted to metaphors of fire, following Blavatsky's preference (ibid., 328), as well as fluidal imagery including "streams," "flows", or "currents" (cf. 57). In the fashion of *Isis Unveiled*, Bailey mingled the languages of physics and religion, asserting to transcend both scientific materialism and naïve supernaturalism. The orthodox Christian speaking of "God" and the scientist speaking "with equal reverence" of "Energy" essentially mean the same (Bailey 1922c, 24). Bailey thus practically lifted the notion of energy to the level of a divine entity.

Bailey certainly contributed to the idea of God-as-Energy, which would become a common theme in later New Age ideas of ultimate reality (cf. Hanegraaff 1998, 187). However, she was not the first to make this proposition. The identity of God and energy was also propagated by New Thought authors several decades earlier, although without the same pronounced appeal to science. For example, Harriet Emilie Cady (1848–1941), a homoeopathic physician and student of the “mother of New Thought” Emma Curtis Hopkins (1849–1925), stated in her book *Lessons in Truth* (1896):

God is Spirit, or the creative *energy* which is the cause of all visible things. God as Spirit is the invisible life and intelligence (according to Webster’s definition of spirit) underlying all physical things. There could be no body, or visible part, to anything unless there were first Spirit as creative cause. (Cady 1896, 8; emphasis added)

In other words, divine Spirit is the cause of all existence, and this Spirit is energy. Cady’s reference to *Webster’s Complete Dictionary of the English Language* is notable because the mentioned entry on spirit includes the associations indicated by Cady: “intelligence”, “vital essence”, and “energy”.²⁵ The type of energy signified here refers to a general, *disembodied* life principle rather than a physical quantity relating to material systems. (Webster’s first edition of 1828 already tied “spirit” to “energy”, but described energy as the quality of a *material* substance.²⁶) Similar to Cady, Bailey emphasised the intelligent, creative, and vitalistic aspect of energy, and underscored its role as the driving force behind evolution (Bailey 1960, 256). Crucial to the work of the esotericist-sensu-Bailey is that the telos of divine energy is not insulated from human consciousness but is able to respond to thought and manifest in physical reality.

The second principle, “energy follows thought”, is found repeatedly in Bailey’s books. In *A Treatise on White Magic* (1934, 249), she refers to this principle as “the basic law underlying all magical work”. In the posthumously published *Discipleship in the New Age II* (1955), she speaks of “an occult platitude ever since the days of H.P.B. [...] which could safely be given to the general public” (Bailey 1955, 309). *Esoteric Psychology II* (1942) described “energy follows thought” as an “ancient rule” (Bailey 1942, 587). Bailey first mentioned this aphorism in *The Light of the Soul* (1927), her commentary on the *Yoga-sūtra* of the ancient Indian scholar Patañjali (ca. 350 CE). Here, she frames her principle as a “basic tenet of the Raja Yoga system” and an “oriental truism” (Bailey 1927, 20, 382). It is supposedly akin to the key principle of occult self-development, “As a man thinketh, so is he” (cf. Proverbs 23:7, KJV), which means that adepts only transform themselves by changing their desires and thoughts first.

Whereas Bailey omitted an explicit source for her energetic-mental law, a tangible candidate would be *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali* (1890), a translation and commentary by the Indian pundit Manilal Nabhubha Dvivedi (1858–1898)²⁷ that foreshadowed a series of commentaries on Patañjali, including those of Vivekananda and Bailey (cf. Vivekananda 1896). Bailey’s aphorism does not appear verbatim in Dvivedi’s text. However, it is easily derived from the phrase “*prāṇa* follows *ṛtti*” that appears in his introduction to *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali* and in a passage in the appendix to his book.²⁸ *Prāṇa* translates as ‘breath’ or ‘vital energy’, whereas *ṛtti* encompasses ‘mind’, ‘consciousness’, or ‘mental content’. Dvivedi explained the difference between *haṭha yoga* and *rāja yoga* in terms of the relation between *prāṇa* and *ṛtti*. While both forms of yoga aim for the attainment of *samādhi* or meditative absorption, *haṭha yoga* assumes that “*ṛtti* always follows *prāṇa*” and thus emphasises physical rather than mental exercises (Dvivedi 1890, vi). In contrast, *rāja yoga* teaches that “*prāṇa* follows *ṛtti*,” meaning that training begins with the mind and a focus on ethical conduct (ibid.; Appendix, vii). Dvivedi’s prioritisation of mental over physical exercises aligned with Bailey’s own preference. It is a small semantic step from ‘vitality

follows mind' to 'energy follows thought', and Bailey did indicate the principle's origin in *rāja yoga*.²⁹

Despite the indebtedness of Bailey's idealism to Theosophy and New Thought, she deemed her own energy doctrine superior to these currents. Whereas she agreed with New Thought (and Christian Science) on the mind's power, she criticised its over-emphasis on the mind, false claims to divine authority, and the focus of the mind's power to improve material well-being. Bailey sought to remedy its shortcomings and "wishful thinking" by forming a "group of initiates" who seek to improve the state of humanity by correctly implementing the idea that energy follows thought through acts of service (Bailey 1953, 192, 282–283, cf. 253–256). Alluding to Besant and Leadbeater's notion of "thought-forms", Bailey rejected the idea that thought could generate vibrations of "mental matter" (Bailey 1953, 575; cf. Besant and Leadbeater 1905, 21–23). She underscored instead the notion of energy as a more subtle mediating agency between mental and material reality (Bailey: *ibid.*).³⁰

Via the notion of energy, Bailey made a case against the dualism of mind and body that she viewed as the cause of the split between religion and science. "Orthodox religion", Bailey stated, has "separated the two great concepts of spirit and matter" (Bailey 1949, 127). It is the "new age workers" who would bridge the gulf between spirit and matter, and religion and science, by demonstrating that "throughout the universe there is only spiritual substance", that is the "motivating energy" behind all actions and forms (*ibid.*). Although energy is secondary to the power of thought,³¹ Bailey's third energetic principle—the adept works with energy—is a recurring leitmotif in her books.

4.5. *The Esoteric Path: Self-Knowledge and Energy Work*

Bailey's esotericism is imbued with the promise of the millennium. With the dawn of the "Aquarian Age", in which the return of Christ is imminent, the delusions plaguing humanity and hindering its spiritual progress will steadily dissipate. However, the process does not occur automatically but requires certain salvific means to usher in the new age. These means are self-knowledge and energy work.

Self-knowledge is the key to sensing "the vibration of that greater Life" of the macrocosm and thereby contributing to the evolution of consciousness (Bailey 1922c, 69). Knowing one's own mental power is the path to finding "the kingdom of God" within oneself (*ibid.*). In *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950), Bailey defines self-knowledge and the subsequent liberation from the bondage of delusion into freedom as the ultimate purpose of creation. Unlike human beings, who are trapped as "prisoners of the planet", only the deity or "Lord of the World" is completely untouched by the illusion of the world of phenomena (Bailey 1950, 242).³² However, once humans learn to "act purely as a channel for the energy of the soul", they are liberated from the distortions caused by sense perception, egoism, and transient emotions (Bailey 1950, 36–37).³³

Esotericists are supposedly aware of the energies that structure physical reality and consciously engage with them. They have both the spiritual depth of a mystic and the scientist's systematic approach to the study of energies.³⁴ In her book *Education in the New Age* (1954), Bailey defined the occupation of the esotericist as working with the "life energy", the causal factor behind physical reality. It is "discovering and working with those principles which energise each level of the cosmic physical plane and which are, in reality, aspects of the qualified life energy" (Bailey 1954, 64). Essential reality ultimately peaks in a single vital principle—the "one life", that is, "the flow of divine energy through all forms". This vital agent is the source of the living universe and all individual forms, through which "we live and move and have our being" (*ibid.*). Whoever knows the dimension of essence

attains the key to actively shaping the various levels of the external world (Bailey 1954, 18, 65).

While all forms ultimately emanate from the one source of energy, the esotericist is aware of a hierarchical spectrum of energies. These range from autonomous physical energies to the energies of consciousness operating on emotional and mental levels. These energies are captured by the “etheric body”, which manifests in and energises the dense body. The energies of the soul emanate from still higher mental levels, to which only the esotericist at a certain point of evolution becomes sensitive (Bailey 1954, 61, 65).³⁵ Initiates will not only learn to distinguish between physical, vital, and soul energies but also discover how to master them. Evoking, awakening, and directing the “energy of the soul”, which purifies the “centres”, the esoteric disciple will successfully contribute to dispelling “the world glamour” or delusion (Bailey 1950, 42–43). To comprehend the energies of the universe and to put them to creative use, proper mental preparation is required: “Esotericism therefore involves a life lived in tune with the inner subjective realities” (Bailey 1954, 67).

Esoteric work, as interpreted by Bailey, means co-creation. It “is the art of ‘bringing down to earth’ those energies which emanate from the highest sources and there ‘grounding them’ or anchoring them” (Bailey 1954, 67). The esotericist is able to mediate between the principles of ‘life’ (or essence) and ‘substance’ (or phenomena). By means of her individual soul and, by extension, the *anima mundi*, the esotericist has access to the various levels of the world of essence. The macrocosm, or “larger Self”, is suffused by an intricate network of meanings and energies, which are transmissible to the human microcosm via the “etheric body” (ibid., 66–67). The etheric body is characterised by a subtle web spanned by force centres along the individual spinal column, which function as portals between the micro- and macrocosm. They are the instruments by which the subjective reality of divine consciousness can be known (ibid.). These force centres are also the focal point in Bailey’s therapeutic theory (see Sections 5.2 and 5.3).

Motivated by the will to serve others, the disciple of esotericism is supposed to learn the “nature, control and direction of energy” (Bailey 1949, 127). The task of the esotericist is to redeem karma through “creative restoration and spiritual integration” (Bailey 1954, 65). This process will supposedly bear fruit in the next solar system, thus contributing to the cosmic evolution. One particular path of esoteric service is the mastering of energies for the purpose of healing.

5. Bailey’s Therapeutic Theory

5.1. The Main Source of Bailey’s Healing Concepts

Recycling material from her earlier books, the most comprehensive exposition of Bailey’s therapeutic theory is contained in *Esoteric Healing* (1953). The ‘source amnesia’ characteristic of the occult genre challenges the precise identification of earlier influences on the text. Most of *Esoteric Healing* is ‘authorised’ by virtue of having been ‘received’ from ‘the Tibetan’ and Bailey rarely makes references to printed sources, a notable exception being Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*.

“When one enters the realm of healing, one enters a world of much esoteric knowledge”, states the introduction to *Esoteric Healing* (Bailey 1953, 1). The book sets an unmatched paradigm for energy healing practitioners decades later and continues to attract readers seventy years after its publication. The posthumously published book—a tome of 771 pages—ranked among her top three bestsellers in 2018 (Blackthorn 2020, 390), indicating the lasting interest it has generated. Here, catchwords of the holistic milieu—consciousness, energy, and subtle bodies—were all combined in an optimistic programme of a future medicine.

With buoyant force, Bailey (or the unnamed editors of her posthumously published books) declared that the soul harbours unknown energies waiting to be released in a fashion that resembles “the attempt of the scientist to release the energy of the atom” (Bailey 1953, 5). Such is the work of the esotericist who strives to uncover “the true art of healing” by tapping into the body’s hidden powers (ibid.).³⁶ *Esoteric Healing* is structured in three parts: (1) the origin of disease; (2) the requirements for healing; and (3) the fundamental laws of healing. True to Bailey’s style, *Esoteric Healing* elaborates on vague Blavatskian tropes to the nth degree. Her long-winded explanations are repetitive and partially contradictory. Hence, any outline of Bailey’s medical theory must naturally remain selective and restrict itself to an attempt to capture the gist of her message.

Key elements of Bailey’s medical theory are built around the notion of an etheric (or vital) body. The new frontier of medicine, she argued, would emphasise the etheric body’s “mechanism of vital, pranic life”, which underlies the nervous system and operates through the “centres” and “nadis” (Bailey 1953, 274–277). The main function of the etheric body is to energise the physical body. At the same time, it serves as the central nexus between microcosm and macrocosm. It connects a person with the “energy body of the Earth and the solar system,” embedding her in a vast and vitalising network of cosmic energies (ibid., 2–3).

Bailey saw a natural connection between esoteric knowledge and therapeutic practice, as all initiates who have achieved “true liberation” would be “transmitters of spiritual energy” (Bailey 1953, 2). Not all esotericists are called to heal the body and many focus on other levels of the subtle body. Nonetheless, esoteric healers share the same aim: “to effect the free flow of energy” (Bailey 1953, 57). The healer is supposedly aware “that energy follows his thought and flows through him to the patient” (ibid., 601). Thus, esoteric healing means “essentially the manipulation of energies” (ibid., 600). It requires knowledge of the subtle force centres, an understanding of evolution, and the esotericist’s own soul development (ibid.).

5.2. The ‘Energetic’ Causes of Disease

Bailey justified her programme of esoteric healing by recourse to the typical line of reasoning of alternative against orthodox medicine (cf. Whorton 2002, 9). She reproached the latter for seeking to cure disease by suppressing the symptoms rather than treating the actual cause of an ailment. Bailey’s “new medicine” was not concerned with “the outer, tangible, physical effects” but claimed to address the “inner causes” located in a patient’s force centres (Bailey 1953, 273).³⁷

Against the backdrop of contemporaneous discoveries on how to improve vitality—for example, via vitamins and nutrition—Bailey highlighted the supposedly revolutionary yet unrecognised role of the etheric body.³⁸ Accordingly, individual disease is caused by disturbances in the etheric centres (Bailey 1953, 273, cf. 73–84)³⁹. Imbalances caused by karma reflect in the centres, which may lead to physical ailments.⁴⁰ A person’s immune response is determined by her etheric body, where the immediate cause of disease is claimed to be located:

All diseases—except those due to accidents, wounds resulting in infections, and epidemics—can in the last analysis be traced to some condition of the centres, and therefore to energy running wild, to energy over-active and misdirected, or insufficient and lacking altogether, or retained instead of used and transmuted into a higher corresponding centre of energy (Bailey 1953, 250–251).

In addition, Bailey laid out a psychosomatic theory of disease, where the etheric body takes an intermediary position between the “inner psyche” and the “outer form” (Bailey 1953, 337–338). Psychological problems arise due to energies affecting corresponding

centres in the etheric body, which in turn impact the endocrine system and lead to the secretion of hormones into the bloodstream via the glands (*ibid.*). Bailey was fully aware that the notions of “etheric body”, “force centres”, and “subtler energies” had little standing in medical science, but hypothesised that the study of the glands would confirm their agency (*ibid.*, 46).⁴¹

Contrary to the force centres, energies preserve their “essentially divine nature” (Bailey 1953, 587–588). There are no diseased or evil energies, only energies that are out of balance and thus producing friction that manifests as pain, suffering, or even death (*ibid.*). However, Bailey still described instructions for energetic hygiene reminiscent of early mesmeric practice (Zoehrer 2020, 168). Whereas ‘energies’ are per se divine, subtle ‘forces’ may be contaminated and produce disease. The healer’s task is to carefully absorb those forces while guarding his own etheric body from infection (Bailey 1953, 100).⁴²

5.3. Two Occult Healing Modalities

Bailey claimed to have developed a form of occult healing that is superior to other classes of spiritual healing, e. g., the invocation of the “spirit of the earth”, collaboration with a “healing deva”, faith healing, prayers, affirmations, autosuggestion, and magnetic or hypnotic passes on the etheric body (Bailey 1953, 631, 644–647). Her approach involves the skill to move and project “energy currents” while applying “creative imagination” and “the power to visualize” (*ibid.*, 575). According to Bailey, two basic forms of occult healing must be distinguished: “magnetic work” on the one hand, and the “work of radiation” on the other (*ibid.*, 578, 643), which roughly correspond to animal magnetism and New Thought visualisation techniques. Magnetic healing involves a healer’s hands and aims at pouring “vital healing force” upon the patient (Bailey 1953, 642–643). Notably, Bailey refers to the magnetic healing agent also as “prana or vital planetary fluid”, revealing a likely influence from earlier forms of ‘pranic healing’ as proposed by Reuß, Vivekananda, or Atkinson (cf. Zoehrer 2021).⁴³

According to Bailey, not much training or knowledge is needed for the “natural healer” to transfer “prana”: “He heals but does not know how or why; prana simply flows through him in the form of a strong current of animal vitality”, that moves not through the *cakras* but through the spleen (Bailey 1953, 579). The magnetic/pranic healer uses his hands either through the laying-on-of-hands on the particular centres and the diseased area, or through activating the energy of the centre associated with the diseased organ via the hands (Bailey 1953, 649). An “average unintelligent healer” merely transmits “prana” and is only temporarily effective because he is unable to engage with the actual cause of disease (Bailey 1953, 329, cf. 579).

In contrast, radiatory healing is conducted without physical contact and aims to “feed the soul life of the patient” via the healer’s “auric emanation” (*ibid.*, 643). Radiation is supposedly more advanced than magnetic healing as it draws soul energy and projects it on the patient’s aura and soul (*ibid.*). A crucial aspect of this approach is the concentration of “love and the healing force” in the brain, and their subsequent projection “into the stream of energy which issues from the ajna centre” between the eyebrows (Bailey 1953, 102). During the pouring out of energy in a group setting, Bailey suggests the following invocation: “May the love of the One Soul, focussed in this group, radiate upon you, my brother, and permeate every part of your body—healing, soothing, strengthening; and dissipating all that hinders service and good health” (*ibid.*, 105).⁴⁴ In order to project a kind of love that is untainted by lower emotional qualities, it is the healer’s responsibility to cultivate herself as a “pure channel” (Bailey 1953, 677). Flooding the patient with “pure soul energy” was the “way that Christ worked”, supposedly surpassing all other forms of healing (Bailey 1953, 329).

Although Bailey downplayed the effect of magnetic (or pranic) healing, she retained a characteristic element of animal magnetism in her own system: The crucial requisite of a healer is the ability to enter into “sympathetic rapport with the patient” and induce an “unbreakable relationship between the healer’s etheric body and that of the patient [...] for a definite circulation of energies” (Bailey 1953, 7, 645). Numerous other parallels could be drawn between Bailey’s healing theory and classical animal magnetism. Among the most obvious are the grand vision of the role of healers in a new era, the cosmic or universal nature of the healing agent, the metaphors of flow and fire (ibid., 328), the association of clairvoyance with the solar plexus (ibid., 83),⁴⁵ measures for energetic hygiene (Bailey 1953, 100), and references to the music of the spheres.⁴⁶ In a sense, Bailey’s therapeutic model could be considered one of the many recycled editions of what inherently constitutes mesmerism, supplemented with elements of Theosophy and New Thought.

Esoteric Healing offers a case study of what I refer to as a ‘futuristic retro-medicine’ that envisions a revolutionary, utopian healing practice while mostly ignoring its conceptual precursors. Her juxtaposition of a magnetic versus a radiatory model falls in line with an observation described by the Swiss literary scholar Sabine Haupt. Haupt made the case that medical/psychological, physical, and occult theories converged in the early twentieth century into a discourse of radiation. The “spiritual-material force of nature” (*geistig-materielle Naturkraft*), which explained various paranormal phenomena and was first coined as ‘magnetic’ or ‘fluidal’, steadily moved towards a language of rays and radiation (Haupt 2005, 173).⁴⁷ Already Mesmer himself referred to an “invisible fire [...] equal to the light in the aether” that was transferred to his patients for the purpose of healing (Mesmer 1814, 110). The Romantic physician and *Naturphilosoph* Carl Gustav Carus (1789–1869), a late scientific defender of mesmerism, introduced in his seminal work *Psyche. Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele* [On the Developmental History of the Soul] (1846) the notions “radiations of the unconscious” (*Strahlungen des Unbewußten*) and “radiations of the soul-life” (*Strahlungen des Seelenlebens*) (Carus 1846, 269–270). He believed that these somnambulant emanations were ejected during natural or magnetic sleep and influenced other people. Reichenbach thought his *Od* to manifest in the form of radiating light. His idea was adopted by Blavatsky and du Prel. Du Prel believed that “radiations emanating from the human organism could lead to [telepathic or telekinetic] action at a distance” (du Prel 1899a, 23).⁴⁸

Around 1900, occultists speculated whether the “X-rays” they postulated could be identical with the short-wavelength rays discovered in 1895 by the German physicist Konrad Röntgen (1845–1923). Röntgen’s discovery set the stage for the rapid development of radiation physics that included Henri Becquerel’s (1852–1908) research on natural radioactivity. Previously, the English physicist William Crookes (1832–1919), who later joined the Theosophical Society and served as president of the Society for Psychical Research between 1896 and 1899, attempted to explain spiritualist phenomena in terms of electromagnetic waves (Haupt 2005, 169).

Bailey did not indicate any concrete influence on her radiation theory. A likely template to Bailey’s idea of healing energies flowing or radiating from soul to soul is again to be found in the New Thought discourse. For example, Hopkins spoke of “the streams of healing energy that quiver forth from your soul” in a series of lectures first published as booklets in the 1930s (Hopkins 2017, 80). Atkinson only casually mentioned the term “mental radiation” (Dumont 1913, 31). However, some similarities can be found between Bailey’s description of radiatory healing and Atkinson’s “Spiritual Healing” outlined in his book *Psychic Healing* (1906), published under his pseudonym Yogi Ramacharaka.

Like Bailey, Atkinson invoked the imagery of the healer as a “channel” for a transcendent agent. “Spiritual Healing”, Atkinson believed, “is not ‘done’ by anyone. [...] he

healer becomes an instrument or channel through which flows the Spiritual Healing Force of the Universe. That is, the healer is able to open up his Spiritual Mind as a channel for the inflow of the Spiritual force of the Universe, which passes through the Healer into the Spiritual Mind of the patient” and, thus, restore health (Ramacharaka 1906, 174). Similar to Bailey’s radiatory healing, Atkinson positioned “Spiritual Healing” as a particularly “high form of healing” that depended on the healer’s degree of spiritual unfoldment. Mixing fluidal and light metaphors, he stated that the spiritual healer would let the “light of his or her higher mentality [...] pour forth upon the mind of the patient, bathing him in a wave of high thought and lifting him, temporarily to a higher plane of being” (ibid., 34). Atkinson’s spiritual healing involves the laying-on-of-hands as an option, keeping in mind that “Jesus and his apostles healed by Spiritual Power” and by means of the hands (ibid., 181). In comparable manner, Bailey asserted that the most advanced healers would have mastered both techniques, employing the “vital pranic force” and the “energy of the soul” to effect the healing process (Bailey 1953, 644).

These similarities notwithstanding (and regardless of whether they indicate historical connection or point to a common source), Bailey sharply demarcated her esoteric healer from ordinary “spiritual” or “metaphysical” healers (Bailey 1953, 524–529). Being in conscious touch with her own soul, the esoteric healer has the power to contact (“invoke”) the soul of her patient and enter into “telepathic rapport” with him (ibid., 524). The “healer in the New Age” has acquired the extraordinary ability to express “the quality of divinity” (ibid., 529). However, she ought not to adhere to some “vague mysticism” but must strive for “exact knowledge” about the subtle mechanism of the etheric double (ibid., 524). This involves mastery over her own energy centres, as they are the source of power for treating the patient’s corresponding centres. Thus, the esoteric healer is in tune with the divine, her patients, and herself via the medium of energy.

5.4. *Healing by Seven Rays*

In the final section of *Esoteric Healing*, Bailey suggested seven healing techniques corresponding to her seven rays. She omitted a clear step-by-step guideline on how to concretely apply the techniques and confined herself to opaque “ancient symbolic statements” as the disclosure of esoteric healing methods “would be too dangerous” (Bailey 1953, 705). Insinuating that in the early twenty-first century some disciple would interpret these “magical statements”, she evaded an explicit description of the practical details of her healing approach (ibid., 706).⁴⁹

Bailey’s elusiveness underscores a fundamental tension that underpins her book in general: on the one hand, she assured her readers of a full elucidation of ancient occult knowledge of healing, and on the other hand, she consistently moved the imminent breakthrough “to release the energy of the atom” into the future. Humanity was about to witness “a new era in scientific unfoldment” (Bailey 1953, 713), but just not yet. Essential practical aspects of Bailey’s proposed healing techniques ultimately remained shrouded in mystery, perhaps only reserved for the participants of her correspondence courses. Meanwhile, the revealed parts of her ‘esoteric’ healing conception were substantial enough to stimulate imaginative interpretations by her many readers.

5.5. *Medicine of the Future*

Nothing short of “the medicine of the future” is what Bailey envisioned in *Esoteric Healing* (Bailey 1953, 278). Having no interest in an empirical analysis of the current medical and therapeutic fields, she shared her bold intuitions of how “medical research will trend during the next two hundred years” (ibid.). By way of a Hegelian synthesis, she directed her critique against both biomedicine and religious–therapeutic practices only to offer

her own allegedly superior model. Thus, she did not subscribe to the trench warfare between orthodox and alternative medicine on behalf of the latter. In fact, she regarded the relentless attacks by the “mental schools” (specifically Mental Science, New Thought, Unity, Christian Science), chiropractics, and naturopaths against orthodox medicine as counterproductive (ibid., 256). The successes of these “cults” would by no means surpass the “God-given knowledge” of orthodox medicine (ibid.). At the same time, she saw potential in “faith cures”, which she appreciated as “custodians of needed truths” (ibid.). However, superior knowledge of the art of healing had to be rooted in a conscious and systematic understanding of the healing process. Only an “initiate of high degree” with a Christ-like nature would be worthy of such insight (ibid., 524). Thus, all contemporaneous approaches to medicine and healing appeared to Bailey as necessarily deficient. If they were successful, it was merely “accidental” but not due to conscious understanding (ibid.).

The future medicine that Bailey proposed would today be referred to as a form of ‘integrative medicine’ (cf. Wisneski and Anderson 2005) as it would fuse both conventional and alternative therapies: “Many healers in the New Age will combine orthodox study and knowledge with the art of spiritual healing” (Bailey 1953, 557). This “science and art” would respect the value of ordinary medical and surgical methods while employing “methods of occult healing” (ibid., 526). *Esoteric Healing* envisioned that the forthcoming medical profession would consist of “men and women of spiritual orientation” who are well versed in the “exoteric” skills and knowledge of orthodox medicine, physical anatomy, and conventional treatments of pathological symptoms. Their practice would be complemented with “esoteric learning.” From this fusion “a new medical science will emerge” that is built on two foundations: First, the established medical science concerning the physical body, and second, the “constantly growing understanding of the nature of the etheric body, of the centres, and of the transmission and circulation of certain controlled energies” (ibid., 530).

Bailey prefigured the self-understanding of contemporary energy healers as complementary rather than alternative (in the sense of substitutive) service providers in relation to biomedicine. Whereas seven decades after *Esoteric Healing*, the integration of energy healing into biomedicine remains largely unrealised, individual contact-free and subtle energy-based practices such as Therapeutic Touch have made significant inroads in the field of nursing, postnatal care, and palliative care (cf. Meehan 1998; Zoehrer 2025a).

Only a recalibration of the medical profession could fully meet the needs of a humanity that is increasingly becoming “sensitive and subjectively oriented” (Bailey 1953, 531), indicating the imperative to tap into the energies of the mind and soul. Bailey’s emphasis on the subjective factors of illness and healing was tied to her critique of the complexity and overspecialisation of medical science. In the future, diagnoses could be radically simplified because “Medical men in the New Age” (ibid., 276) understand the relation between the various energies and the centres. However, Bailey admitted at this point that her own knowledge was tentative and further research necessary:

Some day, when more research and investigation have been carried forward, the science of medicine will be built upon the fact of the vital body and its constituent energies. It will then be discovered that this science will be far simpler and less complicated than present medical science (ibid.)

Thus, although Bailey’s “fact of the vital body” was phrased in revolutionary language, it remained but a hypothesis. Despite her integrative vision, the empirical pursuit of objectively diagnosing symptoms was of little relevance to her. In contrast to highly specialised physicians, the “healer in the New Age” would require “more basic and less detailed” knowledge about the etheric “vehicle of energies” (ibid., 549).⁵⁰ While Bailey saw therapeutic value in sound hygiene, pharmaceuticals, vitamins, and exposure to sunlight, the central means in her idealistic medicine was “the use of the mind” (Bailey 1953, 219).

Thought supposedly influences the etheric body's centres, which again activate or inhibit the glands, thus affecting the hormone system. The future healer would be well versed in the relation between the glands and the centres (*ibid.*, 218–220), proficient in directing energies (*ibid.*, 218), and have a developed clairvoyant vision (*ibid.*, 277).

As is typical for complementary approaches, the primary goal of Bailey's "Medicine in the next century" was not curative but preventive and salutogenic. The desirable condition to be achieved by means of energy transfers was "to keep the body in proper balanced order", which includes physiological and psychological aspects (*ibid.*, 218–219). This indicates that Bailey recognised the limitation of her New Age healers who work entirely "with the vital energies" (*ibid.*, 538). She thus anticipated the customary (and often legally required) self-delimitation of contemporary energy healers who constrain their services to the improvement of well-being as a supplement to the medical professional's cure.

6. Bailey's Influence on the Holistic Milieu

The following textual analysis shows that Bailey's influence on leading voices of the holistic milieu in general and the founders of energy healing schools in particular was anything but "muted" (cf. Sutcliffe 2003, 138). This section offers the following counter arguments: Bailey has been perceived as an authority on subtle physiology; she was invoked as a patroness by (predominantly female) authors on energy healing; and served as a model for both the holistic theorist and the holistic guru. Furthermore, implicit references to Bailey's principles of energy underscore that, whereas remembrance of her name has been muffled, the memory of her ideas was kept alive.

6.1. Bailey as an Authority on Subtle Physiology

Bailey's thought directly impacted the popular reception of subtle body concepts and related notions of healing in the latter half of the twentieth century. David V. Tansley (1938–1988), the English populariser of radionics, was among the first to combine radionics with Bailey's teachings on energy and the *cakras* (Tansley 1972, 1985), resulting in a Baileyan turn in a field dominated by engineers (cf. Rauer 1988). This trend was underlined by titles such as *Radionics: The New Age Science of Healing* (1974) by the occultist and flying saucer contactee Riley Hansard Crabb (1912–1994).⁵¹

Kurt Leland demonstrated that Bailey left a mark on the wave of authors who consolidated their own *cakra* systems during the 1980s. A number of these authors adopted (at least partially) the names and associations of the *cakras* coined by Bailey. These include the American engineer, psychologist, and Theosophist Zachary F. Lansdowne (b. 1944), author of *The Chakras and Esoteric Healing* (1986); the German psychologist Klausbernd Vollmar (b. 1946), a member of the Findhorn Community; and the German Reiki practitioner Bodo Baginski (1952–2012), who first combined the popularised seven-*cakra*-system with Reiki (Leland 2016, 372–375).

Several subtle physiological aspects of Bailey's *cakra* doctrine had a lasting effect and gained currency in energy healing modalities. Foundational to various school founders and popularisers is the notion that *cakras* can be over- or understimulated, improperly balanced, or blocked (Leland 2016, 443n23). Equally dispersed among energy healers is the doctrine that the *cakras* are associated with the endocrine glands (*ibid.*, 214–215, 390). Another element adopted from Bailey by several energy healers—probably via the English portrait painter and esoteric author Vera Stanley Alder (1898–1984), a major disseminator of Bailey's teachings—is the belief in the necessity of seven major initiations. These correspond to the mastering of the seven *cakras*, that is, opening them for the uninterrupted flow of wisdom and force that each one represents (*ibid.*, 216).⁵² Although these doctrinal features have become widespread in the field of energy healing, explicit references to Bailey are relatively

rare. For example, when Barbara Ann Brennan (1939–2022) first published her healing method in *Hands of Light* (first published 1987), she presented a *cakra* system that draws substantially on the above-mentioned Bailey features. However, Bailey is mentioned directly only twice: once in the context of discussing the process of incarnation, and once in the bibliography, which lists *Esoteric Healing* (Brennan 1988, 61, 283).

In *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925), Bailey foretold that by the end of the century, the function of the glands and their connection to the etheric body would be “established past all controversy, and the whole aim of preventive and curative medicine will shift to a higher level” (Bailey 1925, 89). Whereas the promised paradigm shift never materialised, several holistic theorists throughout the 1970s to 1990s rephrased Bailey’s idea, pouring old wine into new wineskins. One such case is William A. Tiller, who offered his take on Bailey’s “radiatory healing” by conceiving the “etheric body” (in his model consisting of the “endocrine/chakra system”, the acupuncture points, and the meridian system) as a “special antenna system”. Tiller postulated a version of the etheric body that would produce radiation comparable to electromagnetic emissions (Tiller 1997, 121, 128), thus again combining radionics with Bailey’s thought.⁵³

In short, the widespread association of *cakras* with subtle flows of energy, the stimulation or inhibition of glands, stages of initiation, and radiation drew abundant inspiration from Bailey. However, not only her ideas but also her personality became a point of reference in the holistic field.

6.2. Bailey as Enlightened Patroness

Several female protagonists of energy healing pointed to Bailey as a teacher of esoteric wisdom. The esotericist and “priestess of Isis” Naomi Ozaniec, for example, referred to Bailey throughout her book *The Elements of the Chakras* (1990) with an eye to channelled insights. Ozaniec repeated Djwhal Khul’s statement contained in the preface to Bailey’s books from 1934 onwards: “My work is to teach and spread the knowledge of the Ageless Wisdom wherever I can find a response” (cf. Ozaniec 1990, 6).⁵⁴ Other references by Ozaniec focus on Bailey’s instructions on how to develop mental clarity, telepathic skills, and higher levels of consciousness. Likewise, her follow-up book *Chakras: A Beginner’s Guide* Ozaniec (1999) starts with Bailey’s ‘revealed’ explanation of how the *cakras* function as a tool for “spiritual awakening”. A revised edition of her first book, now emphasising “Energy Centres for Total Health” in the subtitle, refers to Bailey as an authority on the subtle body and meditation (Ozaniec 2000).

Caroline Myss (b. 1952) was a “major spokesperson for chakra beliefs” during the 1990s (Hammer 2004, 190). Her book *Anatomy of the Spirit* (1996) presented a form of “intuitive healing” that combines Theosophical heritage with Christian sacraments and the Kabbalah. Although Myss did not explicitly cite Bailey, the latter’s *Esoteric Healing* is listed in her selected bibliography, again indicating the perception of Bailey as an authority in the field.

In *Wheels of Light* (first published in 1989), Rosalyn L. Bruyere (b. 1946) produced a hero-legend that British Theosophists and Bailey’s Arcane School “traveled to India, ‘became enlightened’, returned, and wrote about chakras” (Bruyere 1994; 57).⁵⁵ Despite this brief tribute, the self-declared clairvoyant and reader of the ‘human energy field’ cited Bailey only once (ibid., 27) when quoting from the posthumously published *The Rays and the Initiations* (1960) on the revelation of esoteric mysteries. The same quotation will be repeated in revised, gendered form by Diane Stein (b. 1948) as an epigraph to her book *Essential Reiki* (1995):

That which is a mystery shall no longer be so, and that which has been veiled will be revealed; that which has been withdrawn will emerge into the light, and

all *women* shall see and together they shall rejoice. (Stein 1995; cf. Bailey 1960, 332, emphasis added)

Stein, an American wicca and women's rights activist, represents a devoted feminism that, on a surface level, is incompatible with Bailey's Edwardian style. However, like Bailey and the early leaders of the New Thought movement, she advocated for the social recognition of religious–therapeutic approaches, which had been predominantly practiced by lay-women vis-à-vis a highly professionalised, “patriarchal medicine” (Stein 1990, 10).⁵⁶ Although Ozaniec, Myss, Bruyere, and Stein mention Bailey only punctually, what they have in common is that they invoke her as a patroness who not only was conversant with the art of healing but also taught a path to enlightenment.

Going beyond the adoration of Bailey as a symbolic figure, two male representatives of the holistic milieu built even more extensively on Bailey's repertoire and self-image. They were the American physician Richard Gerber, a systematiser of energy healing practices, and the Chinese-Filipino healer–teacher Choa Kok Sui, who initiated a global energy healing movement. Both began to publish on energy healing at the peak of the surge of New Age literature in the late 1980s.

6.3. “Medicine for the New Age”: Bailey as a Model for the Holistic Theorist

An instructive case for Bailey's often implicit but foundational influence on the holistic milieu of the 1980s is *Vibrational Medicine* (1988), an extensive compilation of various energy healing modalities, praised by *Publishers Weekly* as “the cutting edge of the whole health movement” (ibid., blurb).⁵⁷ The book was authored by Richard Gerber (1954–2007), a practitioner of internal medicine with an interest in alternative methods of healing.⁵⁸

Adopting the exorbitant revolutionary rhetoric of 1980s New Age scientism, Gerber sought to overcome “the Newtonian paradigm of physics” allegedly underlying established biomedicine and embrace “the Einsteinian viewpoint” that would allow us to understand the human being as “interpenetrating, interactive energy fields” (Gerber 1988, 34). In contrast to the “Newtonian” or mechanistic view of humans as sophisticated biological machines, the anthropology behind *Vibrational Medicine* is avowedly vitalistic. It presumes a “unique form of subtle energy that has yet to be fully grasped by the scientists of the twentieth century” and is known as “life-force” or the “spirit that animates all living creatures” (ibid., 32). According to Gerber, the energetic view of the human being was the decisive distinction compared to the biomedical framework: “This spiritual dimension is an aspect of human nature that is not taught in medical school nor well understood by most physicians. But the spiritual element is a part of human existence that must be taken into account if we are to truly understand the basic nature of health, illness, and personal growth” (ibid.). Moreover, he held that if medicine advanced by investigating and integrating alternative approaches it would certainly rediscover the “human multidimensional anatomy [...] described by ancient schools of healing throughout the world,” a central element of which is “the etheric body” (ibid., 33).

Whereas Gerber acknowledged the inspiration he received from Bailey, along with other Theosophists—i.e., Charles W. Leadbeater, Rudolph Steiner, Geoffrey Hodson, and Dolores Krieger—and physicists including Albert Einstein, David Bohm, and Tiller (ibid., 19), Bailey's impact on Gerber is tangible but rarely explicit. He cited *Esoteric Healing* only twice: First, in the context of discussing the lack of scientific recognition of the *nāḍīs* (“an intricate and most extensive network of fluid energies”), and second, when associating the *cakras* with the glands (Gerber 1988, 134–135, 138; cf. Bailey 1953, 195, 625). Without referring to Bailey, a notable parallel is Gerber's division of the “human subtle energetic anatomy” into “physical”, “etheric”, “astral”, and “mental” levels (Gerber 1988, 136), a fourfold nomenclature that was also applied in *Esoteric Healing* (Bailey 1953, 2–4). These

terms were either adopted from Bailey or derived from a common Theosophical source, for example, Besant, Leadbeater, or Arthur A. Powell (1882–1969) (cf. Leland 2016, 392)—possibly via Tiller’s texts.⁵⁹ Gerber additionally mentioned other subtle vehicles above the “mental body”, including the “causal body” (Gerber 1988, 154). The latter was a common element in Theosophical models (cf. Hall 2007), which also appeared in Bailey’s tabulation of subtle bodies with their corresponding force centres (Bailey 1953, 45).⁶⁰

Comparable to Bailey’s distinction between magnetic and radiation healing, Gerber discerned between less efficient “magnetic healing” or laying-on-of-hands techniques that supposedly only affect the physical and etheric level, on the one hand, and “spiritual healing”, which purportedly work at the level of higher subtle bodies including the “mind and spirit”, on the other (Gerber 1988, 318–319). As in Bailey’s idealism, “consciousness” takes priority over “energy”, and is indeed “the highest form of energy” (ibid., 418). Its journey through matter “provides the strongest driving force for the evolutionary process” of both humanity and the planet (ibid.). Recognisable echoes of Bailey’s vision are also found in the chapter titled “The Emergence of Medicine for the New Age”. Gerber believed that the “spiritual/holistic medicine of the future” surpasses biomedicine because it allegedly deals with the true cause of illness “at the subtle-energy level” (Gerber 1988, 428). Finally, the perhaps clearest indication of Bailey’s impact on Gerber is that he dedicated his book “to the vast spiritual Hierarchy which silently works to uplift the human condition”.

6.4. “Service to the World”: Bailey as a Model for the Holistic Guru

There is hardly any founder of a school of energy healing who so thoroughly emulated Bailey as Choa Kok Sui (1952–2007). Born as Samson Lim Choachuy to a Protestant father and a Buddhist mother, Choa Kok Sui relished the library of his father, a member of the Theosophical Society in the Philippines, during his teenage years. He developed a particular interest in mysticism, occultism, Rosicrucianism, and the Astar Foundation, a ‘mystery school’ founded in 1951 by Robert (1913–2006) and Earlyne Chaney (1916–1997).⁶¹ In his twenties, he conducted experiments with the aim of developing clairvoyant abilities (cf. Leland 2016, 376). Choa Kok Sui’s system called GMCKS Pranic Healing⁶² was an amalgam of Atkinson’s original exposition of “Pranic Healing” and the (post-)Theosophical *cakra* systems of Leadbeater, Arthur E. Powell, and Bailey. He thus embedded his school of energy healing firmly within twentieth-century esoteric discourse (Zoehrer 2020, 2021).

Choa Kok Sui drew extensively from Bailey’s work. Similar to Bailey, Choa Kok Sui claimed that parts of his healing concept were channelled from an inner teacher to whom he first referred to as “Respected Teacher Mei Ling” (Choa Kok Sui [1987] 1990, xxx). He later identified his master as the past incarnation of the Hindu god Rāma and the legendary Indian Tantric adept and Tibetan cultural hero Padmasambhava (also known as Guru Rinpoche, ca. 8th and 9th centuries CE) (Choa Kok Sui 2006, 17). Five of Bailey’s books are listed as “recommended reading” in Choa Kok Sui’s first book, *The Ancient Science and Art of Pranic Healing* (Choa Kok Sui 1987, 25, 337), re-published by Samuel Wieser as *Pranic Healing* (1990). In the introduction, Choa Kok Sui suggested *Esoteric Healing* to those who sought a deeper understanding of the *cakras* (Choa Kok Sui [1987] 1990, 22).

Choa Kok Sui regarded his healing movement as being at the helm of Bailey’s “divine Plan”, which anticipated the coming of a World Teacher towards the close of the twentieth century (cf. Bailey 1922c, 61). In support of this Plan, several disciples would be “sent to incarnate on the planet Earth” and initiate healing schools, including Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, *qigōng*, and, lastly, Pranic Healing (Choa Kok Sui 2006, 66–67). However, in contrast to other teachers of energy healing, ‘Master’ Choa Kok Sui claimed to be aware of his identity as an incarnated disciple of the Hierarchy (ibid.).

In *The Origin of Modern Pranic Healing* (2006), Choa Kok Sui recognised the historical indebtedness of his healing system to Mesmer, the Theosophists, and Bailey. While he appreciated *Esoteric Healing* for its “many priceless teachings and hints”, he also criticised Bailey for using her own terms that supposedly deviated from the dictations of Djwhal Khul. This was the case when she made the distinction between magnetic and radiatory healing (Choa Kok Sui 2006, 84), which depreciated healing through *prāṇa*. Choa Kok Sui regarded all traditional or occult therapies as insufficient “arts” instead of “science” (ibid.). His declared mission was to reorganise them and establish “a fully developed healing science” based on clairvoyant observations, systematic experiments, and a system of treatment protocols (ibid., 85). In this manner, Choa Kok Sui reproduced the tension already inherent in Bailey’s work: claims of scientific support on the one hand, and reliance on authoritative spirit guides on the other.

Apart from communion with a Tibetan master, Choa Kok Sui integrated dozens of other elements from Bailey into his doctrinal, ritual, and organisational system. These include meditations, invocation formulas, full moon gatherings, applications of the seven rays, and the establishment of a worldwide organisation for disseminating teachers and healers. Choa Kok Sui taught his disciples to regularly practice a meditation practice called “Meditation on the Twin Hearts” (Choa Kok Sui [1987] 1990, 237). Its purpose is twofold: On the one hand, it allows the pranic healer to develop “cosmic consciousness or illumination;” on the other, it is “a form of service to the world” (ibid.). Choa Kok Sui regarded this exercise as an instrument to harmonise and bless the world, thus ushering in the “Golden Age of World Peace” (The Pranic Healers 2023).

There are several indications that Bailey provided the template for the “Meditation on the Twin Hearts”. First, she instructed her “world servers” to meditate in order to pave the way for the New Age. Second, Bailey describes a technique similar to Choa Kok Sui’s in her *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922), however, in less detail.⁶³ Third, Choa Kok Sui inserted a blessing obviously inspired by Bailey’s “Great Invocation”, which her Arcane School had promoted from 1935 onwards in order to advance the coming age, the return of Christ, and the execution of the “Plan of Love and Light” (Albanese 2007, 465). One line of Choa Kok Sui’s version appears to be a paraphrase: “From the Heart of God, Let the hearts of all sentient beings be filled with divine love and kindness” (Choa Kok Sui [1987] 1990, 240). The corresponding line in Bailey’s invocation reads: “From the point of Love within the Heart of God Let love stream forth into the hearts of men” (Bailey 1953, xi).⁶⁴

In its final version of 1945, Bailey’s Great Invocation reflects the three qualities attributed to God (intelligence or mind, love, and will) and summons their full realisation in humankind. Choa Kok Sui picked up on this theme in his list of “Spiritual Findings” (Choa Kok Sui 2006, 286). During full moons—inspired by Bailey’s interpretation of the Buddhist festival of Vesak and the full moon meditations practiced in the Arcane School—Choa Kok Sui’s disciples gather in groups to meditate and recite the Great Invocation (The Pranic Healers 2024b; cf. Bailey 1948, 154; 1957, 349–352, 419)⁶⁵. He brought Bailey’s Great Invocation up-to-date by reformulating it in a gender-inclusive and post-Christian language that speaks of “every person” instead of “all men”, of “human race” instead of “race of men”, and “Great Messenger” instead of “Christ” (The Pranic Healers 2024a). In this way, Choa Kok Sui practiced Bailey’s own advice to conserve aspects of the “old and beloved form”, but also to expand and enrich it (quoted as an epigraph in Choa Kok Sui [1992] 1995).⁶⁶

Choa Kok Sui gave the ‘seven rays’ another function by applying them to management rules. His booklet *Achieve the Impossible* (2012) presented a model of business management that promises the true path to success by following “ancient esoteric teachings” (Choa Kok Sui 2012, 67). Notably, he used Bailey’s attributes of the seven rays ad verbatim except for the last one: Instead of “Ceremonial Magic and Order”, he christened the seventh ray

“Organisation and Structure”, underscoring once more his pragmatic approach to Bailey’s esotericism (ibid., 80).

Organisation was indeed a skill of Choa Kok Sui that enabled the globalisation of Pranic Healing. On 23 July 1990, he established the World Pranic Healing Foundation to promote his healing system. The organisation set up branches in South East and East Asia, India, the Americas, Europe, and Oceania (Choa Kok Sui 2006, 201–209), and maintains its head office in Makati, Philippines. His global vision and missionary zeal were likely inspired by Bailey’s Lucis Trust and World Servers. But whereas Bailey’s teachings on healing remained highly abstract, Choa Kok Sui was praxis-oriented and translated several Baileyan elements into a simplified and applicable format.

6.5. Anonymous Baileyisms

Choa Kok Sui’s approach to focus on the concrete and practical reflects a general tendency among contemporary holistic authors. It omits much of the conspiratorial vibe of Bailey and other early New Age protagonists. Instead of complex cosmologies, initiations into hierarchies of esoteric masters, or grand millenarian narratives, the reader is given simple recipes for applying healing energies. As a consequence, Bailey’s influence in more recent introductions and handbooks on energy healing is often reduced to her basic principles of energy. For example, the American author Cyndi Dale (b. 1959) adopts Bailey’s principle of “there is naught but energy” and rehashes it in positive terms, however, without mentioning any source: “Energy is information that moves, and it comprises absolutely everything, including both the tangible and intangible aspects of ourselves” (Dale 2020, 9). Physical, psychological, and spiritual hardships are interpreted as symptoms of energetic imbalances. Correspondingly, the solution lies in “work on an energetic level” (ibid.). Dale thus embraced Bailey’s tenet that healing primarily takes place at the level of subtle energies. However, while Bailey envisioned an integration of orthodox and energetic medicine, Dale places energy healing firmly in the field of complementary therapies.

Bailey’s reach was not limited to American, British, or Filipino authors. A burgeoning European landscape of energy healers remains largely unexplored from a Religious Studies perspective, yet it stands to reason to assume that it has been decisively shaped by Bailey’s ideas. For example, the occupational profile of Austrian energy healers, which outlines the activities of more than 20,000 active practitioners and is meant to safeguard legal protection of the craft, contains a few Baileyisms without crediting her. The document states that “an energetic ritual is based on the principle ‘energy follows attention’” (WKO 2020, 7).⁶⁷ It describes a system of subtle energy bodies, including the etheric body, the emotional body, the mental body, and the spirit body (ibid., 3), clearly echoing Bailey’s (and earlier Theosophical) anthropology. The document further distinguishes between the level of information (encompassing mental and emotional energies) and the level of dense energy (the energies operating through the aura, *cakras*, and meridians) (ibid., 5). Charly Lechner, the speaker of the trade group of energy healers in Vienna, explicitly recognises a connection between energy healing and esotericism: “For sure, the boundary between esotericism and energy healing cannot be sharply drawn” (Lechner 2023).⁶⁸ He holds that esotericism represents the belief in the mysterious powers of the universe and its harmonies, while energy healing refers to “pragmatic knowledge” of energies “that are often inexplicable, but still effective” (ibid.).⁶⁹ In this self-understanding of energy work being a decidedly ‘esoteric’ practice Bailey’s ideas are reverberating.

7. Discussion: Bailey and the Occult–Holistic Connection

Alice Ann Bailey was a quiet and elusive but intensely imaginative author who had a sense for the appetites of the spiritual seekers of her time. The echoes of her thought were

far-reaching and still resonate with contemporary forms of energy healing. Several key points can be extracted from the above exploration of Bailey's work and influence on the holistic field, in which healing and 'New Age religiosity' merge together (Hammer 2015a: 373–374; cf. Albanese 2000).

First, Bailey forms a critical joint between the nineteenth-century occult vitalism (surrounding the terms of *fluidum*, *Od*, ether, and *prāṇa*) and the holistic vitalism of the twentieth century that largely focused on (vital or subtle) energy as the overarching notion for the supposed healing agent. Her energetic worldview was ingrained in the Blavatskian tenet of 'the One Life' as a transcendent, unifying principle. She believed the vital power to be the source of all energies making up the manifested world and the driver of evolution. Bailey's vitalism infused her cosmology, anthropology, esotericism, and therapeutic theory. Her religious–therapeutic model thus rested on the idea of a purpose-oriented, living universe, in which the levels of cosmos, solar system, planet, and humanity are intertwined. In this worldview, initiates are in a position of co-creators and active agents who partake in the cosmic evolution of consciousness. The outlook that Bailey offered was fundamentally optimistic, suggesting an independent, can-do mentality that flowed into her healing concept. Only few holistic actors designed a full-fledged cosmology as the basis of their healing approach. However, the belief in vitalising, subtle energies in connection with a subtle physiology (including an etheric body and *cakras*) remains a hallmark in the field and often bears Bailey's imprint.

Second, Bailey understood esotericism (and synonymously occultism) as the work with energies. "Esoteric healing" primarily engages with the flows of energy transmitted via the etheric or vital body, the nexus between the physical, material body, and the 'higher' subtle bodies, including the soul. Her use of the term 'esoteric' has a substantial and social dimension. On the one hand, it is rooted in an occult or New Thought variant of idealism, which emphasises the power of the mind over the energies that shape the world. On the other hand, access to the knowledge of essential reality requires initiation into a spiritual hierarchy of adepts and masters.

Bailey can be counted as an esotericist in terms of several etic definitions. Antoine Faivre suggested six defining features of 'Western esotericism'. Of these, the conception of an interconnected universe as 'living nature', animated by a light or a hidden fire, arguably also pertains to Bailey's cosmology rooted in 'the One Life' and the seven rays emanating from it. The other elements of Faivre's esoteric thought form—correspondence, mediation/imagination, transmutation, convergence, and lineal transmission (Faivre 1994, 10–15)—apply in varying degrees to Bailey's work. While most of them pale in comparison to Bailey's vitalism, the clearest indication of her work's esoteric character *sensu* Faivre, is her emphasis on the transmission of secret knowledge from master to student. The initiation of the adept as the defining trait of the 'esoteric' is underscored in Julian Strube's model. Based on a historiographical analysis, Strube notes three aspects associated with what has been described as 'esoteric' or in equivalent, non-European terms: (1) the appeal to a primordial religion or wisdom tradition; (2) secrecy and initiation; and (3) claims of special powers and associated practices, for example, magic and yoga (Strube 2023, 257).⁷⁰ All three features match Bailey's type of esotericism. However, Faivre and Strube's categories do not capture two further key elements of Bailey's esotericism: the appeal to science and the public dissemination of esoteric claims to knowledge.

What the historian of science communication Robert M. Erdbeer and cultural historian Christina Wessely termed "modern esotericism" may be a better fit. According to Erdbeer and Wessely, modern esotericism emerged in the wake of modern science and constitutes the shadow of popular science (Erdbeer and Wessely 2009: 156). Its central feature is that it uses the rhetoric of exact science (*Naturwissenschaft*) to deliver a "secret doctrine for all"

(*Geheimlehre für alle*). This doctrine, however, has less to do with science proper than a “vitalistic”, subject-centred *Naturphilosophie* (ibid., 170–171). Characteristic of *Naturphilosophie* is its inherent performative aspect, which also applies to Bailey’s energetic worldview, although its practical application is often only implicit or indicated since it is reserved for initiates. Channelling, meditation, prayers, and invocations were part and parcel of Bailey’s esotericism, as they are of religious–therapeutic approaches of the holistic milieu.

Bailey contributed to the notion of ‘esoteric’ as a possible self-label for holistic practitioners, although it remains a contested one. Only a fraction of energy healers openly declare themselves as esotericists. If so, ‘esoteric’ has a dual function: (1) to attract those already steeped in alternative-religious discourse and experimental spirituality (cf. Choa Kok Sui), and (2) to evade scientific and biomedical scrutiny by setting up a defensive demarcation (cf. Lechner 2023).

Third, Bailey’s appeal to science is half-hearted. The age of energy had dawned and would be fully realised with the tapping into the energy of the atom for peaceful purposes. In Bailey’s lifetime generating electricity from nuclear energy was a feasible yet unrealised hope. Although she alluded to science as the harbinger of progress, she did not regard science as the highest authority of knowledge and relied more on revelation and intuition than experimental validations of her hypotheses. Her therapeutic theory joins the genre of what I refer to as ‘futuristic retro-medicine’, the postulation of an iatrophysical theory that relies on a speculative power as a healing agent that has been recycled in numerous variations. The idea of healing through energy constitutes another addition to the chain of Mesmer, Reichenbach, du Prel, Blavatsky, Vivekananda, and Abrams. As in the prototype of mesmerism, Bailey stipulated that a subtle, cosmic agent holds out the potential for a revolutionary therapeutic application, and that it would be on the verge of recognition by science and medicine. However, science was not her highest authority.

In contrast to Mesmer’s enlightened physicalism, Bailey advocated a spiritualised, occult physicalism that derived its authority from Djwhal Khul, a representative of an alleged hierarchy of masters. She (or her posthumous editors) announced that the specifics of the relationship between the glands, the etheric body, and the higher energies are to be confirmed empirically by “the open-minded endocrinologist” sometime in the future (Bailey 1953, 218). This underlines the religious character of Bailey’s project: the assumption of a subtle agent is unfalsifiable. Not experimentation but initiation leads to its understanding and control. Although the paradigm shift in medicine is supposedly imminent, experimental validation is not urgent and the hierarchy’s guidance counts more than science. Accordingly, Bailey did not further pursue a stronger synthesis of her esoteric system with state-of-the-art physics.

The scientific key terms in *Esoteric Healing* are “energy”, “magnetic”, and “radiation”. Bailey’s distinction between “magnetic” and “radiatory” healing reflects her evaluation of mesmerism and New Thought, but hardly bears any connection to physical theories. It is noteworthy that Bailey completely ignored the continued scientific development that led to the rise of quantum physics during the 1920s and Erwin Schrödinger’s (1887–1961) development of wave mechanics. A reason could be the degree of abstraction in quantum physics, where intuition (*Anschaung*) gave way to a probability function of matter that describes a purely mathematical entity. Quantum waves elude physical reality until they ‘collapse’ by means of interaction, i.e., measurement. Despite the intangible nature of quantum physics, ‘quantum mysticism’ will become a key feature of New Age science and holistic reinterpretations of the mind-over-matter principle. Holistic interpretations of quantum physics appearing from the 1960s onwards will augment the New Thought doctrine that ‘mind creates material reality’, which underlies Bailey’s motto ‘energy follows thought’.

Fourth, Bailey's references to a 'mystic East' bear the mark of her Blavatskian heritage. Her work is framed by an occult orientalism involving secret Tibetan masters and opaque Sanskrit notions.⁷¹ However, her appeals to the East mostly remained within the bounds of Theosophical nomenclature while her writings were intended for a secularising, Western audience. On the one hand, Bailey uplifted purported South Asian wisdom to the level of exotic science. This motif is exemplified by the christening of her system of energy flows and transformation as "The Science of the Antahkarana" (Bailey 1954, 147). On the other hand, she pursued the approach of Besant and Leadbeater by de-Sanskritising Theosophical terms to reach a wider Euro-American readership. Examples are her translation of *cakras* as 'force centres', and her preference for the notion of energy over *prāṇa*. Thus, while preserving the air of a mysterious, ancient esoteric path forged by Asian masters, Bailey's teachings were couched in a scientised language. Emulations of this approach with a slightly more pronounced orientalist spin is found, for example, in Choa Kok Sui's "ancient science and art" of Pranic Healing (Choa Kok Sui 1987; cf. Zoehrer 2020, 172).

Fifth, Bailey crucially informed the basic doctrinal elements of energy healing, contributing to its global dissemination. Her influence reflects particularly in (a) the widespread adaptation of her principle 'energy follows thought'; (b) the role of the etheric body and the *cakras* in psychosomatic concepts of illness and healing; and (c) the appeal to a spiritual master as the source of knowledge surrounding hidden powers.

Sixth, Bailey's reception by later holistic authors reveals contrasting processes of pragmatism and technologisation. Holistic practices emerged as part of a highly competitive market of service providers in industrial societies of the post-World War II era. Holistic entrepreneurs such as Choa Kok Sui broke down the voluminous, verbose, and often arcane explanations of Theosophists and post-Theosophists (including Bailey) to basic principles and practical healing recipes expressed in simpler language. An almost opposite approach was chosen by scientist–occultists such as William A. Tiller. Tiller embedded elements of Bailey's doctrine into an abstract theory of subtle energy formulated in technical, physicalist language. In this way, he endowed (post-)Theosophical thought with an aura of scientific authority.

8. Concluding Remarks

Bailey was an innovative, early twentieth-century esotericist. Her grand narrative of cosmic evolution synthesised Theosophy, New Thought, and occult-Christian millenarianism. Part of that narrative embraced a vision of a "medicine of the future", that is, the "new age". Whereas her hope of an integrative medicine remains unfulfilled, energy healing has advanced to become a core practice of the holistic market. The recognised influence of Bailey's millenarianism thus appears to have been outpaced by another element of her legacy: the idea that phenomenal reality is but a manifestation of subtle energies, and that these energies are at the command of the adepts whom Bailey conceived as esoteric healers.

While earlier occult authors have explicitly referred to energy, Bailey introduced the most accentuated 'energetic turn' in the esoteric discourse on quasi-physical agents, i.e., the mesmeric *fluidum*, *Od*, or ether. Bailey was an imaginative author first and foremost, not a healer. Nonetheless, she (and her posthumous editors) provided a prototype for an occult energetic therapy that was translated into concrete healing modalities by later founders of energy healing schools. This made her a purveyor of ideas that bridged occult and holistic discourses.

As "there are no essentials in New Age historiography, only contingences and connections" (Sutcliffe 2003, 54), Bailey's role must not be overestimated. But it would be just as grave a mistake to downplay her ideological impact. Above exploration further substantiated Catherine L. Albanese's assessment that "Bailey—perhaps more than any

other single teacher from the theosophical world—set the stage for the New Age movement” (Albanese 2007, 466). Additional research is required to produce a fuller picture of Bailey’s impact on contemporary versions of energy healing. Attempts to reconstruct a genealogy of this discourse are somewhat hampered by “source amnesia” (Hammer 2004, 180), the glossing over of processes of reinterpretation, which pertains to Bailey herself as well as to her reception. Further insights are also expected to be gained from scrutinising the influence of earlier occult-vitalist discourse as well as life philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*) on her thought. The association of ‘life force’ or a life principle with subtle energies is an ideological mainstay in the contemporary holistic milieu. However, its historical rhizome is yet to be fully excavated.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Acknowledgments: I thank Lukas K. Pokorny, Magdalena Kraler, and Elisabeth Waldl for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Alternative spiritualities in the narrow context of this article shall denote a rhizome of currents that stretch from (Romantic) mesmerism, American Transcendentalism, spiritism, Christian Science and New Thought, Theosophy and related esoteric groups, with offshoots of these nineteenth-century movements extending far into the twentieth-century New Age genre (cf. Fuller 1989; Albanese 2007; Hanegraaff 1998; Heelas et al. 2005; Höllinger and Tripold 2012; Brand 2014). Alternative medicine is here understood as therapies that are *de jure* not privileged to the same extent as the hegemonic, science-based biomedical system (Saks 2002). However, the boundaries between ‘alternative’ and ‘orthodox’ medicine are *de facto* porous as there are gradual degrees of incorporation of (1) autonomous/non-European, (2) complementary/supportive, and (3) optional/specialised practices into contemporary health systems (ibid., 148), dependent on specific local and national conditions.
- ² The recognition and stimulation of a patient’s self-healing ability is a fundamental theme in the history of medicine. Whereas the Renaissance physician Paracelsus (Theophrastus von Hohenheim, 1493–1541) referred to the “inner physician” (*inwendig arzt*) (Paracelsus 1928, 198), contemporary biomedicine speaks of the immune system.
- ³ For example, vegetarianism, hydrotherapy, light and air baths, massage therapy, hypnosis, and (auto-)suggestion (Krabbe 1998).
- ⁴ Including Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine, to note two outstanding examples (cf. Unschuld 2018; Lüddeckens 2020).
- ⁵ This article picks up the notion of “holistic milieu” as coined by Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead to describe a prominent strand within the ‘New Age movement’ (cf. Heelas et al. 2005, 8). The “holistic milieu offers a ‘new age of wellbeing’” (ibid., 88–89), which encompasses a wide range of practices that to varying ratios could be classified as therapeutic *and* spiritual. Health and fitness are the primary motive for clients to first engage with holistic activities, followed by the interest in spirituality (ibid., 91). Due to the popularisation of its activities and its established market position, the holistic field has lost much of its former alternative temperament. The imminent millenarian vision of a ‘New Age’, although still latent, does not serve anymore as a convincing *pars pro toto* denotation of the milieu.
- ⁶ The American New Thought author and occultist William Walker Atkinson succinctly highlighted this characteristic tension in occult literature: “It is a marriage of the Ancient Occult Teachings to the latest and most advanced conceptions of Modern Science—an odd union, for the parties thereto are of entirely different temperaments” (Atkinson 1906, 3).
- ⁷ A more detailed account of Bailey’s illustrious family background, life, and legacy is provided by Isobel Blackthorn (2020). For an overview of Bailey’s life and work in the context of esotericism studies see (Bernard 2016).
- ⁸ Although Bailey found the “growing anti-Semitic feeling in the world [...] inexcusable” (Bailey 1953, 268), her own view of Jews was utterly clichéd. See, for example, her remarks on “The Jewish Problem” in Bailey 1944, 96–99.
- ⁹ Besant, who was a British women’s rights activist and socialist, served as president of the Theosophical Society Adyar between 1907 and 1933.

- 10 Bailey's occult orientalism via the allusion to Tibetan wisdom was largely cosmetrical. According to Olav Hammer, "there is hardly any local Tibetan color at all in these works—in fact, the master's name, Djwhal Khul, is not even phonetically a possible name for a Tibetan" (Hammer 2004, 132).
- 11 Thomas Hakl recounts that Bailey met the Jewish-Italian psychologist Roberto Assagioli for the first time in Ascona. Assagioli, who had worked with Freud and Jung, had already corresponded with Bailey in the 1920s. He pursued a project of combining Theosophical ideas with humanistic psychology using the term psychosynthesis. His influence would reach the Esalen Institute, the American "offshoot" of Eranos founded in 1962 by Michael Murphy and Richard Price (1930–1985) (Hakl 2013, 29–30; cf. Bochinger 1994, 402).
- 12 Christoph Bochinger, who also discusses Bailey's millenarianism, noted that the term 'New Age' was used by the English poet William Blake (1757–1827) who again was influenced by Emanuel Swedenborg's (1688–1772) concept of a 'New Church' (Bochinger 1994, 520).
- 13 Like Bailey, Spangler is an important patron for occult brands of contemporary energy healing. For example, Choa Kok Sui's first book *The Ancient Science and Art of Pranik Healing* (1987) cited Spangler's forecast of people "beginning to attune to" the energies of a "new world" (Choa Kok Sui 1987: xviii). Spangler provided the foreword for Dolores Krieger's *A Healer's Journey to Intuitive Knowing* (2020), which, however, omitted any reference to a 'new age'—indicating that the millenarian momentum in the holistic milieu had toned down.
- 14 In her autobiography, Bailey described her first encounter with Blavatsky's work as follows: "I sat up in bed reading 'The Secret Doctrine' at night and began to neglect reading my Bible, which I had been in the habit of doing. I liked the book and, at the same time, I disliked it cordially. I thought it was very badly written, incorrect and incoherent but I could not get away from it" (Bailey 1973, 138).
- 15 Reiser, reputedly a friend of Albert Einstein (1879–1955), advocated scientific humanism and showed a particular interest in psychic phenomena and parapsychics (cf. Reiser 1974).
- 16 Several occult authors including Bailey refer to an "inner man," a notion that has its roots in the antique Platonic-Christian metaphor (cf. Marksches 1995).
- 17 The term "One Life" came to be frequently invoked by Theosophical authors as a fundamental vital principle (cf. Kraler 2022, 180–272). Notably, Blavatsky was fully aware that the notion of a vital principle was controversially debated in academia: "Mr [Thomas Henry] Huxley [1825–1895, the English biologist, comparative anatomist, and stern defender of Darwin's theory which earned him the byname 'Darwin's Bulldog'] does not believe in 'Vital Force,' others do. Dr J. [James] H. Hutchinson Sterling's [1820–1909, a Scottish idealist philosopher and authority on Hegel] work 'Concerning Protoplasm' has made no small havoc of this dogmatic negation. Professor [Lionel Smith] Beale's [1828–1906, an English physician and microscopist] decision is also in favour of a Vital Principle, and Dr B. W. [Benjamin Ward] Richardson's [1828–1896, an English anaesthetist and physiologist] lectures on the 'Nervous Ether,' have been sufficiently quoted from. Thus, opinions are divided" (Blavatsky 1888a, 635). A probable influence on Blavatsky's notion of "one life" was Swedenborg's identical term mentioned in numerous passages of his *Arcana Coelestia* (1752). Swedenborg claimed that although living organisms appear to live autonomously they are recipients of a vivifying, "Divine influx" (Swedenborg [1752] 1946, n. 3001). Hence, "there is one only life, that of the Lord, which flows in and causes man to live" (ibid.). In *The Divine Law Of Cure* (1884), the New Thought theorist Warren Felt Evans (1817–1889) refers several times to the "one life" and explicitly cites Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* (Evans 1884, 24). The theme was also taken up by Atkinson, who integrated the term "one life" into his vision of human evolution: "Man is a Centre of Consciousness in the great One Life of the Universe. His soul has climbed a great many steps before it reached its present position and stage of unfoldment. And it will pass through many more steps until it is entirely free and delivered from the necessity of its swaddling clothes" (Ramacharaka 1906, 206).
- 18 Whether Bailey's idea of evolution was influenced by the French life-philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941), whose *élan vital* was the central propeller of biological evolution in opposition to the Darwinian principle of random mutation (Bergson 1907), requires a separate investigation.
- 19 Of the five volumes only *Esoteric Psychology*, Volumes 1 (1936) and 2 (1942), were published in her lifetime.
- 20 The seven methods of healing Leadbeater associates the rays with are (1) drawing health "from the great fountain of Universal Life"; (2) the exercise of will-power; (3) the calculation of astrological influences and the invocation of the planetary spirits; (4) manual therapies including massage; (5) the employment of drugs; (6) faith-healing; and (7) magical invocations. Leadbeater asserted that a practitioner may operate with all seven powers but would be most effective when applying the method that corresponds to the "ray" of his specific personality (Leadbeater 1925, 280).
- 21 Leadbeater's literary assistant on Sanskrit texts Ernest E. Wood (1883–1965) published his interpretation on the subject in *The Seven Rays* (1925), which construes seven personality types largely reminiscent of Leadbeater's list of virtues without explicitly referring to it. Wood did, however, mention that Leadbeater encouraged him "to publish my own rays material as a book" (Wood 1925, 86).
- 22 The remaining three (religion, trade, healing) have no equivalent in Leadbeater's or Bailey's system.

- 23 Although the exact precursors to Bailey's esoteric idealism remain a matter of speculation, a similar view was articulated by Atkinson. In *Dynamic Thought* (1906), Atkinson proposed that mind, energy (or force), and matter belong to the same continuum. The universe is alive and responsive to thought. However, essential reality is mental and thus takes priority over matter. In other words, "All is Mind—Mind is All" (Atkinson 1906, 158). In this vein, Atkinson understood all material forms and all phenomena of force, energy, and motion to be manifestations of "Vital-Mental Action" (ibid., 157–159).
- 24 Bailey disregarded subatomic particles or specifications of energy in terms of physical theories, but boldly claimed that "the thought that all is energy has already been accepted by modern science" (Bailey 1955, 309).
- 25 After providing the more immediate meanings of "breath" and "aspire", and before listing associations with "soul" or "supernatural apparitions", *Webster's Dictionary* rendered spirit as "Life, or living substance, considered independently of corporeal existence; an intelligence conceived of apart from any physical organization or embodiment; vital essence, force, or energy, as distinct from matter" (Webster et al. 1886, 1273; identical to the entry in Webster et al. 1864, 1273).
- 26 "That which hath power or energy; the quality of any substance which manifests life, activity, or the power of strongly affecting other bodies; as the spirit of wine or of any liquor" (Webster 1828: SPI).
- 27 Dvivedi's work was supported by the Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund.
- 28 The appendix contains a translated and commented extract from another classic manual written in Sanskrit, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (15th century CE). Dvivedi was the first to translate parts of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* into English. A translation published three years later by South Indian T. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and edited by Tukaram Tatya became widely influential in the emerging field of modern yoga (Kraler 2022, 240).
- 29 The English Theosophist and father of modern astrology Alan Leo (b. William Frederick Allan; 1860–1917) provided a possible junction between Dvivedi's and Bailey's formulations in *Mars: The War Lord* (1915): "It is a well-known fact to those who study the inner springs of human nature that Prana, or life, follows thought" (p. 35). A similar variation of the phrase was offered earlier by Atkinson: "Prana is moved by the Mind" (Ramacharaka 1906, 35).
- 30 Bailey is not entirely coherent when she states that "true healers have to create a healing thoughtform, and through this they consciously or unconsciously work" (Bailey 1953, 676).
- 31 Bailey's mental-energetic principle is construed as an unfalsifiable doctrine. While repeatedly stating that "there is nothing in the created world but energy in motion, and that every thought directs some aspects of that energy", Bailey also noticed that the influence of thought is limited by the sphere of "some greater thinking, directing energy" (Bailey 1953, 631). This qualification gives the last word to a superior, transcendent power, which makes her claim of the power of human thought elude any criticism.
- 32 In her early theological musings, Bailey characterised God in three parts as "Logos", "intelligent Love", and "intelligent loving Will" (Bailey 1922c, 41). In this tripartite union, God is the consciousness of the macrocosm and the "central life" (ibid., 49). Bailey later identified these three "Aspects" in the first volume of her *Esoteric Psychology* (1936) with a fatherly trinity that is associated with the major three rays (Will, Love-Wisdom, Active Intelligence). The motherly nature of God is represented by divine "Attributes" through the four minor rays (Harmony, Science, Devotion, and Magic) (Bailey 1936, 351; cf. Borsos 2012, 22).
- 33 Bailey obviously follows the template of the "three poisons" in Buddhism. She explicates that the troubled condition of the world is the result of human immersion in three types of delusion: First, the failure to see with mental clarity ("illusion"); second, the distraction caused by pride and selfish desires ("glamour"); and third, the emotional confusion situated on the "etheric levels" of the human self ("maya") (Bailey 1950, 20–22). A fourth obstacle is posed by the "Dweller on the Threshold", who guards the path of the aspirant to higher worlds of knowledge. This is a common theme among Theosophists that was first introduced as a literary invention in the occult-romantic novel *Zanoni* (1842) by Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873). Bailey's version of the Dweller represents "the final test of man's courage", a challenge that is comprised of his own sinful nature and impedes his qualification "to tread the Path of Holiness" (Bailey 1950, 22).
- 34 The definition of esotericism as hidden knowledge is dismissed by Bailey as too broad. It suggests that the esotericist is somebody who seeks "to penetrate into a certain secret realm" that is forbidden to the ordinary student (Bailey 1954, 59). Bailey regarded such a formal, epistemic understanding of esotericism as unsuitable and instead suggested a substantial definition focused on the mastery of energies. The mystic is excluded from the endeavour of the esotericist for she only hungers for a vague transcendent being. In contrast, the scientist is indeed dealing with energies like a "true esotericist", although he is unaware of their emanating source (ibid.).
- 35 Bailey laid out a variation of this hierarchy of energies elsewhere with "the life of the One Source" as the "primary energy," from which the soul manifests as "secondary energy" giving appearance to the third, physical form of energy (Bailey 1953, 586).
- 36 The nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 must have been in the vivid memory of her readers. In contrast, the use of the atom's energy for peaceful means was still a noble idea and a matter of intense research during Bailey's lifetime. (The first nuclear power station to connect to a power grid was built by the Soviets in 1954, cf. Kaiser and Madsen 2013.) Thus, her project of harnessing the soul's energy for healing paralleled the scientific and industrial pursuit of new (physical) energy sources in the post war era.

Later holistic authors would dissent from Bailey's model and regard *cakras* not as causes of disease but only as diagnostic tools. For example, Dora Kunz and Dolores Krieger, the creators of Therapeutic Touch, attempted "to correct a misconception—conveyed by many books—that disease starts in the chakras. Diseases are physical. A person gets a disease, and *then* the chakras are affected" (Kunz and Krieger 2004, 140).

Bailey used the terms "vital body", "etheric body", "double", and "energy body" synonymously (Bailey 1953, 455; cf. Bailey 1934, 500). Bailey's earliest reference to etheric centres as an explanation for the cause and treatment of illness appears in *A Treatise on White Magic* (1934, 594) but is further elaborated in *Esoteric Healing*.

Bailey discerned three main sources of disease: First, the psychological state of the patient; second, his karmic debt; and third, harmful collective, environmental, or planetary influences. The "three planetary diseases" cancer, tuberculosis, and syphilis are supposedly the consequence of planetary "karma" (Bailey 1953, 275). Likewise, epidemics are an expression of a difficulty in the planetary etheric body (*ibid.*).

Bailey first postulated a systematic correlation between the "seven centres of force" and the glands in *The Soul and Its Mechanism* (1930, 120), which draws on a schematic diagram depicting the endocrine system contained in the book *Your Mysterious Glands* by the American physician Herman Harold Rubin (1891–1973) (Leland 2016, 226–227). This connection between subtle and medical physiology underscores a characteristic feature in Bailey's work: the combination of (fully anglicised) occult orientalist ideas with the appeal to science.

Attempting to clarify the difference between her notions of 'energy' and 'force', Bailey explained: "I wish to remind you that I use the word 'energy' in reference to the spiritual expression of any ray and the word 'force' to denote the use which men make of spiritual energy as they seek to employ it and usually, as yet, misapply it" (Bailey 1949, 16).

Bailey's main references on *prāṇa* are Rama Prasad's (c. 1860–1914) *The Science of Breath* (1890) and her own commentary on Patañjali (Bailey 1953, 356). Yet, breathing exercises are only of secondary importance to Bailey, who favoured thought over technique. The first priority of an aspirant is to establish "mind consciousness", "right thought", and awareness of their force centres (Bailey 1950, 257). Bailey thus disassociated herself from those who use breathing techniques that would at best produce physiological effects and merely activate "lower centres"—including occultists, Indian gurus, as well as opera singers. She contrasts the latter with a hypothetical future form of singing that would involve higher energies. As part of the "planetary symphony", this art of singing would ultimately perfect the "music of the spheres" (Bailey 1950, 257). On the early intersection of occult breathing techniques and opera singing see (Kraler 2025).

The term "One Soul" refers to the unison of a group collective (cf. Bailey 1953, 354).

The localisation of the sixth sense in the solar plexus has its roots in the Puységur school of mesmerism. Its earliest theorist, A.-A. Tardy de Montravel (N/A), described the "solar plexus" (*plexus solaire*) as "the organ of the sixth sense" (*l'organe du sixième sens*) (Tardy de Montravel 1787, 259–260, cf. 209, 266). Tardy and the Puységur school were an important reference point for Eberhard Gmelin (1751–1809), an empirically oriented German mesmerist. Mesmer already highlighted the role of the hypochondrium, the region of the upper stomach, thus drawing on a crucial element in the medical tradition of Paracelsus. Paracelsus thought that the hypochondrium was the seat of the life-spirit (*spiritus vitae*), which he referred to as *archeus* and inner alchemist (*alchimia microcosmi*) (Schott 2001: A384). Leading representatives of German Romantic medicine conceptualised the solar plexus and the brain as the seats of the unconscious and conscious souls respectively. These theories foreshadowed and influenced Carl G. Jung's analytical psychology (Baier 2019). I thank Karl Baier for these references.

On how Mesmer's notion of the music of the spheres was inspired by Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), see (Baier 2024).

Medieval Christian mystics already engaged in radiation symbolism. Gnostic and neoplatonic theories of light from antiquity and late antiquity were increasingly adopted since the late eighteenth century and entered the works of Swedenborg and Theosophy (Haupt 2005, 159–160).

Original: "die vom menschlichen Organismus ausgehenden Radiationen zu Fernwirkungen führen können".

Bailey's forecast coincides with the gradual materialisation of the coming Christ, which she believed to occur after 2025 (cf. Pokorny 2021, 207).

This suggestion of "basic knowledge" of the etheric somewhat contradicts Bailey's earlier critique of vague insinuations that are antithetical to "exact knowledge" (cf. Bailey 1953, 524).

From the early 1960s until the mid-1980s, Crabb served as the director of the Borderland Science Research Foundation (est. 1945) based in Eureka, California (BSRF 2024).

Brennan's other major reference points were the Neo-Reichian bodywork of *Bioenergetics* developed by Alexander Lowen (1910–2008) and the *Core Energetics* of Lowen's colleague John Pierrakos (1921–2001), who incorporated a Theosophy-based *cakra*-model into his body psychotherapy (Lowen 1975; Pierrakos 1987; cf. Kripal 2007, 229).

Cf. Abrams (1916, 255): "The energy emanating from the human organism is electro-magnetic".

The passage from the original "Extract from a Statement by the Tibetan" of August 1934 reads: "My work is to teach and spread the knowledge of the Ageless Wisdom wherever I can find a response, and I have been doing this for many years. I seek also to

help the Master M. [Morya] and the Master K. H. [Koot Hoomi] whenever opportunity offers, for I have been long connected with Them and with Their work. [...]”.

For a thorough historical examination of the intercultural transfer of the *cakras* within the early Theosophical context see (Baier 2016).

The only other reference to Bailey in *Essential Reiki* showcases the transmission of an idea through the female ‘lineage’ of Blavatsky, Bailey, and Stein into the Reiki discourse of the 1990s. Stein (1995, 103) introduced a triskelion-shaped Reiki symbol called “Antahkarana”, which she claimed was an ancient Tibetan symbol used for meditation and healing and mentioned by Bailey. Placed under a massage table during a Reiki session it supposedly amplifies healing energies (ibid.). The Vedāntic notion *antaḥkaraṇa* (Sanskrit: “inner instrument”) appeared in Blavatsky’s writings where it denoted the bridge between “lower” and “higher” minds (Leland 2016, 456n29). The idea was further developed by Bailey to describe an occult process of integrating the self and higher ontological levels. It refers to a method of bridging the ordinary and spiritual modes of understanding by means of a “thread of consciousness” (Bailey 1954, 2, 148). *Antaḥkaraṇa* also encompasses the links or channels that connect the adept with other world servers, with the Hierarchy, and ultimately with the Kingdom of God (ibid., 145). Bailey’s “Science of the Antahkarana” claims to explain how energies enter and exit the individual, and how they are used for self-transformation (ibid., 147). In *Esoteric Healing*, the development of *antaḥkaraṇa* is a quality required of the healer and related to the “power to command the spiritual will” (Bailey 1953, 525). Contrary to Stein, Bailey did not use a symbol to express the idea of *antaḥkaraṇa*.

Under the term “vibrational medicine” Gerber subsumed acupuncture, homeopathy, Bach flowers, crystals, radionics, subtle-energy fields and *cakras*, and meditation. Reflecting the increasing traction of the term ‘subtle energy’ in the 1990s, Gerber added the subtitle “The #1 Handbook of Subtle-Energy Therapies” to the book’s third edition of 2001.

The emic status of *Vibrational Medicine* was underscored by endorsements of the who’s who of the holistic milieu including Dolores Krieger (1921–2019), professor of nursing and co-founder of Therapeutic Touch, Larry Dossey (b. 1940), physician and advocate for religious–therapeutic means of intervention, Marilyn Ferguson (1938–2008), author of the New Age-Bible *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980), and C. Norman Shealy (b. 1932), founding president of the American Holistic Medical Association. The foreword to Gerber’s book was written by the Stanford professor of material sciences William A. Tiller (1929–2022), who since the early 1970 advocated for parapsychology, occultism, and alternative medicine in the name of science.

Gerber mentioned the term “emotional body” as a synonym for the “astral body”, which is not attested in earlier Theosophy (Hall 2007, 9), but established in the writings of Bailey and Arthur A. Powell (cf. Powell 1927, 2).

Bailey associated various levels of the causal body with the heart, *ajna*, and head centres.

The Chaney’s aimed to reconcile Spiritualism with Theosophy, the Arcane School, and Christianity. This ambition reflects in the structure of the spiritual hierarchy which they asserted to have inspired the founding of their organisation. One of the hierarchy’s masters was Kut-Hu-Mi (also spelled Koot Hoomi), a figure who appeared in both Blavatsky’s and Bailey’s writings (Stillson 1967, 133–145).

GMCKS is the acronym for Grand Master Choa Kok Sui.

To achieve “illumination” the occult pupil is instructed to form a “channel between the heart centre [...] and its corresponding head centre” (Bailey 1922b, 286).

Bailey’s Great Invocation found broad resonance in the holistic field. It was often reproduced and recited by the luminaries of the British New Age activists throughout the 1970s to 1990s (Sutcliffe 2003, 47, 139).

Sutcliffe 2003, 142–143) recounts a participant observation of a Scottish full moon meditation meeting of a group belonging to the Units of Service, a network that is part of Bailey’s Lucis Trust (cf. The Arcane School n.d.).

The referenced passage from Bailey’s *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922) reads as follows: “The fundamentals have always been true. *To each generation is given the part of conserving the essential features of the old and beloved form, but also of wisely expanding and enriching it. Each cycle must add the gain of further research and scientific endeavor, and subtract that which is worn out and of no value. Each age must build in the product and triumphs of its period, and abstract the accretions of the past that would dim and blur the outline. Above all, to each generation is given the joy of demonstrating the strength of the old foundations and the opportunity to build upon these foundations a structure that will meet the needs of the inner evolving life*” (p. 2; Choa Kok Sui’s citation is marked in italics).

Original: “Ein energetisches Ritual basiert auf dem Prinzip ‘Energie folgt der Aufmerksamkeit’”.

“Die Grenze zwischen der Esoterik und der Energetik ist sicher nicht scharf zu ziehen”.

“Auf der energetischen Seite das pragmatische Wissen um mentale Kräfte, um Energieströme und um das Machbare, das oft genug nicht erklärbar ist, aber trotzdem wirksam stattfindet”.

A similar etic definition for esotericism that connects secrecy with special knowledge of hidden forces was suggested by Pokorný and Winter (2023, p. 3): “[E]sotericism’ is understood as an umbrella notion comprising largely nonhegemonic teachings and currents with shared structural features, foremostly centering on the idea that higher or special (practical) knowledge distilled from a discourse deemed secretive can be (incrementally) utilized by its practitioners to salvific or otherwise self-cultivational ends, thereby uncovering ulterior dynamics of life, nature, and/or the cosmos at large”.

- ⁷¹ Going beyond South Asia, a special role in her millenarian vision was attributed to Confucius, who—as a member of the “Great White Brotherhood”—was to incarnate in order to pave the way for the New Age (Pokorny 2024, 36).

References

Primary Sources

- (Abrams 1916) Abrams, Albert. 1916. *New Concepts in Diagnosis and Treatment. Physico-Clinical Medicine, the Practical Application of the Electronic Theory in the Interpretation and Treatment of Disease, with an Appendix on New Scientific Facts*. San Francisco: Philopolis Press.
- (Anonymous. 1890. *Geometry in Religion and the Exact Dates in Biblical History after the Monuments, or, the Fundamental Principles of Christianity, the Precessional Year, &: As Based on the Teaching of the Ancients by the Cube, Square, Circle, pyr*. London: E. W. Allen.
- (Atkinson 1906) Atkinson, William Walker. 1906. *Dynamic Thought or the Law of Vibrant Energy*. Los Angeles: Segnogram Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1922a) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1922a. *Initiation, Human and Solar*. New York: Lucifer Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1922b) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1922b. *Letters on Occult Meditation*. New York: Lucifer Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1922c) Bailey, Alice A. 1922c. *The Consciousness of the Atom*. New York: Lucifer Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1925) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1925. *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1927) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1927. *The Light of the Soul: Its Science and Effect: A Paraphrase of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1930) Bailey, Alice A. 1930. *The Soul and Its Mechanism*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1934) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1934. *A Treatise on White Magic*, 8th ed. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1936) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1936. *A Treatise on the Seven Rays. Volume 1: Esoteric Psychology I*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1942) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1942. *A Treatise on the Seven Rays. Volume 2: Esoteric Psychology II*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1944) Bailey, Alice A. 1944. *The Problems of Humanity*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1948) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1948. *The Reappearance of the Christ*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1949) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1949. *The Destiny of the Nations*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1950) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1950. *Glamour: A World Problem*, 3rd ed. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1953) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1953. *A Treatise on the Seven Rays. Volume 4: Esoteric Healing*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1954) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1954. *Education in the New Age*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1955) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1955. *Discipleship in the New Age II*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1957) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1957. *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1960) Bailey, Alice A. [Djwhal Khul]. 1960. *A Treatise on the Seven Rays, Volume 5: The Rays and the Initiations*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- (Bailey 1973) Bailey, Alice A. 1973. *The Unfinished Autobiography*. New York: Lucis Press.
- (Bergson 1907) Bergson, Henri. 1907. *L'évolution créatrice*. Paris: Felix Alcan.
- (Besant and Leadbeater 1905) Besant, Annie, and Charles W. Leadbeater. 1905. *Thought-Forms*. London, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society.
- (Blavatsky 1877) Blavatsky, Helena P. 1877. *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology. Vol. 1: Science*. New York: J. W. Bouton.
- (Blavatsky 1888a) Blavatsky, Helena P. 1888a. *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy. Vol. 1: Cosmogenesis*. London: Theosophical Publishing Company.
- (Blavatsky 1888b) Blavatsky, Helena P. 1888b. *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy. Vol. 2: Anthropogenesis*. London: Theosophical Publishing Company.
- (Brennan 1988) Brennan, Barbara Ann. 1988. *Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field*. New York: Bantam Books.
- (Bruyere 1994) Bruyere, Rosalyn L. 1994. *Wheels of Light: Chakras, Auras, and the Healing Energy of the Body*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- (BSRF 2024) BSRF [Borderland Sciences Research Foundation]. 2024. “Riley Hansard Crabb”. Available online: <https://borderlandsciences.org/cart/riley-hansard-crabb/> (accessed on 15 May 2024).
- (Bulwer-Lytton 1842) Bulwer-Lytton, Edward. 1842. *Zanoni*. London: Saunders and Otley.
- (Cady 1896) Cady, Emilie H. 1896. *Lessons in Truth*. Lee's Summit: Unity School of Christianity.
- (Carus 1846) Carus, Carl Gustav. 1846. *Psyche. Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele*. Pforzheim: Flammer und Hoffmann, Pforzheim.
- (Choa Kok Sui 1987) Choa Kok Sui. 1987. *The Ancient Science and Art of Pranik Healing: Practical Manual on Paranormal Healing*. Quezon City: Institute for Inner Studies.
- (Choa Kok Sui [1987] 1990) Choa Kok Sui. 1990. *Pranic Healing*. York Beach: Samuel Weiser. First published 1987.

- (Choa Kok Sui [1992] 1995) Choa Kok Sui. 1995. *Advanced Pranik Healing*. York Beach: Samuel Weiser. First published 1992.
- (Choa Kok Sui 2006) Choa Kok Sui. 2006. *The Origin of Modern Pranik Healing and Arhatic Yoga*. Transcribed and edited by Charlotte Anderson. Makati City: Institute for Inner Studies Publishing Foundation.
- (Choa Kok Sui 2012) Choa Kok Sui. 2012. *Achieve the Impossible. The Golden Lotus Sutras on the Science of Prosperity and Spiritual Business Management*. Quezon City: Institute for Inner Studies.
- Crabb, Riley Hansard. 1974. *Radionics: The New Age Science of Healing*. Vista, CA: Borderland Sciences Research Foundation.
- (Dale 2020) Dale, Cyndi. 2020. *Energy Healing for Trauma, Stress and Chronic Illness: Uncover and Transform the Subtle Energies That are Causing Your Greatest Hardships*. Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications.
- Dowling, Levi H. 1908. *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ. the Philosophical and Practical Basis of the Religion of the Aquarian Age of the World and of the Church Universal. Transcribed from the Book of God's Remembrance, known as the Akashic Records, by Levi*. With an introduction by Hon. Henry A. Coffeen. London, Los Angeles: Leo W. Dowling.
- (du Prel 1899a) du Prel, Carl. 1899a. *Die Magie als Naturwissenschaft. Erster Teil: Die magische Physik*. Jena: Hermann Costenoble.
- (du Prel 1899b) du Prel, Carl. 1899b. *Die Magie als Naturwissenschaft. Zweiter Teil: Die Magische Psychologie*. Jena: Hermann Costenoble.
- (Dumont 1913) Dumont, Theron Q. [William Walker Atkinson]. 1913. *The Art and Science of Personal Magnetism. The Secrets of Mental Fascination*. Chicago: Advanced Thought Publishing Co.
- (Dvivedi 1890) Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. 1890. *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: Translation, with Introduction, Appendix, and Notes Based upon Several Authentic Commentaries*. Bombay: Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund.
- (Evans 1884) Evans, Warren Felt. 1884. *The Divine Law of Cure*. Boston: H. H. Carter & Co.
- Ferguson, Marilyn. 1980. *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s*. Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher.
- (Gerber 1988) Gerber, Richard. 1988. *Vibrational Medicine: New Choices for Healing Ourselves*. Santa Fe: Bear & Co.
- Gerber, Richard. 2001. *Vibrational Medicine: The #1 Handbook of Subtle-Energy Therapies*. Rochester: Bear & Co.
- (Hopkins 2017) Hopkins, Emma Curtis. 2017. *Scientific Christian Mental Practice. From the 12 Original Booklets Founded Upon the Instruction of Emma Curtis Hopkins*. Edited by Michael Terranova. Vancouver: Wise Woman Press.
- (Kaiser and Madsen 2013) Kaiser, Peter, and Michael Madsen. 2013. Atom Mirny: The World's First Civilian Nuclear Power Plant. *IAEA Bulletin* 54: 5–7.
- (Krieger 2020) Krieger, Dolores. 2020. *A Healer's Journey to Intuitive Knowing: The Heart of Therapeutic Touch*. Rochester: Bear and Company.
- (Kunz and Krieger 2004) Kunz, Dora, and Dolores Krieger. 2004. *The Spiritual Dimension of Therapeutic Touch*. Rochester: Bear and Company.
- (Lansdowne 1986) Lansdowne, Zachary F. 1986. *The Chakras and Esoteric Healing*. York Beach, ME: Weiser.
- (Leadbeater 1920) Leadbeater, Charles W. 1920. *The Science of the Sacraments*. Los Angeles: St. Alban Press.
- (Leadbeater 1925) Leadbeater, Charles W. 1925. *The Masters and the Path*. Adyar and Madras: Theosophical Publishing House.
- (Lechner 2023) Lechner, Charly. 2023. Vorwort. Berufsgruppensprecher Humanenergetik Herbert C. Lechner. Available online: <https://www.wko.at/wien/gewerbe-handwerk/persoennliche-dienstleister/humanenergetiker/berufsgruppensprecher-humanenergetik-herbert-lechner> (accessed on 3 July 2024).
- (Leo 1915) Leo, Alan. 1915. *Mars: The War Lord*. London: L. N. Fowler & Co.
- (Lowen 1975) Lowen, Alexander. 1975. *Bioenergetics*. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan.
- (Meehan 1998) Meehan, Therese C. 1998. Therapeutic Touch as a Nursing Intervention. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 28: 117–25.
- (Mesmer 1814) Mesmer, Franz Anton. 1814. *Mesmerismus. Oder System der Wechselwirkungen, Theorie und Anwendung des thierischen Magnetismus als allgemeine Heilkunde zur Erhaltung des Menschen*. Berlin: Nikolaische Buchhandlung.
- (Myss 1996) Myss, Caroline. 1996. *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power and Healing*. New York: Harmony Books.
- (Oschman 2000) Oschman, James L. 2000. *Energy Medicine. The Scientific Basis*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.
- (Ozaniec 1990) Ozaniec, Naomi. 1990. *The Elements of the Chakras*. Shaftesbury: Element.
- (Ozaniec 1999) Ozaniec, Naomi. 1999. *Chakras: A Beginner's Guide*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- (Ozaniec 2000) Ozaniec, Naomi. 2000. *Chakras: An Introductory Guide to your Energy Centres for Total Health*. Shaftesbury: Element.
- (Paracelsus 1928) Paracelsus [Theophrast von Hohenheim]. 1928. *Theophrast von Hohenheim gen. Paracelsus Sämtliche Werke. Abteilung 1: Medizinische, naturwissenschaftliche und philosophische Schriften; Band 11: Schriftwerk aus den Jahren 1537–1541*. Edited by Karl Sudhoff. München: Oldenbourg.
- (Pierrakos 1987) Pierrakos, John C. 1987. *Core Energetics: Developing the Capacity to Love and Heal*. Mendocino: LifeRhythm.
- (Powell 1927) Powell, Arthur A. 1927. *The Astral Body and Other Astral Phenomena*. London: Theosophical Publishing House.
- Prasad, Rama. 1890. *The Science of Breath and the Philosophy of the Tattoas. Translated from the Sanskrit, with Introductory and Explanatory Essays on Nature's Finer Forces*. London: The Theosophical Publishing Society.
- (Ramacharaka 1906) Ramacharaka, Yogi [William Walker Atkinson]. 1906. *Psychic Healing*. Chicago: Yogi Publication Society.
- (Rauer 1988) Rauer, Harald. 1988. Fragen an 'Dimension Zwei'. Wie Radionik möglich ist—Der theoretische Hintergrund. *Efodon Synesis* 27: 27–31.

- (Reichenbach 1849) Reichenbach, Karl von. 1849. *Physikalisch-physiologische Untersuchungen über die Dynamide des Magnetismus, der Elektrizität, der Wärme, des Lichtes, der Krystallisation, des Chemismus in ihren Beziehungen zur Lebenskraft*. Braunschweig: Vieweg, vol. 1.
- (Reiser 1954) Reiser, Oliver L. 1954. "Preface" to Alice A. Bailey [Djwhal Khul]. *Education in the New Age*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company, pp. v–xxi.
- (Reiser 1974) Reiser, Oliver L. 1974. Messages to and from the Galaxy. *Frontiers of Consciousness: The Meeting Ground between Inner and Outer Reality*. Edited by John Warren White. New York: Julian Press, pp. 198–212.
- (Stein 1990) Stein, Diane. 1990. *All Women are Healers. A Comprehensive Guide to Natural Healing*. Freedom: Crossing Press.
- (Stein 1995) Stein, Diane. 1995. *Essential Reiki: A Complete Guide to an Ancient Healing Art*. New York: Crown Publishing (Random House).
- (Stillson 1967) Stillson, Judah J. 1967. *The History and Philosophy of the Metaphysical Movements in America*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- (Stone 1948) Stone, Randolph. 1948. *The New Energy Concept of the Healing Art*. N/A.
- (Stone 1957) Stone, Randolph. 1957. *Energy: The Vital Polarity in the Healing Art*. Improved and enlarged edition of *The New Energy Concept of the Healing Art*. Chicago: Randolph Stone.
- (Stone 1985) Stone, Randolph. 1985. *Health Building: The Conscious Art of Living Well*. Reno: CRCS Publications.
- (Swedenborg [1752] 1946) Swedenborg, Emanuel. 1946. *Arcana Coelestia. The Heavenly Arcana Contained in the Holy Scripture or Word of the Lord Unfolded, Beginning with the Book of Genesis*. Translated from the original Latin by John Clowes, Revised and Edited by John Faulkner Potts. New York: Swedenborg Foundation. vol. 4. First published 1752.
- (Tansley 1972) Tansley, David V. 1972. *Radionics and the Subtle Anatomy of Man*. Rustington: Health Science Press.
- (Tansley 1985) Tansley, David V. 1985. *Radionics, Science or Magic? An Holistic Paradigm of Radionic Theory and Practice*. Saffron Walden: C. W. Daniel.
- (Tardy de Montravel 1787) Tardy de Montravel, A. A. 1787. *Journal du Traitement Magnétique de Madame B. Pour Servir de Suite au Journal du Traitement Magnétique de la Dlle N. & de Preuve à la Théorie de l'Essai*. Strasbourg: Librairie Académique.
- (The Arcane School n.d.) The Arcane School. n.d. "Meditation at the Full Moon" [Booklet]. Available online: https://www.lucistrust.org/uploads/general/Full_Moon_Booklet_-_2015.pdf (accessed on 9 May 2025).
- (The Pranic Healers 2023) The Pranic Healers. 2023. Meditation on Twin Hearts. Available online: <https://masterchoakoksui.bio/meditation-on-twin-hearts/> (accessed on 4 July 2024).
- (The Pranic Healers 2024a) The Pranic Healers. 2024a. The Great Invocation by MCKS. Available online: <https://www.thepranichealers.com/the-great-invocation-by-mcks> (accessed on 4 July 2024).
- (The Pranic Healers 2024b) The Pranic Healers. 2024b. The Significance of the Full Moon. Available online: <https://www.thepranichealers.com/the-significance-of-full-moon> (accessed on 4 July 2024).
- (Tiller 1997) Tiller, William A. 1997. *Science and Human Transformation: Subtle Energies, Intentionality, and Consciousness*. Walnut Creek: Pavior Publishing.
- (Vivekananda 1896) Vivekananda, Swami. 1896. *Râja Yoga: Or Conquering the Internal Nature*. London: Longmanns, Green.
- Ward, Arthur H. 1910. *The Seven Rays of Development*. London: Theosophical Publishing House.
- (Webster 1828) Webster, Noah. 1828. *An American Dictionary of the English Language*. 2 vols. New York: S. Converse.
- Webster, Noah, Goodrich, Chauncey A., and Porter, Noah. 1864. *An American Dictionary of the English Language by Noah Webster, LL.D.* Springfield: G. & C. Merriam.
- (Webster et al. 1886) Webster, Noah, Chauncey A. Goodrich, Noah Porter, and C. A. F. Mahn, 1886. *Webster's Complete Dictionary of the English Language*. London: George Bell & Sons.
- (WKO 2020) WKO. 2020. Berufsbild Humanenergetik. Available online: <https://www.wko.at/ooe/gewerbe-handwerk/persoennliche-dienstleister/humanenergetiker/neu-berufsbild-humanenergetik-stand-28.01.2020.pdf> (accessed on 3 July 2024).
- (Wood 1925) Wood, Ernest. 1925. *The Seven Rays*. Wheaton: Theosophical Publishing House.

Secondary Sources

- Albanese, Catherine L. 2000. The Aura of Wellness: Subtle-Energy Healing and New Age Religion. *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 10: 29–55. [CrossRef]
- Albanese, Catherine L. 2007. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Baier, Karl. 2016. Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer: Annotations on the Appropriation of the Cakras in Early Theosophy. In *Theosophical Appropriations: Esotericism, Kabbalah, and the Transformation of Traditions*. Edited by Julie Chajes and Boaz Huss. Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, pp. 309–54.
- Baier, Karl. 2019. Von der Iatrophysik zur romantischen Psychologie des Unbewussten: Eine Einführung in den Mesmerismus. *Entspannungsverfahren* 36: 101–32.

- Baier, Karl. 2024. Die magnetische Isis: Natur im Denken Franz Anton Mesmers. In *Von der Physiotheologie zum Vitalismus?: Transformationen des Verhältnisses von Naturforschung und Religion im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*. Edited by Thomas Ruhland and Friedemann Stengel. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 545–91.
- Bernard, Léo. 2016. Alice Ann Bailey et le Lucis Trust: Trajectoire d'un Mouvement ésotérique en Contexte (1919–1949). Master's thesis, Faculté des sciences historiques, Université de Strasbourg. Mémoire de recherche en Histoire et sciences des religions, présenté sous la direction de M. Jean-Marie Husser. Strasbourg, France.
- Bernard, Léo. 2025. Dewanchand Varma and Pranotherapy: Healing and Subtle Energies in the French Interwar Period. In *Subtle Energies in Therapy, Spirituality, Arts, and Politics. 1800–Present*. Edited by Julian Strube, Marleen Thaler and Dominic Zoehrer. Brill: Numen Book Series.
- Blackthorn, Isobel. 2020. *Alice A. Bailey: Life and Legacy*. N.p.: Next Chapter.
- Bochinger, Christoph. 1994. "New Age" und Moderne Religion. *Religionswissenschaftliche Analysen*. Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus.
- Bogdan, Henrik, and Gordan Djurdjevic. 2013. Introduction. In *Occultism in a Global Perspective*. Edited by idem. Durham: Acumen, pp. 1–15.
- Borsos, David. 2012. *The Esoteric Philosophy of Alice A. Bailey: Ageless Wisdom for a New Age*. San Francisco: Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the California Institute of Integral Studies.
- Brand, Klaus. 2014. *Wissenschaft und Religion in Mesmerismuskursen des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ein Beitrag zum Religionsbegriff und zur Entstehung moderner Spiritualität*. Münster: Monsenstein und Vannerdat.
- Buescher, John Benedict. 2008. Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as it Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling. In *Theosophical History Occasional Papers*. Fullerton: Theosophical History, vol. 11.
- Cox, Simon. 2022. *The Subtle Body: A Genealogy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Erdbeer, Robert Matthias, and Christina Wessely. 2009. Kosmische Resonanzen. Theorie und Körper in der Esoterischen Moderne. In *Resonanz. Potenziale einer akustischen Figur*. Edited by Karsten Lichau, Viktoria Tkaczyk and Rebecca Wolf. München: Wilhelm Fink, pp. 143–76.
- Faivre, Antoine. 1994. *Access to Western Esotericism*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Fuller, Robert C. 1989. *Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hakl, Hans Thomas. 2013. Eranos. In *An Alternative Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Hall, Julie. 2007. The Saptaparṇa: The Meaning and Origins of the Theosophical Septenary Constitution of Man. *Theosophical History* 13: 5–38.
- Hammer, Olav. 2004. *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hammer, Olav. 2015b. New Age. In *The Occult World*. Edited by Christopher Partridge. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 372–81.
- Hammer, Olav. 2015a. The Theosophical Current in the Twentieth Century. In *The Occult World*. Edited by Christopher Partridge. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 348–60.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1998. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Haupt, Sabine. 2005. 'Strahlenmagie'. Texte des späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts zwischen Okkultismus und Science-Fiction. Ein diskursanalytisch-komparatistischer Überblick. In *Gespenster. Erscheinungen, Medien, Theorien*. Edited by Moritz Baßler, Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf and Bettina Gruber. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, pp. 153–76.
- Heelas, Paul, Linda Woodhead, Benjamin Seel, Bronisława Szerszynski, and Karin Tusting. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Höllinger, Franz, and Thomas Tripold. 2012. *Ganzheitliches Leben. Das holistische Milieu zwischen neuer Spiritualität und postmoderner Wellness-Kultur*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.
- James, William. 1907a. Energies of Men. *The Philosophical Review* 16: 1–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
- James, William. 1907b. The Powers of Men. *The American Magazine* 65: 56–65.
- Josephson-Storm, Jason Ānanda. 2017. *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Human Sciences*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Krabbe, Wolfgang R. 1998. Naturheilbewegung. In *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen, 1880–1933*. Edited by Diethart Kerbs and Jürgen Reulecke. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, pp. 77–85.
- Kraler, Magdalena. 2022. Yoga Breath: The Reinvention of Prāṇa and Prāṇāyāma in Early Modern Yoga. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria.
- Kraler, Magdalena. 2025. Subtle Energies of Sound: Leser-Lasario's Vowel Breathing and Mantra Chanting. In *Subtle Energies in Therapy, Spirituality, Arts, and Politics. 1800–Present*. Edited by Julian Strube, Marleen Thaler and Dominic Zoehrer. Brill: Numen Book Series.

- Kripal, Jeffrey J. 2007. *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Leland, Kurt. 2016. *Rainbow Body. A History of the Western Chakra System from Blavatsky to Brennan*. Lake Worth: Ibis Press.
- Lüddeckens, Dorothea. 2020. 'Imagined Origin': Ayurveda, Reiki und Traditionelle Chinesische Medizin. In *Was Heilung Bringt. Krankheitsdeutung zwischen Religion, Medizin und Heilkunde*. Edited by Martin Tulaszewski, Klaus Hock and Thomas Klie. Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 155–67.
- Markschies, Christoph. 1995. Die Platonische Metapher vom 'inneren Menschen': Eine Brücke zwischen antiker Philosophie und altchristlicher Theologie. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1: 3–18. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Mutschler, Hans-Dieter. 1990. *Physik, Religion, New Age*. Würzburg: Echter.
- Partridge, Christopher. 2004. *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*. London and New York: T & T Clark International, Continuum, vol. 1.
- Pokorny, Lukas K. 2021. The Theosophical Maitreya: On Benjamin Creme's Millenarianism. In *The Occult Nineteenth Century: Roots, Developments, and Impact on the Modern World*. Edited by Lukas Pokorny und Franz Winter. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 195–220.
- Pokorny, Lukas K. 2024. The Ascended Confucius: Images of the Chinese Master in the Euro-American Esoteric Discourse. *Numen* 71: 29–47. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Pokorny, Lukas K., and Franz Winter. 2023. Euro-American Esoteric Readings of East Asia: Introductory Remarks. *Numen* 71: 1–8. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Saks, Mike. 2002. Professionalization, Regulation and Alternative Medicine. In *Regulating the Health Professions*. Edited by Judith Allsop and Mike Saks. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 148–61.
- Samuel, Geoffrey, and Jay Johnston, eds. 2013. *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*. London: Routledge.
- Santucci, James A. 2006. Bailey, Alice Ann. In *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*. Edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaff. Leiden, Boston: Brill, pp. 158–60.
- Schott, Heinz. 2001. Geschichte der Medizin: 'Lebensgeist'–Alchemist in unserem Bauch. *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 98: 383–85.
- Schott, Heinz. 2017. Alternative or Complementary Medicine: History and Legacy. In *Cancer Genetics and Psychotherapy*. Edited by Parvin Mehdipour. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 935–50.
- Smith, Crosbie. 1998. *The Science of Energy: A Cultural History of Energy Physics in Victorian Britain*. London: Athlone Press.
- Stein, Justin. 2024. Religion, Ki, and Aikido: From Pre-war Japan to the Post-war United States. *Vienna Journal of East Asian Studies* 16: 194–222. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Strube, Julian. 2023. The Emergence of 'Esoteric' as a Comparative Category: Towards a Decentered Historiography. *Implicit Religion* 24: 353–83. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Sutcliffe, Steven J. 2003. *Children of the New Age. A History of Spiritual Practices*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Unschuld, Paul. 2018. *Traditional Chinese medicine: Heritage and Adaptation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Whorton, James C. 2002. *Nature Cures: The History of Alternative Medicine in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wisneski, Leonard A., and Lucy Anderson. 2005. *The Scientific Basis of Integrative Medicine*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.
- Wolf, Bernhard. 2005. Geistiges Heilen als Lebenshilfe zwischen Therapie und Spiritualität. In *Heilung–Energie–Geist. Heilung zwischen Wissenschaft, Religion und Geschäft*. Edited by Werner H. Ritter and Bernhard Wolf. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, pp. 126–51.
- Young, Phil. 2011. *Pranotherapy: The Origins of Polarity Therapy and European Neuromuscular Technique*. London: Masterworks International.
- Zoehrer, Dominic S. 2020. Pranic Healing: A Mesmerist Echo in the New 'Holistic' Age. In *Religion in Austria*. Edited by Hans Gerald Hödl and Lukas Pokorny. Vienna: Praesens, vol. 5, pp. 139–99.
- Zoehrer, Dominic S. 2021. From Fluidum to Prāṇa: Reading Mesmerism through Orientalist Lenses. In *The Occult Nineteenth Century: Roots, Developments, and Impact on the Modern World*. Edited by Lukas Pokorny and Franz Winter. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 85–110.
- Zoehrer, Dominic. 2025a. Between Spirituality and Medicalisation: The Professionalisation of Energy Healing in Austria. *Religion in Austria* 9: 41–97.
- Zoehrer, Dominic. 2025b. Historical Roots of 'Subtle Energies': Occult Physicalism. In *Subtle Energies in Therapy, Spirituality, Arts, and Politics. 1800–Present*. Edited by Julian Strube, Marleen Thaler and Dominic Zoehrer. Brill: Numen Book Series.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.