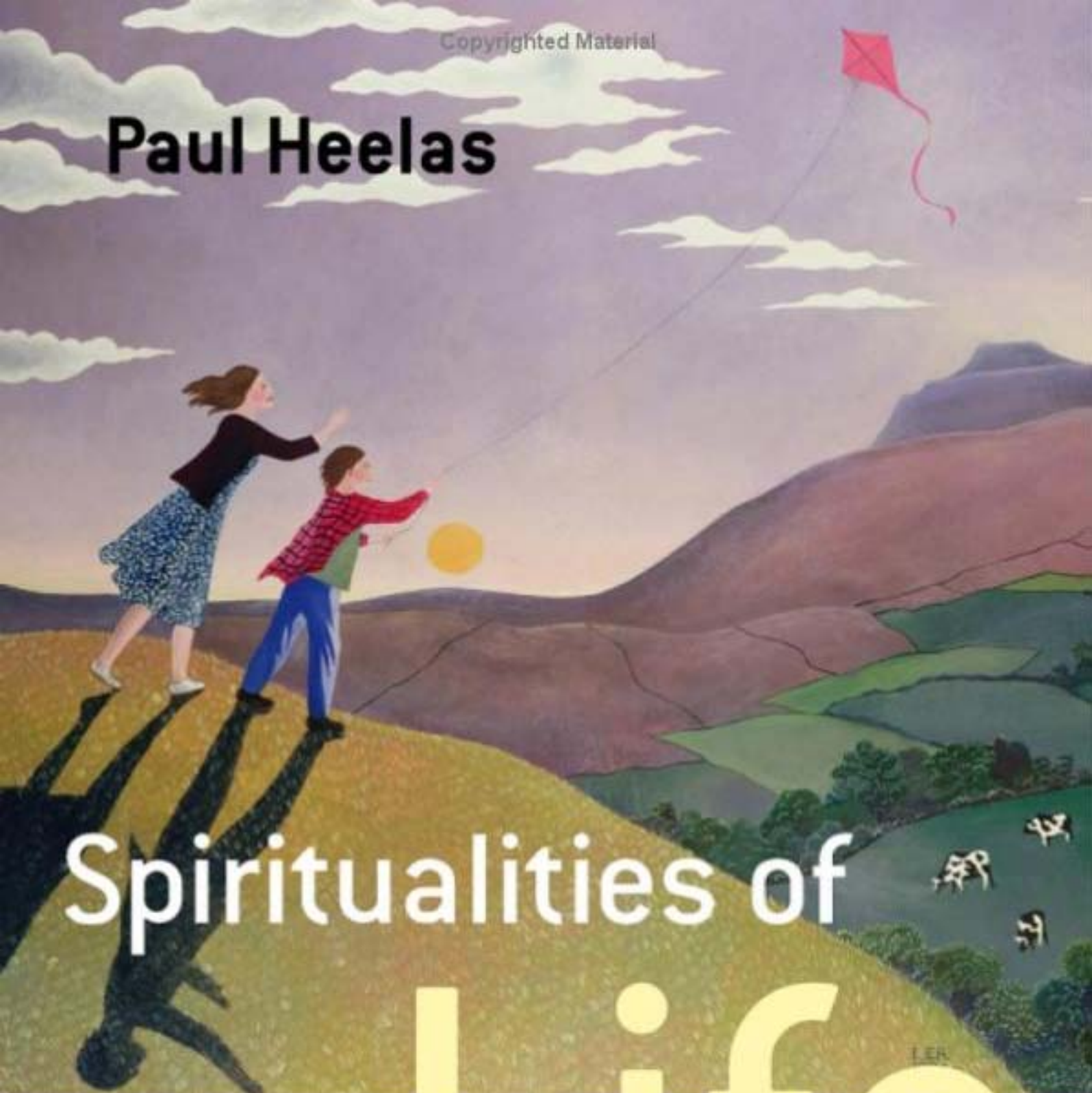


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Paul Heelas

An illustration of a woman and a child flying a kite on a grassy hill. The woman is wearing a black top and a blue patterned skirt, and the child is wearing a red plaid shirt and blue pants. They are both reaching out towards the kite string. The kite is red and is flying high in the sky. The background shows rolling hills in shades of purple, pink, and green, with a yellow sun in the sky. There are some cows grazing in a field in the distance. The overall style is a soft, painterly illustration.

**Spiritualities of
Life**

Romantic Themes and Consumptive Capitalism



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Spiritualities of Life

New Age Romanticism and
Consumptive Capitalism

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Chapter 2

Wellbeing Spirituality Today

The span of transcendence is shrinking. Modern religious themes such as 'self-realization', personal autonomy and self-expression have become dominant. (Thomas Luckmann, 1990, p. 138)

New Age beliefs and attitudes are now so widespread in our society and its culture as to effectively dominate all areas of life. (Colin Campbell, 2004, p. 40)

There is a new market category called wellness lifestyle, and in a whole range of industries, if you are not addressing that category you are going to find it increasingly hard to stay in business', enthuses Kevin Kelly. This broad new category, Mr Kelly goes on, 'consolidates a lot of sub-categories' including spas, traditional medicine and alternative medicine, behavioural therapy, spirituality, fitness, nutrition and beauty. As more customers demand a holistic approach to feeling well, firms that have hitherto specialized in only one or two of these areas are now facing growing market pressure to broaden their business. 'You can no longer satisfy consumers with just fitness, just medical, just spa', says Mr Kelly. (Economist, 6–12 January, 2007, p. 51)

The Wellness Revolution. How to Make a Fortune in the Next Trillion Dollar Industry. (Paul Pilzer, 2003)

Take some time out for yourself and try a taster session or a talk from the Natural Health Care Team in the Chaplaincy Centre, including homeopathy and reflexology. Every day the Sports Centre is hosting taster sessions at lunch time, everything from salsa to yoga. (Lancaster University 'Staff Learning Festival', 10–15 July 2006)

... the number of adherents (if that is not too strong a term for the consumers of cultic religion) will decline. (Bruce, 2002, p. 79; my emphasis)

Since one of the main arguments I am addressing is that the growth of New Age spiritualities of life can be explained away as being largely – if not

entirely – a matter of secularistic consumption of a superficial kind, I now provide a brief survey of some of the evidence for the recent growth of wellbeing spirituality, paying particular attention to some of the more significant sociocultural contexts where growth has occurred and the forms it takes in these contexts. Without going into matters in any depth, salient explanations are introduced when appropriate. (Salient because they are drawn upon later.) What follows thus provides an opportunity for saying something about where, how and why consumer activities *could* be in evidence.

Of particular significance, I chart some of the ways in which inner-life spirituality has permeated a great deal of the culture and its institutions. Generally restricted to counter-culturalists during the sixties, then the ‘cultic milieu’ which developed (including those more seriously involved with seminar spirituality), it now has a home within an albeit variegated cultural milieu. Writing in 1983, Martin Marty notes, ‘religion has unmistakably and increasingly diffused through the culture’ (p. 273). Since then, indeed since earlier, it has been the turn of spirituality to develop into something akin to a ‘sacred canopy’. Certainly, inner-life spirituality has sprung up within influential mainstream domains of the culture, such as the press, perhaps relatively autonomously, perhaps influenced by more specialized holistic activities and publications. It has also entered ‘nooks and crannies’, specific sites like bed and breakfast establishments, Burnley College (Hopi healing in the one of the most deprived towns in Britain), Looking Well (a holistic centre located in a ‘genuine’ working people’s town, High Bentham near where I live), or the Sports Centre of Lancaster University. In many parts of Britain, small villages or their environs are likely to have a practitioner or two. More generally, the expression ‘mind-body-spirit’ has entered the ranks of ‘cultural belief’; so has the term ‘holistic’, now encountered in contexts as diverse as medispas and university mission statements, or for that matter, the *Dawn* newspaper of Pakistan, one headline running, ‘Soomro [the Senate Chairman] for Holistic Approach to Combat Terror’ (3 October, 2006, p. 19); and terms like ‘inner-child’ have become a staple of the middlebrow press and women’s magazines.

In some quarters, it has become customary to discuss the numerical significance of ‘spirituality’ in ways which smack of exaggeration, often with the feel of the indeterminate, and tending to gain their effect by listing relatively *ad hoc* illustrations or by using poorly evidenced generalizations. In *The Making of the New Spirituality. The Eclipse of the Western Religious Tradition* (2003), for instance, James Herrick claims:

For many Westerners, the long-prophesied new spiritual age certainly has arrived. The Revealed Word and its busy, personal God have faded into our collective spiritual memory, and bright new spiritual commitments encourage fresh religious thought. (p. 16)

‘I have been *asserting* that a massive shift in Western religious attitudes has taken place’, continues Herrick, then noting that ‘perhaps some basic evidence of such a change is in order’ (p. 17; my emphasis). Whilst going on to provide a certain amount of useful data, Herrick also makes statements of the kind, ‘The pervasiveness of alternative spiritualities forcefully confronted Americans with revelations that Ronald and Nancy Regan sought advice from an (expensive) astrologer’ (p. 17). The relative paucity of survey data, of information gathered by way of locality research, systematic interviewing and the like means that it is tempting to have recourse to this kind of statement. I shall do my best to avoid it.

What is Growing

With the development of the assumptions, beliefs, values and associated experiences of the autonomous self, especially during and since the sixties, *subjective-life* – so vital an aspect of the self-understanding of the unique autonomous agent – has unquestionably become an ever-increasing focus of attention and concern. (See Patricia Clough’s edited volume, *The Affective Turn*, 2007.) Catering for subjective-life, fuelling the massive subjective turn of modern culture, perhaps in measure constituting elements of subjective-life, *subjective wellbeing culture* has thus entered a range of occupations, from shop floor assistants in major stores to spiritual therapists in hospices.¹ Careers where subjective wellbeing culture, in various forms and in various ways, has become a significant aspect of work, now add up to one of the largest – if not the largest – employment ‘sectors’ of contemporary modernity. And especially during the last decade or so, the development of the culture of subjective wellbeing has increasingly become very much part and parcel of the development of inner-life spirituality.

All cultures are bound up with the (subjective) wellbeing, or not, of their citizens. Subjective wellbeing culture is marked out by the *explicit*, sometimes highly elaborated, attention paid to subjective life. One sees this, for example, in the difference between the car ad that provides the objective facts (fuel consumption, number of cylinders, etc.) and those that declare, ‘Experience’, ‘Experience the Difference’ or ‘The Drive of Your Life’, with only a photograph. Clearly, you might be pleased about the fuel consumption figure. But the fact remains that the life of experience is not explicitly addressed in objective, impersonal promotions of the factual variety.

Those working within subjective wellbeing culture seek to align their provisions and activities with the elementary ‘logic’ of enhancing the quality of subjective-life. Within the constraints of brand identity or style, the fact that the subjective-life of any particular individual is unique means that provisions or activities are personalized or individualized as much as possible (or are left intentionally vague so as to be inclusive whilst being open to personal interpretation). The key is to enable people to *be themselves* (which is

where the unique comes in) *only better* (which is where the enhancement of quality comes in) – a two-fold aim which is frequently advanced by encouraging people to go ‘deeper’ into their experiences of themselves to develop their qualities and circumvent their limitations (and especially for all those who regard life as unfathomable, there is plenty of scope for going deeper). ‘*Feel the difference*’ or “‘*know the difference*’” *for yourself*’ are perhaps the major litmus tests for wellbeing-cum-wellness in subjectivized mode. From child-centred, progressive or ‘independent’ education, to the manager-centredness of ‘soft capitalism’, to patient-centred nursing, to guest-centred spas and hotels, to the more individuated health and fitness clubs, to customer-centred shop floor assistants, to ‘person’-centred call centre operatives, to viewer-centred reality TV shows, to reader-‘engaging’ or ‘life-provoking’ autobiographies and women’s magazines, to advertising, to client-centred therapists, to life-skill coaches – provisions and services offer a wide range of ways of being yourself only better. The child-centred primary school teacher works in the spirit of Rousseau or Froebel to cultivate the particular abilities or ‘gifts’ of individual children and to help particular children to develop their own ‘well-rounded’ personalities; the therapist at the spa endeavours to work with her guest to facilitate the best possible experiences; those producing reality TV shows aim to provide as many opportunities as possible for the individual viewer to learn from the ‘personalities’, both how to avoid ill-being and how to be happy and successful as a person; those working for development agencies increasingly ‘put people first’ – their ‘capacities’, ‘capabilities’, their ‘potential’ (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993).

What has all this got to do with the growth of New Age spiritualities of life? Within the ranks of those supplying the provisions of purchasing culture, any good market researcher will be aware of the numerical significance of the inner-life beliefs of the kind reported by Eileen Barker and others (see below and the Appendix). Market researchers will know that the sales of newspapers like the *Daily Mail* or magazines like *O The Oprah Magazine* benefit from the inclusion of articles catering to the hopes of those with beliefs of a mind-body-spirituality variety; market researchers will know that ‘spiritual’ products sold in health and beauty shops are likely to appeal to those who think that holistic spirituality might well improve their quality of life. And in turn, the widespread presence of spiritually ‘significant’ provisions – not least the many books housed under the ‘self-improvement’, ‘health and fitness’ and, of course, ‘mind-body-spirit’ categories in the wellbeing zones of major bookstores – could sometimes be contributing to the number of people who ‘believe’ in inner-spirituality, perhaps by influencing all those who say they ‘believe in something’ or ‘definitely believe in something’ but who do not know what to call it; who have not wanted to pin it down or take away the mystery by applying an unrealistic ‘label’.

‘Capitalizing’ on widespread ‘beliefs’ in what lies within and what this realm has to offer, many of the provisions and activities of subjective wellbeing culture have introduced holistic, mind-body-spirit themes. Sometimes

these are well developed; sometimes they provide a ‘taste’; sometimes they take the form of allusions to inner-life spirituality and hints of what it promises. Relative to the context of subjective wellbeing culture, inner-life spirituality is thriving. It adds to the ‘better’ or ‘more’ of more secular forms of subjective wellbeing culture by offering additional means to the end of the ‘more’. Working from within the heart of the person, to flow through her or his personal life, it does not distract from the unique – the ‘I am what I am’ anchorage of so much of modern culture – and appeals accordingly.

Whether or not people are taken in by the advertising (etc.) of much of subjective wellbeing culture, what matters is that they have the opportunity to be ‘taken in *to*’ their subjectivities – and this leads some to the ‘real thing’ – activities like reflexology. The heartland of inner-life spirituality, today, is found within the holistic milieu. The milieu takes the form of *holistic activities* – activities which are run by *spiritual practitioners*. Some run small groups; others one-to-one activities. Adept in the arts of practising spiritualities of life of the mind-body-spirit variety, the focus of tai chi groups or one-to-one reiki sessions, for example, is generally orientated towards wellbeing-cum-‘healing’-cum-health; the ‘well-life’.

The assumptions and values of subjective wellbeing culture – the importance of subjective life; the positive, ‘can do’ way it is envisaged; the theme of exercising autonomy to develop, express and celebrate who you really are – are writ large in the holistic milieu. The affinities are close. Accordingly, expectations aroused by subjective wellbeing culture can serve to direct people to the specialized zone of the milieu itself. Here, they can engage in associational, face-to-face activities to go (yet) deeper into what is to be found in other areas of the culture. One reads about yoga and wellbeing (or ‘wellness’) in a popular magazine; one decides to ‘work out’ whilst watching a yoga DVD; one gets interested, buys a book or two and reads about *chakras*, energy flows, *kundalini*, and what yoga has to do with the purpose of life; one gets older and starts thinking about one’s health and what one’s life is all about; one exercises one’s autonomy to find out what works best; one finally settles with a tai chi group; one ‘realizes’ things about oneself that one had not fully appreciated or known about before. Or again: a primary school teacher feels that she should really do something to prepare for the upcoming Ofsted inspection during which ‘spiritual development’ will be assessed; she introduces ‘stilling’ sessions; she experiences the effects for herself and observes the results in the classroom; she decides to join a meditation group.

Many of the practitioners and participants of the holistic milieu work, or have worked, in person-centred, wellbeing professions – nursing, education, counselling, therapy, HRD, and so on. Some become active in the holistic milieu because they have been unable to fulfil their holistic, person-centred, subjective wellbeing concerns within the workplace. Take NHS hospital nurses as an example. On the one hand, governmental policies direct them to respond to the ‘spiritual needs’ of their patients; on the other, they are

terribly busy working to comply with scientific and bureaucratic procedures. A number of nurses who have been interviewed are seriously interested in their own ‘growth’, by working closely with others, and with what holistic spirituality has to offer their patients, but have become so frustrated with the iron cage of the ward, perhaps fed, especially the seemingly ever-increasing number of regulations, procedures and targets, that they have simply left or gone part-time – to liberate themselves by learning to become holistic practitioners in their own right (Heelas, 2006b).

Summarizing the evidence for growth rather more systematically, during the Kendal Project research we erred on the side of caution by working with a strict definition of what counts as belonging to the holistic milieu (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, pp. 36–7). Our paradigmatic criterion of a holistic milieu activity is that it is run by a *spiritual* practitioner. Normally open to the public, activities are held in private. The milieu is comprised of specialized activities. That is to say, rather than taking place within and with reference to more encompassing sociocultural contexts like schools or companies, groups and one-to-one activities are ‘self-contained’. All that is required is available within them. Taking place in a setting like a hired room which is not ‘linked up’ with surrounding (or other) settings, activities are specifically focused on what is taking place as people gather to make progress. Activities provide ‘time-out’. Not taking place within and with reference to broader institutional contexts, institutional issues need not dominate. This characterization certainly serves to distinguish holistic milieu activities from – say – spiritually or holistically informed management training taking place *within* a company, and therefore open to all sorts of company factors (aims, ‘philosophy’, etc.).

Kendal Project research shows that during the autumn of 2001, 95 spiritual practitioners were providing the activities of Kendal and environs. During a typical week, 600 people were participating in 126 separate activities – comprising 1.6 percent of the population of the area. As argued in *The Spiritual Revolution*, there are very good reasons for supposing that Kendal can be taken to be representative of Great Britain as a whole. This means that slightly over 900,000 inhabitants are active on a weekly basis in the holistic milieux of the nation, of whom 146,000 are spiritual practitioners.² At much the same time, Church of England regular Sunday attendance was around 960,000 (Brierley, 2003, p. 8.3); as of 2005, for England, 870,600 (Brierley, 2006, p. 2.3). Thinking of the USA, using different sources of evidence (including recent surveys), our estimate is that between 2.5 and 8 percent of the population are involved in holistic milieu activities provided by spiritual practitioners. And in Britain, together with many other western countries, holistic milieu activities have grown during the last few decades – from being very few and far between in Britain in 1960 or 1970, to the number we find today.

One of the drawbacks of the research carried out during the Kendal Project is that we did not think through the *very* tricky problem of

distinguishing holistic milieu activities from relatively ‘specialized’ activities taking place within the primary schools of Kendal, the local hospital and the like; or, for that matter, Kendalians participating in spiritual reflexology one-to-one sessions whilst on a cruise holiday: ‘specialized’, but with a good chance of the experiences, challenges and opportunities of life aboard entering into the sessions. For complicated reasons, I am now pretty firmly convinced that it not possible to identify a strictly defined holistic milieu of the kind we attempted to operationalize during the Kendal Project. Accordingly, for present purposes I am going to drop the tricky ‘self-contained’ criterion. I shall simply use the term ‘holistic activities’ to refer to mind-body-spiritualities, run by *spiritual, holistic* practitioners, *wherever* they are found.

Mind-body-spirituality wellbeing activities have become relatively widespread in a range of contexts where person-centred subjective wellbeing culture is in demand. These include hotels (of the more luxurious variety), spas (again, of the more upmarket variety), ‘adventurous’, New Age holidays (where the experiential adventures lie within), shops (like the ‘therapy rooms’ of the naturalistic outlet, Org, in Leeds), stores (Boots toyed with it, Harvey Nichols have done it), beauty salons, airports, prisons, (relatively) designated spaces in hospitals, general practices, Healthy Living Centres, meeting places for pensioners, (some) nursing homes, rehabilitation centres (tai chi at the Meadows), training or personal consultancy rooms in companies, lecture rooms in Colleges of Further Education (especially when the topics include beauty treatments, health and fitness), classes within Adult Education facilities, MA/MBA university courses (whether in state or private management or business schools), some restaurants and clubs, health and fitness emporia, the areas around bed and breakfast facilities in remoter reaches of the land, new social movements (in particular environmentalist), primary school quiet rooms, class rooms, assemblies and after-school activities, sporting and recreational activities (meditative forest walking, for example) and the meeting rooms of therapists and counsellors (although my own counsellor is primarily psychological-cum-humanistic, he nevertheless describes himself ‘as God’). Then there are also enclaves within – or associated with – the United Nations (Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong’s ‘The Earth Charter’, with ‘sacred trust’ placed in the ‘interconnected[ness]’ of the ‘environmental, economic, political, social and spiritual challenges facing the world), government quarters, most especially departments of health and education, and to go further afield, INGOs and NGOs.

Before looking more closely at several of these settings, I should emphasize that the term ‘wellbeing’ (or the somewhat more health-focused term ‘wellness’) should not be taken to automatically evoke the ideas of the trivial or the consumeristic. True, the term is used in the sense of ‘feeling good *about* oneself’ – the ‘feelgood’ factor that one should experience after a pampering

session at a spa. However, the term is also used in somewhat different contexts. Amartya Sen, for example, writes:

The functionings relevant for well-being vary from such elementary ones as escaping morbidity and mortality, being adequately nourished, having mobility, etc., to complex ones such as being happy, achieving self-respect, taking part in the life the community, appearing in public without shame . . . The claim is that these functionings make up a person's being, and the evaluation of a person's well-being has to take the form of an assessment of these constituent elements. (1993, pp. 36–7)

As it might be said, much of what used to go under the rubric of welfare now falls under the rubric of wellbeing; or the shift of emphasis from the basics of traditional trade unionism to the subjective wellbeing and personal qualities of soft, 'participatory' capitalism. Much of expressivistic subjective wellbeing culture is humanistic – not just within national and international charities or other organizations, but also within (certain) shops on the high street and (certain) businesses. Although there are basic themes running through subjective wellbeing culture *per se*, the extent to which its products or services are so to speak 'taken in' in an arguably consumeristic manner, or the extent to which products or services have to do with the kind of more 'complex functionings' which Sen writes about, depends on context.

Google Data

For obvious reasons, this kind of data provides only a rough guide. Nevertheless, a simple search using Google serves to indicate the *relative* popularity of ways in which spirituality has come to be considered. At the end of January 2006, a straightforward search for 'spirituality and . . .' on Google.com resulted in the following figures: spirituality and health, 20,400,000; spirituality and business, 16,100,000 (with Peter Senge heading the list); spirituality and education, 14,800,000, spirituality and enlightenment, 2,200,000. A search at the end of January 2007, now using Google.co.uk, provides the same sequencing: health, 1,270,000; business, 1,200,000; education, 918,000 and enlightenment, 132,000. With this pulse of public, quasi-academic and academic interest in mind, I adopt the same sequence.³

Health

By 2001, almost half the general practices of England were providing access to CAM activities – those complementary and alternative forms of medicine which take a 'mind-body' form (approximately two thirds) together with those of a 'mind-body-*spirituality*' nature.⁴ Almost one third of the

CAM activities were provided in-house by doctors themselves or their staff (Dobson, 2003). Much the same picture is found in the USA, one indicator being that 75 out of 125 medical schools, including Harvard, offer courses on CAM, including prescribing courses of action (Wetzel et al., 1998; and see Baer, 2004). Given that around a third of CAM activities incorporate a spiritual dimension, generally of an inner-life variety, it is apparent that the inner-life is by no means viewed unfavourably by considerable numbers of the medical establishment.

Within the sphere of public services, specifically the UK's National Health Service, government charters and plans state that nurses must attend to 'the spiritual needs' of their patients. Reflecting their own experiences-cum-beliefs, it is perfectly apparent that hospital nurses are increasingly exercised by the values and experiences of holistic, mind-body-spirit spirituality, their growing interest owing a fair amount to what patients are looking for in terms of their prior values, beliefs or expectations. Turning to hospices, cancer care centres (normally charities) and similar organizations, holistic spirituality is considerably more in evidence – almost certainly to the extent of having eclipsed Christianity. Cancer Care-Kendal, for example, provides an 'extensive range of complementary therapies', including those with a spiritual dimension; the Penny Brohn Cancer Care Centre (formerly the Bristol Cancer Help Centre) offers 'a unique range of physical, emotional and spiritual support', facilitating 'inner strengths and resources'. (See also Hedges and Beckford, 2000; Partridge, 2005, pp. 4–41; Heelas, 2006b.)

As for CAM itself, a considerable amount of research attests to its popularity. To mention several indicative findings, Toby Murcott (2005) reports that 'Half the population of the UK has visited an alternative practitioner' (p. 36), many of whom will be working with spirituality. And during 2007 it was widely reported that Britons spent £1.6 billion annually on CAM. As long ago as the mid-1990s, the New Age and kindred therapeutic practices of the USA – which will certainly have included a considerable amount that has come to be known as CAM – were generating around \$14 billion a year from personal spending (Ferguson and Lee, 1996); and arrestingly, Raymond Tallis (2004) reports research which shows that 'By 1996, expenditure [on 'alternative therapies'] in the USA...exceeded the total amount out-of-pocket in the entire mainstream medical system' (p. 127).

Returning briefly to the UK, under the title 'Booming Subjects', *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* (19 January 2007, p. 19) places 'complementary medicine' first, undergraduate applications having increased by 36.5 per cent between the years 2005 and 2006; and, it can be added, rose by 31 per cent during the 2006–7 admission process (Paton, 2007).

'Nothing really matters except health', says Danish supermodel Helena Christensen. Surely a widely held evaluation, and one which helps explain the conjunction of spirituality with the wellbeing of health – one which directs us to the realm of health and fitness clubs, spas and the like.

Leo Hickman (2006) states that ‘On January 1, 2005, there were 7,036,118 members of 5,486 public and private health and fitness clubs in the UK – 11.8 per cent of the population’ (p. 5). Tom Dart and Jonathan Keane (2002) provide more information: ‘Between 1994 and 1999 the value of the UK fitness market grew by 81 per cent’, also noting that ‘14 per cent of the [American] population belongs to a health club’ (p. 31). And Matthew Goodman (2006) notes that the health and beauty-spa market of Britain is valued at £1.5 billion. Every health and fitness club (or leisure centre) which I have visited to collect brochures (and this is now a significant number) provides holistic activities; interviews and other sources of information indicate that these are normally run by spiritual practitioners. These are the new cathedrals of so many of our towns and cities – externally bare, bland and monumental shells housing the life of health and fitness.

Remaining with the theme of capitalist services in the mode of relaxation, pleasure or rejuvenation (capitalist in that they almost always aim to make a good profit), the International Spa Association’s (ISPA) definition of a spa transforms the Latin *salus per aquam* (‘health from water’) to an ‘entity devoted to enhancing overall wellbeing through professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit’. The Association reports that in 2001, 156 million spa visits were made in the USA, with \$11 billion in revenue (up from \$6 billion in 1999). Certainly, the more up-market (and utterly luxurious) spas of the USA, Britain, Bali or that world capital, Bangkok, and – indeed – those located all over the globe in uplifting places, have drawn on their market research (which presumably shows the popularity of the spiritual dimension of the life of wellbeing for the people they aim to attract) to invest considerable sums in catering for the spiritual expectations of their target clientele.⁵

Mainstream Business

In Madeleine Bunting’s (2004a) estimation, ‘what the “super-performance” companies require from employees involves a process of transformation of potential, of self-discovery and self-realization and transcendence of limitations, which springs directly from the New Age spirituality of the sixties’ (p. 115). Within the context of what has come to be known as soft capitalism (Thrift, 2005), talk is of ‘bringing life back to work’, ‘people come first’, ‘the learning organization’, ‘personal growth through work’ – and, of course, ‘unlocking human potential’. The state of being of employees is taken to be critical. The emphasis lies with work ‘from the inside out’. So if called for, inner-life spirituality is quite naturally at home.

As indicated by the Google measuring rod, holistic spirituality has established a relatively significant presence within the heartlands of ‘big business’ capitalism: corporate cultures, trainings, weekend courses, talks, seminars and so on. Clearly, the Google figure for ‘spiritual and business’ will include

businesses of an ‘alternative’ bent. However, the Google figure for ‘spirituality and alternative business’ is 1,970,000 – a relatively small percentage of the 16,100,000 items under ‘spirituality and business’. Equally clearly, the Google figure for ‘spiritual and business’ will include Christian spirituality. However, my 2006 Google.com search provided a figure of 13,500,000 for ‘New Age spirituality and business’ (in effect ‘out of’ the 16,100,000 number) – compared with a figure of 1,700,000 for ‘Evangelical Christianity, spirituality and business’.⁶

Moving to more solid ground, Douglas Hicks (2003) summarizes his study of USA companies by noting:

One of the most significant and complicated developments in American religion that contributes to interest in spirituality at work and elsewhere is the rise of New Age traditions. Indeed, along with a new public Christian evangelicalism, New Age language *fundamentally shapes* discussions of contemporary workplace spirituality. (p. 31; my emphasis)

Significantly, Hicks also notes that ‘the aging of the boomer-dominated workforce has been a prime factor of the rise of spirituality in the office’ (p. 28) – significantly because many of these boomers, who have obtained positions of influence (especially in HRD, etc.), will previously have had contact with the spiritualities of the 1960s whilst they were at college. These are the people, one can surmise, who are likely to have faith in what lies within; the contribution it can make to the workplace. These are the people who organize or participate in the training, courses and seminars – the events which aim to release and optimize the resources of the inner-life; the spiritual ‘energy’, ‘wisdom’ and ‘creativity’ (‘spark’ or ‘flair’). These are the people who read, and contribute to, the journals which have flourished, largely during and since the 1980s. These are the people who buy works by Peter Senge (for example *The Fifth Discipline*, 1999): minimally quasi-spiritual in approach, a person who has become increasingly spiritually orientated over the years, who refers to ‘the spiritual revolution’, and who is of *very* considerable influence as an advocate of the self-development focused ‘learning organization’.

Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton’s *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* (1999) provides more evidence. Although the surveys and interviews of their project can hardly be said to address corporate America as a whole (a huge task!), this pioneering study is reasonably representative. Finding that the ‘first choice of everyone we interviewed regarding what gave them meaning and purpose in their job was “the ability to realize my full potential as a person”’ (p. 36), it comes as no surprise to read that ‘Roughly 60 per cent, of the majority of those to whom Mitroff talked, had a positive view of spirituality and a negative view of religion’ (p. 39). ‘For these people’, we also read, ‘it is taken for granted as a fact that everyone is a spiritual being and that spirituality is an integral part of humankind’s basic makeup’ (p. 41) – with ‘integration’ and cooperation being highly valued.

Briefly mentioning spiritual activities (management training, etc.), the popular demand indicated by Google, together with the amount of material which has been written about spirituality and business (publications which have taken off since the earlier 1980s), suggests that many are interested in implementing what they have read about (perhaps by looking at the wealth of material in Robert Giacalone and Carol Jurkiewicz's edited volume, *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*, 2004). Comparing the situation with the 1980s and earlier (which I endeavoured to chart in *The New Age Movement*, 1996), it is perfectly clear that there is *much* more activity taking place today – one source of information being all those journals which have sprung up catering for interest in what workplace spirituality can offer; in its effective implementation.⁷

Mainstream Education

I might have missed something, but it very much looks as though systematic investigations, whether by way of locality study or by way of survey, have yet to be carried out. A big job, which would require looking at syllabuses, teaching content and practice, assemblies, after-school activities, activities on university campuses, departments in universities (including management and health), colleges (including beauty and health departments), adult education, and so on.

All the schools of England and Wales are legally required to attend to the spiritual development of their pupils. David Bell, until recently the Chief Inspector of Schools of England and Wales, sets the tone when he says (it will be recalled) that 'spirituality has come into its own as encapsulating those very qualities that *make* us human' (my emphasis). More formally, to cite in full the definition of spirituality used by Ofsted (1994), the non-ministerial government department responsible for inspecting the standards of schools and teachers in England,

Spiritual *development* relates to that aspect of *inner life* through which pupils acquire insights into their personal experience which are of enduring worth. It is characterized by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, *valuing a non-material dimension to life* and intimations of an enduring reality. (p. 86; my emphases)

It is then explicitly stated that "“spiritual” is not synonymous with religious’ (p. 86). Going a little more comprehensively into the matter of the nature of the ‘spiritual’, probably the most useful document is Ofsted’s ‘Promotion and Evaluating Pupils’ Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development’ (2004). A web-based publication, it includes most of the relevant points. To pull some of them out, we read of the acquisition of ‘personal beliefs and values’ (pp. 10–11); ‘the spiritual quest’ (p. 11); ‘the belief that one’s inner

resources provide the ability to rise above everyday experiences' (p. 12); 'the essence of being human, involving the ability to surpass the boundaries of the physical and material' (p. 13); 'a propensity to foster human attributes such as love, faithfulness and goodness, that cannot be classed as physical' (p. 13); 'the inner world of creativity and imagination' (p. 13); 'the quest for meaning *in* life (p. 13; my emphasis); 'the sense of identity and self-worth which enables us to value others' (p. 13); 'the human spirit' (p. 14); 'their *own* spirituality' (p. 14; my emphasis); 'a pupil's "spirit"' (p. 12); and of 'encouraging pupils to explore and develop what animates themselves and others' (p. 18). Vitalism alive and well today.

Although there are also more theistically orientated passages (partly so as not to leave anyone out), it is clear that the extracts I have provided associate spirituality with humanistic-cum-expressivistic values, and more than hint that many will find that the 'inner world' *is* important. Taking their cue from governmental documentation, it is certainly the case that numbers of teachers encourage inner-life spirituality. After all, schools are inspected, the Chief Inspector of Schools having the general duty of keeping the Secretary of State informed about spiritual – moral, social and cultural – matters. The emphasis is on spiritual *development*, frequently taking place within child- or student-centred contexts where holistic themes are in evidence, where a fair number of teachers are 'believers' (maybe holistic participants, even practitioners), with faith in 'spirituality' as a way of being inclusivistic enough to handle monocultural and multicultural issues; teachers who welcome relief from the routine focus on exam results. With these and other factors encouraging 'spiritual development' in addition to 'merely' teaching *about* spirituality, it is not surprising that inner-life, *experiential* activities are becoming more popular within the mainstream educational system.⁸ Although I do not yet have systematic evidence, research to date in an area around Lancaster ranging from Blackpool in the southwest to Settle to the northeast suggests that many primary schools now provide yoga or tai chi for their pupils (and parents); some have special areas where pupils can go for creative, calming and holistic therapies. Certainly, local schools around where I live in the Yorkshire Dales (perhaps an unlikely setting in that many pupils come from traditional, Methodist farming families), including Ingleton Middle School and the Church of England Primary School which I serve as a member of the Board of Governors, are active.

Provisions

In 1998, Daniel Mears and Christopher Ellison (2000) carried out an innovative study. With a 60 per cent response rate to their telephone survey of Texas residents, they found that 22 per cent of respondents answered in the affirmative to the question, 'In the past year, have you purchased, read or listened to any "New Age" materials (books, magazines, audio or

videotapes)?' (p. 297). What is especially important to note is that New Age themes are in evidence: 66 per cent of the 22 per cent of purchasers believe that 'spiritual truth comes from within', for instance (p. 300). The 'consumption', as Mears and Ellison designate it, of 'New Age materials' is predominantly by 'New Agers' (p. 300).

A great deal of hard evidence, collected by publishers and publishing agencies, supports the contention that the most noticeable area of growth of New Age provisions along the high street has taken place within bookshops (or shops which have a book section). Volumes addressing inner-life spirituality are becoming ever more numerous, one major chain in Britain (which must remain anonymous) selling something in the order of four times more mind-body-spirituality publications than those devoted to traditional theistic world religions. And in newsagents, magazines and newspapers contain increasing amounts of material on mind-body-spirituality. More systematically, unpublished research by Andrea Cheshire (2001), then of Lancaster University, shows that in January 2001, 56 of the 187 high-street shops of Kendal were selling New Age products – products which signalled, encouraged or aimed to facilitate holistic spirituality. Replicating the research in April 2003, Cheshire found that the proportion of these shops had risen from 30 to 45 per cent, with a number being serviced by companies specializing in New Age provisions. It is true that 'new spiritual outlets', as I call those 'alternative' shops specializing in New Age provisions, have not grown as fast as one might expect – but this is surely due to their being rendered relatively redundant by the 'mainstreaming' of such provisions within more conventional outlets.⁹

The Unbelievable

Probably the most arresting evidence concerning the popularity of New Age spiritualities of life is provided by the numerical significance of relevant 'beliefs'.¹⁰ The findings from a number of countries are indeed rather unbelievable.

The RAMP (Religious and Moral Pluralism) survey of the late 1990s was carried out in 11 European countries. Of particular significance for present purposes, religious 'beliefs' were probed by adding an option to the kind of list which has long been in use. In answer to the question 'Which of these statements comes nearest to your own?' respondents were provided with the opportunity to select 'I believe that God is something within each person, rather than something out there'. Drawing on a range of sources, including Eileen Barker (2004 'Summary of Research Results', www.regard.ac.uk), respondents from the 11 countries provided the following responses:

Portugal (979 respondents)	39.1 %
Great Britain (1,423 respondents)	37.2 %

Sweden (1,007 respondents)	36 %
Italy (2,149 respondents)	35.9 %
Denmark (597 respondents)	35.2 %
Belgium (1,659 respondents)	30.8 %
Finland (758 respondents)	28.9 %
Netherlands (1,002 respondents)	26.4 %
Norway (480 respondents)	25 %
Hungary (979 respondents)	24.6 %
Poland (1,133 respondents)	18.4 %
Total	29 %

It is also noteworthy that in 6 of the 11 countries, percentages for the ‘God within’ are higher than percentages for the ‘personal god’:

Sweden	personal God = 18 %	God within = 36 %	difference = 18 %
Denmark	personal God = 20.1 %	God within = 35.2 %	difference = 15.1 %
Great Britain	personal God = 23.4 %	God within = 37.2 %	difference = 13.8 %
Portugal	personal God = 25.9 %	God within = 39.1 %	difference = 13.2 %
Belgium	personal God = 21.5 %	God within = 30.8 %	difference = 9.3 %
Netherlands	personal God = 23.4 %	God within = 26.4 %	difference = 3 %

Using ‘I believe in a God with whom I can have a personal relationship’ as a *rough* guide to belief in the theistic God of Christianity (and other traditions), and using ‘God within’ as a *rough* guide for inner-spirituality, the data *could* be taken as signifying a spiritual revolution of belief.

In the USA, Wade Clark Roof (1999b) draws attention to the fact that ‘The Barna Research Group estimates that one out of five Americans, or 20 per cent, are what it calls “New Age Practitioners”’ (p. 136). The importance of inner-life spirituality is also indicated by George Gallup and Timothy Jones’s (2000) finding that ‘almost a third of our survey defined spirituality with no reference to . . . a higher authority’, a typical response being that spirituality is ‘the essence of my personal being’ (p. 49).

Although longitudinal comparison is somewhat tricky – not least because survey questions have tended to change over the years – it is safe to say that there has been a considerable increase in the number of people in Europe, and almost certainly the USA and elsewhere (including Australia and Japan), who have ‘turned within’ for belief. It is not an exaggeration to say that the inhabitants of a number of European countries are living through the most radical period of spiritual-religious change of belief since Christianity took

root in their lands.¹¹ Without denying for one moment that there are problems with this kind of data, including the near-certainty that God within ‘beliefs’ does not always mean that respondents explicitly refer to inner-life *spirituality*, the findings can hardly be ignored. (For further discussion, see Heelas, 2007a, 2008a; Heelas and Houtman, 2008; Palmisano, forthcoming.) They must indicate something – almost certainly a *great deal*. And the fact that a broadly similar picture emerges from other surveys gives us some confidence that the findings are reasonably reliable (see the Appendix).

The numerical importance of inner-life beliefs among the general population of Britain and elsewhere is considerable. Obviously, though, buying a mind-body-spirit volume, let alone reading a mind-body-spirit article in a magazine or newspaper, could indicate interest or amusement rather than belief. Neither does participating in mind-body-spirituality activities within a relatively secular spa necessarily involve belief. Far from it. With only around half of the participants of the holistic milieu of Kendal according spiritual significance to their activities, the figure is likely to be less within spas. Nor, for that matter, need belief be involved when primary school teachers are leading ‘centring’ activities – neither for the teachers themselves nor for their students. Nevertheless, publishers and spa owners, for example, would not be interested in the holistic, spirit-body-mind dynamic if their market research had not led them to the conclusion that there was a market to be catered for; a ‘cultural platform’ to capitalize upon. Equally, businesses would not spend considerable sums on cultivating inner-life spirituality among employees unless employers had a good idea that it would be adopted (and prove effective).

The number and range of provisions and activities found in cultural-cum-institutional settings would not have proliferated as they have unless there was a receptive sector of the population; unless they were in tune with the beliefs, expectations, values or interests of a significant number of people. The 37 per cent of the British who apparently see God as ‘inside each person’ serves as a basis for provisions and activities to cater for, for spirituality to flow into new settings. And given the pretty solid evidence from a reasonable amount of research showing that inner-spirituality is associated with expressivistic values, higher levels of educational attainment and the person-centred professions (see chapter 5), there is little doubt that teachers, nurses, HRD personnel and the like are most likely to be ‘believers’, maybe contributing to growth in their sectors of expertise accordingly.

Concluding Thoughts

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned the fact that slightly over 900,000 inhabitants of Great Britain are active on a weekly basis in the holistic milieu of the nation. Numbers of participants swell if one includes those who experience their activities as spiritual even though their practitioners do

not. Given the ‘God within’ percentage, and the likelihood that this is higher among those attracted by (say) more secular (body-mind) holistic forms of CAM, the number of participants of this kind could be considerable. Furthermore, there are those who ‘participate’ alone: yoga at home; life-meditation whilst walking; etc. Mike Savage et al.’s (1992) analysis of British Market Research Bureau data suggests that this number could be relatively significant for those health, education and welfare professionals who practise yoga (p. 108). As for beliefs, much hangs on whether one includes those humanistic expressivists who ‘believe’ in their ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ self; those who do not use the language of spirituality but who ‘believe’ in an inner, authentic self which somehow lies beyond society and culture. On the one hand, the idea of this true self most certainly smacks of the metaphysical (Shils, 1981, pp. 10–11; Tipton, 1982; Heelas, 2000, pp. 244–48). It is an interior self which has a great deal in common with the ‘spiritual self’. One might say it is spiritual in all but name – Gilbert Ryle’s (1963) ‘ghost in the machine’ comes to mind. On the other hand, though, the language of spirituality is not used; and perhaps other than serving as an inner source of wisdom, the authentic self of the mode of expressive humanism under consideration is relatively secular. The (healing, etc.) powers of the sacred are not in evidence. At the same time, however, the mode of selfhood under consideration is only *relatively* secular: various aspects of inner-life spirituality, such as the theme of holistic integration, could well be in evidence – ‘psychological’ integration of a ‘magical’ kind which scientific psychologists would dismiss. In short, there is a spectrum between the spiritual self and the relatively secular, numerical significance varying in accord with where a line is drawn; and it has to be said that it is exceedingly doubtful that a useful line can be drawn between, say, the functionally (and to an extent metaphysically) similar ideas of ‘unlocking human potential’ and ‘expressing one’s spirituality’. (See also chapter 8.)

Drawing his discussion of religion and ‘alternative’ spirituality in Britain to a close, Bruce (1996) writes that ‘in so far as we can measure *any* aspect of religious interest, belief or action and can compare 1995 with 1895, the only description for the change between the two points is “decline”’ (p. 273). Whatever the very considerable virtues of Bruce’s data survey in connection with the decline of traditional, theistic religion, in so far as ‘alternative’ spiritualities are concerned the evidence which has been presented shows that Bruce’s assessment can be reversed – to run, ‘the only description for... change... is “growth”’. ‘New Age beliefs and attitudes’ might not have become important enough to ‘effectively dominate all areas of life’, as Campbell would have it (to think of the quotation at the beginning of this chapter). But the flow through society and culture, as well as whatever ‘independent “invention”’ which has taken place, is of an arresting order. Even Gleneagles, that bastion of baronial establishmentarianism, has ‘gone with the flow’ – ‘The Spa’, ‘recognized as the best hotel spa in Scotland following the Annual Conde Nast Reader Traveller Awards 2006’, ‘offers

beauty care and therapeutic treatments for ladies and gentlemen, including the innovative ESPA holistic programmes in life enhancement and unique organic healing and therapeutic Ytsara treatments'. (ESPA treatments are as much for the 'inner self' as anything else.)

Spiritual revolutions – defined as beliefs and/or activities of an inner-life spirituality nature becoming more numerous than the beliefs and/or activities of life-as religion and the spiritualities of transcendent theism – have taken place, or might *very* well be underway, in a variety of contexts: book store chains, associational activities (the fortunes of the holistic milieu compared with the fortunes of the congregational domain), educational practices, mainstream health provision, mainstream business activities, personal beliefs, for example. But are these revolutions – or revolutions in the making – significantly 'spiritual'?

Growth: which means that more people have the opportunity to engage in 'spiritual' consumption than, say, in 1970. The pleasurable titillation of the spiritual massage; the healthy hedonism provided by the holistic spa; the glow that comes from believing that one is a spiritual being; the enchantment stimulated by the 'moving' spiritual autobiography; the purchased freedom provided by the spiritual adventure story; the pride felt in connection with the status display of the 'Tibetan' Buddha in the hall (that 'symbol of restrained good taste', as Mick Brown (1998) puts it). Or is this entirely fair, at least as an overall portrayal? Could it be the case, for example, that even the most 'trivial' of New Age provisions or services *can* serve to lead people away from whatever consumeristic processes are in evidence to 'deeper' things – *beyond* the orbit of 'merely' gratifying the individual? Then what about nurses and primary school teachers? Is it a matter of somehow dividing up the provisions and activities of New Age spiritualities of life into consumer and non-consumer dominated categories?

It is likely that a considerable number of those purchasing commodities are already of a spiritual disposition. Mears and Ellison's finding – that the 'consumption' of New Age materials is predominantly by New Agers – provides support. So does the consideration that those who purchase commodities are primarily middle class, expressivistic, and more likely to belong to the 'God within' camp than the 37 per cent for Britain as a whole; and are also more likely to see 'God' as a spirit or life-force than the typical person (the national average being 14 per cent – see the Appendix). Perhaps 'believers' are less likely to be consuming New Age commodities than non-believers. Perhaps they are more likely to be finding *spiritual significance* in what they buy, over-and-above secular self-satisfaction.

It can be argued that inner-life beliefs are sustained, perhaps developed, perhaps solidified, perhaps enriched by mind-body-spirituality provisions, let alone holistic activities. It can be argued that inner-life beliefs would not be so popular without the provisions (and holistic activities) – provisions (including magazine articles about celebrities and spirituality) playing an important role in acclimatizing, perhaps interesting, younger people, for

example. It can be argued that provisions (and activities) would not be so popular without the beliefs, the popularity of provisions owing a great deal to the ways in which they resonate with beliefs, associated expectations, 'demand'. It could also be argued that *feedback* is taking place, commodities contributing to belief, belief encouraging appropriate purchases. But none of these possibilities are especially significant if the presence of spirituality really only means the presence of consumption.

Finally, although I have not gone into it in detail in this chapter, governmental agencies in the UK (most noticeably in the form of Ofsted and the NHS), and no doubt governmental agencies elsewhere, have had a role in encouraging some of the growth areas. This is taken up later.