



A regular bulletin highlighting the energy of goodwill in world affairs

### The Spiritual Side of Austerity

*The best joy emanates from austerity. Agni Yoga series*

*Economic austerity may be a "blessing in disguise". If we consider the path of the self-chosen renunciation of material wealth for spiritual purposes, there may be important lessons that will help humanity avoid the extremes of luxury and poverty which currently afflict the world.*

History shows that austere times can have the capacity to transform people and nations. For example Sparta, the city-state of ancient Greece, became famous for the military prowess of its citizens through their austere way of life. From this city's name, the word "spartan" evolved and is still used today to connote frugality and self-denial. Ironically, it is modern day Greece that is experiencing some of the most severe economic difficulties and being subjected to "austerity packages", but so too are many other debt-ridden countries.

As this economic stringency is bringing hardship to so many, austerity is probably a word that few would see in a positive light, associating it mainly with economic gloom, the loss of an accustomed standard of living, and all without any compensating goal in sight. But there is another kind of austerity that, willingly implemented, is of invaluable assistance in the pursuit of a spiritual goal. Of course, this is of little consolation to those who are currently deprived of a decent livelihood, but the important difference is that spiritual austerity is implemented out of free choice – it is not, in this latter instance, an unwelcome imposition. This is not to advocate the way of the ascetic or raja yoga practitioner for all those suffering from the current world economic crisis, but it is interesting to reflect on the practice of austerity in spirituality to see if there may be at least some compensating spiritual reward for those affected.

"Practising austerity" is called "Tapasya" in Sanskrit and through it the yogi works to free his mind from worldly desires, clearing a space within where the age-long accumulation of forces that hold him enthralled to the physical world are "burned off", allowing the consciousness to rise unimpeded towards an envisioned spiritual goal. Tapasya literally means to burn or heat up, to

become as a spiritual affirmation states "a point of sacrificial fire focused within the fiery will of God". While the path of the yogi may be too extreme for most people, a certain control or restraint of the material senses and appetites is essential in providing the inner space needed to explore one's true identity. Spiritual retreats are becoming ever more popular forms of developing Tapasya, often involving silence and fasting as part of their regime. Practising austerity involves a conscious choice to withstand some deprivation without complaint, attachment or aversion. The state of mind when deciding to undertake this observance is paramount.

While the so-called Western world is entering a period of austerity, financially at least, in truth many nations, particularly developing and low income nations, have been living in far worse conditions of poverty and deprivation for years. The realisation must finally dawn that financial instability and economic "boom and bust" will always feature in the world as long as nations advocate a "greed based" economic structure over one of beneficent organisation for the good of the whole. Some economists thought that "boom and bust" had been eradicated from modern day economics, however this polarity reflects the dualism of humanity's collective psychological condition and like all other pairs of opposites cannot be escaped until the spiritual path that lies between them is trodden.

Until this path of spiritual austerity is consciously embraced and joyfully trodden, the pairs of opposites will continue to hand out their harsh but fair lessons. For social change and ultimately evolution, occurs through calamities and crises if not through conscious choice. So better to learn the lessons of duality and choose the middle way sooner rather than later, and then, when consciously chosen, joy can accompany the action of release from the burden of material

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Editor:

*Dominic Dibble*

[www.worldgoodwill.org](http://www.worldgoodwill.org)

things. The current austerity measures therefore have some positive potential to reduce excessive consumerism and lead people to think more creatively about the future. There are many examples of people and groups who are leading the way in this area. The *Voluntary Simplicity Movement* founded by Duane Elgin for example calls humanity to stop living on auto-pilot and deliberately make life-changing choices. This entails releasing ourselves from the non-essential activities that permeate modern life so that it becomes possible to live in accordance with our most important goals and values. The priorities of our consumer and work-oriented culture often run counter to that which enriches and inspires us. "Simplifiers" lives, they say, are often enhanced by choices to reduce consumption, and turning to activities which have a positive effect on relationships, family life, service and the environment.

It is not too idealistic to say that many people today are deeply concerned about the welfare of others across the globe in a way which has never occurred before. To meet the demands which this newly evolving recognition of living in "one world" entails it is essential that spiritual values and qualities such as fairness, compassion, and brotherhood are no longer just abstractions but become woven into the fabric of everyday life. The inner and the outer, the subjective and objective worlds need to be linked together to form a whole – human relationships, economic, social and ecological systems – so that all that manifests in the outer world of daily living is directed consciously from a subjective appreciation

## Freedom and Self-Determination

*While the force of circumstance, both individual and global, can sometimes seem to severely constrain our ability to determine our own fate, the inner freedom to choose our response to circumstance can lead to a recognition of the part which every individual plays in the evolution of human consciousness, and the responsibility to use this in service to the whole.*

Throughout the world over the past year, the cry for freedom has been sounded by one society after another, brought to the barricades demanding their right to self-determination. And the world has celebrated their courage. Over the same time period the world has witnessed natural catastrophes – "acts of God" of a seemingly unparalleled level and frequency. Earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, droughts, and tornadoes have ravaged populations in many parts of the world. War, too, has intervened in countless lives, leaving us to ponder, how free are we really? When confronted with the power of nature and the insecurity of a world that still resorts too often to armed conflict, how much self-determination do we really have? As much as science has developed techniques for holding the forces of nature at bay, it still is no match when the full power of nature is unleashed. And as dedicated as global organisations such as the UN and the many non-governmental organisations are to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, violence still disrupts the lives of people in many parts of the world.

What we do have, however, is the power to choose how we respond. Two very wise individuals have left us with guidance on this. One is the psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, whose experience of human suffering – his own and the suffering he witnessed in those who were imprisoned with him

of wholeness, of the oneness of the human spirit and of sharing in One Life.

From this it is possible to understand that benevolence and spiritual austerity are one and the same. For the wealthier people of the world, those who possess education, vocations and skills, benevolent actions are becoming increasingly common, as witnessed in the many acts of magnanimous giving and service, and which sow the seeds for a more disciplined, selfless and fulfilling way of life to emerge. For some of these donors and philanthropists, such giving may involve no personal sacrifice and is perhaps just a percentage of income not really affecting the quality of living. Nevertheless, the current trend shows that many givers are becoming personally involved in the distribution of their money or skills and discovering the first flickers of fiery joy that characterises the path of true austerity.

As this attitude intensifies into a life governed by the energy of goodwill and compassion, suffering in terms of personal loss and denial automatically falls away to be replaced by a positive engagement with the world and identification with the soul of all. The goal to be attained outweighs all else, and a refining and simplifying of the personal life in order to live for the good of others and all that lives upon the planet characterises the consciousness. The consciousness of such a person of goodwill is then steadily transformed in the fire of Tapasya for he has set foot upon the path, even if unwittingly, of the true yogi.

in the death camps of World War II – led him to conclude that no one and no circumstance can take away from a human being what Frankl called "the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances". He learned that, while we cannot always control the forces and energies directed upon us, we can control our reaction to them. "Between stimulus and response there is a space", he said. "In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

In that space the soul can make its intention known. Alice Bailey suggests that there are essentially three groups of people: Those who are unconsciously gaining experience, but are at the same time so engrossed with the processes of the results of experiencing, that they remain unaware of the deeper objectives; those who are dimly awakening to the fact that adaptation to the ways of living to which they are subjected, and from which there seems no escape, means for them the learning of some lesson; and those who are awakened to the purpose of experience, and who are consequently bringing to every event an intelligent power to extract from the happenings to which they are subjected some gain to the life of the soul. They have learned to regard the environment in which they find themselves as the place of purification and the field of their planned service.

The creative nature of that space between stimulus and response defines humanity's present test, a test of increasing exactitude as new and potent spiritual energies make impact on human consciousness, generating widespread anxiety and depression among some, and an as yet undefined yet hopeful sense of future possibilities in others. While the outcome of these inpouring energies is still unknown, it is the individual who determines how he will respond, and here the creative power of goodwill comes into play.

Not only does the individual determine how he responds to circumstance, he also determines the content of his consciousness. Cardinal John Henry Newman, a wise thinker who knew firsthand the convulsive psychological upheaval generated by a change of belief, correctly identified the nexus between responsibility and freedom in the uses to which we put our minds. As he put it, "We can believe what we choose. We are answerable for what we choose to believe."

It is common for an individual to think "I know my own mind" while remaining unaware of how much of the content of his mind is formed by longstanding personal beliefs and assumptions, often unquestioned, as well as by the impact of external thoughts, opinions, rumors, claims, hearsay, and half-truths coming from his exposure to the human conversation, which is now global thanks to the media. The fact that the authenticity and accuracy of this global conversation varies widely depending on the sources used goes unrecognised by many, particularly when the content of public opinion resonates with one's established beliefs and assumptions. Nonetheless, totalitarian governments that attempt to

control the access of their populations to a wide spectrum of ideas are finding it increasingly difficult to control the flow of information generated by the new technologies. And this is a positive development in the liberation of the human mind.

In conclusion, in a world buffeted by the forces of nature and human violence, it might seem unrealistic to place too much trust in the struggle for self-determination. Likewise, on a more subjective level, the soul's plan might seem unfathomable to all but the most enlightened. Yet, Juliet Hollister, the founder of the Temple of Understanding, wrote, "I have always believed that we live in an ocean of intelligence." This intelligence, called *brahma* in Sanskrit, lies at the heart of even the tiniest atom of substance. From the most basic level of life on up to the most advanced, consciousness exists and provides the accelerant to evolutionary growth.

This realisation, when coupled with a recognition of right relationships, dispels any tendency to fatalism or to selfishness. Freedom is won not to achieve the separation of the individual from the whole, but as a result of the individual's awakening to the spiritual worth of his life and the value of every life to the whole. This is what mobilises self-determination and gives spiritual meaning to the quest for freedom. The attainment of freedom is excessively hard work accomplished stage by stage in a process that leads the human being to "become what he is". This mystery lies at the heart of self-determination, and to witness this awakening now occurring across a wide spectrum of humanity is a cause of great hope.

## REVIEWS

> **R-evolution: Taking the Pulse of the World's Consciousness** – a film from the World Servers Foundation (available on request from their website, [www.worldserversfoundation.org](http://www.worldserversfoundation.org))

> **The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Enquiry** by Rupert Sheldrake. Coronet Books (Hodder & Stoughton). Hardback 392 pages. [www.hodder.co.uk](http://www.hodder.co.uk)

"**R-evolution**" is structured as a series of short reflections from a wide variety of sources. It begins with a critique of materialism and environmental degradation, including the famous short address by Severn Suzuki to the UN Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. There are contributions from a number of well-known thinkers in the emerging field of the evolution of consciousness, such as Danah Zohar, Dennis Lipton and Richard Barrett, discussing the need for humanity to move forward. It is proposed that consciousness is continually evolving, from a Newtonian, billiard ball reductionist model of the universe towards a more holistic and participatory perspective.

A number of examples of inspiring service initiatives are given, such as the NGO Combatants for Peace, which uses theatre to facilitate reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

In a section on the Egyptian revolution, an Egyptian citizen notes that, before the revolution, it was shameful to be a citizen. Dr Hussein el Kazzaz shares his observation that, by rapidly building civil councils, the people effectively created a parallel state almost overnight. The Egyptian revolution is therefore suggested as a model of civil society action for others.

The idea is proposed that a certain measure of breakdown may have to happen before breakthrough, so revolutions are partly inevitable. It is also suggested that different nations may be at different levels of conscious evolution, and that this should be taken into account.

A section on China includes the reflections of former UN Ambassador Wu Jianmin, who suggests that Chinese youth feel the need to contribute to the world, and that the world is moving away from competitiveness to interdependence. A number of civil society initiatives in China are also highlighted.

A report from Australia underlines the importance of values education in schools, teaching values such as fairness, respect and integrity.

Richard Olivier considers the power of stories, suggesting that the great stories are coded into us as ways of making meaning. The problem with "business" is that it is currently lacking a compelling story.

A section on philanthropy begins with Andrew Wallas, who notes that his success in business became increasingly hollow, and that he gradually learned to give without conditions, anonymously.

The founder of the World Servers Foundation, businessman and philanthropist Mr Gábor Kovács, shares his opinion that the richest 5% will have to learn how to grow business with a social consciousness. Money needs to be recognised as a form of energy, which can be directed into world service. As part of this process, the richest 5% will need to transform themselves first, and then to facilitate transformation of others. This connects with the need for a new paradigm of leadership, servant-leadership, which serves the community, the environment, the planet, and future generations.

The film concludes by highlighting the need for all to shift from striving to be "the best in the world" to "the best for the world", and that there is an urgent need to inspire the youth of today to serve the world.



In **The Science Delusion**, Rupert Sheldrake, the well-known biologist and author of more than 80 technical papers and ten books, challenges the dogmas of the "scientific worldview" – the belief system that governs conventional scientific thinking. He does this in a spirit of open-minded scientific enquiry, questioning and challenging "the scientific creed" – those core beliefs that most scientists take for granted and which are based upon a materialist view of the universe. He proposes new avenues for research, bearing in mind his view that materialist science is "prone to suffer from a sense of disconnection and isolation", believing that it has answered all of the fundamental questions. Sheldrake points out that scientific research is now a huge industry, with more than seven million researchers worldwide producing 1.58 million publications a year; he maintains that genuinely new discoveries are more likely to occur if research is not confined by existing beliefs, dogmas and taboos.

Sheldrake poses the intriguing question whether, on the basis of a few hundred years of scientific research, we can be sure that the laws of nature are fixed. Existing beliefs and dogmas which are subject to scrutiny in the book include: the idea that the universe is a machine in contrast to a living organism; the theory of the Standard Model of cosmology where "dark energy" currently accounts for about 73% of the matter and energy in the universe; and the idea that the entire evolutionary process has no purpose.

Sheldrake explores the theory of morphic resonance, through which humans, animals and plants inherit characteristics through the collective memory of the species, in contrast to materialist theory, which states that memories are stored in the brain and are wiped out on death. There is also discussion about the mind-brain controversy, in particular the conventional scientific view that mental activity is nothing but brain activity, with the mind confined to the brain. There are also informative chapters on the evidence for psychic phenomena or telepathy, and the argument for an inclusive, integrative approach to medicine rather than an entirely mechanistic system.

Sheldrake acknowledges that scientific knowledge has brought great benefits to humanity, although the power unleashed by scientific knowledge has also had adverse effects on the environment. This book is a fine contribution to a new, more open-minded scientific worldview, that challenges existing dogmas and beliefs about the nature of Life and the universe.

## Fresh Views on Water

In the spirit of the free and open-minded inquiry which Sheldrake advocates in *The Science Delusion*, there are a number of scientists who are exploring new frontiers of knowledge. For example, the Scientific and Medical Network ([www.scimednet.org](http://www.scimednet.org)) is one group which exists with an explicit commitment to provide a safe forum for the critical and open-minded discussion of ideas that go beyond conventional paradigms in science, medicine and philosophy.

One of the simplest molecules in the universe, combining two of its most common elements, hydrogen and oxygen, is water. By weight it composes over half of every human being, and is

essential for all organic life. Despite its simplicity, some of the properties of water are highly unusual – a well-known example is the fact that ice is actually less dense than liquid water. This vital fluid has attracted a number of investigators over the years: an early pioneer was the Austrian Viktor Schauberger, who explored the nature of vortices in water. Recent work which looks at the electrical properties of water is currently underway at the University of Washington, under the leadership of Dr. Gerald Pollack, Professor of Bioengineering. His work challenges a number of scientific orthodoxies, including the notion that positive and negative electrical charges can remain separated in water.

Pollack's main focus is on the interaction between surfaces and the layer of water immediately next to them. Having used a wide variety of techniques to investigate this layer, Pollack and his group have come to the unexpected conclusion that there is a high degree of structuring in the water layer next to certain surfaces, which is many millions of molecules thick. This 'structured water' behaves quite differently from the bulk water. One of the most interesting observations is that a difference in charge exists between the structured water and the bulk, creating a battery. This effect may be implicated in one of the most important – and most efficient – biochemical reactions on the planet, photosynthesis.

The wide-ranging significance of Pollack's work calls for further investigation. For example, if he is correct that there is a percentage of structured water in the cells of all living organisms, and that this percentage can be increased by the application of radiant energy, then implications for healing through the use of the electromagnetic spectrum emerge. Pollack also hypothesises that the structuring of water through radiation may have been implicated in the origins of life on our planet.

For more information on Dr. Pollack's work, see <http://faculty.washington.edu/ghp/>

## **World Goodwill Commentary on the Child**

World Goodwill is pleased to announce the upcoming release of a commentary on *The Child*. It features reflections on the innate spirituality of the young, the changing attitudes to children through the ages, right techniques of raising and educating children, and the significance of children for future world transformation. A few extracts are presented below:

"The research of child psychiatrist Robert Coles, Ph.D., indicates that children possess an innate moral, spiritual and even political sensitivity. Children are not only keenly aware of morals, ideals, values, and the differences between right and wrong, they also have a sharp perception of the reasons behind people's actions, feelings and thoughts."

"Alice Bailey wrote, 'The damage done to children in the plastic and pliable years is often irremediable and is responsible for much of the pain and suffering in later life.' Scientific studies point to the validity of this statement. The pathways in the brain do in fact become set in place and significantly less malleable to change as children grow, particularly after the age of five."

"The modern family and contemporary views on child rearing are actually quite recent developments. It is sometimes forgotten that these tremendous advances in the field of human relationships have been just as groundbreaking and important as the technological advances of our age."

"Reason supports the proposition that children are humanity's best hope and most direct path to world transformation. Is there really any other way quite so potent to bring about real and lasting change in the world? This is essentially the task of recognising the value of each child. A child that has been valued will naturally embrace the society that has valued them. By valuing each child, pathways of positive human interrelationships, cooperation and goodwill naturally unfold, displacing the entrenched forces of global competition and strife, and laying the needed groundwork for the recognition of the fact of one humanity."

To order your copy, please use the enclosed reply slip.

## **Mantram of the new group of world servers**

A strong subjective relationship exists between all servers of the Plan. This coherent, integrated group is transmitting spiritual energy throughout all areas of human thought and action to strengthen world unity and right human relationships. Men and women of goodwill link up in thought every day at **five pm local time** using the following brief dedication, silently and with focused attention:

**May the Power of the one Life pour through the group of all true servers**

**May the Love of the one Soul characterise the lives of all who seek to aid the Great Ones**

**May I fulfil my part in the one Work through self-forgetfulness, harmlessness, and right speech.**

*(mantram card available on request)*



# WORLD INVOCATION DAY 2012



To build a more just, interdependent and caring global society what humanity needs above all, is more light, love and spiritual will. On **Monday June 4 2012**, people of goodwill from all parts of the world, and from different religious and spiritual backgrounds unite in invoking these higher energies by using the Great Invocation. Will you join in this healing work by including the Great Invocation in your thoughts, your prayers or your meditations on World Invocation Day?

## THE GREAT INVOCATION

## Adapted version

From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.  
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let light stream forth into human minds.  
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.  
May Christ return to Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into human hearts.  
May the Coming One return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide all little human wills –  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

From the centre which we call the human race  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

If you would like to send this message to others, two colour ecards are available from our website: the original Great Invocation is at [www.lucistrust.org/ecard/](http://www.lucistrust.org/ecard/), and the adapted at [www.lucistrust.org/ecard2/](http://www.lucistrust.org/ecard2/)  
Also featured on our website at [www.lucistrust.org/wid](http://www.lucistrust.org/wid) is the World Invocation Day video  
– please pass on the link to others.

Many religions believe in a World Teacher Who is to come in the future (hence 'Coming One'), knowing Him under such names as the Lord Maitreya, the Imam Mahdi, the Kalki avatar etc.. These terms are sometimes used in versions of the Great Invocation for people of specific faiths.

## **HELPING TO BUILD RIGHT HUMAN RELATIONS**

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World Goodwill is an international movement helping to mobilise the energy of goodwill and to build right human relations. It was established in 1932 as a service activity of the Lucis Trust. The Lucis Trust is a registered educational charity in Great Britain. In the USA it is a non-profit tax-exempt educational corporation, and in Switzerland it is registered as a non-profit association. World Goodwill is recognised

by the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organisation and is represented at regular briefing sessions at UN Headquarters. The Lucis Trust is on the Roster of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The World Goodwill Newsletter is published three times a year. Unless otherwise indicated, all articles are prepared by World Goodwill staff members.

Multiple copies for distribution are available on request. The newsletter is also available in: Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian (online) Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish.

[www.worldgoodwill.org](http://www.worldgoodwill.org) is the address for World Goodwill on the Internet. The newsletter is available on this site.

*World Goodwill relies solely on donations to maintain its work. The newsletter is distributed free of charge to make it as widely available as possible, but donations are always needed for this service, and are much appreciated.*

3 Whitehall Court  
Suite 54  
London SW1A 2EF  
UK

1 Rue de Varembe  
Case Postale 26  
CH-1211 Geneva 20  
SWITZERLAND

120 Wall Street  
24th Floor  
New York NY10005  
USA

Email: [worldgoodwill.uk@lucistrust.org](mailto:worldgoodwill.uk@lucistrust.org)

Email: [geneva@lucistrust.org](mailto:geneva@lucistrust.org)

Email: [worldgoodwill.us@lucistrust.org](mailto:worldgoodwill.us@lucistrust.org)