

Spiritually Responsible Investing:
integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

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Spiritually Responsible Investing:

integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

(Introduction)

To begin this discussion of Spiritually Responsible Investing, I would like to offer three propositions, and one definition.

The first proposition is:

There are countless numbers of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world.

The second proposition is:

The ways we “invest” our time, energy, and money have a direct impact on the “ways of earning a living” that are available.

The third proposition is:

The most advanced societies are the ones which are successful at integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

And the one definition:

Spiritually Responsible Investing can be defined as investments of time, energy, and money which increase our capacity to integrate spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

(Opportunities for Spiritually Responsible Investing)

Are there opportunities for Spiritually Responsible Investing now, in the world as it is, at this particular point in time?

I believe that any realistic assessment of the challenges of our times could not fail to make it clear that there are countless opportunities for Spiritually Responsible Investing in every part of the world, at this point in time April 15, 2007.

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.2)

As evidence of the opportunities for Spiritually Responsible Investing in the world today, here are 12 relevant observations and statistics: (Note: All but one of these observations and statistics can be accessed on the Internet, and the necessary reference information is included in the hard copy of this paper.)

1) *Number of Deaths Attributed to Hunger and Poor Sanitation (in the years 1950-2000)*

“An estimated 17% (8,549,000) of all deaths in the world in 1990 were due to malnutrition, unsafe water, and (poor) sanitation. If that 17% were applied to the years (1950-2000), (then we may conclude that) more than 418,000,000 (over 400 million) people have died of hunger and poor sanitation in the (50 years from 1950-2000)....”

[in “A Program to End World Hunger: Hunger 2000—Tenth Annual Report of the State of World Hunger” Bread for the World Institute, see <http://www.bread.org/learn/hunger-reports/hunger-report-pdfs/hunger-report-2000/introduction.pdf>) (excerpt quoted from “The Global Burden of Disease: Summary” by Christopher Murray and Alan D. Lopez, eds.)]

2) *Small Arms Statistics, 2003*

“There are at least 639 million firearms in the world today, of which 59% are legally held by citizens.”

“At least 1,134 companies in 98 countries worldwide are involved in some aspect of the production of small arms and/or ammunition.”

(from the “Publications/Yearbook” section of the Small Arms Survey website, in the subsection “press release about the Yearbook 2003”, see http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/sas/publications/year_b_pdf/2003/2003SAS_press-release_yb03_en.pdf)

3) *Worldwide Military Expenditures, 1995-2004*

“According to an estimate by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, world military expenditures for the years 1995-2004 totaled 8.26 trillion dollars (\$8,260,000,000,000) (8,260 billion dollars).

(from “Sipri Data on Military Expenditure” section of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, see http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_wnr_table.html)

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.3)

- 4) From the “World Report on Violence and Health” (World Health Organization Geneva 2002) in Chapter 9 “The Way Forward: Recommendations for Action” p. 254 (at <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2002/9241545615.pdf>)

“The global drugs trade and the global arms trade are integral to violence in both developing and industrialized countries. Even modest progress on either front will contribute to reducing the amount and degree of violence suffered by millions of people. To date, however—and despite their high profile in the world arena—no solutions seem to be in sight for these problems.”

5) *World Population*

In the year 1804, the world population was 1 billion.

In the year 1960, the world population was 3 billion.

As of April 1, 2007 [at 14:11 GMT (EST + 5)], the world population was estimated to be 6,585,985,037

(from www.infoplease.com at www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0883352.html; and U.S. Bureau of the Census POP Clock estimate at www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/popclockw)

6) *Percent of World Population Living in Urban Areas*

“In the year 1800, only 3% of the world’s population lived in urban areas.”

“In the year 1900, almost 14% of the world’s population lived in urban areas.”

“In the year 2000, about 47% of the world’s population lived in urban areas. 411 cities had 1 million or more inhabitants.”

(from website of Population Reference Bureau-- see www.prb.org/Content/NavigationMenu/PRB/Educators/Resources/Human_Population/Urbanization2/Patterns_of_World_Urbanization1.htm)

- 7) From the website of UN Habitat—United Nations Human Settlements Programme— at <http://www.unhabitat.org> (from “Media Centre/Press Kits” section)

a) from “State of the World’s Cities 2004-5” (foreward)

“Many cities face pervasive and persistent problems, including growing poverty, deepening inequality and polarization, widespread corruption at the local level, high rates of urban crime and violence, and deteriorating living conditions.”

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.4)

8) *Number of Vehicles, Worldwide*

“In the year 1900, only 4,192 passenger cars were in existence (there were no trucks, buses, etc.)”

“In the year 1996, there were 485,954,000 cars registered worldwide, and 185,404,000 trucks and buses—for a total, worldwide, of 671,358,000 motor vehicles.”

[from Glenn Elert’s webpage “Number of Cars”—(statistics attributed to various sources) at <http://hypertextbook.com/facts/2001/MarinaStasenko.shtml>]

- 9) From the “Hirsch Report” [“The Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation and Risk Management”—Project Leader: Robert L. Hirsch (SAIC) Commissioned by the Department of Energy, and dated February, 2005] [Accessible at the website of Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)(USA) at www.bartlett.house.gov/EnergyUpdates/]

“Over the past century the development of the U.S. economy and lifestyle has been fundamentally shaped by the availability of abundant, low-cost oil....The peaking of world oil production presents the U.S. and the world with an unprecedented risk management problem....The world has never faced a problem like this.... As peaking is approached, liquid fuel prices and price volatility will increase dramatically, and, without timely mitigation, the economic, social, and political costs will be unprecedented.”

- 10) From Chapter 53 of “Te-Tao Ching” (by Lao Tzu) (possibly written in 6th Century B.C.E., sufficient evidence unavailable) (translation by Robert G. Hendricks) Ballantine Books New York 1989

“Were I to have the least bit of knowledge, in walking on a Great Road, it’s only going astray that I would fear.

The Great Way is very level;

But people greatly delight in tortuous paths.”

- 11) From “Sathya Sai Speaks”, discourses by Sri Sathya Sai Baba (age 80, with a main residence in Puttaparthi, India) “Sathya Sai Speaks” Vol. 1-35 can be accessed via the Internet at <http://www.sathyasai.org/search/default.htm> or <http://www.ssbpt.info/html/sss.html>)

“The mariner uses his compass to guide him aright amidst the dark storm clouds and raging waves. When Man is overwhelmed by the dark clouds of despair and the raging confusion of irrepressible desires, he too, has a compass which will point to him the direction he has to take.... That compass is a Society that is dedicated to the propagation of Spiritual Discipline.” (SSS 8.21 p.108)

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.5)

- 12) From “Permaculture and Energy” (by David Holmgren, co-creator of the “permaculture” concept) (article first written in 1990, published in “Permaculture Activist” Issue #31 May, 1994)
(accessible at <http://permacultureactivist.net/Holmgren/holmgren.htm>)

“The transition from an unsustainable fossil fuel-based economy back to a solar-based (agriculture and forestry) economy will (require making best use) of the embodied energy that we inherit from industrial culture. This embodied energy is contained within a vast array of things, infrastructure, cultural processes and ideas, mostly inappropriately configured for the ‘solar’ economy. It is the task of our age to take this great wealth, reconfigure it, and apply it to the development of sustainable systems.”

Even from this brief assessment of the challenges of our times, it must be clear that there are countless opportunities for Spiritually Responsible Investing in the world today.

(What can individuals do to inspire and encourage Spiritually Responsible Investing)

Here I would like to bring forward the definition of Spiritually Responsible Investing offered at the beginning of this discussion:

Spiritually Responsible Investing can be defined as investments of time, energy, and money which increase our capacity to integrate spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

And then I would like to ask: what can individuals do to inspire and encourage Spiritually Responsible Investing in the communities where they live?

As part of my response to this question, I would like to refer to the first proposition mentioned at the beginning of this discussion:

There are countless numbers of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world.

Why do I believe this proposition?

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.6)

I will tell you why. Because I can name at least 105 fields of activity which are related to discovering and implementing peaceful and sustainable resolutions to the challenges of our times.

Here—due to the time limitations of this presentation—I will name (for consideration as examples) only 32 fields of activity from the list of 105 contained in the appendix of this paper.

accountability indicators, alleviating hunger, alternative gifts, appropriate technology, community gardens, community good news networks, community land trusts, community revolving loans, community supported agriculture, community visioning initiatives, ecological footprint analysis, emergency humanitarian aid, emergency medical assistance, energy conservation, homesteading, individual spiritual formation, interfaith dialogue, interfaith peacebuilding, intergenerational projects, local currency, locally based food processing, locally grown organic food, meditation, mentoring, non-violent conflict resolution, permaculture, preventative health care, socially engaged spirituality, spiritual friendships, voluntary simplicity, water conservation, and world population awareness.

And now I would like to refer to the second proposition introduced at the beginning of this discussion:

The ways we “invest” our time, energy, and money have a direct impact on the “ways of earning a living” that are available.

In this context of this discussion, this second proposition means that individuals in any given community can channel their time, energy, and money to nurture, support, and sustain people working in the 32 fields of activity mentioned above.

I will say this again: *this second proposition means that individuals in any given community can channel their time, energy, and money to nurture, support, and sustain people working in the 32 fields of activity mentioned above.*

Most people at this conference, I believe, will accept the first two propositions brought forward here:

1) *There are countless numbers of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world. (and)*

2) *The ways we “invest” our time, energy, and money have a direct impact on the “ways of earning a living” that are available.*

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.7)

In the time remaining, therefore, I would like to focus on the definition of Spiritually Responsible Investing offered at the beginning of this discussion:

Spiritually Responsible Investing can be defined as investments of time, energy, and money which increase our capacity to integrate spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

And here, in the context of this “Faith, Spirituality, and Social Change” conference, I would like to highlight four specific examples of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives....” These examples will help us arrive at a better understanding of how this definition of Spiritually Responsible Investing can be applied in every variety of circumstances in communities around the world.

The first example I will bring forward is “Community Good News Networks.”

“Community Good News Networks” is a name for participation by local community residents in an ongoing process of actively discovering, sharing, encouraging, and creating good news, for the purpose of “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it.” One way to begin creating “Community Good News Networks” is as follows: ongoing intergenerational programs—programs that bring together elders of the community with young people (ages 5-18) of the community—are created at appropriate meeting places such as local places of worship. Such intergenerational programs would include the following activities: 1) collecting and sharing good news articles, stories, etc., and making contributions to “Good News Reference Resources,” specific to local communities and regions 2) sending notecards (or some other form of communication) which express gratitude and encouragement—and convey invitations to visit—to people who are making good news in the local community or region (and) 3) inspirational sharing meetings featuring “good news makers” from the local community or region.

Communities of people anywhere in the world can nurture, support, and sustain a “Community Good News Network”(in some form or other), and thus provide for others living proof of how this concept can inspire and encourage the creation of more and more Spiritually Responsible Investing.

The second example: “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace.”

Community Visioning Initiatives have, in the past, been applied most often for the purpose of increasing citizen participation in the planning and development phases of community revitalization efforts. In 1984, the non-profit organization Chattanooga

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.8)

Venture [Chattanooga, Tennessee (USA)] organized a visioning initiative that attracted more than 1,700 participants, and produced 40 community goals—which resulted in the implementation of 223 projects and programs, the creation of 1,300 permanent jobs, and a total financial investment of 793 million dollars.¹ “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace” would use a similar format—brainstorming ideas, organizing the ideas into goals, prioritizing the goals, identifying doable steps, etc.—but with a specialized focus... for example, on identifying, creating, and gathering together all ideas for collective effort (including representative efforts already in existence which could be expanded) that 1) “... bring to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it” 2) increase our collective capacity to encourage and inspire individual spiritual formation—with all the beneficial consequences that follow for individuals, communities, regions, etc. and thus 3) build trust among people from different faith communities and cultural traditions. Annual “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace” in local communities—and visioning initiatives involving entire regions—could provide 1) a reliable means for drawing out solutions to many of the challenges in the fields of peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability 2) a reliable means of building consensus for the collective efforts necessary to implement such solutions and 3) an opportunity for all residents to learn civic skills relevant to sustaining ongoing community revitalization.

(1. The statistics cited are from “Revision 2000: Take Charge Again”, a brochure received from Chattanooga Venture. These statistics are also accessible in a detailed overview of Chattanooga community revitalization efforts titled “Chattanooga: The Sustainable City”, at the website for the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership.)

The third example: clearinghouses of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world.

Even the most diverse communities of people will begin to find more and more common ground as they proceed with projects like “Community Good News Networks” and “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”—as the ways and means necessary to nurture, support, and sustain people working in fields of activity related to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability will become easier to see in the everyday circumstances of community life. In this kind of positive environment—the kind which encourages movement towards higher common ground—it will be possible to create local community points of entry which can function as clearinghouses of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives....”

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.9)

Once such a clearinghouse is established, local community residents who wish to become involved—or increase their participation—in local and regional peacebuilding, community revitalization, and/or ecological sustainability initiatives, should be able to visit a local community point of entry, identify a starting point, and begin developing—or furthering—their involvement within two weeks of the beginning of their search.

The fourth example: “Community Journal/Newsletters.”

Any community of people who participate in creating “Community Good News Networks” and “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”—and who create local community points of entry which can function as clearinghouses (such as described above)—will surely identify, develop, and create enough descriptions and examples of fields of activity relevant to discovering and implementing resolutions to the challenges of our times

and generate enough regular feature material in categories such as workshops and conferences, committee reports, resource reviews, letters to the editor, community journal entries, and links to other useful information and organizations

to justify a monthly publication of a “Community Journal/Newsletter...” (or some form of community-wide communication on a monthly basis)

and, by its very nature, such a publication (or form of communication) would be an ongoing contribution to the goals of

- 1) “... bringing to the fore what is often hidden: how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help as well as to those who receive it”
- 2) increasing our collective capacity to encourage and inspire individual spiritual formation—with all the beneficial consequences that follow for individuals, communities, regions, etc.
- 3) building trust among people from different faith communities and cultural traditions
- 4) increasing our capacity to be responsible “stewards” of our time, energy, and money
- 5) increasing our capacity to access what is necessary for basic human needs and quality of life through principles and practices of ecological sustainability and permaculture, especially in light of the implications of ecological footprint analysis and the “peaking” of oil production

(Spiritually Responsible Investing, p.10)

- 6) increasing our awareness of the countless number of “things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives” which will contribute to peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, in their own communities and regions—and in other parts of the world
- 7) reducing the incidence of violence—and all the costs associated with war
- 8) increasing emergency assistance to people with basic human needs and
- 9) reflecting an understanding of the value of silence.

Wouldn't you like the opportunity to discuss the contents of such a publication (or form of communication) with your family, friends, neighbors, and other people who are a part of the community you live in?

(Summary and Concluding Comments)

In Summary, I would like to return again to the question brought forward earlier in this discussion:

What can individuals do to inspire and encourage Spiritually Responsible Investing in the communities where they live?

And I would now like to respond to that question in this way:

I believe that any community of people, however small in numbers, who participate in ongoing “Community Good News Networks” and annual “Community Visioning Initiatives for Peace”—and who combine the resources created by local community points of entry clearinghouses and “Community Journal/Newsletters” to link many associated efforts (like the 32 fields of activity mentioned above)—will surely be assisting with outreach, partnership formation, consensus building, and development of service capacity associated with a significant number of peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts, all at the same time....

And here is my closing statement—my message to you in the context of this conference on “Faith, Spirituality, and Social Change”:

Such communities of people will surely provide living proof of the third proposition mentioned in this discussion—that *The most advanced societies are the ones which are successful at integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.*

Thank you.

Spiritually Responsible Investing:

integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

Appendix

accountability indicators, alleviating hunger, alleviating poverty, alternative gifts, appropriate technology, barter networks, biodynamic agriculture, building civic skills, building community, car-free zones, character education, citizen participation, citizen peacebuilding, co-housing, community banks, community development, community economics, community gardens, community good news networks, community journals, community land trusts, community membership agreements, community revitalization, community revolving loans, community self-awareness, community service work, community supported agriculture, community supported manufacturing, community visioning initiatives, consensus decision making, cottage industries, creative commons, cultural diversity, development assistance, disease control, eco-classifieds, ecological architecture, ecological footprint analysis, ecological tipping points, economic conversion, edible schoolyards, emergency humanitarian aid, emergency medical assistance, energy conservation, energy farms, fair trade, faith-based educational institutions, faith mentoring, farmers markets, food co-ops, green living, green politics, green purchasing, green retrofitting, holistic health care, homesteading, identifying problems and solutions, inclusive decision-making processes, individual spiritual formation, inspiring role models, interfaith dialogue, interfaith peacebuilding, intergenerational projects, local community points of entry, local currency, locally based food processing, locally grown organic food, low impact transport systems, medical assistance, meditation, mentoring, neighborhood revitalization, non-profit human service organizations, non-violent conflict resolution, oil depletion protocol, peace studies programs, peak oil, permaculture, positive news, powerdown projects, preventative health care, questionnaire construction, recycling, relocalization, renewable resources, right livelihood, right livelihood employment listings, rural renaissance, socially engaged spirituality, socially responsible investing, solutions journalism, spiritual discipline, spiritual diversity, spiritual friendships, spiritually responsible investing, sustainable health care, vegetarian nutrition, village design, village industries, violence prevention, voluntary simplicity, water conservation, win-win conflict resolution, world population awareness, yoga, zero waste, etc.