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Commercialisation:  
the antithesis of sharing

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The danger is not commercialisation *per se* but our constant identification with its inner and outer manifestation, in which humanity's intelligence is led in the opposite direction from nature and spiritual evolution.

What is evil, anyway, if not our identification with it?

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‘Sharing is the key to solving the world’s problems’. Such a statement is so simple that it may fail to make an appeal, so we must go much deeper into this subject if we want to comprehend what this means. In order to understand how sharing is the surest guide to justice, peace and right human relations, we need to investigate its meaning and significance from many angles – including psychologically and spiritually, as well as from a social, economic and political perspective.

In the course of our enquiry it is therefore necessary to watch closely the movement of our thoughts so that no ideologies, beliefs or isms enter into our minds. There are myriads of ways to look at sharing because the nature of this principle is a powerhouse within the Laws of Life, and anyone can intuit and experience its extraordinary versatility. However, if it is true that sharing is so important to our continued evolution on this Earth, then the first question we need to examine is: why isn’t this principle understood as an answer to the crisis of our civilisation?

One way to find out how sharing has been subverted in our societies is to observe how commercialisation has slowly structured itself into our consciousness. It is easy to say that sharing is the solution to the world’s ills, but this assertion becomes merely another lofty belief unless we also consider how commercialisation is tightening its grip on our evolution by the hour. To find the key to solving the problems of humanity, we must also ask ourselves how and why we have allowed the authority of the politician to dominate our social and economic arrangements, our education and our everyday lives. Most importantly we also need to examine, through self-reflection and inner awareness, how our complacency and wrong education has led to a collective indifference to the suffering of others.

We all understand what sharing means on a personal level, as everybody shares within their homes and communities. So why do so few people understand the need to implement the principle of sharing on a national and worldwide level? A large part of the answer to this question can be simply put: it is because the foundations of our society have been constructed in such a way that market forces have become loose. We have developed complex economic and political systems that are increasingly geared towards profit and commercialisation: the tax structures, the large corporations, the countless legal regulations that are created to defend private interests – all of this creates a highly complicated and divisive society. Nobody understands the system in the end, but the system understands precisely how to manipulate us for its own purposes. And in such a complex society, with so many laws and policies created to facilitate commercialisation, the principle of sharing is almost non-existent.

As long as we live in a society that is driven by profit and commercialisation, the principle of sharing will always be eclipsed. In every sphere of human activity it can be observed that when commercialisation moves in, sharing moves out. The same reality also pertains to the environment: when commercialisation moves in, nature moves out. Indeed when commercialisation moves in it can be so invasive, so destructive, that it can break apart families. It can break apart traditions and national identities, as we have seen with free trade agreements and the economic integration of Europe. Wherever these forces are

unleashed it can lead to a widening gulf between rich and poor, a loss of community solidarity and a contagion of spiritual turmoil, and a diversion of man's God-given intelligence in the opposite direction of social progress and evolution. And if commercialisation is left to blindly guide a society for a long enough period of time, it can even compromise human life.

### **The meaning of commercialisation**

We are not talking about commerce *per se*, but about the greed and selfishness that is involved when market forces are let loose, and the complacency and indifference that is the result. It doesn't mean that we have to work in commerce for this to apply to us – it applies to us all, because we all live in a world that is permeated by market forces. The danger is not even the process of commercialisation *per se*, but rather our constant identification with its inner and outer manifestation. There is no use in trying to grasp or define commercialisation in psychological terms, because we cannot understand the malefic forces that underpin its processes from a dictionary definition. The world situation has deteriorated to such an extent that a glossary meaning of commercialisation gives us no clue as to what is really happening in society today. The old understanding of commerce as simply buying and selling has almost been lost because, from a certain perspective, market forces have infiltrated our cells like a disease and transmuted into a silent killer called commercialisation. It is part of us and living within us. Commercialisation is the system we have created in relationship to the earth and to each other, and is inherent in the movement of people and life within society. Of course there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the systematic exchanging of goods and services within or between nations, but just as a knife can be used to cut vegetables or to kill people, so can commerce be used for good or ill.

Our enquiry therefore concerns how commercialisation has misled our creativity from fulfilling the simple needs that we all have in common, and skewed our motives toward the mindless pursuit of profit and endless consumption. Why do we fail to recognise, and therefore restrict, the destructive power of commercialisation despite all the harm that it is wreaking upon society and the environment? A response to this question can also be simply put: it is because we are all searching for happiness. And commercialisation is very clever in promising us happiness, a 'good life', a more comfortable life and security. We are all searching for security. But it is a false sense of security that we are being sold – a dangerous fantasy.

Again, we are not talking about security *per se*, such as the kind of physical security that a family needs for bread and shelter, but rather the search for psychological security that ultimately drives us to become more isolated from each other, and essentially denies our intelligence and freedom. It is the need for psychological security that impels us to constantly search for the personal delusion that we call happiness. And the forces of commercialisation are expert in offering us happiness by misdirecting our minds from awareness of the Self, which is the only place where any real contentment or joy can be found. Happiness in the context of a highly commercialised and inequitable society is one of the ugliest social fantasies that we are attached to, because in such a society individual happiness can only exist alongside misery and sorrow. Like a sink, it always comes with two taps; the hot and the cold. Happiness and misery in a sick society inevitably exist side by side. The yearning for an illusive happiness can also be dangerous, however, when in that process we become emotionally trapped and self-absorbed, and our lives become imitative and uncreative. Before long, our natural tendency to love and empathise with those less fortunate than ourselves can be overridden by complacency, indifference and fear. Which leaves us with an important question: what is the relationship that exists between fear and the search for happiness?

### **Abducting Self-knowledge**

The ability to look at oneself inwardly without fear has been swiftly abducted by the forces of commercialisation. Even in our closest personal relationships we live in fear as a result of our continuous search for happiness and security, which is the point at which commercialisation enters human affairs and damages us psychologically. It creates endless desires for objects and possessions, and places a limit within our consciousness so that we do not see beyond our emotional attachments. It can reduce us to queuing all night long for the latest fad or gadget, and is capable of putting us into a trance until we think that shopping is our religion, or that the profoundest meaning of common sense is 'buy two and get one for free'. It can lead a person to look at a prospective partner and think: 'They are good looking, but do they have any money?' Or it can induce the teenager to copy their schoolmates and aspire to be like them too, to wear the ever-changing fashions and flaunt the expensive 'look'. It is very easy for commercialisation to manipulate the brains of young children, and to distort the true meaning of education which is concerned with inner freedom and Self-knowledge, not conformity or competition. Commercialisation makes us small, it makes us afraid, it degrades our humility, and we are not even aware of it. These forces have built into our minds such conditioning and fear that the simple way of sharing no longer makes an appeal, leading to mental blindness of the highest order.

Observe the basic psychological dynamic that is structured into our consciousness by commercialisation: constant measurement and comparison between different people, and the instinctive worshipping of success. The desire to 'make it', to become a 'somebody'. And the same adulation of success and achievement is ingrained in our children from the youngest age; to make them want to look at themselves in the mirror one day and say: 'I made it'. Even the artist strives to say 'I achieved', or desires others to say of him: 'You know that man? He achieved so much'. But when we define ourselves in relation to others, when we constantly measure and compare ourselves with others who have what we don't have, we end up creating a peculiar complex of inferiority that hinders the expression of our spiritual potential and right human relations. This dynamic suits commercialisation very well. Because in our continued worshipping of success and achievement, we thereby sustain the forces of profit and materiality in every area of our lives – in our schools, in our workplaces, in our homes, even in our dreams.

Imagine if a famous celebrity or a billionaire is brought into the room now, and how our attitude towards that person would be very different from normal. Because we are like that too, we are also conditioned to think: 'Become successful, then you are a somebody'. We are all impelled through social conditioning to inwardly bow to the authority of a 'somebody', which is essentially how commercialisation creates machines out of people. Its first job is to make us believe that success is the way, but to achieve success we are told that we have to work very hard, that we have to achieve. Then we learn that to achieve we have to compete with everyone else, that we have to become a 'winner'. It is not long before we have lost our inborn empathy and creativity, before we begin to follow ideologies and beliefs, and before we conform and become complacent.

This is the inevitable outcome of worshipping success and achievement: our complacency and indifference to the suffering of others. Because this is what the obsession with individual achievement in our societies inexorably does; it breeds indifference. So much so that even the virtuous person who we would call reasonably-minded – a respectable, law-abiding citizen who is more or less psychologically healthy – will say 'there has always been hunger, and always will be'. Furthermore, it is curious to observe the obscure emotional effect that commercialisation has on the person who looks at this unfortunate planet and says: 'I want to help, but I feel so helpless'. Of course there is always something we can do to help alleviate the suffering of the world, but it is largely the forces of commercialisation that lead us to feel overwhelmed, separated and helpless as

individuals. The unchaining of market forces in every department of human life is gradually taking away our compassion, taking away our goodwill, taking away our awareness, taking away our common sense. These same forces have bullied the principle of sharing with all their might over several decades, growing in such an elusive and refined way that to be complacent is now the norm.

### **An invisible tsunami**

Thus it is no exaggeration to say that commercialisation is the *bête noire* of human evolution, like an invisible tsunami that slowly deluges all levels and aspects of society. People who believe in the devil better think again about where the devil is, if such a thing exists. Our complacency and wrong education has led commercialisation to become like a powerful hammer, while sharing has become a miniscule nail. To the extent that it has become a way of life to know that people are dying from hunger in other parts of the world, while we ourselves do almost nothing to prevent it.

Not that we can excuse our complacency and indifference. Our complacency should be taken to court where we should all be judged for committing crimes against humanity. We should form a planetary queue outside the International Criminal Court in The Hague, because we are all complicit. Through our collective complacency and indifference we have remained silent while the earth was being pillaged and destroyed, and we have looked the other way while our brothers and sisters are dying in poverty. In the final analysis, the people who desecrated the earth and those who did nothing to stop them are one and the same, because one cannot exist without the other. We could even say that the one who looks the other way is even more culpable, because the one who is hoarding the world's resources and destroying the earth is entirely dependent on the complacency of others – he could not do it otherwise.

In truth, commercialisation is nothing less than a silent war, a war against humanity's growth and evolution. This point cannot be emphasised strongly enough: commercialisation is a *war*. Not just a war between different sides, between competing nations or rival tribes, but a war in itself. It is a war that is being waged within every household, community and nation because commercialisation is so devious, so intelligent, that it knows exactly the weaknesses of humanity. It knows our emotional nature intimately well because this is where it resides, and from where it manipulates. And from here it infiltrates our beliefs and ideologies, and fosters different factions, and feeds off the political parties fighting one another. It is so subtle that it is able to buy stocks and shares in our beliefs and isms, and this is where it invests in order to grow.

The hidden reality is that for several decades another Auschwitz is slowly being built, but this time in a different form by driving humanity to fully capitulate to the forces of profit and commercialisation. Global warfare today is not only being waged in the form of tanks and guns, but in the destruction that is concealed in the creed of market forces that has gradually overshadowed almost every region of the world. Who can deny that thousands of deaths from needless poverty-related causes is not already the equivalent of an Auschwitz that occurs every single day? As the economic situation deteriorates further in different countries, as the world's stock markets continue to roar and then collapse, the forces of commercialisation are becoming ever more triumphant in bringing about international conflict, social chaos and life-threatening extremes of inequality. The minority rich are becoming ever richer, and the majority poor are becoming even poorer, until a worldwide Auschwitz could increasingly take the form of massive deaths due to poverty and hunger. A great, silent war is being fought on every plane of our existence which the men and women of goodwill throughout the world are only just beginning to sense, even if unconsciously. How we respond to this emergency on planet earth will determine the future prospects for the human race. The reader is urged to think very carefully for themselves over what has just been said.

The following points summarise only some of the veiled, pervasive and extremely dangerous effects on humanity of rampant commercialisation that:

- Sustains mind conditioning which is pollution to the soul.
- Creates and deepens a complex of inferiority in people wherever they are, leading a person to believe they must become a 'somebody', and in that process of becoming they lose their true spiritual purpose in life.
- Instils an unconscious and often life-lasting sense of psychological fear in people's minds that prevents any curiosity or open-mindedness about the spiritual meaning of life, and ensures that complacency is sustained at all times.
- Constantly misdirects people's attention in order to inhibit awareness of the Self and the moment of now during daily life, and throughout the course of a lifetime.
- Drives individuals and groups to be caught in all manner of beliefs, and out of those beliefs the manifold isms are nourished and perpetuated.
- Prevents people from being creative, communicative and giving in society.
- Weakens social services.
- Produces a separation between citizens and the state, leading to the sporadic eruption of chaos and riots.
- Gives the illusion that the present system of education – based on isms, beliefs and the worshipping of success and achievement – leads to social order.
- Drives children to become stressed, indifferent and lost within.
- Engenders and sustains distrust among different people across society, until cynicism and fear of one another becomes the norm.
- Replaces a culture of ethics and morality with the vulgarity of the extremely rich who parade their wealth before the poor.
- Leads to acute feelings of loneliness in people from all walks of life, a loneliness that can drive anyone to feel poor and worthless within.
- Fosters worldwide depression to the point where individuals and groups no longer recognise their true spiritual purpose in life.
- Results in a highly complex society in which the simple understanding of right human relations is replaced by the interminable, stressful and ultimately violent pursuit of human rights.
- Enforces the belief that perpetual growth of the current system is needed, even when the world economy is on its knees. The same system, that is, that has already led to economic upheaval, social divisions and universal pain and suffering.
- Causes such destruction to the earth and air that anyone who is mature about environmental issues will be seriously concerned to the point of seeing no light at the end of the tunnel.

Hence commercialisation is indeed a silent war – a war in which bombs are constantly dropped on the true meaning of education; that is, Self-knowledge. It is a war that both psychologically and materially drives millions of people into poverty, and that could eventually lead to outright war between all nations.

### **A vicious circle**

To repeat: commerce in its own right is not dangerous, nor is capitalism. But it's the implementation of the seeds of worshipping success that sustains the process of commercialisation in a dangerous, socially divisive and destructive way. Or to put it differently: the forces of commercialisation sustain us to worship success, and we, by worshipping success, sustain the forces of profit and commercialisation. It's a vicious circle. We need these forces in our lives to sustain our pursuit of success and achievement, and these forces need us in order to sustain themselves. And the more energy we give to the politicians around the world to glorify the powers of commercialisation, the more that disciples of the creed of market forces will be bred up there in governments. Although in the end, nobody wins. Even if we leave the city to lead a quiet and peaceful life in the secluded countryside, we are dividing ourselves from the rest of society and its problems. Even if we receive the most exalted education from the best universities, the moment we leave school there are malevolent forces waiting for us, an immense tide of social pressure that is inescapable and omnipresent, and we will inevitably sink in the invisible tsunami. We can never win as long as market forces are let loose, as long as human consciousness is driven by profit, as long as young people are conditioned to worship success and achievement.

How then can we talk about sharing in its essence without having our eyes pointed towards the destructive effects of commercialisation? It is impossible, just as it is impossible to talk about justice without having our eyes pointed towards our brothers and sisters who are dying of hunger. How can we share when the influence of selfishness and greed has such a grip on our societies, and when we continue to worship success and achievement? Through its clever and manipulative ways of conditioning our minds, commercialisation has moulded the principle of sharing to become the miserable shadow of the poor and the helpless mother of the starving millions. In the face of its abysmal power and perpetual deluge, it is very normal that people will see the principle of sharing as naïve or utopian, and will think you are deluded if you say that sharing is the key to solving the world's problems.

**More information:**

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This article was based on a series of dialogues and edited by Adam Parsons.

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Share The World's Resources (STWR) is a civil society organisation with consultative status at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). We call for extensive reforms to the world economy to ensure a fairer sharing of wealth, power and resources within and between nations. For more information visit [www.sharing.org](http://www.sharing.org)

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