

Practical Spirituality: The Art and Science of Conscious Living

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Introduction

The spiritual life does not remove us from the world but leads us deeper into it (Nouwen, 1981). Spirituality is about valuing and deeply connecting with what we hold sacred in ourselves, other beings, and the universe as an integral whole. Spirituality isn't diametrically opposed to science. *The notion that science and spirituality are somehow mutually exclusive does a disservice to both* (Sagan, 1995). Like science, spirituality is also involved in the pursuit of meaning, purpose, and explores the nature of reality.

The two approaches of spirit and science have received separate emphasis in their development in Eastern and Western civilisations. On the one side, (the spiritual), the individual existentially lives within the collective movement to meaning. On the other side (the scientific) the individual is understood intellectually in the essential material separation from the collective.

In this article, we integrate these two approaches. In the spiritual realm, the movement of acting for the disclosing of the collective good creates the subjective experience of identity in the world. The characteristic of science, found by experimentation and starting from objectivity, is that from the atom, to the cell, to the embryo, to the organism, the participation of the individual creates meaning at a new level of order. In both cases, the meaning lives in the space between the definition of the individual and the realisation of unity at a new level of description. What we then realise is that we need a practical

spirituality, to find the process of the individual that dynamically addresses the question of the good of the whole.

Despite the fact that spiritual understanding is derived from individual experience or consciousness, there is an objectivity to the spiritual insight that is gained through the inter-subjectivity, or collective subjectivity; for example, of the mystics through the ages who have explored the spiritual path. Furthermore, a 'scientific path' to spiritual knowledge, which is practical, exists in the form of yoga (union with God; (Paramahansa, 2012/1946)). Therefore, instead of contrasting science to spirituality, we need to align these two perspectives as a single continuum of finding the truth. This may help us understand both the domains in totality as an integral 'One', which is the feeling of wholeness. From understanding wholeness as a process, we are also able to move beyond the fixity of the parts into their natural unity.

With this change in perspective, we are in a much better position to bridge science and spirituality, than we would have been otherwise. By bringing together "matter" and "meaning" through what can be termed practical spirituality, we can appreciate how both science and spirituality are complementary and incomplete without each other. Indeed, we might reclaim the word 'science', the original meaning of which was to know the world through various means - not just through the 'official' scientific method.¹

The Two aspects of the sea

When we look at the interference of waves spreading out from two nearby locations, over a beautiful still sea, there are two options for our understanding.

(1) **Wonder/contemplation:** We may take the ripples over the blue water as part of the experience of meeting the sea. The sea reveals that an elemental nature stands across from us. The wave patterns in the wind, the colour, the vastness, are aspects that receive into them (and their perception) the unity of existence that is the sea. When we talk of "the sea", everyone understands what we mean, as a singular endeavour of encountering this quality.

(2) **Understanding/revelation:** We can learn from the sea a behaviour of waves, as something to distil into mathematical form. We can find a representation in the mathematics of waves that can stand in for the experience of the sea. We can even ask children to recite in class the abstract basis of waves, quite separately to the phenomena of the sea. This mathematics becomes in the minds of children the constructed order that accounts comprehensively for the phenomena of waves.

The progression of discovery in physics consists of both these aspects, refining a description of the world (2) that leaves open the wonder (1). When reading the accounts of great scientists, they are often busy with a problem for many years, in deep contemplation when the wonder (1) as if by magic reveals itself in a mathematical form (2). Our inquiry into practical spirituality begins with the question how can we create a space where the

¹ "Middle English (denoting knowledge): from Old French, from Latin scientia, from scire 'know'."
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/science>

forms of science become the window for experiencing the spiritual dimension to life?

The present article delineates the relationship between conscious living and practical spirituality. It demonstrates how practical spirituality enables and empowers us for living creatively by nurturing and celebrating the spirit and reconnecting with life's purpose in a meaningful manner.

Spirituality

The domain of spirituality is premised upon the belief that there exists a transcendent reality beyond the realm of the senses, which is the creative source of the realm of matter as well as the mind. There is an interesting parallel here with the work of physicist David Bohm. Bohm worked on wholeness in quantum physics and developed the concepts of the 'implicate' and 'explicate' orders. The 'implicate order' being an un-manifest matrix from which mind and matter (manifest reality) unfold as the 'explicate order' (De Quincey, 2005, p165). Bohm saw the source of creativity as being within the 'implicate order' and he called this the 'generative order'. In Bohm's view, there is no such thing as pure chaos, only infinite degrees of order.

Creativity produces novel forms of order in a process of unfolding from the 'generative order'. Furthermore, Bohm's assertion was that "something very like intelligence is at work at the deepest levels of reality" (De Quincey, 2005, p135) and that "consciousness creates reality" *ibid* p165. Indeed, the philosopher Thomas Nagel has suggested that the "materialist Neo-Darwinian conception of nature is almost certainly false" (Nagel, 2012), while there has been a call for recognising that consciousness may be universal (Koch, 2013). Spirituality involves establishing an interconnectedness of our innate self with this 'implicate order' or Spirit/Consciousness, which is the source of all the creations in the universe. Christina Puchalski, Director, George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, defines spirituality as:

"...the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred." Puchalski (2009)

Therefore, spirituality involving a search for meaning in life involves both **being** (realizing oneself; our true nature) as well as a journey towards **becoming** one with the supreme. From this perspective, spirituality offers a very practical approach towards leading one's life, because, firstly, it enables an individual to identify one's true nature and then guides how one can lead his/her life in accordance with that innate self. Subsequently, it empowers those 'conscious' individuals to live towards an expression of the collective good. There is a feeling of connecting with an underlying and all-pervasive 'wholeness'. Indeed, "Wholeness, it is said, contains everything about itself, within itself." Franses (2015, p 7).

Practical Spirituality

Practical spirituality involves spiritual empowerment, the power to transform ourselves and the world around us (Prophet, 2000). It allows us to find a definition for ourselves and our actions within an expression of the collective good. It is practical because we can harness this spiritual power to address the issues and concerns that engulf us in our day-to-day life.

With a sense of gratitude for every aspect of life, a spiritual person devoid of false desires is at peace with him/herself as well as with the supreme consciousness. On account of this harmonious acceptance of the will of the divine spirit, he/she experiences no stress/anxiety of gaining/losing anything.

Living every moment consciously, the spiritual individual takes everything as transient and a matter of course of time - a natural unfolding and enfolding. Thus, experiencing that moment very deeply and yet not making an attempt to hold on to it. As a result, reaching a stage that is beyond pain, anguish, and anxiety of fear of loss. With an intuitive understanding of the truth; a spiritual person passes through the world knowing fully well that though everything matters, yet none of it actually does; this is the divine paradox.

Through this transformative and unifying meaning, spirituality helps us discern the route that connects us to a creative space (a generative order to use Bohm's terminology), which is both transcendent and immanent, idealistic and practical. It is that space where the head and the heart, matter and meaning meet in the all-pervading interconnectedness of love. And the way into this space is through 'letting go' of any expectations or clinging to specific outcomes. We are able to then trust the living inter-connected and developing universe and recognise and feel the presence of this within us – there is an interiority of meaning. As a result, spirituality starts appearing to be very practical - meaningful events and processes then arise from this space, since this space is not empty, but full of potential and immanent with possibilities.

The space of meaningful event

Joann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), though most famous as a playwright, also carried out scientific work and, in particular, developed a practice, with the study of colour and the forms of plants (Goethe 1790; 1810) that encapsulated these scientific and spiritual aspects. Through the Goethean method, we know the cycle of red, orange, green, blue, violet, magenta, when apprehending the whole wonder and beauty of the colours as they appear through a prism. Similarly, the sequence of developmental stages of the organs of leaf and flower reveal to us the whole character of the plant as a story told through the transformed expression of the plant organs, (which modern genetics has now corroborated two hundred years after Goethe's work; Franses and Wride, 2015).

Goethe practically states that the neutral understanding of science; i.e. being unbiased and open to the phenomenon of study, is a route to attend to the spiritual dimension in everyday

life (Bortoft, 1996; 2012). We are not cut off by science into an abstract world, where the human intellect is the only light. Rather science is the practice of encountering the whole quality of existence, as a transformation of the spirit through the earthly.

In our experience of teaching together on the MSc in Holistic Science at Schumacher College, Totnes, Devon, UK two of the authors (Mike and Philip) opened a space where meaning could be questioned with respect to its relevance to science (Franses and Wride, 2016). The question we wanted to bring to the classroom was, could we understand the discoveries of mainstream physics and biology in a Goethean type way, as linked to life?

The doorway to meaning

When we started the teaching, we were slightly awed at our audacity. Surely it would turn out that physics and biology were just rote subjects that served a technological age, the domain of experts and research specialists. But once we had made the step of trusting each other and the enterprise, all the different parts and theories of physics and biology, seemed to fall together naturally into the deciphering of a living meaning.

This journey, meandering through card games uncovering meaning, stages of embryo development, and the history of matter in its relation to meaning, allowed us to appreciate a unity to which everything pointed. The learning of the parts did not fix us but opened us to a whole participation. However, it was also elusive: what was this wholeness? Was it a theoretical construct, an imagined realm, or a hidden dimension to existence?

In the class, where we navigated biology and physics together, it became clear that wholeness is the experience of arriving together at the fulfilment of meaning. Wholeness is not some theoretical goal, to be intellectually gained. Wholeness is the quality of life that we experienced in the class. There was a palpable feeling in the room that a profound collective experience was occurring.

Wholeness turns an exteriority of means into an interiority of identity. This is happening to us all the time, as we see and communicate the world, not as a data transmission, but a story of subjective beings and their happenings in interaction. But also life has this same facility. The examples we shared with the class related to the cohering of activity into a unity of life, acting for itself.

Wholeness is not some separate mathematical capacity that acts on matter. *Wholeness is the spiritual movement in which external possibilities reveal the meaning of an interior identity.*

Wholeness is the act of assembling possibility all at once into a unity that gives the interiority of meaning to the world of external fact. Nor is this definition of wholeness just a human construct or a philosophy about existence. This aspect of wholeness runs through all of what is known as quantum physics and quantum biology (Al-Khalili and McFadden, 2015). The world is innately open to this process of seeing through external possibility a unity that governs the interiority of identity.

So the cell coheres into the unity of millions of protein interactions. While the organism is the identity that lives through many cells. Even in colonies of bacteria or ants, or slime-mould collections of amoebae, we see this interiority of behavior, in collectively cohering the individual existences (Ben-Jacob et al 2004; 2006).

Wholeness and the Organism

This is exactly the situation of a newly fertilized egg cell. It is not yet a 'thing' and yet it has 'knowing' within it, it's a 'know-thing' inhabiting a space of potential. In fact, the idea of the whole is already within it, at the start, as it contains a genome with a full complement of genes to encode proteins to make a new organism. The 'no-thing' of possibility does not even have the ground for existence within it. It is a surrender to find the meaning that dynamically establishes the ground. Therefore, it starts on a journey of realizing that wholeness. So, it involves the phenomenological nature of the journey from 'no-thing' to identity. This includes the 'ground' of the establishing of existence coming only in the act of realising of potential.

All the parts that are self-generating and self-organising already contain the whole even as they create the whole. As explored above, the eternal space contains the potential for all events and processes. When we actively connect to that space with reverence and gratitude we can experience this self-generating creative process, which we are intimately bound up with. We are then conscious of our role in helping to bring events into manifestation creatively. It is like a child's experience of language, where s/he meets a meaning through words. Only through experience does the child "see" that the language is meaning itself. There is similarly no method to the world, except the one that establishes meaning to the means of endeavour. The ground of all understanding is only in the conscious living. This fundamental of practical spirituality prepares us for living practicality.

It is demonstrated, as described earlier, in Goethean science (Seamon and Zajonc, 1998; Seamon, 2005). For example, where we allow the "tree" to reveal itself as the meaning of the behaviour of leaf, stem, bud, flower, towards a whole realisation. We know "tree" as a powerful encounter, whose very nature is transformation. We discover "tree" as meaning to the journey of the process of unfolding that we have attentively observed. The tree lives its own rhythm of extending out of itself into space and time. In the same way, practical spirituality is an unfolding of a potential that extends us into a new expression of a relationship with God.

According to Goethe, science is as much an inner path of spiritual development as it is a discipline aimed at accumulating knowledge of the physical world (Naydler, 1996, p23). It requires rigorous training of our faculties of observation and thinking as well as feeling, imagination, and intuition. Science and spirituality align in an experience of wonder through 'contemplative looking' (Anschauung). The scientist comes to see 'God in nature, nature in God'. If we consider ourselves to be 'scientists' in the older sense of the word (as discussed above), we can transcend the fragmentation that is both within ourselves and the world, for example in educational approaches that are better aligned to practical

applications in the workplace (Franses and Wride, 2015).

Therefore, in order to experience the fullness of reality, the potential of the world appears to us, in an act establishing our subjectivity along with our objectivity; by quieting the mind in meditation, contemplation, and mindful silence, while we go about our everyday lives in the material world of objects. This creates openness, an expanded space within us in which emerge the possibility of imagination, visualization and out of box thinking. As a result, we become aware that subject and object arise together and we can explore truth beyond material reality. We become true participants in our lives and in the world. As Nobel Prize winning physicist John Wheeler (1911-2008) said: “We are shapers and creators living in a participatory universe” (Folger, 2002). Material reality is then regarded as sacred in the process of its appearing. We then don't need to find an escape from reality (the great error that religious thought/spirituality has promoted through the years).

Nor do we need to adhere to the myopic view, which associates science only with the explanation of matter; while depriving us of meaning. We also need a science of the interior self where we find meaning. The truth about living matter is an appearing of both subject and object in the act of the encounter. Indeed, Goethe famously said that the human being ‘is the most powerful and exact instrument’ (Naydler, 1996, p23). It is also about directing our attention in different directions in ‘inner and outer arcs of attention’ (Marshall, 2001). We also have to challenge the prevalent approach that equates scientific inquiry with quantification and measurement. A qualitative science is also a valid science – a science of feeling, which validates the role of sense experience as being intrinsic in nature. Goethean science represents a ‘science of qualities’ (Reason and Goodwin, 1999) where we are deeply engaged in finding the meaning of the whole, rather than simply a quantification of disconnected parts.

Space for the spirit

We can also extend this understanding from science to spirit. In the realm of our own experience, interior identity, without being corporeally identified with any matter itself, gives meaning to the exterior of possibility, of the apparently random happening of our lives. Now the spirit, as incorporeal unity, gives meaning a form beyond matter. But this view of spirit is entirely practical. It is only by approaching existence through the way of faith that the corporeal facts of existence miraculously reveal the interior identity of the spirit.

By allowing space and slowness for the process, the interior identity of meaning reveals itself to us. Science turns around from being a dull textbook collection of facts, into the experience of revealing a meaning giving interior identity to the group. We are moved together to realise that

1. Spirituality is by nature practical.
2. Every living form is evidence of this movement, from externality of possibility to interiority of meaning (also shown in their quantum coherence).
3. Humans are called to answer to a spiritual movement in gaining access to a meaning

that hovers as form over their actions.

This allows us now to go further into the nature of this form of practical spirituality.

The interiority of meaning

The interiority of meaning implies we become intimate with the universe. Even at the level of the most elemental realm, quantum physics, we are amazed at all the different types of particles, forces, underlying complexity of description, that have to fit together to make the unity of the atom. Surely the atom should be no more than some fragile, unstable unity just managing to keep itself into existence. But in molecules, or collections of atoms, in biological systems, we find the most amazing folding acrobatics of proteins or information structure of genes or signaling networks. The atom has an interiority of meaning that gives it the freedom to found a whole new level of external structure or complexity.

The same is true of us spiritually, that our modest and clumsy attempts to explore reality, lead to moments of intimacy with the universe, in which a new freedom of interiority of meaning identifies itself. In this case, we stand not on a unit of matter, but on a unity of meaning. Spirituality is as practical as building a house.

Seeing through a world built through matter, the intimacy of meaning discovers the secret of the spiritual path. Such a discovery is not an incremental knowledge, but a leap where everything together is signposted as a direction of the unity, the wholeness. The world is seen from inside, in the interiority of meaning, completing all externality.

Conscious living

Conscious living involves silencing the continuous chatter of the mind in a relaxed playful manner and looking within to connect with what is going inside us. At the same time being in touch with what is happening outside. Then putting together both these aspects in such a manner that neither is overpowering the other; and experiencing a gentle flow of events that happens naturally, without deciding or fixing anything ahead of the time.

This enables us to be in tune with ourselves because only when one is in tune with oneself, is he/she in a position to be attuned to the deepest core of the other so that the “self” and “other” disappear and there is only one flow. We obtain a state of balance both within ourselves and with our relationships.

It is like someone sitting calmly and without thinking of anything and experiencing the sunset over the sea in a deep and relaxed manner so that one becomes a part of the single unifying experience. Such a setting enables an individual to experience that moment in its entirety and not just superficially. Thus, creating a possibility for an individual to truly live and deeply experience one’s life rather than merely existing, reacting to the situations and drifting through life.

Only in such a state does there exist a possibility of alignment between the unconscious,

subconscious and the conscious. Conscious living creates a space where the unconscious bubbles up seamlessly as the conscious does not act as a barrier, thus making the experience of living richer and deeper. In conscious living, one does not feel that one is doing what one does not want to do, rather it empowers individuals to take control of their lives. One's life is determined by the conscious choices one makes in accordance with one's inner self rather based on what is considered important by others in the society.

Practicality of conscious living

It may seem that conscious living is only for spiritually inclined individuals, but the reality is that it is the most practical way of leading one's life. As conscious individuals do not merely make decisions, rather think deeply about their decisions, they make decisions that are aligned with their inner self. They are in a job that they want to do and not in jobs that they don't like to do. They are not living and doing things because of a wrong decision or lack of awareness or because of surrendering to the pressure or lure of external circumstances. So, they not only know what they want out of life but also make conscious choices and decisions to have that in time rather than wishfully waiting for it to happen one fine day.

Conscious individuals spend the majority of their time doing things that they love to do. Their routines and habits with respect to eating, exercising, enriching themselves are in harmony with the needs of their body and soul than otherwise. They are self-disciplined by design rather by any effort, so never indulging in wasteful spending of time and money on things that are not truly worth that effort and investment.

The pertinent question is how can we transform our lifestyle and form a natural habit to live consciously during our lifetime. It's both difficult as well as deceptively simple at the same time. To begin with one needs to be conscious (mindful), and think about, everything one does and then start making conscious choices rather than doing things without thinking. It may not be always easy to change our lifestyles, to break out of our daily routines and stop doing what we are used to doing for years. It requires reflecting upon before making any choice or decision and asking a question time and again whether I actually need that something or just simply want it. Surprisingly, the answer may be "No!" for the majority of things that we earlier thought to be necessary and important. And then comes the time to take courageous decision to actually say no to what we don't need. Initially, it may require a willful effort, energy, and constant vigil to make those choices consciously but gradually it will start happening unconsciously as a way of life.

Mindfulness, rooted in the Buddhist philosophy and cultivated for millennia through meditation practices could be of great help in attaining this competence. Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present when you are mindful, and you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to the experience. A comprehensive analysis of mindfulness research, co-directed by a management scientist at Case Western Reserve University, suggests that injecting a

corporate culture of mindfulness not only improves focus but also the ability to manage stress and how employees work together (Good, et al, 2015). The research indicates that when one is mindful, he/she can have a greater consciousness in the present. That is the reason that organizations like Google, Aetna, use mindfulness training to improve their workplace functioning. Research in disciplines like psychology, neuroscience and medicine provide a wealth of evidence that mindfulness improves attention, cognition, emotions, behavior and physiology. Mindfulness has been shown to improve three qualities of attention: stability, control, and efficiency. The human mind is estimated to wander roughly half of our waking hours, but mindfulness can stabilize attention in the present. Individuals who completed mindfulness training were shown to remain vigilant longer on both visual and listening tasks.

These fundamental considerations based on our consciousness become a framework for analysing the various decisions of our life - like how we spend our time productively, what is the real cost of acquiring a thing, or the losing or weakening of a relationship? What will be the impact of our decision on others (people as well as the planet) because, in conscious living, “self” and “other” merges in one unifying experience?

Inner and outer integration

Conscious living lays down a vital foundation for an individual to embark on a journey into the domain of spirituality. Practical spirituality enables us to experience the meaningful moment of living deeply and consciously rather than through the ambition to subdue, control and exploit nature, 'putting nature on the rack' as Francis Bacon said (Fideler, 2014). It also allows us to exist harmoniously and learn effectively within the modern world of supercomplexity (Barnett, 2000 a,b) and to not be overwhelmed by the challenge of the 'wicked problems' of existence (Brown et al., 2010). The resulting humility and the joy of seeing ourselves as a cosmic whole (as every slice of a cake is a cake in itself) rather than just a small spark of the universe go much beyond the interconnectedness paradigm. Thus, we become tiny as well as massively significant at the same time.

Thus, in such reflection, we can respond creatively to both inner and outer worlds. Emanating from the East, this is the art and science of yoga, the science of the self, or as Yogananda Paramahansa would say of Self Realisation (Paramahansa, 2012/1946). In the west, we observe the equivalent in the tradition of alchemy (Hermeticism), which comprises spiritual transformation of the individual in interior terms, which also enable a creative change in the outer world (Picknett, 2011).

This coherence within freedom and variation is integrity - integration. When we are integrated (acting with integrity), within ourselves and with the outside world, we are harmonious with the universe. We are parts of that harmonious whole, which expresses itself within and through us. It supports us and we contribute to it. Thus, synchronicities (as discussed by Carl Jung and Wolfgang Pauli; Donati, 2004) support and validate such a meaningful existence in a sustained manner; we know we are on the right track with the little messages that the universe brings us. The meaningful coincidences guide us and validate our thoughts and feelings about where we are and where we are going. And as a

byproduct, our behavior and decision-making very naturally becomes ethical and sustainable, which are not only of great value to our long-term success as an individual or as an organization but also critical for our survival on this planet. This holistic approach will enable us to examine the reality of the universe, which is obviously incredible and multidimensional.

It would also highlight the power and the limitation of the realm of science that examines existence only from the perspective of causal relations of matter in the vast expanse of the universe. But, the quantum theory already teaches us the subtle nature of matter, which relies equally on the establishing of the reality of perception. Instead of trying to conceal this co-creation of subject and object behind a complicated mathematics, we should open up to see science as a window into discovering a code of living beyond our own finite understanding. Matter, as we understand it, is only one of the layers of the universe. It is akin to the visible spectrum of light. In reality, the universe exhibits itself in multifarious manner - frequencies, dark matter, dark energy, black holes and so on. It is a system, which, as a whole, is much more than the constituents put together; it is an organic, growing and dynamic system, which requires an integral approach rather than only a reductionist one.

Indra's Net and the Holographic Universe

Contemporary physicists are in general agreement that the ancient metaphor of Indra's Net is indeed a good description of the universe. Stephen Mitchell, in his book *The Enlightened Mind*, wrote:

"The Net of Indra is a profound and subtle metaphor for the structure of reality. Imagine a vast net; at each crossing point there is a jewel; each jewel is perfectly clear and reflects all the other jewels in the net, the way two mirrors placed opposite each other will reflect an image ad infinitum. The jewel in this metaphor stands for an individual being, or an individual consciousness, or a cell or an atom. Every jewel is intimately connected with all other jewels in the universe, and a change in one jewel means a change, however slight, in every other jewel."

Whitehead (1926) one of the west's preeminent philosophers echoed the same sentiment while defining the human interactions when he proposed that the actual temporal world is a community of a multiplicity of occasions (epochal occasions).

"The epochal occasions are the primary units of the actual community, and the community is composed of the units. But each unit has in its nature a reference to every other member of the community, so that each other member of the community, so that each unit is a microcosm representing in itself the entire all-inclusive universe."

The mind being a mirror of reality, and not its basis, which is a common thesis among various religions is quite akin to what physicist are proposing as holographic principle. From this perspective, the seemingly very different domains of science and spirituality appear to be on a common platform describing the same truth in a similar manner with the only differentiator being the vocabulary.

Conclusion

Although science has led our progress for centuries, increased the levels of efficiency and affluence significantly, yet this increase in affluence is not translating into making people any happier and healthier than they were in the past. For instance, the incidence projections indicate that the number of people with dementia is projected to nearly double every 20 years (Duthey, 2013). Surprisingly, genetically identified forms of Alzheimer disease, which was first identified around 100 years ago account for only 0.1% of disease cases (Blennow, et al 2006). In research conducted by Hypertension Society of India (HSI), it was observed that more than 20% of Indian youths suffer from hypertension. “Most of the young working population face health problems due to anxiety, stress and the usual ‘hurry’ that prevails in their day-to-day life”, said, A Muruganathan, President, HSI (IANS, 2016). A 25 percent drop was identified in the trust in science since 1974 amongst the self-identified conservatives who frequently attend church (Gauchat, 2012).

Religious institutions too appear to be losing their appeal especially in the developed world, according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center survey, a staggering 35% of adult American Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) are religiously unaffiliated, which is double the share of unaffiliated Baby Boomers (17%) and more than three times than the Silent generation (11%). Two-thirds of Millennials who were raised unaffiliated are still unaffiliated (67%), a higher retention rate than most other major religious groups (Lipka, 2015). The trend continues with respect to higher education as on account of rising tuition costs and a poor job market, 20 percent of American middle-class parents say they don't consider a college education to be a worthy investment (Merill Edge Report, 2012).

In a seven-nation survey conducted by the market-research firm YouGov for the London-based Legatum Institute in 2015, 55% of Americans expressed that under capitalism the rich are getting richer and the poor get poorer, while 65% respondents reported that big businesses dodged taxes, bought favours or polluted and only 14% felt that next generation will be richer, safer and healthier than the last. The percentage of optimists is 42 percent in Thailand, 39 in Indonesia, 29 in Brazil, 19 in the U.K. and 15 in Germany (Montgomerie, 2015).

In this context, when we are witnessing a fall in people's faith/trust in leading social institutions be it religion, science, capitalism or higher education; practical spirituality offers us a comprehensive framework to achieve a cohesive integration of science and spirituality as a single coherent system. Science-spirituality collaboration is also important because the ultimate questions of matter and creation of the universe cannot be answered by fundamental science alone without accounting for and factoring in consciousness, meaning and values. The tools of science would be more useful and beneficial only if the wisdom and creativity of individual consciousness guide their application in a meaningful direction.

Our existence on this planet is threatened by incredible global challenges such as global warming, climate change, widening of the gap between rich and poor, sustainability,

biodiversity, depletion of non-renewable resources, rising sea levels, etc. Our future depends on science and spirituality working together, because, separately, neither will be able to single-handedly address humanity's monumental tasks. Science and spirituality need to come together as a single framework and make a concerted effort to derive holistic solutions for these mammoth problems involving multiple stakeholders. Only then we will be employing our full human capability to address these issues.

The coming together of science and spirituality will set the stage for the next evolutionary leap in realizing the true human potential. But, we must understand that practical spirituality has its ground neither in the practice nor the spirituality separately, but only in their combination.

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