

INTRODUCTION of the book Spirit in Finance

In Plato's cave, people thought that the dark shadows cast on a blank wall were reality, not realizing that their perception imprisoned them. The man who managed to free himself wanted to show his fellow human beings the way to the light. It almost became his death, as people prefer to think in the way that feels most familiar. Like Plato's philosopher, I nevertheless choose to write and tell how we as human beings and organisations are able to build 'heaven on earth,' by imbuing ourselves with more Spirit and exuding love.

The first case of financial craze in the Netherlands, the tulip mania, dates back to 1637. At that time, too, it involved a purely speculative trade that had got out of hand. A single tulip bulb could amount to as much as one or more annual salaries. One could even buy a tulip bulb on option. Eventually the Amsterdam Stock exchange crashed.

In the past twenty years or more we have managed to blow up the financial system somewhere in the world nearly a hundred times. Take for instance the economic crisis in Argentina (2001), the financial crisis in Russia (1998), the financial crisis in Asia (1997), the Mexican tequila crisis (1994) and the bursting of the Internet bubble (1997-2001).

On each occasion we have taken the same kind of emergency measures. To begin with, we pump a great deal of tax money into wobbly financial institutions. Then we improve the rules and the supervision. In the present case, a total of \$10,000 billions worth of support programmes was promised within six months after today's crisis began. In addition, a lot of discussions are taking place about adjustments to laws and the role of our supervisors.

It seems difficult to imagine how we, with our hyper-rational thinking, have found it nearly impossible to think about money in a different way. It is as if we have forgotten that money is our own invention. In an economic sense, it is altogether an illusion. It is a belief in a belief. It involves digital figures that we tap into a computer. In a spiritual sense, money is neither good nor evil. It is neutral. Just like a match. You can use it to set a forest on fire or light a candle. Money is only a means to an end. It is up to us how we deal with it.

On the outside, the financial world appears to be very logically constructed. It is a world in which many decision-makers with a high IQ are active. Using the saying ‘measuring = knowing,’ plenty of manuals and protocols are striving after ‘high output.’ Quarterly figures often mean more than people. Everything runs smoothly until we no longer have faith in it. It can actually be said that the financial world with its billions of supporters has become the largest religious community on the planet. It has deeply-rooted ideologies about people and the world. Its followers adhere to a strange system of religious dogmas and rituals. Essentially, everything is based on belief in the omnipotence of money. The influence of its teachings and concepts about money reaches far beyond most religions, churches, spiritual movements and organisations. Too often, money becomes an excuse for merely surviving rather than truly living.

In this book, I hope to show how the credit crisis can help us all to bring ‘heaven on earth’ – how we can let our light shine on finances. Money and matter provide an outstanding possibility – perhaps even an unequalled potential – for people and society to return to love. How? By no longer interacting in this world of money and matter based on self-interest alone, but rather under the guidance of Spirit. A new world is possible once we are willing to join Spirit in making the efforts. This can only happen when we are willing to take total responsibility in our daily thinking and actions.

Some people cling strongly to money and matter. The credit crisis offers various examples of this. Others will do almost anything to avoid touching matter. Above all they seek Spirit ...until matter shows itself.

This book will help you to imbue money and matter with your Spirit. It aims at guiding us from Spirit to earthly matter. The goal is to inspire people and organisations in financial matters – to heal our rigid thoughts and feelings about money and spirituality. We will seek ways to dissolve the boundaries between the seemingly separate worlds of spirituality and finances. The book offers a holistic, contemporary view of a changing financial/economic world filled with loving signals and examples of people and organisations that have chosen a new path. May it inspire you!