

The Convergence of Science, Spirituality and Peace

by Joseph R. Giove, Executive Director of www.CommonPassion.org

Three major technological and humanistic developments are converging. They are:

1. Collective mind-matter interactions
2. Peace-creating field effects of human group coherence
3. Proliferation of global collaboration technologies and social networking

Through this convergence, a holistic blending of the East and the West is making the scientific exploration of certain spiritual practices, which are aimed at creating peace, a viable pursuit. With a rigorous Western approach to practical application of Eastern wisdom, world peace may well be within our reach.

This article first discusses the current state of societal disharmony from an unusual perspective, one that considers the underlying subjective issues of conflict. Next it addresses how the science of consciousness is transforming our worldview. Then it presents how an East-West convergence of science, technology and spirituality gives humanity an unprecedented opportunity to bring sustainable peace to our communities and to the world. Capitalizing on this opportunity is the mission of CommonPassion.org.

A Different Model of Societal Disharmony

The peace-through-strength approach, both in our communities and on the world scene, continually demonstrates its limitations. Every “victory” contains the seeds of fear, mistrust and hostility. Societal tension underlies attempts at reconciliation, rendering them temporary at best. A more fundamental and sustainable approach to societal harmony is apparently needed. This approach might be viewed as the strength-through-peace approach, advocated by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, discussed below.

This approach examines and addresses the underlying *subjective* issues of conflict, a common one being tension or stress. As R.K White argues in *Fearful Warriors*:

“Traditional approaches to peace...cannot be effective in the absence of concurrent measures to drastically reduce tension. High levels of tension or stress directly motivate violence aimed at removing perceived injustices, threats or blocks to progress....they may also indirectly breed misperceptions, fear, and dysfunctional cognitive and decision-making processes.”

Consider this on a personal level. Recall a circumstance between you and a spouse, coworker or business partner. Your stress may have distorted your perception of the situation and ability to make thoughtful, creative, harmonious decisions. Now multiply this stressful influence times a hundred or thousands, as is the case in many communities around the world.

If a sustainable approach to peace is possible, it must alleviate this tension in a way that feels personal to each individual, yet is not externally imposed. When this is

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accomplished, cognitive and decision-making processes naturally tend toward more harmonious outcomes.

Examining human consciousness as it relates to peaceful relations seems as relevant as any externally motivated means of resolving conflicts. However, implementing a community or global strength-through-peace approach, without scientific evidence will seem like a Pollyanna notion, extremely naive, or a gross underestimation of a complex socio-economic-geopolitical dynamic.

Fortunately, decades of well-controlled scientific studies suggest that this is the very approach that can and should be taken to undermine the very roots of conflict and violence.

From an Objective to a Subjective Worldview

To understand this revolutionary approach it is important to legitimize subjective experience. Think of the things that matter most to you: happiness, love, inner peace, faith, belonging, contentment, joy and creativity, all subjective experiences. The chair on which you sit and the computer screen you view are mostly empty space, made “solid” by the subjective experience of your mind.

Our modern life of faster, smaller, virtual, more ephemeral, more abundant...everything, can be stymieing and unsettling. It can feel like we're losing our once-solid footing for life as we race headlong into an era where less has become more and the materialistic underpinnings of our worldview are dissolving from the inside out. Many people are losing their reference point for identity and security. This can be especially difficult and stressful for the critical mind. As consciousness researcher David Orme-Johnson points out:

“We live in an era in which science is evolving from a materialist worldview to integrate into its theoretical structure the last great frontier of science, consciousness. It is natural during this phase transition for those steeped in a mechanistic paradigm to be critical of the emerging scientific understanding that consciousness plays a fundamental role in natural law. The scientific investigation of consciousness is critical to our understanding of the natural world and for solving the recalcitrant problems of humankind, which are all ultimately problems of mind.”

Once we give consciousness and its practical application equal footing with machines, progress and commerce, we have a chance at uniting three major developments that have resulted from advancing technology and globalization. They are: 1) collective mind over matter, 2) a human-based peace technology, and 3) massive global collaboration.

As Mass Mind Moves, So Does Matter

Imagine going to Las Vegas and playing craps. Instead of everyone at the table hoping for a different roll of the dice, you all agree what number you want to see. Believe it or

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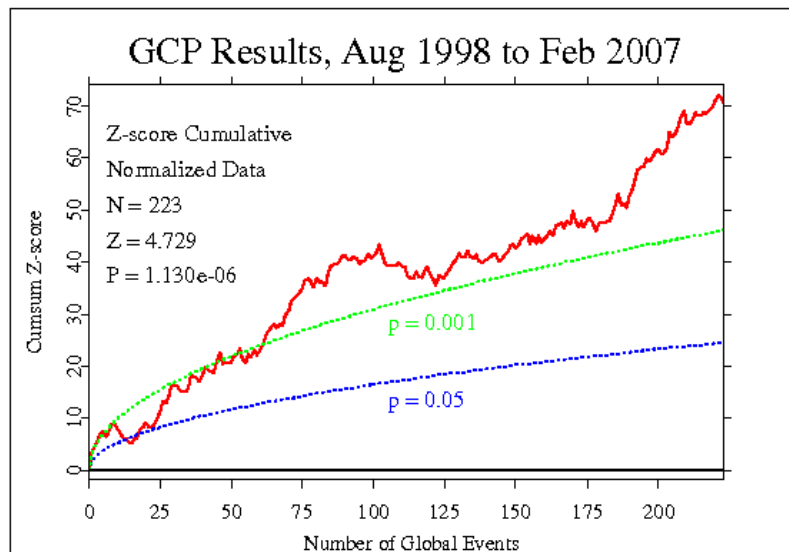
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not, this might have a subtle influence on the probability of those intended numbers occurring. This ability to influence random events has been studied for over 75 years, according to Dean Radin, PhD, author of *Entangled Minds* and *The Conscious Universe*.

Now imagine having dozens of computers spread around the world whose job it is to roll electronic dice continuously, creating a steady stream of random events. Do you think that a group of people around the world could meditate on becoming more coherent as a group, calming themselves very deeply without falling asleep, and that human coherence could make those random dice-rolls not so random?

What would you say if it doesn't even require that much intention; that all it takes is an event that captures the collective attention, like the death of Princess Diana, a tsunami disaster broadcast on every TV station, or the tragedy of September 11, 2001? Dr. Roger Nelson, retired Princeton University professor, heads the Global Consciousness Project. (<http://noosphere.princeton.edu>). Since 1998 this project has been running a network of random event generators distributed around the world. When actual events of world interest happen, a change of the random numbers to non-random occurs, which cannot be explained through traditional physics. Over 200 events have been evaluated, from natural disasters to the death of celebrities to global meditations, and have shown that as humans become more coherent, it appears that matter does too, with odds against this phenomenon occurring by chance at over 1,000,000 to 1.

Graph of Accumulating Deviations



The above figure presents the cumulative deviation of the formal results from chance expectation, which is shown as the horizontal black line at 0 deviation. Truly random data would produce a jagged curve with no slope, wandering up and down around the horizontal. The dotted smooth curves show the 0.05 and 0.001 probability envelopes that help to define significant versus chance excursions.

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The jagged red line shows the accumulating excess of the actual Z-scores relative to expectation for the complete dataset. 13 of the originally specified events are excluded from the formal set for rigorous calculations. These have problems such as weak or incomplete specification, overlap or dependence with other events. The rigorous subset is based on a careful, skeptical assessment made in 2003 and 2004, and uses empirical normalization. This assessment resulted in more careful application of rules to avoid problems in event definitions.

As extraordinary as these consciousness field effects are, something even more interesting happens when we study what occurs to *other humans* under special cases of intentional group coherence.

A Human-Based Peace Technology

One of the most remarkable imports from the East isn't curry spice; it's a phenomenon referred to as "a fourth state of consciousness." When this state of consciousness is shared within a group, it appears to have a peace-creating influence on others in a community.

The first three states of consciousness you are already familiar with: 1) wakefulness, 2) dreaming while you sleep; and 3) deep sleep.

The fourth state, according to Robert M. Oates in *Permanent Peace*, seems to be a combination of two seemingly opposed human states: minimum physical-mental arousal and maximum awareness. The former is akin to deep sleep, where the body and nervous system are minimally aroused, with no sensory or mental activity. The latter is a rarified, gentle type of awareness that transcends normal wakefulness – a pure, self-referral type of awareness – awareness circling back to become aware of itself...awareness of awareness, so to speak.

While this fourth state of consciousness is uncommon, it is a natural human state. It has been studied extensively for its remarkably positive effects on human health and well-being. In this state, breath slows down, heart rate decelerates, skin conductance increases (the opposite of the Fight or Flight response), brain functioning become more coherent from left to right and front to back, as indicated by the EEG.

The method used to experience this fourth state of consciousness is an inner practice called transcendental meditation (TM). The full complex of effects as described above does not seem to be achieved with most other forms of skilled relaxation or meditation. TM comes from the eastern Vedic tradition. It is the oldest continuous system of human knowledge, called the Perennial Philosophy. TM is not a religion, does not involve contemplation about religious or secular ideas, nor does it involve concentration, which is characteristic of some meditation and religious practices. It is a simple, inner practice that allows the active mind to settle to its silent self-referral state.

The reason TM is being highlighted here is because it is has been the subject of most social studies, and has a well developed theory of consciousness and its individual and

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collective effects. These studies tested the hypothesis that societal stress underlies violence, aggression and conflict, which can be reduced by inducing into the community a fundamental calming and harmonizing influence.

Remember the Global Consciousness Project where groups of people appear to influence a change of random numbers to non-random? Considering this, it's not too far fetched that humans can affect other humans to behave in a more coherent, harmonious way as well...by becoming more coherent and harmonious within themselves.

Since the late 1970s, studies of large peace-creating groups of TM practitioners have consistently shown a reduction of violent crime and terrorism. They come to a city, gather in large groups for a period of weeks or months, and a significant drop in crime is subsequently observed below pre-existing levels. These groups, numbering in the hundreds to thousands, seem to create a calming and harmonizing effect in the surrounding communities.

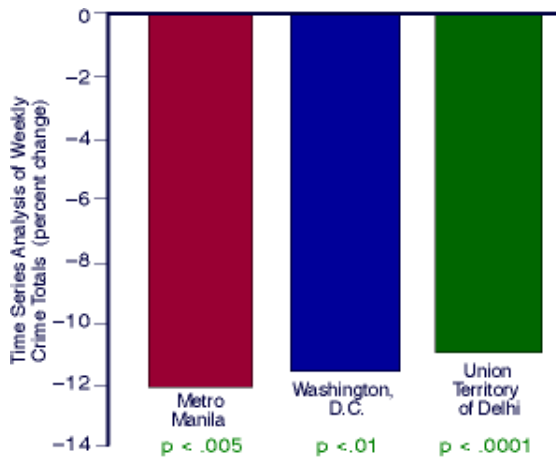
What is particularly encouraging in these studies is that violent crime isn't the only aspect positively influenced; it appears that all members of a community, including policy makers, social architects, police officers, husbands and wives, teachers, children, virtually every segment of a society, all seems to be influenced in a way to be more harmonious: within themselves, between each other, and with their environment. Think of what could be accomplished if citizens in these communities would form similar peace-creating groups and thus provide this effect on a continuous basis. The future of neighborhood crime prevention programs should include similar peace-creating group activities. These activities may include TM but studies currently underway sponsored and conducted by CommonPassion.org, may show other types of activities can be effective.

The table below summarizes three studies that demonstrated significantly reduced crime in the capital regions of the Philippines, the United States and India. A time series analysis showed that this drop was not expected based on prior causative factors, and could not be accounted for by weather, seasonal cycles or change in police coverage. Because two of the three groups were composed of Westerners visiting Asian cities, these studies also demonstrated that peace-creating groups apparently operate on a fundamental level that transcends political, cultural or ethnic differences. (*The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 8, 67-104; *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 9, 457-485).

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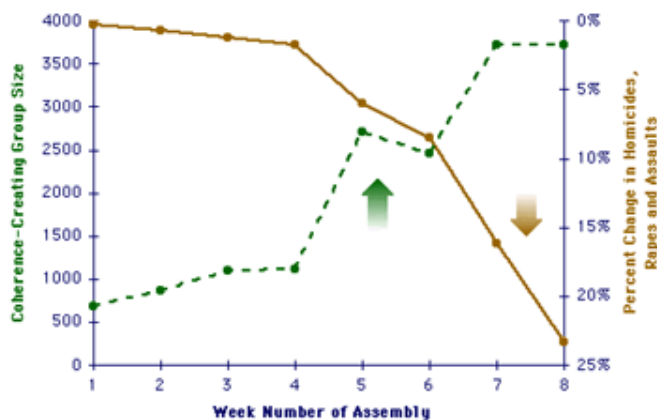
Decreased Crime in the Capital Regions of the Philippines, the United States, and India



Source: www.permanentpeace.org with permission.

Another study, performed in 1993, is shown below. It was a National Demonstration Project of TM conducted in Washington, D.C. from June 7 to July 30, 1993. It tested the efficacy of a peace-creating group for reducing crime as measured by FBI Uniform Crime Statistics. Soon after the start of the study, and during a near-record summer heat wave, violent crime began decreasing and continued to drop until the end of the experiment (maximum decrease 23.6%), after which it began to rise again. The likelihood that this result could be attributed to chance variation in crime levels was less than two parts per billion ($p < .000000002$). The drop in crime could not be attributed to other possible causes, including prior causative factors, temperature, precipitation, weekends, and police and community anti-crime activities (*Social Indicators Research* 47: 153-201, 1999).

Reduced Violent Crime in Washington, D.C.



The remarkable effects demonstrated by the 50+ well-controlled TM social studies is not outside the realm of your own personal experience, you may have just never considered it

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this way. Imagine going to a gathering of friends who respect you, desire your company, and are calm and enjoying themselves. This gathering would feel welcoming and you'd be more likely to have a relaxed, enjoyable time. You'd feel confident, creative and resourceful. You'd feel a harmony with your friends that would transcend inevitable differences. Contrast this with attending a court hearing with obvious interpersonal polarities, skilled adversaries and ill intentions. In the presence of this field of tension and conflict, you may feel uneasy, strained, mentally agitated, uncreative, perhaps even cognitively impaired, and not in the best decision-making mode. Both scenarios involve a localized consciousness field that you influence and that influences you...a very common human experience.

Mainstream science is just now recognizing this consciousness field. It's been there all along, though, harboring our hopes, frustrations, fears, joys, sorrows...and intentions. While a handful of very powerful people may be able to influence a nation for its betterment or detriment through political, economic or violent means, the mass of people connected through technology can now bring something much more rewarding to life. This brings up the final development.

Massive Global Collaboration

Massive collaboration in today's highly connected world is something dramatically different than we're used to. It is about deep changes in the structure of our society and economy that are touching virtually every aspect of human affairs.

As Dan Tapscott says in *Wikinomics, How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, "Billions of connected people can now actively participate in innovation, wealth creation and social development in ways we once only dreamed of. And when these masses of people collaborate they collectively advance the arts, culture, science education, government and the economy in surprising ways...discovering the true dividends of collective capability and genius. These changes are ushering us toward a world where knowledge, power and productive capability will be more dispersed than at any time in our history—a world where value creation will be fast, fluid and persistently disruptive."

The power to add immense value to humanity and disrupt the cycle of conflict, violence and societal disharmony has been demonstrated repeatedly by the two previously mentioned developments. Now, combined with the proliferation of massive collaboration technologies – made evident by the large scale successes of MySpace, YouTube, Second Life and Wikipedia – these two social endeavors can be scientifically explored to discover their ability to impact social harmony.

Imagine a massive global collaborative of peace-creating groups whose purpose is social harmony, comprised of members from every religion, meditation practice and indigenous group. They would come together locally and globally, learn how to apply the findings of prior social studies, and develop an open-source technology that validated the social harmonizing effects of their combined efforts.

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One of the products of their collaboration would be a “social harmony index” reflective of the value in social capital gained by their efforts. They would regularly monitor indicators of social harmony and coherence, like the level and severity of emergency calls, crime statistics, socially responsible investing, and other real-time data sources. They would then feed that composite index back to participating groups over mobile phones, podcasts, television, radio and the Internet.

This index would serve as a social coherence feedback signal that would help integrate all the diverse tendencies in society for a mutually enhancing common good. This will educate and empower ever-larger numbers of people to participate in the most effective peace-making program ever developed. One that puts the power of peace in the hands of those who benefit most: the individual. This would be ideal for the Millennium Project of the United Nations University and incorporated in their annual *State of the Future* publication.

When this is done, peace may well be within our reach, and science can help us get there.

Joseph R. Giove is founder and Executive Director of CommonPassion.org, a nonprofit, nonsectarian, educational and scientific consortium committed to uniting collective human intention and technology to promote social harmony: www.CommonPassion.org.

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