

## ***THE SOUL OF MONEY – An interview with Lynne Twist***

Lynne Twist is a global activist and the author of *THE SOUL OF MONEY*, a wise and inspiring exploration of the connection between money and leading a fulfilling life.

Q. Your book, *THE SOUL OF MONEY*, examines our relationship with money – how we earn it, how we use it, how we spend it, and how we give it away. Is money really that big of an issue for most people?

**LYNNE TWIST:** We all have an identifiable, though largely unexamined relationship with money that shapes our experience of life and our deepest feelings about ourselves and others. Money is the most universally motivating, maligned and misunderstood part of life. Money is how we measure our competence and self worth and whether we are rich or poor we all find ourselves in the grip of fantasies and fears about money, obsessing about it in ways that can make it a destructive power in our lives. The process of transforming our relationship with money requires that we confront our fears around money, our addiction and attachment to money as well as our guilt and hurts around money. Money drives so much about human behavior in the world today, and we can see the adverse consequences in global terms when we look at patterns of violence, oppression and other social, political and economic inequities. At a personal level, we've all seen the way money often undermines relationships with family, friends and work associates. Now, more than ever, it's imperative that we understand our individual relationship with money so that we can begin to align our decisions about money with our deepest core values and highest commitments. This is what will ultimately bring us the most happiness AND make the world a better place.

Q. How can understanding our relationship with money change our lives?

**LYNNE TWIST:** When we are engrossed in the money game we often grow selfish, greedy, petty, fearful, or controlling. We get caught up in our fears of not having enough and become disconnected from our soul in order to “get what's ours” or constantly “get more.” When we let go of the unquestioned chase for more, and ground ourselves in appreciation of what we have, we discover the wealth of our own sufficiency. We experience the prosperity of “enough” and we find a kind of peace and freedom with money and with ourselves. When we express that by directing our money – no matter what the amount – toward things we believe in, we can discover and experience that generous, courageous and committed place in ourselves.

Q. What do you mean by learning to live with enough?

**LYNNE TWIST:** There comes a point where having more than we need becomes a burden. We are overcompensated, overstuffed, swimming in the excess, looking for satisfaction in more or different. We live in a world where the prevailing belief is in scarcity. We don't believe we have enough time, enough energy, enough love, and we are all pretty certain we don't have enough money. Those beliefs drive us to over-consume, over-spend, over-eat, always thinking we still need more. We also buy into the myths that there's not enough to go around, more is definitely better and the resignation of “that's just the way it is.” I had the good fortune to be mentored by the great futurist and humanist, R. Buckminster Fuller. He taught me that at this point in our evolution we can choose to move from a you-or-me world – a world where either you win or I win, or we can commit to a you-and-me world where all of us have enough food, enough water, enough land, enough housing and enough of the fundamental things for each one of us to live a fulfilling and productive life. This uncommon vision requires a shift in the very basis of the

way we relate to one another AND the way we relate to money. Ultimately it shifts the way we relate to ourselves and the world.

Q. But isn't scarcity a reality in third world countries?

**LYNNE TWIST:** I've spent nearly thirty years working to end world hunger and I've seen firsthand that brutal existence where people don't have enough to eat. And yet, we live in a world awash with food. We currently have on earth more food than we need to feed everyone several times over. In several countries, including the U.S., farmers are paid to NOT grow food. Yet hunger persists. So the deeper issue is not scarcity of food, but rather a disastrous cycle of ineffective aid, corruption, disrupted markets, failed farming investments and other factors. That's why just sending handouts of food or money doesn't solve the chronic problem. The solution requires that we commit *ourselves* to solidarity and integrity, creating partnerships to assist people in reclaiming the power of their own self-sufficiency. I suggest there is enough in nature, in human nature and in the relationship we share with one another, to have a prosperous, fulfilling life, no matter who you are or where you are in the spectrum of resources.

Q. How does one begin to practice sufficiency?

**LYNNE TWIST:** Popular culture promotes owning, holding, collecting and accumulating. We become burdened by our excess; it clutters our thinking and our lives as we become attached to our possessions and identify who we are by what we have. In the practice of sufficiency, we experience wealth in the action of sharing, giving, allocating, distributing and nourishing the projects, people and purpose that we believe in and care about with the resources that flow to us and through us. Accumulation in moderation – saving money and buying things we need – is part of responsible approach to personal finances. But when “holdings” hold us back from using money in meaningful ways, then money becomes an end in itself and an obstacle to well being. Money is only useful when it is moving and flowing, contributed and shared, directed and invested in that which is life affirming. One of my favorite sayings about this comes from Haiti: “If you get a piece of cake and eat the whole thing you will feel empty. If you get a piece of cake and share half of it, you will feel both full and fulfilled.” The happiest people I know are those who express themselves through channeling their resources to their highest commitments.

Q. One of the most surprising aspects of your book is when you say that excess wealth is actually an obstacle to happiness. How could this possibly be?

**LYNNE TWIST:** Mother Teresa taught me that wealth is no protection from human suffering, and I have seen it firsthand in my own work. Many of the world's most wealthy people live trapped in a prison of privilege in which material comforts are plentiful, but spiritual and emotional deprivation are real and painful. Often the wealthy suffer from loneliness and isolation, especially when so many relationships are all about money and lack the genuine qualities of love or friendship. Excessive amounts of money become an obstacle to a fulfilling life unless the relationship with that money is grounded in sufficiency, and in generosity and relatedness of soul.

Q: In your book you advocate a new context for philanthropy which you call Committed Philanthropy. Please explain.

**LYNNE TWIST:** You do not need to be wealthy to be a philanthropist, in fact, 88% of the money given to charities in the U.S. comes from individuals, not corporations. And, surprisingly, of this group 75% of these people make less than \$150,000 dollars a year. And, philanthropy is not just about cold hard cash. Committed philanthropy enables people to invest their wealth, not only in dollar amounts but also with the energy of their intention, their resources and/or assets. Sometimes those resources are financial.

Sometimes they are sweat equity and sometimes it's one person's devotion and passion to hold a vision for what's possible.

Q. You have said fundraising is sacred work. How so?

**LYNNE TWIST:** Fundraising offers a powerful and privileged opportunity to be in intimate conversation with another person about the nature of their highest commitments and values. Fundraising is all about money's flow – freeing it, inviting it, channeling it and enabling people to experience themselves in the nourishment of that flow. In philanthropic interaction we can return to the heart and soul of money: money as energy and money as a currency for love, commitment and service, money as an opportunity to give back.

Q. In conclusion, what is the message about money you most want to convey?

**LYNNE TWIST:** When the use of money is consistent with our core values, it strengthens the quality of our commitment and our accountability for it. It has a powerful impact on our ethical and moral fiber. We can begin by turning our attention to making a conscious effort to use our money with life-affirming purpose, to nurture those people, organizations, projects and products that represent our most soulful interests. And we can stop the flow of money toward those that debilitate or demean life, or drag us down. We can be more financially generous with organizations and individuals doing good work that we want to support. Some of us may devote ourselves to public service or become advocates for socially responsible public spending on health, education, safety and government. The mindset of scarcity and the longing for “more” will begin to lose its grip when we begin to make different choices. We each have the power to arrange life to take a stand with our money and our life. Every moment of every day we can bring this consciousness to our choices about our money, our time and our talents to take a stand for what we believe in. We have the capacity for much greater lives than just “getting and “having.” I invite you to take a stand. I invite you to separate yourself from the prevailing winds of scarcity, greed and accumulation and use the opportunity that we each have to explore sufficiency and enough – - the true portal to prosperity . I invite you to deepen your values and to live in a new freedom and power in your relationship with money and life.

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Lynne Twist is the author of **THE SOUL OF MONEY Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Life** (W.W.Norton, September, 2003). A veteran global activist and fundraiser living in San Francisco, she is one of the founding executives of The Hunger Project, vice-chair of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, and trustee of Fetzer Institute, is also the co-founder with her husband of The Pachamama Alliance. The Alliance is dedicated to preserving the Earth's tropical rainforests and its indigenous cultures, and to the creation of a new global vision of sustainability for us all. Please visit [www.soulofmoney.org](http://www.soulofmoney.org).

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