

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? AUSTERITY

Indulge yourself? No way! Can't you see there's a war on? The Zeitgeist is grey, stripped down, disciplined and self-denying. Picture: we are confidently trekking up the hillside when suddenly the ground falls away precipitously and we find ourselves moving through a dark, damp, featureless valley. Worse, it is filled with fog. What to do? Press ahead, armed with the belief that we will one day regain the sunny uplands and, most importantly, hold hands. Austerity has two imperatives: one is self-imposed adaptive scarcity, the other is the moral order of community. It is said Britain was never more cohesive and at peace with itself than during the darkest hours of WWII. Yet, as we look up to the C-suite, we might conclude some folk seem to be quietly exempt from the commonwealth of austerity; or not so quietly once shareholders wake up and wag their fingers at the bosses. Good for them, for revolt is better than cynicism and disillusionment. And we should remember, in praise of austerity, that parsimony is a discipline. It takes us back to basics: to issues of true value; to critical



priorities; to considered rather than casual choices; and to essentials before the frivolous. Yet, in this world, simple pleasures become even more of an imperative. Fun is an essential, for goodness sake!

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