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# A Time to Heal

HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

I find I am often accused of living in the past, or of wanting to return to the kind of past that can only be met in the imagination. I have been branded as a traditionalist, as if tradition was some kind of disease that had to be sprayed at airports. I am told that I wish to go backwards into the Brave New World of the 21st century – not, as some would have us do, blindly trusting in the gloriously progressive technological utopianism of the high priests of scientific rationalism, but anchored in the mudbank of superstition and irrelevant spirituality.

Why am I accused of such 'backwardness?' Because ever since I witnessed, as a teenager in the 1960s, the ever more frenzied dismemberment of what was left of the traditional framework of our existence – even to the excited pronouncement that 'God is dead' – I have dedicated my life to finding ways of trying to bring back the 'baby' that was inevitably thrown out with the 'bathwater' during the orgy of over-zealous destruction. The most important areas that needed the baby's reinstatement, in my opinion, were Architecture, Agriculture, Medicine and Education. (The Environment was another crucial element, but could be included as part of Agriculture.)

As I saw it, the 1960s represented a further tightening of the screw of rationalism that had been applied with increasing force since the days of Descartes. Don't get me wrong – rationalism and reason are essential elements in the whole equation of life and without them we would lack many of the acknowledged benefits of modern existence. However, I believe that Man has a dual nature – his feet on the ground and his head in the clouds – and that, in a sense, he is a microcosm of what lies at the heart of the Universe. I also believe that the existence we find ourselves in – as part of this world and, in turn, the Universe – consists of a giant paradox. Hence everything in life has another side to it – good and evil, light and dark and so on and so forth. We are therefore confronted continually by opposites and it would seem that, by reading history, the wisest of our ancient forbears understood in a rather profound way that one of the secrets of a civilized existence was invariably the reconciliation of opposites, or the search for balance and harmony.

It is only too clear that mankind has made enormous strides in progress through the application of rational thought and experimentation, particularly during the twentieth century, but it has been at a price in my view. And that price has been the loss of balance and harmony and the introduction of a harsh, brutalized, mechanistic view of the world and of mankind where everything is reduced to the sum of its parts and we find ourselves, increasingly, as guinea pigs in a series of very uncertain experiments conducted in the laboratory of Nature. The fact that people are beginning to ask questions and to display anxiety about this loss of balance reveals that, deep down in each one of us, there is some distant voice that comes to us from another dimension and that is crying out for recognition once again.

Take Architecture, for instance. Throughout the past century we have witnessed the brutalization of our built environment precisely because of the powerfully fashionable ideological necessity of reducing both Man and his surroundings to the level of a machine so as to crush those ancient, 'irrational' elements in Man which have been so vilified as Tradition. The practice of architecture in the last century, as with the other aspects of life I will refer to later, will eventually be shown as an aberration for the simple reason that it has relied on the denial of our essential humanity. Our technological competence is truly remarkable, but we make a terrible mistake if we equate our nature with that technology or, indeed, our buildings. Technology already dominates every aspect of our lives. We don't need to live in buildings that intimately reflect that selfsame technology and which, inevitably, de-humanize us by their very scale and lack of any reference to human proportion.

Of course I can't prove 'scientifically' that de-humanized surroundings affect our psychological outlook, but there is enough anecdotal evidence to show that many people have had to accept the imposition on them of a built environment over which they have little or no choice. The utter soullessness of what has been imposed on them in the name of progress and functional efficiency has taken its toll, both of mind and spirit and of the one thing we cannot escape from – the public realm. All around us we see the results of the denigration of our higher instincts and the constant war with Nature; a deadly combination which has created *disharmony*, *disintegration* and *dysfunction*.

In architectural terms, as I see it, the challenge is to make Tradition a living thing; a living language that draws its inspiration, like a great



tree, from subterranean, unseen roots, but which is nevertheless rendered contemporary in each generation. Tradition is not a dead thing; it is, in fact, the only means by which we can experience a sense of belonging and meaning within a rapidly changing world. It is, ultimately, the only way of making sense of the past and the future through their subtle reconciliation in a kind of eternal present. We can only live in the future by recalling and re-examining the past. To do so otherwise is hardly sensible or responsible – but that is what we have been encouraged to do, hence the whole debate about environmental crisis and the need for sustainable development.

Nowhere is the war with Nature more visible than in the world of Agriculture. Even the modern crops and the chemicals that are crucial to their survival have names that reek of battle and conflict. We are told that only ever more sophisticated technology and fewer and fewer people on the land are required to 'feed the world.' Nature must be subdued and humbled, put in Her place and, through deliberate ignorance, abused without ever stopping to consider that experience of this world tells us that you can never actually have something for nothing and that if you push beyond the natural balance Nature herself invariably rebels in some unexpected way. The world is full of clever people who believe they can find, or have found, the final solution to the challenges and problems that confront us in this existence – hence the belief that genetic engineering will usher in a world free from disease and hunger.

Modern agriculture may have produced an over-abundance of cheap food, but it has proved to be at an enormous price in terms of landscape, wildlife, natural resources and biological diversity. Agricultural science invariably takes no account of long-term considerations because it lacks the essential balance engendered by 'irrational' elements like common sense and the precautionary principle. Instead of working with Nature to the best of our ability, which requires infinite study and the appropriate development of our intuitive powers, agricultural science, like architectural 'science', seeks to impose entirely industrial processes upon an unwilling natural environment. These industrialized processes rely entirely on the maintenance of an alien system of monoculture which treats a naturally complex ecosystem as if it was a factory floor. At each turn of the industrial crank, as the eminent American philosopher and farmer, Wendell Berry, so aptly expresses it, Nature rebels. In order to crush each rebellion a new and more

powerful 'weapon' has to be invented in order to maintain the whole unsustainable edifice of monoculturism. Whole armies of scientists in white coats have to be employed to put down these insurrections. And now, with the gleam of triumph in these armies' eyes, we are told that the final victory is just around the corner when Nature can be subdued to Man's insatiable will through the manipulation of Her vital ingredients – genes. It is now even possible to cross the boundaries between species to create entirely unnatural, transgenic organisms. We are furthermore assured that this great example of Man's ingenious skill at innovation is completely safe, for ever, and can never possibly cause the slightest ripple in what is to be left of the 'natural world'. Do you *really* think this is likely to be the case? Deep down in the recesses of your heart is there not a faint memory of distant harmony that rustles like a breeze through the leaves? Call it a forgotten instinct; call it, perhaps, if you want to be exceptionally daring, a sense of the Sacred; call it an inner awareness at a greater depth than the mere intellect. Whatever you call it, it probably makes you a little uneasy, although you may not dare say so in case others think you are an anti-progressive reactionary, or somehow simply not 'modern'. The same applies, of course, to the world of architecture and the built environment where we dare not display our pathetically reactionary sentiments in the face of the Big Brother of the Avant-Garde. So the armies continue to advance across the battlefield, laying Nature waste, imposing their alien structures, deaf to the cries of those who beg for some recognition of the innate Sacredness of our soil and our landscape. Pigs may soon fly – literally. But if they do they will be kept in sophisticated battery cages and are unlikely to be fluttering about in the branches of genetically modified trees . . .

What we are witnessing is the cult of the Future and, correspondingly, the abolition of the Past. To have a Past is highly inconvenient. The Cult of the Future relies heavily on the convenient and to perfect this reliance on convenience it is necessary to industrialize Life itself; to remove every last vestige of the irrational which cries out in protest from the depths of the beleaguered soul before it is smothered by those who worship a golden monster. The industrialization of Life will be a global obsession and, like all obsessions, it will be unbalanced. At some stage the balance will have to be rectified. Everything that goes too far one way invariably has its equal and opposite reaction, but what kind of havoc will such an obsession wreak? And



will there be enough local insurrections to slow its progress?

In the field of medicine and healthcare there are now a few local insurrections that are growing in size. I recall a speech I made to the British Medical Association in the early 1980s when I gently pleaded with them to adopt a more holistic, balanced and less mechanistic approach to the healing of the sick; to re-introduce elements of ancient wisdom and traditional therapies that had been thrown enthusiastically onto the scrap-heap of medical history and, once again, to rediscover the essential trinity of mind, body and spirit. To my, not entirely total, astonishment, the full weight of the industrialized medical Establishment descended upon me and, once more, I discovered how simple it is to be misunderstood and mis-represented. Nothing daunted, I have continued ever since to work at ways of establishing an integrated approach to healthcare whereby the best of orthodox, clinical medicine can be harnessed in tandem with the best of traditional, 'irrational' therapies. Modern, industrialized medicine tends to treat people as if they were a mechanical process. Traditional medicine treats each patient as an individual and recognizes those deeper, invisible elements in our humanity which also need treating. I firmly believe that an imaginative integration of these two approaches, subject to necessary safeguards, would be greatly beneficial to the patient and would be more likely to awaken a long-suppressed awareness of that hidden, mysterious dimension we call the Spirit. No amount of tampering with the foundations of our religions to make them more 'accessible', more entertaining, more relevant or more fun will restore that lost spiritual awareness – another victim of, amongst other things, the overriding cynicism, even nihilism, of the educational establishment ever since the 1960s.

It never ceases to amaze me how powerful is the rearguard action fought by those who seem to have developed an undying hatred for anything that cannot be explained, or 'proved', by Science – even if, in the case of what has come to be known as complementary medicine, it can be demonstrated on many occasions to be beneficial to the recipient. Such is the fury of this rearguard action that it is virtually impossible to attract any funding from official bodies, or even charitable trusts, for the purposes of carrying out proper research into the efficacy of such complementary therapies. I remember, for instance, when three Government research bodies were carrying out a three year research project into the organic farming system at Highgrove,

that there was a complete refusal my request to include the homoeopathic treatment of our livestock in the research programme. Despite approaching other relevant organizations to carry out the research instead not one of them would agree to do so. I recall, too, a thoroughly flawed research project carried out by the orthodox medical establishment into the work of the Bristol Cancer Centre which, under my Patronage, had pioneered a remarkable holistic approach to the treatment of cancer. This report was trumpeted, with great glee, to the four corners of the Earth and maintained that a patient was twice as likely to die from such treatment as from the orthodox approach. Subsequently a more reasonable relationship has been forged between the Centre and the medical establishment and there is now a far better chance of making a difference to the lives of many more people.

But what is it, I wonder, that inspires such vehement, vitriolic hatred of these 'irrational' elements in the human experience – as if it was being seriously proposed that we should revert to the 'bad old days' of superstition, quackery and subservience to organized religion? I can't answer that question properly. I can only suggest that *one* reason lies in the way in which the foundations of education have been tampered with throughout the last century.

Mention education, and the principles that lie behind it, and you will unleash the fury and vilification of a howling mob. Mention that there might be a few timeless, well-tryed principles that lie at the heart of the whole educational process, whatever age we live in, and you are instantly accused of being a highly dangerous, reactionary traditionalist. Ever since the 1960s in particular, we have witnessed a never-ending series of experiments with a well-tryed system of education. Instead of gradual improvements we have been forced to observe the testing to destruction of a whole range of ideological theories that have helped to cause untold confusion in the entire outlook of at least two generations. By the time many of these experiments have finally been declared a very expensive and wasteful mistake, it will take another thirty years to repair the damage. Meanwhile, old ideologies die hard and the corrosive canker of moral relativism continues to seep into the whole educational edifice, to the extent that it is still hugely controversial to suggest that it would be sensible to ensure that children are introduced to a moral and cultural framework for their lives, let alone the concept of a national identity. History



teaching has become a joke, but a dangerous one as it consciously reduces the past to the level of the absurd and cultivates a perennial attitude of cynicism towards the major events and personalities in our national story. The same is often true with regard to the teaching of English literature where our greatest authors are either ignored altogether or reduced, once again, to the level of the absurd.

In Architecture, Agriculture, Medicine and Education the loss of balance stems, in large part, from the way in which students in these subjects are taught. The 1960s saw the rapid expulsion of those teachers and lecturers who maintained some of the timeless traditions within their disciplines and, to the present day, it is the training colleges where the discredited, fashionable theories of the 1960s still die hard. I initiated my Foundation precisely in order to support projects which seek to restore sanity to these areas of life. It was for this reason that I offered a home for the Temenos Academy under the protection of my Foundation. Everything I aim to do with my Foundation is linked to that search for harmony and balance; for the maintenance of a *living* tradition – not a dead pastiche; that emphasizes peace, not war with Nature, whether in Architecture, Agriculture, Medicine or Education; that encourages proper thought for generations yet unborn. To think of generations yet unborn is not to deny progress – it is to ensure the survival of civilized existence and to maintain the gossamer-thin thread of continuity that links generations now dead with generations unborn.

As I have grown older I have gradually come to realize that my entire life so far has been motivated by a desire to heal – to heal the dismembered landscape and the poisoned soil; the cruelly shattered townscape, where harmony has been replaced by cacophony; to heal the divisions between intuitive and rational thought, between mind, body and soul, so that the temple of our humanity can once again be lit by a sacred flame; to level the monstrous artificial barrier erected between Tradition and Modernity and, above all, to heal the mortally wounded soul that, alone, can give us warning of the folly of playing God and of believing that knowledge on its own is a substitute for wisdom.