

Principles of Harmony

The following reflects discussions that have begun to take place at the University of Wales TSD as part of the University's Harmony programme. This note is intended as a possible prompt for furthering these discussions.

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One of the matters that has been discussed in thinking about the Harmony Programme is whether or not it is possible to define "principles of Harmony." Indeed, some have gone further to suggest that we might be able to define "The Principles of Harmony." I do not go that far, since it seems to me that the principles of Harmony are part of a mysterious order of being to which a finger may do no more than point. So I prefer to talk about "principles" without claiming that the ones discerned are exclusive. They are, at best, the ones of which we have had a glimpse. So far.

Another word that seems to have some kind of common acceptance is the word "whole," that there is a whole of which we are but a part. Harmony supposes that no part can be considered other than within the whole. The part presupposes the whole.

Some will claim that the cosmos is "purposeful," its purpose being the fulfilment of itself as a whole, that it may aspire to blossom and be fruitful. Most would accept that even if it exists this purpose is difficult if not impossible to discern.

Nevertheless, the proposition being discussed is that at the root of what we term "Harmony" lie principles of order and proportion, a cosmos that is interconnected, ordered and harmonious. Such a notion, the notion of an ordered cosmos is apparently common to all human societies, albeit that their expressions of this order vary. Here are some examples.

In his work with schools, Richard Dunne, the headmaster of Ashley Primary School in Surrey, with whom I am working on Harmony in Education, has chosen to work with the following principles of Harmony:

1. A principle of geometry – order and proportion
2. A principle of interdependence –relationship and connection
3. A principles of the cycle – seasonality and limits
4. A principle of diversity – a wholeness that includes differentiation
5. A principle of health – wholeness and well-being
6. A principle of beauty – pattern, shape, symmetry, movement, colour, texture and flavour
7. A principle of oneness – we are Nature

In a text, *The Grammar of Harmony*, based upon the third chapter of his book, *Harmony: A New Way of Looking At Our World*,¹ His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales talks of principles of Harmony in terms of a universal geometry of circles, squares and triangles that underlies the design of carpets, windows, mosques, cathedrals and temples. He also speaks of the

¹ HRH The Prince of Wales, Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly, *Harmony: A New Way of Looking At Our World*, Blueprint, 2010.

ratios found in music and in the spiral, the Golden Ratio of Fibonacci 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13. This spiral shape is also shown in the vortex of water. He says, “we find this shaping and patterning so naturally pleasing...we call it beautiful.”

For him, then, the Grammar of Harmony is “the grammar that underpins the structure and growth of all things in the natural world and we resonate with these patterns because they are our patterns too – we are made of them, just as every tree, plant and flower is made of them.”

Joseph Milne,² speaks of Harmony in terms of Platonic principles of Justice and Providence. In Plato’s *Timaeus*, the universe is seen as originating in perfection, a perfect living whole. Each part, including humankind, is in order so long as it is in harmony with the whole. The basis of law-making is to bring about harmony in every soul in order that friendship may be the perfect manifestation of citizenship.

All things are ordered towards justice and perfection, and everything is “provided” for in the total scheme of things. No matter what injustices may occur in time, Providence will remedy and restore things ultimately in the future. These notions of order predate Plato and are found in the expression of balance in Ancient Egypt, the moral doctrine of Maat.

Luci Attala,³ reminds us that from an anthropological viewpoint, “meanings are slippery fish”! But, if the word harmony could be translated as something akin to “correct practice”, then indeed, she says, every culture has an idea of what that must be and how it can be achieved. As all social groups form themselves into a structure (through making rules of behaviour) that creates order. This order is however, she says, seen as being culturally created, not as being universal and eternal.

Tristan Nash has referred to different areas of Harmony that might be explored – between humans and the environment, for individuals, for society and between the built environment and the natural world.⁴

In the teachings of The Venerable Master Chin Kung, social order is brought about by Four Integrative Methods – giving, kindness, beneficial conduct and collaboration.⁵ And in the report of the *Celebration of the 2550th Anniversary of the Buddha* held at the UNESCO headquarters in 2006⁶ he speaks of intrinsic virtues of purity, kindness, compassion, harmony, love and humility: “the world and the universe are originally harmonious and nature is intrinsically kind.”⁷

This reference to loving kindness as being part of our nature, resonates with my own work on the essential quality of Love, supported I would now say by the writings of the social biologist Humberto Maturana for who we are by

² email to David Cadman, Tristan Nash, Lucci Attala and Nick Campion 22nd July 2016.

³ emails to David Cadman, Joseph Milne, Tristan Nash and Nick Campion 23rd and 25th July 2016.

⁴ email to David Cadman, Lucci Attala and Nick Campion 22nd July 2016.

⁵ *Compassion and Love Shining Throughout the Universe* Hong Kong Buddhist Education Foundation Ltd., 2015

⁶ *Celebration of the 2550th Anniversary of the Buddha: Buddhist Contributions to Humanity and Sustainable Development of World Peace*, Hong Kong Buddhist Education Foundation Ltd., 2013.

⁷ *Ibid.* 4.

nature *Homo sapiens-amans*.⁸ So for me, Harmony is an expression both of something beyond and within us and of our natural inclination towards love and nurture. One gives rise to the other in a ceaseless coming to be and ceasing to be.⁹

All of this seems to suggest that as we work to discern the principles of Harmony, we might have some sense of the following:

- Order proportion and balance.
- Wholeness and relationship between the whole and the parts.
- Inter-connectedness.
- Diversity.
- A variety of cultural expressions.
- Right being and correct practice.
- Justice and lawfulness.
- Love and compassion.
- Collaboration and community.

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⁸ Humberto Maturana Romesin and Gerda Verden-Zöllner, *The Origins of Humanness in the Biology of Love*, Edited by Pille Bunnell, Imprint Academic, 2008.

⁹ Scherto Gill and David Cadman (Eds), *Why Love Matters*, Peter Lang 2015 and David Cadman, *Finding Elsewhere*, available from amazon.co.uk.