

The Quest for Harmony

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This day of lectures is part of the University of Wales Trinity St. David's Harmony programme, to which Tony Juniper, John Sauven and I have been appointed as Harmony Professors of Practice. These appointments are, in part, because we are all familiar with the principle of "Harmony" as expressed by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales. Indeed, Tony Juniper was a co-author with The Prince and Ian Skelly of a book entitled *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World*,¹ which was published in 2010. Its first chapter was entitled "Harmony".

The principle of Harmony also provided the *leitmotif* for an archive – of which I was the co-editor – of the speeches and articles of The Prince of Wales, which was published in 2014.² The archive, which covers the period 1968-2012, was commissioned by the University of Maryland and the University of Wales Trinity St. David. Published by the University of Wales Press, it is in two volumes divided into eight Parts, each one covering an aspect of The Prince's work such as the natural environment, the built environment, health and medicine, education and so on. A third volume covering the period 2013-2017 is underway.

The very first Part of Volumes 1 and 2, and indeed of the third volume, is "Harmony", and it is this principle that is the foundation of all that then follows. For more than anything else, The Prince of Wales proposes the need for a more harmonious relationship between humankind and Nature, and the need for greater understanding and tolerance, greater harmony, between and amongst each one of us.

So here we are.

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¹ HRH The Prince of Wales, Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly, *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World*, Blue Door, 2010

² *Speeches and Articles 1968-2012*, selected and compiled by Suheil Bushrui and David Cadman, University of Wales Press, 2014.

But before we begin, please note that this proposition of “Harmony” is not “motherhood and apple pie”, some wishy-washy notion of “niceness”. For The Prince this is a serious and well-formed proposition based upon many years of both study and, above all else, practice.

As something of an aside, I want to say that I would set this principle, and even the notion of having such a guiding principle, within the context of the philosophical approach proposed the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1912-2009). Naess proposed that in trying to develop what he called a personal “ecosophy”,³ – an evolving but consistent philosophy of being, thinking and acting in the world, that embodies ecological wisdom and harmony⁴ – in order to do this and to be true to ourselves and our values, we have to make clear the ultimate norm or root principle upon which our thoughts and actions are based, and then be true to this norm in developing our thesis from principles to action. By a process of “deep questioning”, we can probe beneath the surface expressions and actions, again and again asking the question “Why?” until we reveal the root from which they grow.

We can also use this same approach when we come to challenge an establish worldview – such as “the market rules” or “economic growth must be supported by unlimited consumption”. For when we do this we reveal the root principle or norm upon which that worldview is based. Then, and only then, do we reveal the true nature of the challenge.

In this way, we can also see that all that The Prince of Wales proposes can be seen to be based upon a root principle, which Naess would have written as “Harmony!”. And underlying this proposition we discover his thesis that we live within an ordered and naturally harmonious cosmos, and that our task is to align ourselves with it in all that we say and do.

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³ Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, translated and edited by David Rothenberg, Cambridge University Press, 1989

⁴ www.schuachercollege.org *What is Deep Ecology?* by Stefan Harding

In expressing this principle of Harmony, The Prince is much inspired by what he would call “sacred geometry”. This notion of proportion and order as a universal and timeless principle is taught at his School of Traditional Arts, which studies the arts and crafts of the great traditions, not least the Islamic tradition.

In a text being prepared for the third volume of the *Speeches and Articles* archive, he says this:

I have gained a great deal of insight into the meaning of Islamic symbolism and of the universal geometry that constitutes the grammar of harmony from the renowned world authority on sacred architecture, Professor Keith Critchlow, who helped me found and direct my School of Traditional Arts in London some twenty years ago. An architect himself, he has dedicated his life to the study of the ancient principles and how they work in sacred buildings. He told me once a wonderful old Chinese story about an ancient sage who was asked by his young pupil to draw a picture of the universe. The old man hardly hesitated before picking up his brush and promptly making three swift strokes on the page. First he drew a circle, below it a triangle, and below them both a square.

The circle, the triangle and the square, when combined together create the great cathedrals, mosques and temples and their proportions are present in the patterning and spiral of Nature, they are revealed in the proportions of the Golden Mean, the Fibonacci Ratios, and the scales of music.

Again in this text The Prince says:

On the mathematical level this is all very interesting, perhaps it is even entertaining, but my point is that, wherever it appears, we find this shaping and patterning so naturally pleasing. Whether it be the shape of a plant, the arrangement of petals in a flower or the harmonies of the music made when it is constructed according to this numerical relationship, we call it ‘beautiful’; we have a sense of an immeasurable quality; we feel something special and indefinable when these numbers are at play. There are even well-documented experiments where different groups of people have been shown pictures of different faces and asked individually to say

which ones they find more beautiful and, generally, they tend to settle on those images where a person's features conform most readily to the ratio of the Golden Section – the relationship, for example, between the width of the eyes and the length of the nose, or the width of the mouth to the width and height of the forehead; even the spacing of the teeth. It seems that we resonate naturally with the proportions that reflect this golden proportion. No wonder the banks decided that credit cards should be golden mean rectangles or that Apple decided to use this ratio to create the shape of its first iPod.

And again, he says:

The Grammar of Harmony is therefore 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 up of them, just as every tree, plant and flower is made up of them.

So, when The Prince of Wales talks about “Harmony” he is talking about a universal and timeless informing principle that shapes all that is good, and whose absence in our lives is harmful.

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One of the most moving and powerful texts of the first two volumes of the archive of The Prince's speeches and articles is an article written by The Prince and published in the *Temenos Academy Review* in Autumn 2002. The article was titled “A Time to Heal” and at the very end, he wrote this:

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 example of our humanity can once again be lit by a sacred flame; to level the monstrous 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 believing that knowledge on its own is a substitute for wisdom.

And in our Introduction to Volumes 1 and 2 Professor Bushrui and I referred to the work that The Prince has undertaken in the light of Harmony as follows:

[This] is a story about a young prince, brought up with a deep sense of duty and the need to match words with action. This is a prince who in his teenage years, becomes distressed by what he sees as a deliberate attempt not only to separate present from past, but to abandon the principles and meaning of a timeless tradition – in his own words, to “throw out the baby with the bathwater.” The “tradition” in question is not a longing for the past or a crude sentimentality: it is a golden thread of wisdom that speaks of balance, order and connection, and of a reverence for Nature as a whole, something that is sacred. It is, therefore, a living tradition.

As he grows in experience and understanding, this prince comes to see that what at first seem to be things separate and apart are, in fact, aspects of a single whole. Intuitively, and with study, he comes to see that there are systemic principles at work, which we ignore at our peril. Most especially, in all that is going wrong, he sees the absence of the single principle of Harmony. And it is this principle, together with his innate sense of the greater need for action and not words, that leads him to inspire and establish organizations that work tirelessly for the individual-in-community; often for those whose voice is not heard – young people in inner-city areas, people of faith, local communities wanting to have a say in their own redevelopment, small farmers and shopkeepers, teachers wanting to teach their subject with passion and depth, those in healthcare who see that there might be a better integration of traditional and mainstream medicine and care. And, most recently, this is a prince who, seeing Nature as a whole and as a living system, is prepared to urge us to consider more carefully not only the ways in which we farm and fish and forest, but also the ways in which we shop and consume the goods of the Earth.⁵

⁵ *Speeches & Articles, 1968-2012* by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, University of Wales Press, 2014, x.

And as he has put it himself in the text prepared for Volume 3 of the archive:

This is why I have long tried to remind people that the Grammar of Harmony is not some irrelevant, nebulous scheme, nor an engaging way of describing an approach to design that somehow, in some long since passed Golden Age, people suddenly came up with in order to create some of the most astonishing works of art and architecture in all of history. No. The Grammar of Nature's Harmony is the foundation of the language by which we may properly understand how the world works and see it for what it really is. It is joined up, all one thing, profoundly interdependent and, by a recognition of its limits, ultimately self-sustaining.

So, then, we can see that for The Prince of Wales "Harmony" is no small thing.

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In all of this, a key feature of The Prince's work is his understanding of what he describes as "a crisis of perception". He suggests that the difficulties we face – the erosion of resources, extreme poverty and even an unstable economy – arise not from technical glitches, but in a crisis founded in the very values and principles that, knowingly or not, shape how we see, understand and experience the world. This radical claim, he says, goes to the root of our present concern with economic, social and environmental sustainability.⁶ In this, it seems to me that his approach is similar to that of Arne Naess, to whom I have already referred – although I have to say that as far as I know The Prince has never read the writing of Naess nor is he aware of what Naess has had to say.

The Prince finds the root cause of our present crises arises from an imbalance – a loss of harmony – brought about by the dogma of post-war Modernism which, no doubt with good intent and with the aim of improving our material well-being, has ignored the limits of Nature, the need to see ourselves as

⁶ *Speeches & Articles, 1968-2012* by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, University of Wales Press, 2014, 1.

“part of” and not “apart from” Nature. Restoring balance, restoring Harmony, healing our relationship with Nature, informs all of his work. Increasingly over recent years, he has spoken of the relationship between the environment, society and the economy and, in rather similar ways to the Pope in his encyclical *Laudato Si* (May 2015), he has pointed to an underlying crisis of values, challenging the common convention of selfishness and greed which shapes notions of thoughtless economic growth, unlimited consumption and financial speculation. Indeed, in his message to the COP21 gathering in Paris in December 2015, he said:

On an increasingly crowded planet, humanity faces many threats – but none is greater than climate change. It magnifies every hazard and tension of our existence. It threatens our ability to feed ourselves; to remain healthy and safe from extreme weather; to manage the natural resources that support our economies, and to avert the humanitarian disaster of mass migration and increasing conflict.

So it would seem that in tackling climate change and resource depletion, including the social and economic consequences that arise therefrom, and indeed in addressing the whole matter of social, economic and environmental sustainability, The Prince of Wales proposes that in order to clarify our perception we must first understand and align ourselves with this principle of “Harmony”.

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However, leaving aside for the moment what The Prince has said, and turning to my own work, I want to explore this “crisis of perception” a bit more deeply. And in this, and in speaking of the links between economy, environment and society, I must, of course, stress that I am speaking for myself and not for The Prince of Wales – although, as I have said, he has for many years made clear that there are direct links between, for example, businesses and the environment and businesses and community.

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In Buddhist teachings, perception, or *sañña*, is very important. It is one of the five aggregates (*skandhas*) by which we make sense of the world – form, sensation, perception, mental formations and consciousness. The teaching is that to become enlightened we must first see things as they truly are, since perception shapes thoughts, which shape action. Indeed, in the opening stanza of the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha says that it is with our thoughts that we make the world, that the way in which we see the world becomes concrete *in* the world.

This teaching is part of a long, but sometimes forgotten, tradition. If we were sitting here in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, our perception would no doubt be governed by a theological view of the world, a view dominated and managed by the teachings and authority of the Church. We would most likely take as given that all that happens is shaped by this – markets, scholarship, society and so on, all shaped by a theological imperative.

Today we are also governed by a dominant worldview. We don't call it "Theology", we call it "Economy", or more particularly "Liberal Market Economy". We, too, have priests. We call them business men and bankers. And the world they profess is not only one in which the so-called rules of their world are assumed to prevail, but also one in which to question them is heresy. This is a world of money, pricing and debt, of low levels of financial regulation and a dogma that proposes that the greatest good arises from growing the economy without limit. To play our part in this we must consume and then consume more, if necessary borrowing to be able to do so. For unless we do this, how can the economy grow? This is a world in which one Vice Chancellor in the UK told a gathering of departmental professors that they had to "sweat their assets"; a world in which one distressed nurse in an American hospital described as "a crisis" having given treatment to a man who had failed to disclose that he had no health insurance. This is a world where efficiency is described in financial terms and where the education of children is dominated by their potential economic value. This is also a world in which unregulated commerce, for example in fishing, forestry and the mining of coal and oil, has created a climatic

crisis of severe proportions. This is a world at odds with the principles of balance and order expressed in “Harmony”.

Challenging such a dominant worldview is difficult, not least because, as in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, its governing propositions are deeply embedded and taken for granted. We live our lives shaped by these propositions, but are often unaware of them. So it is that in almost any conversation about how we should proceed someone is bound to say: “We must be more business-like.” Or in any proposed conference or in the forming of any committee, someone will say: “We must have someone who understands business.” And yet, the odd thing is that it is these very businesses and being business-like, that has brought upon us the impending crises of resource depletion and climate change, and, in so doing has created a world in which the gap between the rich and the poor has become ever-wider, creating what an increasing number of observers say is a dangerous social and economic instability. Not trickle down, but trickle up! Although I recognise that it is heresy to say so, perhaps we should be less business-like!

In my own work, for example in my work with the Spirit of Humanity Forum, with the Guerrand Hermes Foundation for Peace – in a book entitled *Why Love Matters: Values In Governance*⁷ – and in my own writings,⁸ I have proposed another root principle – Love. So, in Naess’s way of speaking, my ultimate norm would be expressed as “Love is!”. My proposition is that all that is, when it is most true, is an expression of, and is shaped by, the energetic force of Love. Love is of the essence and we should align ourselves to Love in all that we do, both in our private and our public lives. Love is true and harmonious.

I have brought this root principle to the matter of economics⁹ and have argued that as there are no absolute forms of economy, only different economies shaped by different underlying values, if you wish to question or

⁷ *Why Love Matters: Values In Governance*, Eds. Scherto Gill and David Cadman, Peter Lang, 2015.

⁸ David Cadman, *Love Matters*, Zig Publishing, 2014 and *Finding Elsewhere*, Zig Publishing, 2015 – both available from Amazon.

⁹ See www.lovematters.uk.com

challenge any particular form of economy, such as ours, you should look to, question and challenge its core values. And if we seek to construct another kind of economy, such as an Economy of Love, we need must ensure that it is in accord with our own root principles. Otherwise, we live in a tyranny and should say so.

My Economy of Love is set out in one or two texts on my website www.lovematters.uk.com. Now is not the time to explore this in any depth, except to say that, like the principle of Harmony, it is an example of trying to be clear about how we see the world; not simply allowing convention to shape our world without thought; being sure to explore core values and to try to integrate our inner and our outer lives. To live well.

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But there is something that happens before all of this, which is vital to an understanding of Harmony – and here I want to refer to work of the scholar Joseph Milne. Joseph is a theologian, a philosopher and a Fellow of the Temenos Academy of which His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales is Patron. He is important because more than anyone else I know he provides us with a perception of wholeness and interconnection that pre-dates the Enlightenment, a perception that has been lost, but which is utterly relevant to the present day.

Joseph has written many texts and given many lectures, but the two texts that I want to refer to here are *Metaphysics and the Cosmic Order*¹⁰ and *The Mystical Cosmos*.¹¹ The first of these is important because it provides a description of three levels of knowing: the Religious, the Philosophical and the Empirical. Each of these plays its part in the matter of knowing, but each is separate:

It will be helpful to clarify these three levels. By the Religious I mean the revelatory, sacred Presence in all things, the disclosure of the created realm as an act within the mind of

¹⁰ Joseph Milne, *Metaphysics and the Cosmic Order*, Temenos Academy, 2008.

¹¹ Joseph Milne, *The Mystical Cosmos*, The Temenos Academy, 2013.

God. ... From this level come all the various “sacred cosmologies” that are symbolic articulations of the divine ground of all that exists.

By the Philosophical I mean the metaphysical understandings or contemplation of the essence of reality....

...By the Empirical I mean the entire realm of observational and inferential deduction of the laws and nature of visible reality, the realm of the empirical sciences, of “objective” knowledge....¹²

Whilst each of these has part to play, they should not be mistaken for each other. For example, if I have a tooth ache I must go to a dentist, someone who has an empirical understanding the nature of toothache. If, on the other hand, I want to understand the meaning of suffering in the human condition, it is unlikely that the dentist will help me. Rather I need a philosopher or a theologian. In our time, empiricism has all but expunged the theological and the philosophical, and in so doing has sought to “explain” the world to us in a language that is insufficient to the task.

An important part of this shortcoming is manner in which we are supposed to know. The modern, scientific, and therefore empirical, definition of knowing is based upon sensory perception and calculation. Such knowing would not have been regarded as knowledge for Plato and Aristotle:

For them knowledge of the cosmos was not for the sake of explanation or for accounting for everything in a single system or model. Their enquiries into reality are not a prelude to modern scientific enquiry as has often been claimed. Their concern for the truth of things is a fundamentally different kind of concern, and it therefore opens up an entirely different order of reality, an order completely passed over in the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. For Plato and Aristotle the pursuit of truth is understood as adequate response to the Real, a coming into a right relationship with what most truly is.¹³

¹² Joseph Milne, *Metaphysics and the Cosmic Order*, Temenos Academy, 2008, 19.

¹³ Joseph Milne, *The Mystical Cosmos*, The Temenos Academy, 2013, 9-10.

This then brings us into another “disposition towards reality,”¹⁴ a realm not of objectification, but of relationship, a realm of *being* and a quest not for separation, but for *union*:

From the ancient Greek philosophers to Aquinas in the late Middle Ages it was understood that a relation exists between the human mind and the nature of things.¹⁵

And:

The being or presentness of things is not like our modern notion of “fact”. The facts of things are secondary and often transitory. What Aristotle is observing is that what first presents itself to the intelligence is Being, not features or characteristics or qualities, and that all else that might be known of things follows only after Being.¹⁶

In this sense, the primary question is not what can we know, but how shall we be.

This is not the place to take this further, but I would urge you to read what Joseph Milne has to say. And I would also ask you to consider that what it suggests is that how we perceive matters because we shall find what we perceive and the manner of our perception will make this so. And furthermore, it suggests that at a time of “crisis” when we can see before us the consequences of actions based upon the exclusive dogma of empiricism, we might well ask ourselves whether or not there are other ways of “seeing” that are natural to us and that are required to enable us to act wisely.

Later, in my work with the University, I intend to develop these thoughts and, hopefully, to bring Joseph Milne to Lampeter to share his work with us.

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Finally, there is this. Those who have studied these things say that we are shaped by the stories we tell each other, and by the stories that are told to us. If this is so, then we have to look

¹⁴ Ibid. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid. 13.

¹⁶ Ibid. 14.

carefully at these stories and if we find them unsatisfactory, we need to find others. For if we continue to tell stories that are not true we will lose our way.¹⁷

In a way, this is what The Prince of Wales has been trying to do for over forty years. Sensing that Modernism was too strident and was in danger, as we have heard him say, of “throwing out the baby with the bathwater,” he has asked us to take account of stories that are wise and timeless. One of these is the story of Aphrodite and the birth of Harmony.

Arising, it is said, from the waters of Love,¹⁸ and brought forth between twixt the seasons and the winds, the beautiful Aphrodite, gives birth to a daughter, Harmonia – gives birth to renewal, harmony, balance and order. And so it is that each year, Beauty arises from Love, and carries the possibility of renewal and harmony. It is there in everything we see as the year turns. It arises from the cold darkness of Earth and Winter. It is born into the growing light of Spring. Its coming to be is there in the magical transformation of life that takes place in the dark time, to which, one day, all will return. This is Harmony, beautiful, true and good, without which nothing can be.

But we cannot just assume that all will be well. For, as the story tells us, united with Ares, the god of war, Aphrodite also gives birth to two other children, Phobos (Fear) and Deimos (Terror). Whilst, therefore, this union brings harmony, it also bears with it the possibility of dis-harmony, the possibility of that fearfulness which is the enemy of Love. Indeed, the story tells us that unless we act with wisdom and with a pure heart, there is every possibility that all will not be well; that unless we have courage and overcome our hubris the possibility of catastrophe is real and ever-present. Disruptive forces, such as greed and fear are ever-present possibilities, manifest in the realms of Nature, Economy and Society.

So it is that we should not be surprised when storm, flood, pestilence and financial disruption arise from acts based upon greed and fearfulness – when, instead of seeking to sustain, we seek short-term gain and selfish gratification. Markets and communities can work in tune with each other or not; but to

¹⁷ This comes from David Cadman, *Finding Elsewhere*, Zig Publishing, 2015.

¹⁸ David Cadman, *Love Matters*, Zig Publishing, 2014, 12-13.

bring well-being they have to work both within their own realm and within a broader set of loving relationships between the social, the economic and the environmental. When we act otherwise, we are likely to come across Phobos and Deimos.

The story of Aphrodite tells us that if we want to nurture and sustain, we need to choose Love not Fear. Love matters. Love opens up and brings together, but Fear works to close down the possibility of change. Therefore, at a time (such as now) when significant change is required, Fear will be the enemy; it will hold us back and tempt us to hold onto 'business as usual'; it will constrain what we may take to be possible instead of enabling us to move; it will make us hesitate and shrink back. And wherever Fear is present, there is a lessening of trust, the very quality needed if we are to move towards more understanding and co-operation.

We might now call this necessary integration of the economic, the social and environmental, "sustainability" – but when we do, we are inclined to talk about it in a different way. We tell a different story, one in which sustainability is most often thought to be mechanical, no more than environmental management and, in that, principally concerned with energy efficiency and carbon management. According to this account, sustainability is concerned with quantities – the physical and measurable aspects of matters such as climate change, energy consumption, transport and the performance of buildings and materials. All of this is important, but as the story of Aphrodite shows us, it is not enough. The older myth presents harmony or sustainability as having a much wider and deeper meaning, setting it within not just measurement and a narrow economy, but within Love as the ground of all being, suggesting that our economic, environmental and social lives are connected and cannot be sensibly considered apart from each other; that life, if you like, is about relationships; loving relationships, a continuous and integrated mutuality and reciprocity, which, in this story, is called Harmonia or harmony.

We can see that the story of Aphrodite encourages us to probe beneath and beyond the conventional discussion of sustainability to reveal that upon which it depends. In the face of our present difficulties – of which climate change, resource

depletion, economic disruption and global poverty are, perhaps, the most evident – the story urges us to see that sustainability cannot be understood, let alone achieved, by a narrow focus on technology or by a mere pruning of the outlying branches of convention. If we are going to avoid what must at least be the possibility of a mighty catastrophe, we have to examine this matter at its roots. In doing so, we have to return to that which, in truth, we know, but may have forgotten. For there is, here, a direct and ancient relationship of cause and effect, and when we examine it without the fetter of convention we shall see that we have not come to be where we are by accident, but as a result of our own ignorance and thoughtlessness. And the reason that we have such difficulty in knowing what it is that we must now do is because we are looking for answers in the wrong place. Love matters. Listen to the voice of Love.

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In summary, then, let me offer some conclusions:

1. The principle of Harmony upon which so much of the work of The Prince of Wales is founded, is itself rooted in a view of the world as interconnected and entangled. It reflects timeless and universal principles of balance, order and proportion – as represented in sacred geometry.
2. Within this thesis lies The Prince's notion of "a crisis of perception" leading to, and at the same time brought about by, a loss of harmony extending to all social, environmental and economic relationships.
3. The importance of "perception" has ancient roots, not least in the Buddhist tradition, where it is the foundation of thought and hence action. And it is of vital importance when we wish to challenge a dominant convention, such as the one that most shapes our lives – the convention of the Liberal Market Economy.

4. My own work proposes an alternative root principle – that “Love Is!”, that all that is when it is most true is shaped by the energetic force of Love. Such a proposition shapes all our relationships – economy, society and environment.

5. In the end, we are shaped by the stories we are told and choose to tell. We stand between an old and largely discredited story and a new and more harmonious one that is waiting to be heard and expressed. The New Story is likely to be very different from the Old Story, and in waiting upon it and seeking to tell it, we should choose Love and not Fear as our guide. For me, this is the way of Harmony.