

Book Reviews

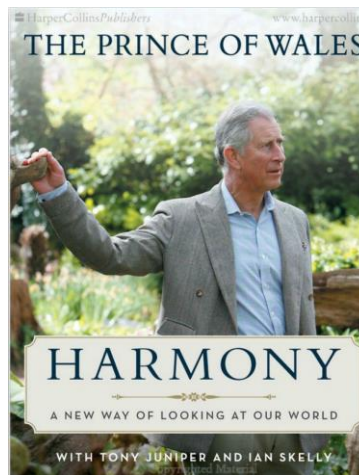
Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World, by Charles, Prince of Wales, with Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2010, 330 pages, hardcover. List price US\$29.99.

Public figures sometimes allow their names to be attached to publications to gain publicity or promote worthy causes. Accordingly, we might easily assume that Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly actually wrote *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World* and that the Prince of Wales added his name to identify himself with the work and lend support. Or we might conclude that the prince developed the concept of the book but then found two qualified men to write it.

In the present case, however, there is little doubt that Charles actually drafted or dictated the text. His linguistic style is immediately recognizable, and we know that he has a deep, personal interest in environmental issues that feature heavily in the work. The two associates could have been fully occupied finding the beautiful photographs, securing reproduction rites, creating other graphics, and editing the text. The outcome is a handsome book that can grace any coffee table. Yet it is also a serious work that calls readers to respond to its message.

More surprising is the range and depth of knowledge of the ageless wisdom displayed. Even if the associate authors supplied much of that knowledge, the prince must, at the very least, have consented to the prominent place it occupies in the book. More likely the esoteric content reflects his own beliefs and worldview. What comes across to this reviewer is that Charles is an esoteric student in his own right and has read a broad spectrum of the literature.

Harmony is an ambitious work. It summarizes threats to the planet and human society, including uncontrolled industrialization, unsustainable growth, depletion of natural resources, poor urban planning, disconnect among people, and the ugliness too often seen outside our home and car windows. The book's thesis is that these problems stem from the disruption of harmony between man and nature.



The author traces the disruption—the “great divorce”—back to Thomas Aquinas’ teachings on the distinction between Creator and creation [pp. 148ff]. Historians of theology might dispute that assertion, arguing that controversies over creation versus emanation and creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*) can be found in the writings of Augustine and earlier church fathers, even in the Hebrew Bible.

Be that as it may, a fairly clear trail runs from scholasticism, through humanism, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution to modern materialism. The plight in which we now find ourselves is summarized thus:

The dominant world view only accepts as fact what it sees in materialist terms, and this opens us up to a very dangerous state of affairs, not least because the more extreme this approach becomes, the more extreme the reaction tends to be at the other end of the scale, so that we end up with two fundamentalist, reductionist camps that oppose each other. On the one side, a fundamentalism secularism and on the other, fundamentalist religions [p. 9].

Charles quotes from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene to identify both the problem and

the solution: “Attachment to matter gives rise to passion against Nature. Thus trouble arises in the whole body; this is why I tell you: be in harmony” [p. 31]. He is optimistic that we can learn once more to be in harmony and that to do so could yield profound results:

I find . . . that if people are encouraged to immerse themselves in Nature’s grammar and geometry—discovering how it works, how it controls life on Earth, and how humanity has expressed it in so many great works of art and architecture—they are often led to acquire some remarkably deep philosophical insights into the meaning and purpose of Nature and into what it means to be aware and live in this extraordinary Universe. This is particularly so in young people and the results of such immersion are as heartening as they are surprising [p. 9].

The author urges us to explore sacred mathematics, art and architecture, along with their interrelationships and correspondences with the natural order. Most of his examples will be familiar to esoteric students, though this reviewer learned of a few new ones. Charles insists that we apply them anew in the structures, systems and institutions we create. We must recapture the ancient wisdom, which he considers to have been part of divine revelation. Moreover, revelation is ongoing if we adopt the right attitude and prepare ourselves appropriately. Revelation, Charles declares, “comes about when a person practices great humility and achieves a mastery over the ego so that ‘the knower and the known’ effectively become one” [p. 13].

Charles identifies the Egyptian goddess Ma’at as an important protagonist in the battle between harmony and chaos. Ma’at, he explains, was “daughter of the Sun god Atum-Ra and the feminine counterpart to Thoth, the divine mind whom the Greeks called the Logos—the Word that begets Creation.” Without her, “the entire universe would fragment and collapse into the primordial chaos from which it had come” [pp. 93-94]. Harmony is seen in the ancient temple at Çatalhöyük, Turkey; Islamic decorative art in Cordoba, Spain; the architec-

ture and stained glass of Chartres Cathedral; the paintings of Botticelli; and the violins of Stradivarius. In his discussion, the author moves effortlessly from Hermeticism, Neoplatonism, eastern religions, and Australian aboriginal culture to the writings of Jalaluddin Rumi, John Dee, William Blake, and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Like his father, the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles is well-known for his views on modern architecture. He makes an interesting point about the special responsibilities that architects bear:

I have never made it my habit to go around criticizing the artwork people choose to put on their walls, even if I do not like it. After all it is their business. But architecture is a different matter. It, in large part, defines the public realm and therefore helps to define us as human beings. It affects our psychological well-being because it can either enhance or detract from a sense of community [p. 134].

Charles is scathing in his criticism of the “Brutalist” school of architecture, which he declares “seem[s] deliberately to summon up chaos rather than conjure harmony” [p. 135]. Significantly, he notes, few architects of the school actually live in their own creations; rather they choose more traditional homes.

The author sees the ageless wisdom expressed, not only in art and architecture, but also in the ways primitive peoples interact with their environments—ways that are respectful of the Earth and conserve natural resources. On his own estate, he has put many of their methods into practice, while also developing new sustainable techniques of organic food production. He mentions Rudolf Steiner’s work on biodynamic farming [p. 162].

Charles criticizes the layout of modern cities, in which residential, business, shopping and recreation zones are separated from one another. In consequence, commuting to work and even going to a restaurant or visiting friends requires long travel and, in turn, increases dependency on non-renewable energy sources. Furthermore, socio-economic classes,

and in many cases ethnic groups, are segregated, exacerbating societal divisions.

An experiment in reversing that trend is the “walkable” town of Poundbury, Dorset, created on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall (Prince Charles is the duke):

Poundbury comprises high-density, mixed-use buildings; workshops, offices, local services, private housing and social housing—even factories—are all placed next to each other. . . . Squares and streets are designed to have timeless, more traditional proportions and are given a vernacular identity by the careful use of local materials. And, as a result, its residents tell me that the place feels as though it has a soul and a heart [p. 240].

The experiment may turn out to be more successful than Celebration, Florida, developed in the 1990s by the Walt Disney Company.

Charles concludes the book with these words:

[W]e stand at an historic moment. We face a future where there is a real prospect that if we fail the Earth, we fail humanity. To avoid such an outcome, which will comprehensively destroy our children’s future or even our own, we must make choices now that carry monumental implications. It is beholden upon each and every one of us to help redress the balance that has been so shaken by re-founding our outlook in the firmer set of values that are framed by a

clearer, spiritually intact philosophy of life. Only then can we hope to establish a far more sustainable economic system; only then can we live by more rooted values, and only then might we tread more lightly upon this Earth, the miracle of creation that is our privilege to call “home” [p. 325].

Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World demonstrates that people in the highest echelons of society—Charles is heir to the British throne and Supreme Governor-to-be of the Church of England—are conscious of the threats to our environment and are prepared to take remedial action. It also suggests that people at those levels are absorbing esoteric knowledge and are in a good position to influence others.

Many people will read the book because the Prince of Wales’ name appears on it; others may avoid it for the same reason; still others may decide to read, or not read, it for reasons unrelated to its authorship. People ought to read the book. It is well-conceived and sensitively written, and it sends a timely, relevant message both to those who may be new to the key concepts and to those already familiar with the concepts. This reviewer does not hesitate to recommend *Harmony* to readers of *The Esoteric Quarterly*.

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The Seven Wisdoms of Life; a Journey into the Chakras, by Shai Tubali and scientifically edited by Nir Brosh, M.D. MSI Press, 2013.

Numerous books have been written about the chakras, but this one offers a very practical approach that beginners and advanced students alike can appreciate. The author, Shai Tubali, simplifies the vast amount of information available on the chakras in order to make it more accessible to the general reader.

The author states that everything in the book comes from his own direct experience and that his focus is on the psychological and transformative aspects of the chakra system rather than the mystical and esoteric. Perhaps this partially explains his curious statement in the introduction that the soul is a “romantic idea.” Nevertheless, Tubali feels that we need to become sensitive to this subtle anatomy in order to perceive the inner worlds.

Tubali maintains that spiritual capacity is not inherent in humanity but formed out of the brain’s struggle to learn and understand. He goes on to say that the chakras “reveal the story of human evolution and the hidden structure of the human unconscious.” In modern times, our chakra systems are more burdened and unbalanced than ever. This book is meant to help us with the enormous task of clearing and aligning the chakras or centers.

Beginning with the basics, Tubali provides an overview of the chakra system, describing its physical layout, defining terms and explaining the purpose and functions of the chakras as well as the subtle anatomy in general. With this foundation, we are prepared to enter into a detailed study of each of the chakras, a study that comprises the bulk of the book.

Each chakra is introduced in turn, first with a description of its location in the etheric field and its general orientation within the chakra system. Then we are introduced to the basic psychological themes that are of concern to that particular chakra. In the case of an unbalanced chakra, indications are given as to the

psychological reactions this imbalance might cause, and solutions are offered in order to work toward balancing the chakra.

Tubali explains that an individual has four levels of functioning depending upon whether the chakra is 1) imbalanced, 2) “functional” (working but still distorted), 3) balanced (but without full spiritual capacity), or 4) awakened (working in full spiritual capacity). He describes the typical behavior a person might manifest according to the level of chakra development attained. Tubali also explains that each chakra has an age range during which time it should become developed and balanced.

Often a chakra may be unbalanced due to trauma, and according to Tubali, there are traumas that are common for each of the chakras. Knowing what traumas are typically associated with a given chakra can be helpful in understanding one’s own behavior.

Furthermore, people are normally focused through a particular chakra, and that is how they filter their experiences in life. Depending upon their focus, they will exhibit a definite personality type. The author describes these personality types for each chakra and indicates the type of happiness experienced by someone with that chakra focus, as well as the way one finds meaning and purpose in life. Additionally, he describes possible psychosomatic disturbances that may arise due to an imbalance in the chakra. While there is clearly some truth behind the personality characterizations offered here, as with all such generalizations, there is a tendency for them to come across as caricatures.

Although the chakras are independent agents to a certain extent, each with their own agenda, they are also part of a system, and as such they interact with each other depending on their degree of integration. Tubali describes these interactions for each chakra and explains the role each of them plays in the process of kundalini circulation for self-spiritualization. In an appendix, the author gives a more detailed description of the journey of kundalini along the chakras.

At the end of each chapter on the chakras, there are recommended practices that can be undertaken to keep the chakras healthy and balanced. To aid us in this practical work, Tubali provides questionnaires in an appendix for chakra personality type evaluation and chakra imbalance evaluation. Although the book is very well organized, it would have been helpful to have an index.

Shai Tubali developed a practice called the White Light method, which he says enables people to use their subtle anatomy and chakras for psychological and spiritual balance. His method also teaches spiritual transformation and spiritual therapy. Tubali studied the chakras and subtle anatomy through the Yogic Nityananda tradition as presented by

Dr. Gabriel Cousens, who is known from his work in Arizona at The Tree of Life retreat center along with his books on the raw or living food diet. This book is dedicated to Gabriel Cousens.

As a way of summing up the importance of studying the chakras, Tubali says that the chakra system is the most accessible system of our subtle anatomy, and thus it is the most practical vehicle to discover the hidden layers of consciousness. He states that we can use the chakras as keys for perfect balance and conscious transformation.

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