

The Roots of Sustainability¹

By Professor David Cadman



The birth of Aphrodite, from the front panel of the Ludvosi Throne, 460 BC

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“Let us begin the journey home”.²

“Sustainability” is sometimes thought to be no more than a surrogate for environmental management and, in that, principally concerned with energy efficiency and what are then referred to as “green buildings”. Indeed, much of the work on the matter of sustainability is concerned with its “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, for me, it does not ask the right questions. For sustainability has a much wider and, indeed, deeper, meaning. In essence, it proposes 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 or, as I would prefer to put it, relat-ing-ness.

I want to suggest, therefore, that we need to probe beneath and beyond the conventional discussion of sustainability to reveal that upon which it depends. For in the face of what we might call “our present difficulties” – of which climate change is, perhaps, the most evident – I shall suggest 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. Indeed, I shall argue that 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 – and in doing so, we have to return to that which, in truth, we know but may have forgotten. For there is, here, a direct relationship of cause and effect and 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 do is because we are looking for answers in the wrong place.

In seeking to find the right place – and in particular, the right place in which to create good buildings, good places to be in – our quest will be divided into three main parts. They are:

- The Matter of Harmony
- The Matter of Beauty
- The Matter of Love

² Rumi: *Hidden Music*, translated by Matryam Mafi and Azima Melita, Harper and Collins, 2001, 179.

And at the end, as an Epilogue, all of this is drawn together to reveal its origin and provenance.

The Matter of Harmony

Part of my inspiration for this quest has come from my work with His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales who, in two seminal speeches,³ sets out a diagnosis of, and a prescription for what I have referred to as “our present difficulties”.

In essence, His Royal Highness sees the world as being shaped by principles of Order, Balance and Harmony. The articulation of these principles, he says, goes back a very long way, as far back as the teachings of Plato and, indeed, beyond; and the principles themselves are at the root of all of the great religious traditions. At the same time, and as he reminds us, these principles are utterly modern in that they reflect our growing concern with our relationship with what we often refer to as “the environment” but he is more inclined to call Nature.

His Royal Highness tells us:

...I have devoted my life so far to a concerted effort to remind people of the essential need to restore the lost harmony in our lives and, above all, rehabilitate that ancient balance between the inner and outer dimensions of our existence; between our much abused intuitive powers and those of our rational consciousness. Both these powers are, in my view, God-given and it should be the sacred duty of mankind to reconcile them in order to produce what used to be called wisdom. This wisdom is surely the bedrock of civilization...⁴

So, we start with a timeless wisdom of Order, Balance and Harmony.

But then, to bring this matter up to date and to face “our present difficulties”, His Royal Highness asked the question:

³ His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, a speech given on receiving the 10th Global Citizen Award from the Harvard Medical School’s Center for Health and the Global Environment at the Harvard Club, New York City, 28th January 2007; and His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, The Roscoe Lecture, given upon receipt of an Honorary Fellowship from the Liverpool John Moores University, 23rd April 2007.

⁴ *Selected Speeches and Articles by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales*, edited by David Cadman and Suheil Bushrui, The Center for Heritage Resource Studies, The University of Maryland, 2006, 6.

With all our knowledge, our resources and our capacity for sophisticated analysis of any and every problem known to man, how on earth did we get here? If we could answer that question, we could be more confident about our ability to look for and implement solutions before it really is too late.⁵

His answer to this question is as follows:

The crux of the problem, I believe, is that we have come to see ourselves as being outside of Nature and free to manipulate and control her constituent parts, imagining somehow that the whole will not suffer and can take care of itself, and of us, whatever we do. I happen to think that this illusion of separateness conceals from us the degree to which we are still entirely dependent on those natural systems for our basic needs, notwithstanding our technological genius. Surely, if we are to find our way through to a wiser, more balanced future, we must learn to see the world differently – and our role in it? To me, this is a “crisis of perception” which we have to face up to. If we don’t, we will inevitably end up making all the same mistakes, all over again.⁶

But what is this “crisis of perception”? Again, it is best to allow His Royal Highness to speak for himself:

I want to suggest that before we even start thinking about the positive and practical steps needed to reverse environmental degradation and limit climate change, we really do need to look hard at ourselves. [For we] need to recognize that to a large extent we have lost our capacity to see beyond our individual, and in many cases urbanized, lifestyles, ... [lifestyles which mean] that many people now have little or no physical contact with the Earth. They may see excellent programmes about Nature on their television screens, but they have little – if any – direct experience of their own. [For them, therefore] Nature has become a simplified and sanitized, arm’s-length experience, to be switched on or off at will. It is no longer the “Mother Nature” that animated the entire world for generations of our forebears. As a result, so many have lost what I would call a “sense of harmony”.⁷

⁵ Op cit, Harvard Speech.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

In this, we should also note that when in his book *A Vision of Britain: a personal view of architecture*,⁸ His Royal Highness set out Ten Principles as ground rules upon which to build well, one of these principles was entitled “Harmony” and was expressed as follows:

Harmony [is design] that sounds its own “note” and yet blends with the local and natural environment.⁹

So here, as a first point, is the suggestion (which I support) that to find answers to “our present difficulties” and to tackle a “crisis of perception” – to find our way towards “sustainability” – we have, first, to rediscover and then nurture a sense of harmony within and beyond ourselves.

And, lest we should suppose that this matter of Harmony is something that is in some way vague and without form, we should note that if we look for measure we shall find it. For Harmony as proportion and order can be – has ever been – described in the measures and ratios of number and geometric form.

Indeed, one of the masters of this geometry, Keith Critchlow, reminds us¹⁰ that Harmony, or more especially the principle of proportion, is that which describes the relationship between one thing and another as a whole, the relationship, as he puts it, between sameness, otherness and wholeness.¹¹ He refers to these principles as archetypal laws of Nature, and his lecture on the architecture of Chartres cathedral is famous for the insight that it brings, for example, to the use and meaning in architecture of the circle, the square, the triangle and other geometric forms.

There is also a wonderful story that speaks of these things. Central to the pantheon of ancient Egypt was Ma’at. She symbolised the principle of balance and represented the way things go when they follow their natural tendency towards Harmony and order. She is Truth, that which is right – the way things should be – and was so fundamental to the order of the universe that she appeared in the statue of every other god. For the word

⁸ His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, *A Vision of Britain: a personal view of architecture*, Doubleday, London, New York, Toronto, Sydney and Auckland, 1989.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See, for example, Keith Critchlow, *Islamic Patterns: an analytical and cosmological approach*, Inner Traditions, Rochester Vermont, 1976; Keith Critchlow, *Order in Space: a design source book*, Thames & Hudson, 1969, Reprinted 2000 and Jon Allen, *Drawing Geometry: a primer for artists, designers and architects*, Floris Books, 2007.

¹¹ It should be noted that these three essential qualities are presented at the very beginning of Plato’s *Timaeus*.

“Ma’at” literally means “pedestal” or “plinth” and all the gods are always depicted standing on a pedestal or plinth, standing on Ma’at, dependent for their very stability on her because Harmony, balance and order are the basis upon which the universe exists and is sustained. If Ma’at fell prey to the counter force of Isfet, then the entire universe would fall out of Harmony into disorder and chaos.¹²

There is much more that could be said about this¹³ but, to summarize, I would say this: in our exploration of the roots of sustainability, the first proposition is that we have to find the balance and order of Harmony, revealed in measure and, most importantly, in the relationships – or, as I would say, the relatingness – that that measurement seeks to express; the oneness to which, despite our ignorance, we are, perhaps intuitively, drawn.

But, if Harmony lies at the root of sustainability, what is it that gives rise to Harmony? This leads us to the second part of this essay: The Matter of Beauty.

The Matter of Beauty

The biologist Brian Goodwin, speaks of some important changes that have been taking place within the world of science, changes that distinguish between “quantities” and “qualities”. According to this rather exceptional man, this cognitive shift has a long history. It starts in the sixteenth century with Galileo who apparently found qualities to be unreliable and idiosyncratic because they were, he thought, entirely subjective. Thus it was that Western science began its march towards that which René Guénon was later to call “the reign of quantity”¹⁴ – in physics these quantities are called the laws of nature; in biology they are called the laws of physiology; in all, they are identified with measurable regularities that, thereby, have what, in this mind-set, is deemed to be the necessary status of reliability – if we can measure it, it must be real; and if we cannot, it must be false.

Those of us that raise questions about “the reign of quantity”, including as it happens The Prince of Wales, have always to make clear that we are not “against science”. No-one of a fair mind would deny the tremendous advances in science and its application that have come about as a result of the focus on quantities. But, says Brian Goodwin, in the twentieth century new insights into Nature arose that now reveal and recognise the potential value, not of

¹² I am indebted to my colleague Ian Skelly for telling me of this story.

¹³ See, for example, Richard Padovan, *Proportion: Science, Philosophy and Architecture*, Spon Press London and New York, 2003. First published 1999.

¹⁴ René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Time*.

quantities, but of qualities – not simply the pressure of your blood but whether or not you feel well; not just the level of your bank balance but whether or not you are content with what you have. Joy and sadness may be difficult to quantify but we know (without measurement) that they are part of our everyday reality. These are all qualities that shape what it is to be human.

As it happens, “the matter of qualities” is deeply embedded in our way of thinking about our relationships in and with the world. Here, again, is what Brian Goodwin has to say:

...in Goethian science, or holistic science, what we do is work with qualities as well as quantities. We do computer simulation, we do the mathematics, we do analysis – we do all that, but at the same time we say “qualities are the way of complex systems”. And complex systems include the body, any organism, ecosystems, the economy, the climate, the Earth. These are all complex systems, and if we are going to interact with them in ways that are not destructive, we need to change our ways of understanding and adopt a much more subtle approach to interacting with them.¹⁵

He then goes on to say that the conclusion that one might draw from such a thesis is this:

...that qualities are what allow people to understand and interpret complex systems, and interpret them almost instantaneously in order to make judgments and ultimately decisions about what we do and how we act. This is the root of the “feeling” that people have about things which ultimately influence the “quality” of their lives.¹⁶

When I first heard this, it led me to wonder about the quality of that Harmony upon which sustainability depends. And, for reasons that I cannot now quite recall – but which, I suppose, was some unspoken Platonic remembrance – I came to the conclusion that one of the essential qualities of good, sustainable and harmonious places would be that they are beautiful; that the timeless quality of Beauty is a defining principle of Harmony and sustainability; and that Ugliness is their enemy.

One of the great teachings of the Buddha is that it is with our thoughts that we make the world,¹⁷ which is to say that the future that we build will always be a concrete manifestation of that which we hold to be True. Thus, I suggest that

¹⁵ Taken from Brian Goodwin’s lecture at The Prince’s Foundation, 20th September 2005

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The first stanza of the *Dhammapada*

there must be a relationship of cause and effect in the making of place. For example, in their wholeness, in both their design and their use, do ignorance and brutality always give rise to ugly places? And, equally, do beautiful places only arise from that which is good and true? Though some would disagree, I argue that the answer to both of these questions is: “Yes”.

Thus, then, we come to my second proposition, which is: that if Harmony is an informing principle of sustainability, Beauty lies at its root.

But what is this Beauty?

For the neo-Platonist Plotinus,¹⁸ and, of course, for Plato himself, that which is beautiful is also that which is true and good – “Beauty is the splendour of the True” and “Truth is the essence of Beauty” – for the beautiful, the good and the true are each and together an expression of the One which is all. Indeed, it is said that the substance of Reality is its Goodness.¹⁹

Plotinus suggests²⁰ that there are levels or, perhaps, layers of that which is beautiful – starting with that which is perceived through the senses of the eye and the ear – and that all such Beauty is related to the working of the soul, who is herself beautiful. To quote from Plotinus:

It must be therefore that, since the soul’s nature is what it is, and ranks among the highest essences in the order of things, when she sees something akin to herself or even a vestige of kinship she rejoices and flutters her wings, and receives it within her, and remembers her true self and that which is hers. ... Beauty then, is established [in form] when it is brought together into unity, and this beauty communicates itself both to the parts and to the whole.²¹

By contrast, he says, “beauty cannot arise from ugly things”,²² from which the soul “recoils”.²³

But the question that remains is: how is it that the soul is beautiful and from whence does its beauty arise? According to Plotinus, its source is:

¹⁸ I am grateful to Professor Critchlow for directing me to Plotinus.

¹⁹ I am indebted to my colleague Ali Lakhani of *The Sacred Web* for this observation.

²⁰ *Plotinus on the Beautiful and On Intelligible Beauty*, translated by Thomas Taylor, *The Shrine of Wisdom*, 1932 (now reprinted 1984), 1-4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

²³ *Ibid.*

...wholly of the divine order [which is] the fountain of beauty and all that is akin thereto. ...Wherefore it is rightly said that the beauty and good of the soul consist in her assimilation to God.²⁴

Not something, perhaps, that can be measured by quantity but, nevertheless, something that, for Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists, was informed by and could be described by proportion and Harmony.

It might also note that the twentieth century philosopher and metaphysician Frithjof Schuon confirms that this is so but also adds a vital and new dimension, that of “reciprocity” and “generosity”:

Beauty is not only a matter of formal rectitude but also of content...and the content of beauty is its richness of possibilities and its cosmic generosity, so that there is a beauty which possesses or envelops and a beauty which gives and overflows. Harmony of form is not merely the trueness of a square or triangle, it is also and essentially the manifestation of an internal infinitude; it is such in so far as it is all that is capable of being.²⁵

If, then, the principle of Beauty is an essential part of all that is Good and True, it must, surely, also be a part of that which is sustainable, since, in the end, nothing can be sustained that is Untrue – not at one with that which “informs” all that truly is.

And yet, the matter of Beauty is hardly ever referred to in the now common and popular debate about sustainability. Such discourse speaks aloud of new technology and even new forms of economy. Much is made of the management of the physical and social consequences of matters such as global warming, tempest and flood. But how often is it suggested that our environmental crisis is founded upon ignorance and ugliness? Despite all the evidence that might show this to be true, the answer must surely be, “Not at all”.

So, by contrast, I want to suggest that nothing can be sustainable – environmentally, socially or economically – unless it is in essence beautiful, that is, unless it is full of those qualities from which Beauty arises.

²⁴ Ibid, 9.

²⁵ *Frithjof Schuon: Art from the Sacred to the Profane, East and West*, edited by Katherine Schoun and with a Foreword by Keith Critchlow, World Wisdom, 2007, 20.

And returning for the moment to buildings and the built form, I quote in support for my thesis, the Roman architect Vitruvius, whose *De Architectura*²⁶ is, I am told, the most influential architectural treatise of all time. In this work, and as it would seem in foreseeing the matter of sustainability, he put forward three principles for a good building: “firmitas, utilitas, venustas”, that is durability (or sustainability), usefulness, and ... Beauty.

So here, and more than two thousand years ago, we find the link that I am now proposing between sustainability and Beauty. And, later, in the fifteenth century, the Florentine architect, Alberti, again referred to Harmony and Beauty not only as key components of architecture but also as fundamental rules in Nature:²⁷

Beauty is a form of sympathy and consonance of the parts within a body, according to definite number, outline, and position, as dictated by [the elegant arrangement and joining together of parts], the absolute and fundamental rule in Nature. This is the main object of the art of building, and the source of her dignity, charm, authority, and worth.²⁸

Finally, there is one other important aspect of Beauty that needs to be emphasised, since it goes to the heart of where Beauty is to be found.

In the modern world, the notion of Beauty is typically expressed as being something that is superficial and transient, ever shifting according to fashion. It is supposed to be something that can only last a short while and will inevitably decline with age. It is also said to be relative, no more than a matter of personal taste, something fleeting that cannot be truly known. But according to tradition, Beauty is timeless, absolute and cognizable. What is more, it is argued that we all have the capacity to know it and express it, even if our sensibility and discernment have been so dulled by the ravages of our time that we have become blind to it. Beauty is absolute and True because it is an expression of the One, the Divine – of that which is. It is, of course, there in proportion, ratio and Harmony, expressed in number and geometry; it is there in the icon and the sonata; it is there in the unfolding beauty of Nature, in the rising and ebbing of the tide and the cycle of the seasons. It is there because here, there and everywhere is where it is!

²⁶ Probably written between 27 and 23 BC.

²⁷ I am grateful to my colleague Ben Bolgar of The Prince’s Foundation for this reference.

²⁸ Leon Battista Alberti, *The Art of Building in Ten Books*. See also Joseph Milne’s paper ‘Ficino on the nature of Love and the beautiful’, published in *Friend to Mankind: Marsilio Ficino*, Ed Michael Shepherd, London, 1999.

So where have we got to? So far, I have suggested that the essence of sustainability must be found as much in its qualities as in its quantities; and that, in this, Harmony is of especial importance and Beauty lies at its root; that ugliness and dissonance are the enemy of sustainability; and that Harmony and Beauty, which at root are founded in the divine order of things, expressed through the workings of the soul, are its friend.

Thus it is – if you are not already too weary – that we come to the third and final part of our quest: The Matter of Love. For we have still to ask what it is that gives rise to Beauty and thus to Harmony and thus to sustainability. What is the root of the root of the root?

The Matter of Love

In his discussion on Beauty, you will, perhaps, remember that Plotinus had referred to a “divine order [which is] the fountain of beauty”. And we can note that Frithjof Schuon – from whom we have also heard – says this:

The archetype of beauty, or its Divine model, is the superabundance and equilibrium of the divine Qualities, and at the same time the overflowing of the existential potentialities contained in pure Being. In a rather different sense, beauty stems from the divine Love, this Love being the will to deploy itself and to give itself, to realize itself in “another”; thus it is that “God created the world by love.”

All terrestrial beauty is thus by reflection a mystery of love. It is, “whether it likes it or not,” coagulated love or music turned into crystal, but it retains on its face the imprint of its internal fluidity, of its beatitude, and of its liberality...²⁹

So, it would seem that once we engage with the Matter of Beauty we will be drawn, “whether [we like] it or not”, to the Matter of Love.

But it would seem that we have so lost a sense of the sacred that the word “love” has been diminished; has, perhaps, come to mean little more than personal desire, affection or even sentimentality. Nevertheless, I sense that in reality, Love (perhaps with a capital “L”) is something much more profound, that it is of the nature of True Being. It is that which is captured in the Arabic word “Mahabbah”, which I am told means Love as the

²⁹ Op cit, Schuon, 20-21

underlying principle of the universe.³⁰ It is the very “breath of the Divinity”.

This is, of course, the Love that lies at the heart of Buddhism where it is expressed in the teaching of the unity of wisdom and compassion. Indeed, in one of the earliest texts³¹ it is said that it is only by dwelling in the realm of the four “divine abodes”³² of loving kindness, compassion, joy in and for others and equanimity, that enlightenment is to be found; that seeing things as they really are requires that we dwell in Love.

What then can be said of this “divine abiding”? At the heart of my own Quaker childhood, with its emphasis upon silent contemplation, non-violence and tolerance, was a teaching that stressed the strength and gentleness of Christ the “good shepherd” – his compassion for the suffering of others and his assurance that those that would find the kingdom of heaven would not be the rich and the powerful but the meek, the merciful and the pure in heart. Jesus was a man who taught kindness and selflessness and, of course, who encapsulated the core of his teaching in the following words:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.³³

Now, many years later, it seems to me, that this teaching is even more profound than I had supposed. Not only are we being taught that we should love one another as a matter of virtue, we are being taught that Love is of the essence – that is that it is “of God”, by which I mean “of all that is”. For it is also said:

We are of God... for love is of God...God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him...because as he is, so are we in this world.³⁴

And if all that is comes from that which we call God, whose root is “goodness”, then God is in all that is. And if God is Love, then, surely, all that is is Love – all of us, all of life, the coming and going of the seasons,

³⁰ I am most grateful to Professor Suheil Bushrui for pointing this out to me. The word is part of the teaching of the Bahá'ís.

³¹ Op cit, Bhikkhu Bodhi, MN Sutta 52, the *Atthakanāgara Sutta*.

³² In Pali, the four divine abodes or *brahma-vihāra*, are *mettā* (loving kindness), *karunā*, (compassion), *muditā* (appreciative joy) and *upekkhā* (equanimity).

³³ Gospel of St. John, Chapter 13, v. 34.

³⁴ I John, 4, v.v. 6-17.

the wind, the sun and the rain, the in-breath and the out-breath. In the words of the American sage, Whittall N. Perry:

Love is the energizing elixir of the universe, the cause and effect of all harmonies, lights brilliance and the heat in wine and fire, it is the aroma of perfumes and the breath of the Divinity: it is the Life in all being...It is all that the texts have to say, and the more that remains unspoken.³⁵

It is that which the Christian mystic Julian of Norwich refers to as “our Lord’s meaning”:

From time to time these things were first revealed. I had often wanted to know what was our Lord’s meaning. It was more than fifteen years after that I was answered in my spirit’s understanding. ‘You would know our Lord’s meaning in this thing? Know it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed it you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For love. Hold on to this and you will know and understand love more and more. But you will not know or learn anything else – ever!’ So it was that I learned that love was our Lord’s meaning.”³⁶

In all of this, then, and in our exploration of the roots of sustainability, in exploring the relationship between Harmony and Beauty, is there not a suggestion that the natural state of the world, its essence, that by which it is sustained, is the very manifestation of a profound Love; that Love is all, is in all and must be expressed in all; that Love is in all that is beautiful – not least, for you, in all good buildings; indeed, that the fragrance of reality is, therefore, Divine Order, Beauty and Harmony? And is not also true to say that Love, this root cause, this organising principle, this essence, is to be discovered not in elaborate theory but in the everyday and by the practice of small things: thoughtfulness, harmlessness, patience, generosity, kindness, humility.

This is the root of the root of the root; that from which Beauty and Harmony and sustainability must arise. And if we cannot “hear” this, then it must be that in our secular and materialistic world we have lost touch

³⁵ Whittall N. Perry, *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*, Fons Vitae, 2000, p. 612.

³⁶ Quoted in Dorothea Siegmund-Schultze, ‘Some Aspects of Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Divine Love*,’ p.p. 199-210.

with the senses and, indeed, the sensibility that would enable us to understand what is being said. For if, wherever we are, we stand still and listen, we may hear the cry of Nature and feel the desperation of our souls.

So now, in answering the question posed at the outset by His Royal Highness – how is it that we have come to be where we are now – my final proposition is this: that it is this loss of Love and divine presence that has brought us to where we are, and that without it we shall be unable to find our way to what we now call “sustainability”.

Epilogue

As we come to the end of this quest, you may be wondering whether or not there is really any provenance for these wild thoughts; and, indeed, you may be wondering whose image it is that has been present with us throughout our journey together. Well, there is provenance...and her name is Aphrodite. And here we see her rising from the sea and being clothed in the raiment of the Hours, who govern and order the seasons and bring new growth.

Most especially, “the birth of Aphrodite is imagined as the act of love”.³⁷ She represents Beauty and gives birth to a daughter, Harmonia, the goddess of Harmony. Thus it is that in this great myth, we find confirmation of the relationship between Love and Beauty and Harmony.

But what the ancient Greeks understood, but we appear to have forgotten, is that we are not gods and that our best laid plans oft go astray. For lest we should think that this is, then, all settled and easy, we should remember that the father of Harmonia was Ares, the god of war; and that two of her siblings were Phobos (Fear) and Deimos (Terror). Whilst, therefore, this union gave birth to Harmony it also bore with it the possibility of dis-Harmony. The story, therefore, tells us that we cannot just assume that all will be well. Indeed, the story is telling us that unless we act with wisdom and with a pure heart there is every possibility that it will not; that unless we overcome our hubris the possibility of catastrophe is real and ever-present. Perhaps, the present ravages of climate change and the ugliness that so often surrounds us are a manifestation of this.

In seeking to find the right way, in seeking to avoid the path that leads to Fear and Terror, there is one other matter that we need to note. For Aphrodite is said to be born of the Heaven and the Sea. She is, we are

³⁷ Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, Arkana Penguin Books, 1993. First published by Viking in 1991.

told, “the first fruit of the separation of Heaven and Earth”,³⁸ that separation of relationship and time, that birth of consciousness, that is our inheritance and which carries with it the possibility of both Harmony and dissonance. But, and this is the important point, we are also told that Aphrodite bears, as her birthright, “the memory of...union”³⁹ – remembrance of the Whole. She, therefore, as Beauty and Love, is the remembrance that can lead us back towards that union, that wholeness, that holiness, that state of Harmony and grace that we have lost but needs must find.

And so it turns out that it is Aphrodite that has been our guide, and that it is her story that gives provenance to mine, to the proposition that in all things, and not least in the design of buildings, the making of place and, of course, the matter of sustainability, the roots of understanding lie in timeless principles of Harmony, Beauty and Love. We may have forgotten that this is so but if, having heard of it, it is, in some sense, familiar to us, “let us begin the journey home”.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid, 353.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Rumi: Hidden Music*, translated by Matryam Mafi and Azima Melita, Harper and Collins, 2001, 179