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HEALING NATIONS

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*Our politicians are legislation junkies.
 And **we** are social and political hypochondriacs.*

Unwittingly, everyone who is working in the field of complementary/ alternative medicine is helping to put together a new and powerful philosophy that can transform western politics.

Beneath all the political sub-languages or lexicons that drive political debate, there is actually one lexicon that rules. We all use it within the political arena, but no one recognises its existence.

It is the lexicon of orthodox medicine. Or, to be more precise, it is the lexicon conventionally employed when analyzing sentient organisms.

Being political hypochondriacs, we treat our politicians as if they are orthodox doctors. Political agendas focus on our social, political and economic pains: and symptoms. Legislative programs consist primarily of diagnosis and prescription. We are all legislation junkies. And just as when we visit our doctors, too often we place ourselves in the hands of those who are presumed to be experts. We trust that there will not be side effects, and we do not want to take responsibility for bringing about the cure of our problems ourselves. Indeed, we are all too ready to externalize our social and political pains rather than accept ownership of them. Does this sound familiar?

But the lexicon of orthodox medicine is mechanistic, and the mechanistic paradigm breaks down when applied to complex organisms such as human beings and the polity. Hence all the side effects that are endemic to both medical and political practices, e.g. sleeping tablets that list "sleep disturbances" as a side effect, hair loss due to chemotherapy, and 4.6% of all recorded deaths in the USA being listed in 1998 as due to adverse drug reactions. Meanwhile, in the political arena we had the President of Germany complaining in 1997 that government regulation was stifling initiative, we saw in the twenties the organized crime that was a consequence of prohibition and now the contemporary parallels of anti-narcotics legislation that has led to drugs barons and jails filled to capacity due to drug-related offenses.

Hence, our dissatisfaction with the orthodox medical paradigm, and hence our sense of alienation and our political apathy with regards to the orthodox political paradigm.

But, thanks to everyone who is working in the field of complementary/ alternative medicine, there is a different and more effective way of looking at how western politics work and how western politics can be transformed.

Orthodox medicine is being challenged by complementary/ alternative medicine. We need the same challenge within the political arena.

Orthodoxy separates mind and body, doctors and patients, governors and governed. But to be separate is to be disempowered.

We are vital to the healing process. As patients and citizens, we need to be involved.

That is the key.

Take these familiar criticisms of orthodox medicine:

1. *We present as being sick and in need of cure*; We play the patient.
2. *Problems of diagnosis* - diagnosis problematic at best.
3. *Side effects* - high incidence of iatrogenic (doctor induced) illness and hundreds of thousands of deaths annually from medical treatments.
4. *Lack of humanity* - treatment clinical rather than caring.
5. *Symptom shift* - focus upon fluctuating symptoms instead of on prime causes.
6. *Treated as mechanisms* - diseases are not seen as [expressions] of the self.
7. *Invasive approach* - unnecessary surgery and unnecessary administration of drugs.
8. *Rocketing costs* - medications costs soar, yet 45% of prescriptions are ineffective.

Now translate these same criticisms into the political arena:

1. *We present as being sick and in need of cure* - we are political hypochondriacs, always complaining.
2. *Problems of diagnosis* - effective political diagnosis of social, economic and environmental problems is an elusive chimera.
3. *Side effects* - all legislation is subject to unexpected side-effects, some of them disastrous.
4. *Lack of humanity* - our interface with government is distant and impersonal.
5. *Symptom shift* - government focused on symptoms. Real causes are too often ignored.
6. *Treated as mechanisms* - we seek remedies and cures from the supposed experts - being reluctant to take responsibility ourselves.
7. *Invasive approach* - governments are focused on intrusive legislative and regulatory interventions

8. *Rocketing costs* - governmental budgets are severely stretched, with no diminution of political or social 'pains.'

Curing emphasizes elimination. It is mechanical. Healing involves a dynamic, a process. With curing we *externalize* our symptoms, blaming our pains or at least our bad luck rather than ourselves. Thus we take tablets when we should instead be making adjustments to our lifestyles and attitudes. This symptom-driven approach we all too readily embrace within the political arena, blaming our politicians rather than ourselves. Even our neighborhood litter is seen as someone else's problem, rather than as a sign of our own attitudes towards society and our local communities. Healing, on the other hand, requires us to - assume responsibility for the symptoms.

Illness is the route to wholeness. It is how our higher consciousness alerts us to our true selves and needs. In the same way, we must acknowledge this truth about our communities, societies and nations. We need to say of the riot, for example, that we do not just have sink zones in need of curing, but that we have national and societal wounds in need of healing.

The Western doctor asks: "What sort of symptom does this person have?" The Eastern and alternative doctor asks: "What sort of person has this symptom?" The time has come to ask the same of our nations. We must no longer ask for example, "What sort of filthy street/vandal/homeless etc. does this nation have?" Instead, we must ask: "What sort of nation are we to have such filthy streets/vandals/homeless etc.?" This is a very different question, opening us to very different political/social/spiritual answers.

And why does the language of medicine so readily fit the arena of politics? Because medicine deals with the human being and all human beings are sentient organisms. Likewise, the *body politic* is best understood as a sentient organism.

Now look, in political terms rather than medical, at the eight causes of illness as posited by C Norman Shealy and Caroline M Myss in their book 'The Creation of Health':

1. *Unresolved or deeply consuming psychological or spiritual stress*: Stress drives our modern nations. We knee-jerk into cynicism and have lost the art of forgiveness. Our culture, especially via our media, is to complain and to ignore what is good. Gratitude has flown. It has been replaced by demands and rights.

2. *Negative belief patterns*: Negativity is endemic to the modern state. Our politicians feed our negativity for it is in their interest to have us dependent upon them. Our media encourages negativity, for that sells papers and TV programs.

3. *Inability to give or receive love*: Love means relationships: with our neighbours, with our authorities, with our communities and with our politicians. This involves the female side of the brain. We are alienated from our own true selves and from each other. It is only consuming that hides the pain from us. We are out of relationship with the body politic.

4. *Lack of humour and the inability to distinguish serious concerns from the lesser issues of life*: We lead spiritually wasted lives and are assured that we lead materially significant lives. We have lost the plot of what makes us sane. We can learn from our social and political symptoms instead of continually complaining about them.

5. *Ineffective exercise of the power of choice; inability to hold dominion over the movement and activities of one's own life*: Politically we are not in control. Communities are non-existent.

We have colluded in this in order to avoid responsibility. We must move from the monologue to the dialogue. Communities have to be recreated. We must become engaged.

6. *Poor nutrition and exercise*: Modern nations are materially sated. We have not changed our consumption patterns since we were struggling for survival. We are suffering from the "pathologies of affluence".

7. *Absence or loss of meaning in one's life*: In a machine-driven society, there is no meaning. The science of efficient causality is King. Teleology is dead. The old way centres around 'provision'. The new way must centre around 'meaning'.

8. *Tendency towards denial; not acknowledging what it is that is not working in one's life*: We set up defense mechanisms to avoid the truth. For example, we have 'indulged' in reaction formation via political correctness. We regress into our infantile modes of consumerism. We are in denial.

Within the context of the complementary/ alternative medical paradigm, our way forward politically is clear:

We must take responsibility for our lives. We must empower ourselves and accept ownership of our present social and political conditions. We must come out of denial with regards to how our modern nations function. We must cease to declare war on political symptoms such as failing hospitals, run-down neighborhoods and street crime, but must instead embrace them as truths about ourselves, about us as individuals and about us as communities, nations and societies.

In her 'Aquarian Conspiracy' Marilyn Ferguson lists the fundamental differences between orthodox and alternative medicine. For example she distinguishes between the professional as an authority and the professional as a therapeutic partner. Likewise she wants us to move away from the orthodox paradigm which sees the body as a machine in good or bad repair, towards an alternative paradigm that sees the body as a dynamic system, context, field of energy within other fields. Her assumptions of the new paradigm of health can be readily translated into a new political agenda or manifesto. It would read as follows:

The new political paradigm, whereby health will be restored to our post-industrial nation states, will require our governments and people to search for patterns and causes in all social, political and economic occurrences, with government only [intervening] directly with perceived social, political and economic ills when it is absolutely necessary so to do.

Although use will be made of specialist government departments and external specialist agencies, the entire thrust of all governmental policy will be driven by a concern to achieve an integrated program that takes into account the well-being of the entire nation and/or planet, and that operates at a level that takes into account every conceivable aspect of the body politic, both in terms of material factors and spiritual.

Although government agencies will be expected to operate efficiently, those agencies and their personnel will be expected to place a predominant emphasis upon human values, and to accordingly take responsibility for their work. This being the case, government policy will be aimed far more at the spiritual or mental well-being of the nation rather than just at the material. The over-emphasis upon the material ultimately denies the citizen his or her humanity, and ultimately fosters one-dimensional attitudes

both on the part of government and the people that are contrary to the nation's over-all well-being.

All government agencies and personnel will be required to foster an empathetic attitude towards those people and communities in their care. The emotionally neutral government officer is incapable of dealing in a humane way with the needs of those people that he or she is actually required to serve.

The government will always aim for minimal intervention in social, political and economic areas. There will always be times when intervention is necessary, but ordinarily that would be undertaken as a last resort. Government policy and action will be complemented with the full armamentarium of non-invasive techniques, most of which will be associated with devolution of power and authority, and the fostering of non-materialistic attitudes and goals.

The nation state will be viewed as a dynamic system, as a field of energy within other fields. The psychological factors will be seen as being as important as material factors. The body politic will not be seen as a material machine that is in either good or bad repair. A body politic can be passing through a period of recession yet can still be in fundamentally good health if the attitudes and actions, the dynamics of the nation are in good heart.

Problems within the nation state will not be seen as 'things' that need to be altered or eradicated per se, but will be identified as being part of a process that needs to be understood in its entirety.

The purpose of government will not be viewed as primarily to eradicate perceived social, political, or economic ills, but will be understood as the prime agency to help the nation understand its situation in the whole, and to work with the nation to achieve social, political and economic well-being in terms of material and spiritual factors.

The government will not be in a situation of authority and power over its citizens. Through comprehensive devolution, the citizen will be empowered and will thereby achieve real autonomy within the context of his or her community. This is not to suggest that fundamental laws, such as criminal law, will not be maintained by central government. In this context it is the role of government to keep in place those factors that are fundamental to good governance and good social order.

Government will not be in a position of supreme authority over the citizen. Instead, government and government agencies will be involved in a therapeutic partnership with their citizens.

The spiritual aspect of the nation's health will be seen by government as of equal importance with material aspects.

Spiritual or psychological factors will be seen by government as primary or coequal factors in all social political or economic concerns.

The spiritual state of the nation, how the nation feels about itself, and how each individual citizen feels about his or herself will be seen by government as fundamental to the well-being of the nation state.

The government and its agencies, although still using *quantitative* information will place a primary reliance upon *qualitative* information, which will include the feelings and views of its citizens and the communities within which everyone lives. This will involve the government not so much in a fact-finding mode, but more in a counseling mode.

Governmental action will be aimed not at 'bolt-on/snap-off' procedures in order to avoid future ills, but will be centered around the need to see the nation as a dynamic complex of relationships and aspirations. This will place an emphasis on education, but an education that is not driven by the government in authority, but in partnership with local communities.

In Summary

The defining paradigm of the twenty-first century will be that of 'healing.' Everyone presently involved in the development of complementary/ alternative medical practices is helping to create a radical philosophy that can transform and ultimately heal not only ourselves as individuals but the very nations in which we live and the very planet from which we draw our life.

May this work prosper!

References

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Richard Dell's *Healing Nations* has recently been described by Bob Geldof in the following terms: "Richard Dell has written a thoughtful and thought-provoking book. In essence this is a political manifesto with a robustly spiritual core. He posits a newer, different way in which to arrange ourselves and our institutions."

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