



The sacred art of maturing

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Ageing was, and can again, in new ways, become the unfolding of the Wisdom virtue, of becoming significant ‘prophets’, speaking and acting in this time in ways that assure harmony of human, earth, knowledge, and technology. This way of wisdom is a far cry from the dominant ways ageing is now viewed – as loss of abilities, neuro this and that, fears of illness and death, looking forward to being warehoused, or, if lucky, a kind of paradise, perhaps wiling away the days at one of Donald Thump’s golf courses.

There was a time, a now ancient time in which ‘schools of prophets’ were instituted. Their demise, though, can provide for us a radically new way of imagining ageing as a ‘school of prophecy’. In the ancient schools of this sort, individuals were taught secular knowledge, but, more importantly, exercising the office of the prophet – to speak the depth of morality in relation to the culture, to speak the heart-felt worship of the Divine, in multiple ways, and to act as the most significant guides of the state, and checking all attempts at illegality and tyranny.

Synonyms for ‘prophet’ include: astrologer, auger, bard, clairvoyant, magus, medium, meteorologist, oracle, palmist, sibyl, soothsayer, wizard. Just imagine if we were able to begin to hear elders through these magnificent imaginations. The fact is, though, should anyone, in their later years, begin in any way to exhibit such tendencies, they are sure to be diagnosed as having Alzheimer’s or dementia, or, as they say, losing it.

We are unable to see that our view of ageing has very little to do with ageing; it has to do with holding onto an exclusionary view of what constitutes being significant human beings – contributors to a whole and complete materialistic view of the world.

Wisdom concerns ‘future time’. The elderly live much more in ‘future time’. We, alas, think that as we age, we live more and more in the past – because we are only able to hear literally. The going over and over stories of the past has to do with the slow and necessary drawing out of the spiritual significance of the past – that is, its future significance for our intimates, family, and, if there were a place for it, the community and even the world.

One of the major wisdom processes is that we begin to step out of earlier times and experience becomes simultaneously a participation in the earthly world *and* spiritual worlds. One culture’s sense of ageing as demise is a Whole culture’s sense of ageing as complete clarity. The difficulty is that the latter view is something that has to be educated and formed, and when elements of it only come out of the unconscious, it seems to be degeneration, when it is actually regeneration trying to awaken, not merely for the individual, but, prophetically, for the world.

Ageing into maturity is not a thing but a happening, a dynamic movement. We are now quite familiar with the 'mid-life' crisis. Every time we pass through a crisis, a former world we have lived disintegrates and a new world forms. The crisis of – let's not call it 'ageing' any more, but the crisis of maturing – entails a surrendering to the very source of our being. It is the beginning of the never finished process of letting go, which can change the whole of the way the rest of us live, softening the earlier goal of having, holding onto, getting more, progressing, winning at all costs.

For years, every time I get the chance, I try to introduce the possibility of the forming of 'Centers for Creative Elders', places, many of them, that hold to a more true view of what we call 'ageing'. I am so happy to introduce it here.

Notes on contributor



Robert Sardello is Director of the School of Spiritual Psychology and Spiritual-Earth Sanctuary. He lives in Texas and offers spiritual conversation centered in many themes throughout the world. He is author of 10 books, most recently *Silence: The Mystery of Wholeness and Heartfulness*. Website: www.heartfulsoul.com.