

Chapter 28 : Hierarchies & Quality of Life

The world is full of injustices: the upper class is happier than the lower class, generals happier than privates & (it seems) royalty happier than citizens in general. The first two examples are well established. On the third example, I quote Prince Bertil, who was amused at the Republic Club's argument that the Royal House should also welcome a republic because their entire life was so hostile to human beings: Prince Bertil had never met a monarch who would rather be a citizen.

The explanation was probably prosaic. As noted below in this chapter, their education & background no longer fitted in. If they were not recognized as royal, they had no role in society at all. The lock-in effect could be quite drastic:

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At the time of Princess Estelle's birth, the university lecturer in personality and developmental psychology Bertil Persson & the court reporter Johan T Lindwall were interviewed about the subject.¹ Persson was not aware of any research on the psychological problems of royalty but believed that the motivation for the assigned role was not very high at the beginning and that they were uncomfortable with the situation. However, like others, they eventually adapted. From that point of view, royalty was not at all unique. Lindwall agreed with the description: Both Carl Gustaf and Crown Princess Victoria had told him that they never considered during their childhood whether there was an alternative. Everyone they met took their future for granted. The conflicts came when, after graduation, they met new people with new ideas and began to reflect on their situation. But noblesse oblige, they reasoned. If they were chosen by fate, they would somehow have to manage.

Research on the subject is not entirely lacking. Depictions of royalty with mental illness usually begin with Nebuchadnezzar II & Caligula and end with Ludwig II of Bavaria & Emperor Wilhelm II.² The most common diagnosis is that of imperial insanity. This is not a neurological disease but is defined as a combination of megalomania & paranoia. However, Emperor Wilhelm II has been gifted with the more recent diagnose histrionic personality disorder.

In connection with Crown Princess Victoria's eating disorders, reference was made to other affected princesses: Diana (1961-1997) who suffered from bulimia & depression³; Leila Pahlavi (1970-2001) who suffered from anorexia, drug abuse, low self-confidence, depression & general fatigue.⁴ Another "princess disease" is said to be the combination of self-overestimation due to unjustified praise & poor self-confidence for not meeting the praise. Further examples are listed below.

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¹ Jenny Rickardson. Psykologin bakom en prinsessas födelse. Modern psykologi, 2012:2,

² Wiedermeister 1875; Ahnfelt 1888; Midelfort 1994; Fesser m.fl. 2001; Denton 2011; Green 2016.

³ Cecilia Hagen. 20 år sedan prinsessan Diana dog – här är sagan om folkets prinsessa. Amelia.se, 2017-08-17.

⁴ Leila Pahlavi. <wikipedia.org> (2018-01-01); Nahid Persson Sarvestani. (2008.) Drottningen och jag.

Jean Bernadotte (1763-1844) & Desirée Clary (1877-1860)

There is a lot of information about the mental health of the Bernadotte family. The depictions of the French period repeatedly refer to their "rheumatism", a contemporary term for mild mental illness.

Jean's rheumatism is mentioned when his career for various reasons stalled and as a reason seeking leave from the war service and the constant killing. The nature of the complaints is not apparent, but since he allegedly spent long periods in bed, withdrew from public view & even visited spa resorts, one can suspect a depression.

Desirée's rheumatism is mentioned in connection with her 1818 becoming queen. The symptoms appear psychosomatic: depression, tiredness, headache & insomnia. She gained and lost weight. Her skin was at times reddish, greyish & full of rashes. It was also at this time that she attempted to enter into a relationship with former Foreign Minister Richelieu, but was rejected. The symptoms probably had something to do with the environment not treating her according to her new rank of queen, but the information is insufficient.

Jean was a dominant personality who could not stand opposition & who let his environment suffer if they tried. He had no family life of consequence. In Sweden Desirée kept her spirits up for a long time, but many observers noted her increasing "indolence", quite unlike her previous perky self. She was depressed by her life situation. She was forbidden to visit abroad - apparently, like her daughter-in-law Josephine, she was to be "Swedified". In practice, Jean held her captive at the palace on the grounds that the family must present a united front against all of their inner and outer enemies - republicans, Gustavians, newspaper men, Bonapartists, legitimists - whom Jean threatened during his nightly rages to imprison, execute, exile or shoot at the spot. She missed him when he died, but was also relieved.

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Josephine of Leuchtenberg (1807-1876)

Oscar I & Josephine for a long time lived on their own. The family was so low-profile that it was even commented on abroad. Josephine tried to please Oscar, but they do not seem to have had much in common. There are some diary notes that she was unhappy. For example, between 1833 and 1836 she suffered from a severe depression.⁵ The most likely cause was an identity crisis. Who was she? Where did she belong? I quote from the diary:

'December 1836. This home of my exile
My beloved homeland, how I love you, how much I'd like to see you again... you who alone would be able to restore my life. All these equally sweet and indefinite emotions are united in this one word: heimat ... But where is this beloved part of earth to which I would like to turn my eyes, where my soul would like to fly? Is it the land, where my grandfather lived (France), that gave my father life and that again repelled him, because he remained faithful to his honour and duty. No, no, it cannot be my homeland. - Perhaps it is the far-off areas under an azure blue sky (Italy), where I first saw the light of day and first raised my hands in prayer to my Creator? Oh no! Only when I fled from there did I get to know it, and even though only a child, I have to share the lot of other exiles. I have nothing to thank this country for, nor can I be

⁵ NFB 1884: s. 1364.

anything for it. - But the hospitable country (Bavaria), which received me, where my inner world was formed, where I learned to love - yes, I feel like it would be my fatherland if I had free choice - but it did not know me, I am wandering about without fatherland, without family, admittedly with a name, yes, a beloved name, which I can never forget - but which also never gives me any peace. It was my destiny to travel, with sorrow in my heart, to foreign coasts - duty compelled me to do so, a duty which for me was a happiness. These new areas (Sweden) I am admittedly guilty of affection and gratitude, but are they my fatherland? No and no again. They are neither the earth of my fathers nor the cradle of my childhood nor the scene of my young people, who are given life by thousands of innocent memories - they are as I hope, my grave, for I am tired of constantly wandering about - but my fatherland? Will I therefore never have a fatherland? - O God forgive me, may he forgive me, for I understand and feel it such - I will never find it down here, for we are all refugees on this earth of trials, struggles and tears. "I will give you my heart, in what I show myself worthy of your love. So I hope one day to enter into the eternal rest and finally find my true fatherland, where we shall all be united before your throne ... Heaven - it is the fatherland of the exiles."⁶

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The Imperial Princesses

After Charles John princesses, crown princesses and queens were allowed to travel freely & spent more time abroad away from the family than contemporaries considered reasonable. This seems to have been related to Sweden-Norway's more relaxed view of royalty, which strongly deviated from the rest of Europe. The princesses obviously needed some "normal" reverence. In fact, it seems possible to rank their mental health based on how disappointed they were with the Swedish-Norwegian treatment: Victoria of Baden (1862-1930; b. Hohenzollern) had a personal psychiatrist & spent long periods in Germany & Italy. Maria Pavlovna, Jr. (1890-1958; b. Romanov) was also referred to a psychiatrist & later divorced. Teresia of Saxony-Altenburg (1836-1914; b. Hohenzollern) "was completely out of balance" & 1875-1890 stayed in Switzerland under medical supervision. Louise of the Netherlands (1828-1971; b. Hohenzollern & Romanov) had recurrent panic, rage & fainting attacks. Sophie of Nassau (1836-1913) had disabling seizures & was prescribed total rest: "The convulsions have been so painful, that her loud wailing could be heard from far off; she suffered quietly for years. A couple of times it has occurred, that the hands because of this violent cramp, has for several days been so constricted, that when she was to eat her meals, she literally had to be fed."⁷ - "It might be indiscreet to talk about; but as proof of how terrible the nerve cramps, from which the queen suffers, are, can be mentioned, that the feet [fingers?] literally folded double. The nails have penetrated the skin, so that a painful operation a few times must take place."⁸

The Royal Household's psychiatrist was Axel Munthe, known as a socialite doctor. He and other doctors recommended rest, privacy, stay in spa resorts & environmental change. Munthe was also known for his conversational therapy. The portrayals of Munthe as a psychiatrist are too incomplete to describe his treatment in detail. Comparing the treatment of Victoria & Maria with the treatment in 1910 of Crown

⁶ Nohrenius & Wiklund 2012: s. 36. [Ur Josephines dagbok 1836-12.]

⁷ Upsala 1880-09-21, s 2.

⁸ Borås Tidning 1880-09-14, s 3.

Princess Margaret's friend Clare Frewen (m. Sheridan), it appears to have consisted in isolating the patient & through long conversations give the person a different view of life.⁹ Such creates anxiety. To keep them in treatment, he used to refer to their "albumen", probably another forgotten term for mental problems.

Contemporaries & even posterity have had difficulty understanding what took place, but personally I see it as an effect of the princesses' isolated upbringing as royal hothouse plants. They all believed that the Russian and German empires gave them some special position. Sweden's attitude towards royalty was something of a shock. Maria described it in her memoirs as:

"The Swedish people's attitude towards their prince's house seemed to me, which came from Russia, rather strange. It seemed to look at us with sympathy but as if we were great children, and the smallest feature of our character, good or bad, was commented on in every way but without malice. In Russia it was different."¹⁰ - "One was in Russia clear that we were among the immortals, but the Russian says You to his God and approaches him confidently; but if a common human error is discovered, in our country it is never forgiven. This feeling is missing in my [Swedish] compatriots - made them more complicated."¹¹

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Maria and three other Romanov memoirs have been studied as time documents.¹² They had it in common that:

- They did not care what impression they made on the environment.
- They were ignorant of their own country and felt no need to learn.
- They felt worthless because their education was so useless.
- They never compromised that their position was of God.

The later generation of princesses - Margaret of Connought (1882-1920), Ingeborg of Denmark-Iceland (1878-1958), Louise of Battenberg (1889-1965) & Sibylle of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1908-1972) - post 1917/18 - had no such delusions.

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The Traitors

The princely marriages outside the rules of succession aroused tremendous attention. Prince Oscar's amour Ebba Munck got relatively lightly off because she had the support of her mother-in-law. King Gustaf V, on the other hand, considered the princes' marriages to be unlawful and opposed them in every way he could. The worst hit was Prince Carl Johan's amour Kerstin Wijkmark:

In 1939 Carl Johan met the six year older Kerstin Wijkmark. Wijkmark was the editor of Vecko-Revyn, had a past 1935-1936 as a managers wife in Kilafors and was incredibly elegant & social. They were brought together by mutual acquaintances. Carl

⁹ Sheridan 1928: ss. 80-92.

¹⁰ Pavlovna 1930: s. 163-164, redigerat.

¹¹ Pavlovna 1930: s. 164, redigerat.

Johan seems to have fallen in love with both herself and the cultural elite she surrounded herself with. In 1941 they moved in together, but the engagement lasted until 19 May 1945. Both were fully aware of the consequences of a marriage, but were nevertheless caught off guard by the vehemence of the reactions. The father's Marshal of the Court hired a law firm to look for scandals. The Marshal of the Realm tried to appeal to her sense of duty. Folke Bernadotte tried to dissuade them. In the autumn of 1945 (?) she spent a week at the Red Cross completely anaesthetized & received insulin injections. Since King Gustaf V did not give his consent to the marriage, they had to be married abroad, in America, which caused further conflicts when the royal house got the American Embassy in Sweden to refuse her entry visa.

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The Heirs to the throne

The 20th century's attempt to show a democratic façade meant further tribulations. Worst off were the Heirs apparent: Prince Gustaf Adolf (1906-1947), Carl Gustaf (1946-) & Victoria (1977-). The contradictory expectations, democratic façade, special treatment and the secrecy surrounding their dyslexia was difficult to manage. All three were some period in need of rest abroad. They do not seem to have suffered any direct mental problems, but they have all complained about the discomfort of not knowing whether the environment was interested in their person or in their social position. Hard to avoid though. People with the best intentions also had to make an effort. Regardless of the situation, the environment was never supposed to forget who they were consorting with. Behave naturally, but with respect, was the mantra.

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