

Sophia Perennis

The Path of Perennial Wisdom

Earlier in the last century it was noticed by scholars and students of comparative religion that there was an underlying pattern to the wide varieties of world mythology and sacred teaching. It was not that this had not been known prior to our modern awakening to this idea, but that with the demise of attention to traditional wisdom we, in the West at least, had perhaps lost sight of the fact and were once again rediscovering it.

One strand of this exploration undertaken by Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell, for example, detailed the outlines of a pattern they found almost everywhere across the ancient mythologies of the world which they called, the “Myth of Eternal Return.” This was expressed as the cycle of a larger, cosmic story concerning the journey of humanity across space-time as an adventure of spirit. This cycle of seeing was expressed over and over again with countless variations and a myriad detail, but the underlying pattern appeared, to them at least, to be the same.

As other scholars and students of comparative religion began to look more deeply at religious phenomena in general and at the teachings of the great sacred world traditions in particular, they also noticed a similar pattern as well. From the dawn of human history to the present, some great underlying truth seemed to be expressed amidst the bewildering display of different symbolic languages that spoke to a perennial truth which they each expressed in their own distinctive way. At a metaphysical level at least, there appeared to be a “transcendent unity” to which they each gave expression.

Not everyone agreed with these assessments, of course, but a large number of scholars and students of the wisdom traditions have seen the same and expressed this understanding as a form of *perennialism* that expresses a universal convergence as opposed to unrelated divergence. There is now a growing consensus concerning this remarkable universal pattern shared by numerous scholars and students across the traditions and the world. In our day, this has become an important interpretive frame of reference which appears to give us a deeper understanding of the particularity of any one stream of wisdom, but also helps us navigate the complexities of other streams, and a means to consider more directly the value of their comparative similarities and differences.

To say that there is an underlying story of perennial wisdom, and a larger and more coherent teaching that is common to the world’s sacred traditions is to recognize that human beings are not simply projecting their hopes and fears on a blank and unresponsive universe. They are instead engaged with a vast universal Intelligence and a living Presence that permeates the cosmos and that wishes to be known. Divine Self-disclosure through revelation is the basis for this universal pattern and the reason for the structure of underlying coherence around the diverse manifestations of the Transcendent Immanence that fills all things. We did not simply “make all this up.” Over the course of millennia as we have encountered the Divine we have received these gifts, and this treasury has been guarded and transmitted through the centuries. We in the modern era are just now, perhaps, once again rediscovering the vision of this possibility.

Fundamental to this discovery are persons capable of making it—or as wisdom itself will teaching, individuals who has been made *adequate* for the task of seeking and finding the wisdom of this pattern because their own hearts have been awakened, and they have become able to see. There is a synergy at work in the world—a kind of dialogue going on through the ages and within every human being at their core that opens out on a truth far larger than any one individual or any particular religious expression. We each, however, need the particularity of our own unique experience of discovery and the guidance of a specific teaching that will direct us inexorably to our goal—the knowledge of the Sacred and a grasp of the pattern of its disclosure.

It is critical, therefore, for those individuals today open to this universal wisdom not simply to create some amalgam of their own, or leave it to whim and fancy to create a meaningful system or dialogue with this wisdom. Commitment to (and the practice of) one particular form of this perennial wisdom that speaks directly to the uniqueness of each soul is necessary in order to realize the goal for which it was intended. Transformation of human being and consciousness in general is not possible without the necessary and ongoing effort that each person makes participating in a particular stream. This requires that choices must be made, paths taken, and specific work done under the tutelage of heaven, of course, but also in direct contact with that stream of wisdom which speaks directly to the heart and vivifies as it shapes the soul.

The Order is committed to this larger, perennial vision, but it is also dedicated to the task of helping individuals find the particular Master of Wisdom (and the traditional path of sacred wisdom expressing that teaching) no matter who that wisdom master may be. In this case, universality and particularity are not mutually exclusive. They are valued partners in this sacred work.

At its core, the Order reflects a Christian path following the original and sacred wisdom teaching of Yeshua (though not necessarily the religion that grew up after him that was primarily **about** him and not always focused on his direct message). We remain in solidarity with other paths with the same or similar commitments. We do not seek to join our separate paths as much as to recognize the One divine Energy that suffuses them all, and which gives us the strength and courage to show compassion and solidarity to all our brothers and sisters across the traditions in the large and visionary practice of *Sophia perennis*.