

The World's Need for Sophia

Robert Sardello and Cheryl Sanders-Sardello

We need only lightly survey our present world to see that none of the problems we face can truly be resolved by the kind of world thinking now prevalent. Will current modes of thought and action be able to eliminate the most dangerous threats hanging over the heads of humanity - wars and global tyranny? Will current modes of thought be able to achieve the greatest degree of harmony between individual freedom and the spiritual longings of humanity as a whole? Will current modes of thought be able to promote the balanced development of the creative impulses that every person is gifted with? Will current modes of thought be able to break through the philosophical doctrine of materialism now being promoted worldwide? The four great challenges of the future that is now arriving are: the aging population who are being completely neglected except for those who can afford their own spirit-crushing 'warehousing'; technology, while being of enormous help to humanity, is also the main form of job elimination and soul-deadening; the financial crisis; and the degradation of Earth. All of these challenges are being met with modes of thought incapable of adequate response.

Seen from a spiritual orientation informed by anthroposophy, these difficulties and challenges signal an opening into a new, as yet unknown mode of consciousness and being and are at the very same time a huge fear-producing distraction that is trying to make sure we miss the opening. The contracting forces of fear will try to see to it that these difficulties are addressed from the place of the same kind of consciousness that produced them in the first place. Such fear can be vastly reduced by developing the art and practice of making connection through our soul with the Soul of the World, Sophia.

Taking into account the current situation of the world is imperative in developing an imagination of Sophia. Without world-concern, attention to Sophia most likely turns in a wrong direction -- toward the forming of a goddess cult of Sophia, toward the satisfaction of egotistic desires to have a spiritual justification for what are no more than personal sentiments, or toward a reaction against the devastation wrought by a prevailing history of patriarchal religion rather than developing a positive world view. Sophia cannot be narrowed to such restrictive views, and in spite of the attractiveness of these limited understandings, they would actually be a retarding force in world evolution.

The untapped genius of human beings that lies in the direction of bringing soul and spirit together in service to Sophia, is not to be found in the domain of the intellect, and its attendant formation of concepts that bore down into 'reality'. That approach, Aristotelian in nature, an approach that, in its many variations, has ruled the world, needs now to be balanced with the Platonic orientation toward Ideas. The Platonic sense of Ideas is that they are visions resulting from inner work of purification of the soul and orienting soul toward spiritual reality. Such visionary senses of the Whole are then brought into relation with practical matters through the soul's primary way of world-enactment - conversation, rather than our accustomed Aristotelian approach of learning through information-oriented lecturing and learning, and the imposition of theories or even spiritual

viewpoints onto the world. Platonically-oriented anthroposophy works within the creative space and time of an intelligence of the heart. What is Sophianic space and time like?

The modern mystic-activist-mathematician Simone Weil, said: “Let the soul of man take the whole universe for its body.” Simone Weil is not engaging in speculation here. She is presenting a real, an actual option. By option, I do not mean that through some sort of extraordinary circumstance, such as becoming a mystic, it is possible to, as it were, extend the individual body out to the furthest reaches of the cosmos. We could never do that. Rather, the individual body is *already* the body of the whole universe. Our only option lies in realizing this in actual experience by making every determination to be in connection with the body’s interiority, which will assure connection with the interiority of others and the interiority of Earth.

Simone Weil’s statement is an explicitly Sophianic statement. I do not think that it is a misunderstanding to hear “Let the soul of man take the whole universe for its body” to be saying: “Our individual body is Her Body, for She, Sophia, is the whole, the totality of the Universe.” Many Sophiologists have proclaimed Sophia as the totality of the universe. For example: the Russian Sophiologist, Pavel Florenski says:

"This sublime, royal and feminine nature, who is not God or the eternal Son, nor an Angels or one of the saints... is she not the true synthesis of all humanity, the higher and more complete form of the world, the living soul of nature and the universe? Our forefathers, the devout builders of the Sophia churches and painters of the Sophia icons deeply sensed her existence."

Another example: the great visionary Jacob Boehme, speaks of Sophia in three ways: as the Soul of the entire cosmos, as the Soul of the starry heavens, and as the Soul of the World. Further, these three soul levels of Sophia correspond to three regions upon which they work. The body of the Soul of the cosmos is the entire universe; the body of the Soul of the starry heavens is the sun, the planets the stars; and the body of the Soul of the World is the elements out of which all creatures and things come into existence. There are not three Sophias but rather three resonances of her being.

While Sophia permeates creation, matter, and the human being as its inner space, Her time is that known as ‘potentia’, the time sense of what is ‘coming-into-being’ rather than living in the sleepiness of acquired habits from the past, the has-been, projecting them endlessly and tirelessly into the future. The hoped-for world is not a utopian paradise, but concerns developing new capacities of sensing, feeling and thinking by which it would be possible to live consciously in conjunction with creative spiritual beings. Our relationship with spirit beings would not take the form of guidance from above but rather of mutual creative help with spiritual beings from within a unified Earth-Heaven continuum. Attentiveness would replace assertiveness in the world, and deeds would not be accomplished by energy, but by love.

Within each and every heart exists a continual tug, a felt-longing, a pull, an even uncomfortable ache, that if given even the slightest attention, will initiate a movement into a realm, an utterly real, utterly life and world-transforming realm. To begin, we must

allow and feel, and let this uncomfortable ache of the heart be present in its own way, refraining from mental interpretations of that feeling, which only results in thoughts that we must be missing something in life, or that the world is inevitably disappointing our ideals. When the ache becomes great in its felt sense of a presence that is an absence, and if we do not take flight from the pain, we can begin to inwardly sense that this painfulness is in actuality an invitation to interiority, the doorway to Sophia.

When this force is allowed to do its work, we bodily feel a shifting of our presence from the mental realm where everything is pre-known before being experienced to an immediate, bodily, perceptual, sensory unity unfolding. Moments occur in which body and world are felt as one. These moments may come at times when we are with the natural world, or with another person, or as complete surprises when we are walking down the street. As we discover how to be aware within heart-consciousness, we find ourselves transported from being world and self-spectators, to being wholly and completely aspects of the wholeness of world, experienced as everywhere filled with a familiar and yet completely mysterious animation. Everything that we are familiar with – the songs of birds, leaves blowing in the wind, a glance of another person, a bridge over a river, a slight breeze, ourselves, others – are felt in their interiority, intensifying the mysterious ache in the heart, initiating us into heart-awareness. If we sense that we are being invited into the heart, we can begin to direct our attention there rather than just waiting for moments in which heart-awareness occurs spontaneously.

We have re-oriented ourselves now in such a way that the presence of Sophia can be guaranteed. This re-orientation is something more than shifting focus. We have shifted into a more complete, more whole world, by simply being open and available to our soul-being in its 'perfect nature', given through heart-awareness. When we are within usual consciousness, we are in spiritual darkness, captured; and, if we have spiritual inclinations at all, they are escapist-oriented. We think that spiritual experience is an out-of-body, and hence, out-of-world experience. Our re-orientation reveals that there is Light within the darkness, the illumination of Sophia.