

THE HOLY SOPHIA – COSMIC AND HUMAN

An Anthroposophical Quest

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Just as with the Christian-occidental tradition on the whole (including the realm of Orthodox Christendom), likewise the Anthroposophical spiritual movement relating to its founder, Dr. Rudolf Steiner, has developed no unitary, integrated understanding of the being of the heavenly Sophia. In both, we find three possibilities for an understanding regarding the nature of the heavenly Wisdom (Sophia)—unconnected one from the other: firstly, the so-called Christological conception, that the Sophia and the Logos, namely the Wisdom and the divine, human-becoming Christ-Word, are one. Then, the so-called pneumatological conception, that Sophia is to be identified with the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, the sophianic or sophiological conception, which acknowledges the Sophia as a real, true being, who is to be regarded and perceived not simply as an allegorical personification of an attribute of one of the persons of the triune highest God. Not as an attribute in the sense of His Wisdom, but as an entity in her own right.¹

Whatever, in the Sophia a divine-spiritual power is to be viewed, who inspires the Anthroposophical Movement in its innermost substance. Truly to know her is consequently, as shall be shown, one of the quite prior tasks for the student of Anthroposophy. The attempt undertaken here to provide a survey of some of the most significant statements of Rudolf Steiner concerning the mysterious figure of the Sophia seeks to be equal to the differing levels, in which the riddle of the Sophia comes to expression. This attempt prefers not to proceed in chronological order. But it is hoped that by choosing the form of the narrated recapitulation, the inner connexion will emerge step by step.² Not all relevant fundamental concepts of anthroposophical spiritual science will thereby be explained and this essay does not claim to provide all aspects related to this subject.

¹ With regard to the Eastern Church priest and sophiologist Sergei Bulgakow, Barbara Hallensleben dealt with this problem in detail in our journal; see her contribution *Sergei Bulgakow—Thinker and Servant of Divine Wisdom*. In: NOVALIS 9/10 2003. I did not find the distinction made between un-created and created wisdom in Rudolf Steiner's work. That is why it is not dealt with here.

² Various authors have dealt with the topic dealt with here in the past against an anthroposophical background. Representative: Sigismund von Gleich, *The Sources of Inspiration of Anthroposophy*. Zeist 1953; Sergej O. Prokofieff, *Heavenly Sophia and the Essence of Anthroposophy*. Dornach 1995; Michael Debus, *Maria Sophia. The Element of the Feminine in the Development of Humanity*. Stuttgart 2000. – For the reader of this article it is to be mentioned, that every book-title called here is given in the English translation of the original German title. The titles therefore do not indicate books published in English.

Cosmos of Wisdom and Original World-Wisdom

The spiritual description of the development of earth and mankind tells us of preliminary stages of the solar system and the present planet Earth. This is based on spiritual realities and from those manifestations the fourfold structure of present terrestrial reality becomes explicable. A structure according to mineral, plant, animal and human realms as well as the classic four elements of the solid, the fluid, the air and the fiery warmth. The development of a fourfold membering of the human being which can be found through supersensible research shows physical, ethereal, astral and ego-ic („I“-kind) manners of existence. In this perspective these arise as the outcome of a planetary evolution, and of the previous stages of planetary manifestation. These will now shortly be described as follows.

„Ancient Saturn“ is the term used to name the very first planetary stage of the Earth’s development, characterized by a pure state of warmth—called Ur-substance—in which high hierarchic Spirit-beings (the Thrones or Spirits of Will) prepare the realm of humans, as to provide the first „seeds“ of physical bodies: again out of currents of pure warmth. This manifestation, following its full unfolding, retires into a state of pralaya, of the unmanifest.

Next emerges a stage, named „Ancient Sun“. Everything that was achieved before, now serves as the basis, in which new creative impulses can work actively. The earlier warmth-substance becomes re-enlivened and from that Light and Air-conditions develop. High hierarchic beings (Kyriotetes or Spirits of Wisdom) inform the human „seeds“, so that an ether-element inweaves the physical disposition, enlivening the same. The ancestor of the human becomes therewith plant-like. Certain forms, not attaining this stage, become the forerunners of the animal kingdom. Following this, the completed manifestation is dispersed again into the unmanifest.

A third stage emerges, styled „Ancient Moon“. This phase is distinguished by an increasing consolidation of forms, which present again—as in the prior recapitulations—what was attained in the „Ancient Sun“ stage. Now, in the more subtle sphere, a new element as sound and tone arises. Through the densification of substance a fluid-watery and sticky, viscous element appears. As in the planetary body of „Ancient Moon“ high Spirit-beings (Dynameis or Spirits of Movement) also introduce fluid components into the human disposition; moreover, the human ancestors become endowed with astrality, by which to a quite initial degree, they become ensouled. Our forefathers are herewith animal-like. Formations that do not fully follow this evolution become further-developed forerunners of the animal kingdom or alternatively the first predisposition for the presentday plant kingdom. The entire manifestation finally retires once more into the unmanifest—pralaya.

Rudolf Steiner describes the fourth stage of Earth development—with a review of the previous phases—as first accessible for supersensible research. This condition enables the beginning of the true human form of existence. To the elemental stages of Fire-warmth, Air and Water now joins the solid, the Mineral—just as on more subtle levels formative Lifeseedforces join in with Warmth, Light and Tone. The human form becomes consolidated into a mineral body, imbued as an individual with "I"-quality (Ich-Natur), enforced by high beings, the Elohim (also Exousiai or Spirits of Form). The human receives the spiritual spark of selfhood. Earlier forms of existence, which have not accomplished the full development, consequently become the supporting mineral-realm, plant- and animal-world as the indispensable basis of life for human beings. That the consequent evolution of humanity—in the course of its increasing individualisation—is one of great drama, becomes clear when we regard the architypal Fall of Man.

Rudolf Steiner describes the whole cosmic inheritance which the Earth from „Ancient Saturn“, „Ancient Sun“, and „Ancient Moon“ partakes in as the „Cosmos of Wisdom“. For this participation, humanity has to thank the high spiritual beings referred to, the Thrones (Spirits of Will), the Kyriotetes (Spirits of Wisdom) and the Dynameis (Spirits of Movement). „Wisdom“ is hence the name for all three aforementioned categories of spiritual beings. Due to the works of Wisdom, earthly humanity may live in harmony with all other beings of its world, in particular with the three Kingdoms of nature. Moreover, the higher destiny of human beings asks to transmute, out of their „I“, the nature-given earthly world as a „Cosmos of Wisdom“ by an heightening into a „Cosmos of Love“. The divine, cosmic and finally incarnate „Prototype of Love“ is thus to be seen in the high Sun-Being, the Christ, without whom the human beings cannot achieve the goal of their destiny.³

The great leaders of mankind founded the significant post-Atlantean cultures out of the background of the ancient mysteries; e.g. the seven holy Rishis founded the ancient Indian culture, Zarathustra the ancient Persian, Hermes Trismegistos the Egyptian. They all derived their effectivity from sources which flowed out of „primeval Wisdom“. A Wisdom that, however, would shade and darken more and more over the millennia, so that finally, since the turn of time, it would only be accessible in hidden eastern and western mystery sites. In order to encounter this pre-worldly Wisdom or Sophia (which seems to be addressed here) in its original „true, highest form“, the spiritual researcher, according to Rudolf Steiner, must go back to those times when there was neither an external, visible Earth, nor an existing world for the senses. The divine-spiritual entities, the creators of the world, have formed the world out of this Wisdom—Thrones, Kyriotetes and Dynameis. In later times, however, in the course

³ See R. Steiner, *The Occult Science in Outline* (1909). Dornach 1989.

of the development of the Earth, people could share certain forms, taken by the primal Wisdom as her „garment“. In the light of the mysteries from which the post-Atlantean cultures were founded, man was able to see—without mediation—the pre-worldly Wisdom together with her thoughts. According to this Wisdom, Sophia, the world was formed, and people experienced great revelations during the first earthly times: in imaginations interwoven by inspirations and intuitions. The purely divine-spiritual, true essence of the pre-worldly Sophia, perceived by people, contained even the highest teachings of the seven holy Rishis, the Vedas, Upanishads etc. Assuming they were only written in human language, they were nothing more than a pale shadow.⁴ How much more was this when the natural spiritual view of man had increasingly darkened, until only the appearance—the Maya of the physical-sensual world—was accepted as the real.

Silent, Grieving Isis

In the ancient Egyptian Hermes Mysteries, the neophytes, for the moment standing before the great quest of their own inner being, could be faced with a spiritual experience of how a figure was awaiting them on the other shore of the world-wide existence. They found the earthly image of the same only as veiled and voiceless, and known by them only as living in a secret sanctuary. The neophytes had always suspected that they should only truly recognize their own inner being when they found out who—in the deepest sense—this silent figure could be. However, in this encounter they could become aware of what this deity revealed to them in a purely spiritual experience. This was possible only when they had developed the intense longing to recognize the riddle form long enough and when they had learned not to look earthly, but with the eyes of their own eternal being, a being, which does not go away after death and persists over the row of incarnations. The neophytes and initiates experienced the process of an unearthly birth from the union of their longing with the warmth of the world emanating from that figure and the spiritual light emanating from the same. This was at all the experience of the creative World-Word that was born out of „Isis in communion with Osiris“, and at the same time the experience of the harmony of spheres sounding from her. Isis, the sister and consort of Osiris, became the mother of the new Osiris (Horus) by giving him rebirth—beyond space and time.

The tragedy of the Egyptian mysteries, however, is that in later times Isis remained silent—even for the initiated. Rudolf Steiner specified the period of the „New Kingdom“ as the time of her falling into silence. This was when under Moses the people of the Israelites moved from Egypt to the promised land. Because Moses took

⁴ See R. Steiner, *The Spiritual Hierarchies and Their Reflection in the Physical World*. Dornach 1991. Lecture April 12, 1909.

the Osiris secret with him, he left Isis faint and mourning in Egypt, the Mother of the World, who fell silent from then on and remained hidden behind her veil. Through the initiation of Osiris that was given to Moses, however, the same was enabled to have the encounter with the burning bush that determined all further Hebrew history with the One who let him hear the „I Am the I Am—eyeh asher eyeh”.⁵

The initiates of Ancient India called the same high Sun Being the Vishvakarman, those of Ancient Persia called it Ahura Mazdao and those of Egypt Osiris. Under the name of Yahweh, this being became—for the representatives of the Hebrew people—the One who had spoken to Moses „I am the I Am”, as a preannouncement of Christ. However, from his origin a cosmic being, Christ is to be understood as the most advanced leader of the Kyriotetes, as the „ruler” of development on the „Old Sun”—therefore a Kyrios. He is the One, who at the time of the „Old Sun” had completely assimilated in Himself the unspeakable World Word. This is the Word, which had been shining into the world of the „Old Sun” from twelve cosmic directions, and which through this act—together with the Sun—had become the central being of the entire further cosmic development.⁶ Thus, Christ is the same One who headed the remaining Sun beings even in the earliest times of the earth. In this dignity, He was worshiped by the seven holy Rishis, Zarathustra, Hermes and Moses. As the latter, He is finally called the „Sun Spirit of Wisdom”, broader and more encompassing than the sphere of the Spirits of Movement, Dynameis, through whom for three years the „Christ” Logos gave His light into the earthly world as the „gate” and „inlet”.⁷

Insofar as Osiris in the Egyptian initiation is to be seen more in connection with the creative Word of the World, Isis is more in connection with the flooding sound, which—coming forth from her—penetrates the universe as the harmonies of the spheres. The true reality of the astral body, the star body, also of today's humans, is the same world of spherical harmonies.⁸ As the actual source of origin for the pure astrality of humans, Isis primarily embodies the development of the „Old Moon”. In Egyptian iconography you often come across her in connection with the moon symbol. The cosmic Christ, on the other hand, who is the Kyrios and whom the Egyptians saw in Osiris, embodies the „Old Sun” in an even more comprehensive way. The fact that both were experienced as a sibling couple, and then as a husband and wife,⁹ certainly indicates their belonging—as cosmic entities—to the Spirits of Wisdom, the Kyriotetes. Therefore one could speak of Isis—as a companion of the Kyrios—as a

⁵ See R. Steiner, *The Mysteries of the East and Christianity*. Dornach 1985. Lecture February 5, 1913.

⁶ See R. Steiner, *Man in the Light of Occultism, Theosophy and Philosophy*. Dornach 1973. Lecture June 12, 1912.

⁷ See R. Steiner, *The Spiritual Entities in the Heavenly Bodies and Natural Kingdoms*. Dornach 1984. Lecture April 13, 1912. – As Osiris had absorbed the Word of the World, that high Sun Spirit of Wisdom served as a „gate”, as an „inlet” for the Logos. But please note, R. Steiner does not equate the Second Person of the Triune God, the Son, the Logos, with any entity from the hierarchical rank of the Kyriotetes.

⁸ See R. Steiner, *Anthroposophy - A Summary after Twenty-One Years*. Dornach 1994. Lecture February 2, 1924.

⁹ Obviously a male and a female on a sublime divine-spiritual level.

Kyria. Isis, the high, sublime deity giving birth to the Word of the World again and again, namely to the Spirit Child—she had to fall silent for the mystery students of Egypt. And only her picture, the Isis with the Horus child, was preserved for posterity.

In the times after the Christ event, however, the figure of the goddess Isis with the child reappeared, and was reshaped, in Western art as represented by the Madonna with the baby Jesus. Raphael's Sistine Madonna, in particular, is a shining example of this. The Isis mystery now—in post-Christian times and after no longer being revealed cosmically—can be experienced completely internalized in the sense of an archetype for how the individual human soul can be fertilized by the divine Father Spirit. An archetype for being able to give birth to the World Word—quasi as a spiritual Sun. If this perhaps appears easily understandable in a certain sense, the figure of the Madonna nevertheless embodies „the greatest problem of mankind”.¹⁰ For, in the future from this image of „Maria-Isis” an ever more penetrating understanding shall grow of „new Isis” as being the „holy Sophia”. But, before that subject can be examined adequately, the horizon of the Sophia question needs to be broadened in another direction. The reason for this is that the „descent” of cosmic Wisdom into the interior of the human soul is connected with a series of further, momentous developments, affected by nothing less than the nature of Lucifer.

Lucifer

In those times when unmediated spiritual view subsequently diminished even for the initiates of the pre-Christian mysteries, the primeval wisdom could be seen less and less in imaginations, enwrought of inspirations and intuitions. Back then a human birth of far-reaching significance occurred in Far Eastern Asia, remaining completely unrecognized for external history. In circles of a distinguished, initiated priesthood, in China a boy was born, who through his later work fundamentally changed the relationship of mankind to all pre-Christian wisdom. Even when he was still a child, he took part in the ceremonies of the East Asian mysteries cultivated there due to the special inspiration of that priesthood. And when the boy had grown to be a man and had reached his fortieth year, something happened that the mystery priests had prophetically foreseen. It turned out that this person, out of his own human judgment, suddenly began to grasp the meaning of everything that had previously only been revealed in the mysteries.

According to Rudolf Steiner, this incarnation was—as a matter of fact—an incarnation of Lucifer, that high, proud spirit entity looking back on a vast cosmic past—similar to Christ and to Isis-Sophia. On the one hand, Isis was portrayed as the sibling wife of

¹⁰ See R. Steiner, *Where and How to Find the Spirit?* Dornach 1961. Lecture April 29, 1909.

Osiris, i.e. the pre-worldly Sophia as a female counterpart of the leading cosmic Sun Being of Christ. Likewise, with a view to the development of the "Old Sun", one can also speak—on the other hand—of the leading Sun Spirit Christ and Lucifer as being „a kind of brothers“. Lucifer originally belongs to the hierarchical rank of the Kyriotetes.¹¹

In the following centuries and millennia, up to the 4th century AD, that East Asian incarnation of Lucifer, occurring about three thousand years before Christ, was the origin of everything that developed as the oriental and Near-Asian wisdom. This Luciferic knowledge and culture radiated from all over Asia to the West, to the Mediterranean area and also inspired the world of the Greeks. It was also Luciferic „wisdom“ that appeared as the pagan and Christian Gnosis, in which the very last mystery light fell on the incarnation of Christ and the event of Golgotha. Without that gnostic, Luciferic light, the incarnation of Christ at the time, when the spiritual sight was almost completely lost, would not have been comprehensible.¹²

The Luciferic had interfered quite wrongfully in human development, it had fueled people's passions and desires and layed the seeds of proud rebellion in human souls. According to Rudolf Steiner, however, it had also worked for the better by bringing freedom to man through his own knowledge. The knowledge that Lucifer brought, the „light bringer“ or „light bearer“, in early times of the earth was initially aimed more at the earthly outer world. In contrast, at the turn of the age, the Luciferic „wisdom“ turned ever more strongly towards the cosmos. And this undoubtedly happened as a consequence of the human incarnation of Lucifer described above.

Unpurified souls, however, were unable to thrive on the Luciferic wisdom. Rather, when they entered the Luciferic realm, they only experienced their own entities as wild demons, as distorted images. Only initiated, purified souls could experience the cosmic light-revelation of Lucifer. In the post-Christian period, it was only the initiates of the Grail and the true Rosicrucians who were able to understand the facts of Christendom in the deepest content, just by the new cosmic light of Lucifer.¹³ Rudolf Steiner says: „To describe the Christ or to understand Him just as you understand the other appearances and experiences of the world, and by so doing perceiving His size, His significance for the world, His causation of world events, all this is only possible if the Christian-mystical initiate continues to ascend to the knowledge of the Luciferic realms. So Lucifer gives us the ability within the Rose

¹¹ See R. Steiner, lecture June 12, 1912 (footnote 6). - Lucifer had rejected the Word of the World during the „Old Sun“ and claimed all of his „unrevealed light“ for himself. He then lost his dominion over the preworldly „Venus“, which corresponded to Christ's dominion over the „Old Sun“.

¹² See R. Steiner, *The Inner Aspect of the Social Riddle*. Dornach 1977. Lecture November 4, 1919.

¹³ See R. Steiner, *The Orient in the Light of the Occident*. Dornach 1977. Lecture August 28, 1909. The lecture is part of a cycle, the text of which R. Steiner redesigned twelve years after it was held (1921) for publication in the journal „Die Drei“, which had just been founded.

Cross to describe and understand Christ.“ Moreover: „The explanation of Christ by spiritual insight, as increased and enlightened due to Lucifer, that is the inward, the essence of the spiritual current that has to flow into the West, and as I have said is the mission of the Rose Cross towards the future.“¹⁴

By making his cosmic light available for the knowledge of the Christ event, Lucifer, according to the knowledge of the anthroposophical spiritual science, transforms himself into something good. He transforms himself, by serving the Christ with knowledge light, into a level on which he can be addressed as the Holy Spirit. The transformation that Lucifer is experiencing goes so far as to say that he is now “resurrected in a new form”. The advanced spirits guiding the spiritual development of humanity—as the masters or the twelve individualities united in the leading lodge of the „masters of wisdom and the harmony of sensations“—have him as the thirteenth in their midst. They receive from him and transmit to the new mystery schools all the wisdom that humanity needs for a free, self-confident understanding of Christ and the event of Golgotha.¹⁵

Sophia in Philosophy

While ancient mystery knowledge became luciferic in the above sense and while Isis fell silent, another manifestation of the cosmic-essential element of Wisdom took place. Now a sublime spiritual entity entered the world of humanity in order to begin a development comparable to human-biographical development in general. From the sphere of the development of the „Old Sun“, thus from the range of the Spirits of Wisdom or Kyriotetes, a sublime Wisdom Being descended into the development of mankind. Here it took on a life course of its own, coming to expression in the development of philosophy. The human individual undertakes his biography under the law of the seven-year steps of development in which he progressively grips, penetrates and further develops his essential elements. So, in analogy, the essence of Philosophia advances in 700-year steps. Following the old „law of the sun“, this being at the same time built an essential relationship with certain archangel beings. These had fallen behind in their development and today are operating in an Ahrimanic sense.

This being’s entry into embodiment within the development of mankind must have occurred around 2100 BC., at the time of Abraham. In the period 1400-700 BC this sublime Wisdom Being was committed to the formation of its etheric, since the forerunners of philosophy were still very elementary and shaped by the temperaments. In the third section of 700-800 years, when thoughts were still perceived as coming from outside, the young philosophy blossomed under Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See R. Steiner, *Spiritual-Scientific Knowledge of the Human Being*. Dornach 1979. Lecture March 22, 1909.

This period corresponds with the formation of the sensory or desire body. Feelings, internalized in a Christian sense, shaped the fourth section of development; now the development of the soul of feeling of this Philosophy-Being incorporated into humanity. This is the same development as in humans the phase from 21 to 28 years. In the centuries after Scotus Erigena the period for the formation of the mind soul followed for this Sophia Being. Since the 16th century it has been experiencing its advancement of the consciousness soul. According to Steiner, it stands comparatively „today in its forties“ and the next progression is aimed to be the training of the spirit self. But in order not to fall into the above mentioned danger of Ahrimanic influence, this Sophia Being and with it the philosophical thinking must now flow into spiritual science.¹⁶

Rudolf Steiner was dealing with that subject as early as 1913, on the occasion of the first general meeting of the first Anthroposophical Society. Today's man of the consciousness soul must return to a „Sophia“ again. As ancient man could exclaim: „I love Sophia!“, and how a Dante Alighieri could face philosophy as a real, essential being, something comparable is the task in the present, too (especially for the students of spiritual science). This applies today, since it is about the preparation and training of the human spirit self. The new Sophia, understood in this way, will have to bring man fully to himself in his development of the consciousness soul. She will enter into him and emerge transformed from him again. In the future she will carry the essence of man in herself, in order to be able to present this essence—in its completion—to the knowing individual. In this way, the new Sophia will one day become Anthroposophia.¹⁷

Virgin Sophia in Christian Esotericism

It was already clear above that there is a deep, intimate relationship between Sophia, experienced as the goddess Isis in ancient Egypt, and the Virgin Mother of the baby Jesus, shown in numerous images of the Madonna in Western art. Now the Virgin Mother is not only a figure of salvation and art history referring to past events. At the same time she is an image for inner processes regularly coming to light for those undergoing a Christian spiritual training. In order to be able to grow beyond the bodily and psychic bond to the objective everyday consciousness, profound changes are required in the mental life of the student. First and foremost, this includes the transformation of his passionate, instinctive aspirations living in his own astral, as they have been active in it since mankind got involved with Lucifer. Not only did Lucifer bring freedom through independent knowledge, as shown, but he also led

¹⁶ See R. Steiner, *Ways of Spiritual Knowledge and the Renewal of Artistic Worldview*. Dornach 1999. Lecture January 10, 1915.

¹⁷ See R. Steiner, *Signs of Destiny on the Path of Development of the Anthroposophical Society*. Dornach 1943. Lecture February 3, 1913.

people deeper into the physical corporeality, so that the astral bodies became more impulsive and eager than the creators had intended.

The process of purification or *katharsis* on the inner path plays a decisive role. Since the astral of the student is to be cleansed of all troubles and disorder, the soul is to be more and more illumined by the light of consciousness. The aspirations active in him will be transformed and begin—as new, pure abilities, free of any self-indulgence—to focus entirely on the higher and the Divine. Depending on the student’s development, the higher organs of knowledge will take form within his astral body, known as the seven lotus flowers in Eastern esotericism. Now the external spiritual can flow into the astral and enlighten it. This is due to the pure devotion and receptivity of the astral for higher realities, being attained in this way—as yet subtle and delicate. The student ascends from *katharsis* to the so-called *photismos*, to enlightenment. What he achieves is based on the fact that the renewed, purified astral body imprints its organs of knowledge (receptive of the higher) into his organization in general, in particular into the life body. Thus the student becomes able to bring the spiritual contents of this enlightenment to his full awareness.

Christian esotericism has long called this purified astral body the „pure, chaste, wise virgin Sophia“. The student cleanses and purifies his astral body into the "Virgin Sophia" through everything he can realize by *katharsis*. As such, the Christian esoteric student is then over-illumined or „overshadowed“ by the „Holy Spirit“, through which he may absorb the spirituality of the “World Self”. The Virgin Mother of Jesus was the living archetype for these inner realities, in esoteric schools, she was always called: „Virgin Sophia“. ¹⁸ Now the sevenfold organization of the awakened lotus flowers can—by practicing imagination inwardly—be experienced in the apocalyptic Cosmic Sophia form. The basic structure of the first spiritual element of man, the spirit self, is alive and appears in these seven lotus flowers. Only through the „overshadowing“ by the Holy Spirit this spirit self can be raised to its full activity. As well as in its original, pure nature, as with regard to its openness for the future and to its versatility, the human astral stands in an innermost connection with the Sophia of the world or with Isis. This was already carefully indicated previously. Thereby the actual nature of the human astral body is nothing else than what man experiences by wandering through the world of spherical harmonies between death and a new birth. The spherical harmonies themselves, resounding through the cosmos, are themselves the purest essence of Isis-Sophia. ¹⁹

¹⁸ See R. Steiner, *The Gospel of John*. Dornach 1981. Lecture May 31, 1908.

¹⁹ See footnote 8.

The Search for the New Isis

In the modern world, there exist death processes of many kinds. Nowadays, the human being is exposed to these, because his impulse to fully develop the consciousness soul during the fifth post-Atlantean cultural epoch (as a basis for the attainment of spirit self) is connected to those death processes. This is due to the influence of Lucifer on modern man, who—enforced by this influence—tends to a worldview, by which everything moral is lost for human understanding. In this Luciferic intention all knowledge of nature should result in a mere interlocking of amoral forces. But it is precisely in the moral forces of man where the source and future seeds for later cosmic development lie. The unchanged Luciferic wants to cut the man of the consciousness soul off from the recognition that the Birth of Bethlehem brought the possibility of the strongest morality into the world. This truth was revealed by the divine Sophia, before she had to finally fall silent, to the shepherds in the fields and to the three magicians from the East.

It was Lucifer who took possession of the cosmic Wisdom. He overpowered and killed Isis, the divine Sophia, so that she after this time could no longer be found or heard by man. Just as Typhon corresponding to the ancient Persian Ahriman killed Osiris in the ancient Egyptian myth, by sinking him into the Nile and later into the earth, so Isis, the divine Wisdom, was now killed by Lucifer. He then moved her out into cosmic space, where humans now only see star connections arranged according to mathematical laws. But just what they can no longer see there could make the moral of the world understandable in vivid imaginations and inspirations—from the inside.

Another consequence of how the understanding of nature was separated from everything moral—due to the untransformed Lucifer—can be seen in a theology that has become increasingly „luciferic“ over the centuries. For, the same even considers the God-Man, Jesus Christ, to be nothing more than a simple man from Nazareth. During the 19th and 20th centuries theology was influenced in this way by Lucifer, and thus no longer able to bridge the widening gap between the natural order and the moral world order.

Man's task today, especially if he wants to realize the anthroposophical movement, is—by the Christ power which was given to him since Golgotha—first to seek Isis, so that Christ in his present form can truly appear. What humanity has lost is not the Christ—as he had been lost to the Egyptians as Osiris—but has lost the living view, the knowledge of Christ. And this is what mankind will attain from Isis, Holy Sophia, when she will be found again.²⁰ Rudolf Steiner says:

²⁰ See R. Steiner, *The Bridge Between the Spirit of the World and the Physical of Man*. Dornach 1988. Lecture December 24, 1920.

„In the course of the 20th century Christ will reappear in his spiritual form not by the fact that something comes in from outside alone, but by the fact that people will find the power represented by Holy Sophia. In recent times there has been a tendency to lose just this Isis power, just this Mary power. It has been killed by everything that emerged in human consciousness. Moreover, some of the more recent religious confessions have eradicated the view of Mary.—That is what is, so to speak, the mystery of modern humanity, that basically Maria-Isis has been killed, that she has to be searched. She has to be searched just as Osiris was searched over in Asia, and she must be searched in the vast sky with that power Christ can trigger in us if we surrender to Him in the right sense.“²¹

The Secret of Sophian Astrality

The Spiritual Teacher points to the future by presenting his multi-layered account of the true nature of Isis-Sophia, as well as by stressing the task of utterly effortful searching for her to bring her back to humanity. Likewise, the impulse beyond the consciousness soul is a future impulse, focusing on the first essential spiritual element, namely developing the spirit self. Pointing back to a very distant past, there is Isis, who died for the experience of mankind. There is also the human astral, how it came into being from the „Old Moon” and has developed since the Luciferic temptation.

Although, the true nature of human astrality is not primarily found through a spiritually inquiring view into the past. Instead, more specifically, the human astral body is not the result of what has been, but rather a kind of anticipation of what yet possibly can be. The decisive astral dynamic is future-oriented and lies in the desire to be out for something, to want something. The conceptional imagination and memory pole of human soul life is determined more by the etheric than by the astral. These are past-orientated. All longings and desires, in turn, all interest of the astral is based—according to a great insight from Rudolf Steiner—not on a development that spans from the past to the present and further to the future in the sense of the conventional concept of time. Rather it depends on a development that is carried by a reverse flow of time. The same comes from the future and passes over the present into the past.²² For Rudolf Steiner, these psychosophical considerations led to the following description:

„Names are not of special interest here, but I shall choose terms as chosen by those, who look at things from the point of view of clairvoyance and then really see them flow one into another. These are terms from spiritual science, by which you will

²¹ Ibid.

²² See R. Steiner, *Anthroposophy, Psychosophy, Pneumatosophy*. Dornach 1980. Lecture November 4, 1910.

recognize in psychosophy, what you have learned in spiritual science. Let us now refer to the stream that holds the concepts, not conscious for the moment, which comes from the past and flows into the future, as to the etheric body. On the other hand, let us refer to other stream, which moves from the future to the past, which accumulates with the former and cuts it, as to the astral body. And what is consciousness? The mutual meeting of the astral body and the etheric body.”²³ Here we must add the vertical and present-minded “I” impact—empowering man to form judgement.

Everything temperamental is anchored in the etheric body of man, including the choleric temperament. Each of the four temperaments in its kind is typically related to the flow of time. The four temperaments are always conditioned by the current from the past. However, in their development man encounters something that flows towards him from the future. Man can absorb this when he has learned to exercise patience to a high degree. The same comes to man from the future as the quality of Wisdom, God-given Wisdom. When the esoteric disciple, due to the development of a certain humility and modesty, faces this Wisdom, he comes to the experience that it begins to flow into and fulfill his etheric element, and he will have a very specific experience. He feels life going away, swimming away with the flow of time.²⁴ In Rudolf Steiner's words: „And the stream of wisdom is something that comes towards you, something which, whilst you swim away with time, flows into you like an opposing stream. Now you actually feel this inflow so that—figuratively speaking—you feel it like streams, but streams that flow in time, which come in through your head pouring into your body and being absorbed by your body.”²⁵ The decisive precondition for such an experience is the quality of greatest serenity, instead of a self-will pushing forward. It is the spiritual virtue of a—mysteriously spoken—reversed, receiving will, which is especially open towards one's own karma. It is precisely in such an experience that the new Isis is heralded. This is how Isis, the holy Sophia, is approaching man from the future.

Summary and Outlook

The higher the hierarchical rank of a cosmic spirit entity that one would like to recognize, the more extensive the spheres and areas of the given world facts need to be considered. Otherwise it is hardly possible to interpret the radius of their action correctly—and thereby the expression of their being. The Holy Sophia, the Sister Being of the high Sun Spirit, the cosmic Christ, is for Herself—for the inner eye and from the descriptions of spiritual science—One who belongs to the rank of Kyriotetes.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See R. Steiner, *What Is the Significance of the Occult Development of Man for His Hulls and His Self?* Dornach 1976. Lecture March 23, 1913.

²⁵ Ibid. Of particular note here is the influx of the wisdom element from above through the main. This point of view is of great importance for the Sophianic aspect of the awakening and formation of the sevenfold lotus flower organization of the human spirit self.

As the primal Wisdom of the World („Urweltweisheit“) and as the representative of the „Cosmos of Wisdom“, she summarizes the effects of the essence not only of the Kyriotetes (the Spirits of Wisdom) but also of the Thrones (the Spirits of Will) and the Dynameis (the Spirits of Movement). This opens up access to the entity of Isis-Sophia who was also significantly connected with the development of the “Old Moon“. The latter was mainly guided by the Dynameis. Its inheritance from that time is the emanation of the world of the spherical harmonies. From here, the astral body of man is prenatally configured with regard to each incarnation. This macrocosmic-microcosmic relationship subsequently establishes the intrinsic law that the human astral body is originally of a Sophian nature. Through the process of *katharsis* on the spiritual path the human astral can change into the „Virgin Sophia“. One day, the same—overshadowed by the Holy Spirit—can bring the true „I-Am“ forth in the individual. On the one hand there is all the great past of the Sophia being. On the other hand the Sophian element of wisdom approaches human beings from the future, corresponding to the inner nature of the astral body in the deepest sense. This requires a further clarification. The reason for this, in order to find Sophia, is that, instead of a static one, man needs a knowledge that is dynamic in every detail. Moreover it is necessary that man now develops a metamorphosized will, namely a receptive one. The search for the New Isis does not refer to what is already here, rather, it creates a completely new relationship with the entire future for humanity as a whole.

Without drawing attention to the high spirit of Lucifer, who was once a pre-worldly Kyrios, it is not possible to understand the Sophia Being. The deeper relationships between Christ, the Holy Spirit, Lucifer and the Holy Sophia could only be touched on here. However, it must have been clear that when Rudolf Steiner spoke of Christ and the Holy Sophia or of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Sophia, he always referred to the relationships between them. His statements contain no indication that one should assume Sophia to be one of the persons of the triune God or one of its exalted cosmic representatives.

In this essay, the references to the Holy Sophia (Heb. *chokhmah*) in the Old Testament were not discussed. Nevertheless, from these references it can be seen that she is a self-identical being, covering all nine hierarchical ranks of the created angels and intelligences and yet extending beyond the Cherubim and Seraphim.²⁶ This attempt is based entirely on Steiner's statements. The view of holy Sophia handed down in the Old Testament was not addressed by him. Therefore, here this view has been disregarded.

The biblical sources in question were taken by the three Russian sophiologists Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), Pavel Florensky (1882-1937) and Sergei Bulgakov (1871-

²⁶ See Proverbs 8.22 and Wisdom 7.22, representative of numerous other passages.

1944) as the starting point for their research dedicated to the Holy Sophia. It could be considered as a deep concern for knowledge and understanding to access the teachings brought forth by these important Russian thinkers in the spirit of Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy. The outlook given here is combined with the hope that in the future the spiritual efforts focused on such a synopsis may increase more and more.²⁷

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²⁷ See M. Frensch, *Wisdom in Person - The Dilemma of Philosophy and the Perspective of Sophiology*. Schaffhausen 2000; R. Powell, *The Divine Sophia*. Schloss Hamborn/Borchen 2004. In addition to anthroposophy, both works take special account of Valentin Tomberg's early and late works.

²⁸ This article was firstly published in German in the monthly „NOVALIS“ (1.2004).