

A Sophia Mosaic

gathered by Signe Eklund Schaefer

I am the Human Being. I am the Past, the Present, and the Future. Every mortal should lift my veil.

—Rudolf Steiner, *The New Isis/Sophia Myth*

Sophia is the name of a Divine Feminine being, a creative mother presence, bearing all that was, and is, and will be. Throughout time she has been revered and described in myths from around the world. She has been known by many names—The Great Mother, Isis, Tiamet, Gaia, Mary, Kuan Yin, Aditi, Ala, Skywoman, to mention only a few. Now, as Sophia, this great wisdom being, she who embraces human becoming in all its striving and suffering, is calling in new ways into our consciousness.

By what modern names might we recognize Sophia in our materialistic, right-wrong, thought heavy, partisan world? Could a concept like Rudolf Steiner's 'twelve world perspectives' be a contemporary identification for her infinitely inclusive presence? According to Steiner, *Anthroposophia* refers to the current reality of her being on earth. In his *New Isis/Sophia Myth* she speaks of herself as the human being, and initially she is asleep and confused. In his lecture *Search for the New Isis, Divine Sophia*, Steiner offers the startling thought that in our times, "We do not lack Christ; but the knowledge of Christ, the Sophia of Christ...is lacking." And from still another perspective, might we perhaps see Steiner's *An Outline of Esoteric Science* as an effort to tell her evolving biography?

Since autumn 2019 the Anthroposophical Society has sponsored a monthly zoom meeting where a group of us have been exploring Sophia through sharing our own questions and experiences. We were drawn to this group through many different doorways, such as myth, philosophy, feminism, star wisdom, esoteric studies, healing, and contemporary life itself. The group is looking toward a future conference in 2022.

Sophia is hard to talk about because as soon as one characterization is given, it can feel inadequate. It may be true, but so perhaps is the opposite. No one description can encompass the totality of this being. The Sophia Group decided to gather one paragraph from anyone in the group willing to briefly address their individual relationship to, or understanding of Sophia. Some words are the inspiration of a particular day; others express long pondered questions, observations or insights. There was no template for these offerings, only the effort to share our own searching for meaning, our own encounters with the veil.

In sharing this mosaic of our thoughts, we invite you to explore your own relationship to Sophia. How is she manifesting, calling through the veil into your consciousness, your interest? And how are you listening?



It may not be possible to name that profoundly prophetic moment of wondrous realization that She who has been Presence, Accompaniment, Inspiration for all the decades of this life has now, in the end, quite simply become Indwelling. It is Sophia: She who lives into the humblest regions of my humanity, my life and work, consecrating every conscious deed despite all my unconsciousness. It is She who makes my life in community possible with the hope that Wisdom become Love, and Love become that healing force which would touch my confined world, and then even the whole world. Sophia in my life: like the Bodhisattva of Compassion She hears the cries of the world and transforms each day ... "carrying a world-secret, indeed a World-Being."

—Carrie Schuchardt



Sophia stole quietly into my life at an early age—I did not know her name. She entered in silence, and only spoke when my inner being was as silent as she. She stood behind the Imagination of Mary in the Luke Gospel, living in the words... And she kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Over the years this Being of Sophia continues to open my soul to dimensions of the Divine that bring life to my spirit.

—Micky Leach



Sophia is Living Process. Not being a formed thing, she is quite difficult to express fully in words. If Sophia were likened to a story or a poem, she

would be the space between the words that allows meaning to find its way to human hearts and minds. The clearest way that I experience Her is analogous to an earthly mother's love. A mother's love-force is the environment that makes it possible to *manifest into being* from what is only otherwise *potential*. Sophia surrounds me all the time, she encourages me and allows for me to be the fullest self that I am willing to become. She will wait patiently, silently alongside me while I try to discern my way and occasionally she gives me a guiding nudge when I am not paying attention to what needs my attending. She is utterly receptive and yet totally giving at the same time. For me, Awakening to Sophia is to participate in a conversation that has no beginning or end, it is a beautiful movement between being heard and listening deeply, as revelation reveals revelation.

—Angela Foster



As if in a Dream after midnight
and inspired by heralding Stars in silence
She quietly turns her magnificence,
and one might miss her
if not for her gaze

White eyes wide open
and crowned by the Dolomites,
Mastiff Baumes or some other
ancient limestone barrier

There are Oaks and Pines spread across her brow
and meadows on her cheeks
Her mouth is the Sea
dripping seaweed and shells down to her shoulders

Her companion the Owl rests on her left shoulder
She turns to see
as she has done for eternity,
her gaze upon thee

—Claudia Knudson



In contemplating the words of the New Isis
Mysteries "I am the Human Being, I am the Past,
the Present, and the Future. Every Mortal should lift
my veil"... She beckons to me in a way that requires a
particular kind of attention. An attention to the subtle,
silent, shifting moments; listening for the silence in
between words and the space between the notes in music.

I feel Sophia when I stand at the river's edge and witness the vast array of colored leaves on a fall day – enlivening the palette that is the true nature of Sophia brought back to life from her white light captivity. As I witness, and breathe, and feel the arising that these colors bring to my soul, I can witness, and breathe, and enliven Sophia in me. I sense her deeply in the interlude of dusk and rising of morning light when I feel the quiet shifting of light to dark, and dark to light. She awakens in me the true understanding of life into death and death into rebirth.

—Michele Mariscal



Rudolf Steiner said "our Luciferic world picture... the mathematical-mechanical world picture of natural science" has dispersed and imprisoned Sophia in a cold starry vault of heaven, beautiful to look at, but devoid of life. He further indicates that it's precisely our reductionist, Ahrimanic tendencies of analyzing, objectifying, manipulating and imposing that predisposes us to the world conception promulgated by abstract science. In a world marked by a numbing "busy-ness", the divine feminine represented by Sophia invites me to be still, to listen and to behold – to deepen appreciation for intrinsic beauty, letting nature speak to all of my senses, not just my intellect, thereby inspiring imagination in a warm and living way. Practically speaking, Sophia calls out to me in my work in agriculture and the natural sciences through a burgeoning food movement that seeks to find patterns, to foster relationship, to nurture, to create harmony and to cultivate a holistic awareness of how food is cultivated, prepared and shared for health and healing. The mechanical agro-world view is "busy" creating an inter-locking world of farm robots, GMOs, remote sensing, sterile environments, synthetic biology, nanotechnology and yet more pharmaceuticals (including vaccines). We need to rediscover the garden, the commons and the hearth. Only Sophia can lead us there.

—Hunter Francis



"If you seek me with true desire for knowledge, I shall be with you. I am the seed & the source of your visible world. I am the ocean of light in which your soul lives. I am the ruler of space. I am the creator of cycles of time. Fire, Air, Light, Water and Earth obey me. Feel me as the spiritual origin of all matter..." And when I had no consort on Earth, you called me Maya. But since the cosmic Being of Love has

made his sacrifice to be *'the meaning of the Earth'*, you O human being, are invited to contemplate your vows, to enact the Union of *'Christ-in-me'*—Love & Warmth, with Anthro-po-Sophia – Wisdom-in-me –The Light of Understanding; consecrated in the Bridal Chamber of your Heart—A Sacred Marriage of Spirit & Soul—Warmth & Light. *'The Time is at Hand'*, dear friends, to put on your Wedding Garment; and if it is your will, repeat after me: 'The Christ-in-me, takes the Sophia-in-me, that I may live in wholeness, now & for all ages to come'. I now pronounce you, Sophia-Christos. You may Lift the Veil, kiss the bride, & hail the bridegroom within.

—Hazel Archer



If I write about the Divine Feminine in my life today,

I want to say that I am living with Her now in Her aspect as Sigune, from the Parzival legend. In speaking of this legend, Rudolf Steiner describes how his spiritual research led him to ask the question, "Where does the name of Parzival appear?" Eventually he realized that it is indicated in the starry script, when the Moon is at crescent phase: the illuminated portion of the Moon appears then as the chalice; sacredly cradling the "un-illuminated" part of itself as though it were the Host. But who leads Rudolf Steiner on this quest? Who tells him he must seek out where the name of Parzival appears? I imagine it is Sigune, she who also tells Parzival his true name. In her divine feminine role as weaver of the starry script, it is she who reveals the true name of each seeker of spiritual knowledge ~ all that seek to know themselves as spiritual beings must learn their names from her. Her task is particularly enhanced when she appears in the presence of the host and chalice, as she did this morning, September 14, 2020, when the waning crescent Moon swept by Venus/Sigune in the East at dawn. I hold it is one of the world's most beautiful realities that the Moon will only ever approach Venus at crescent phase, so as to not outshine her in her task of weaving the starry script out of what lives as the highest and best in the human heart. With Moon presenting as chalice and host, and Venus nearby as Sigune, weaver of the starry script, we may be led to our highest, greatest truth.

—Mary Stewart Adams



The sun rose

without a word
throwing its light on the golding trees of autumn

And on the same day
the moon will rise, silent in light til evening
when its crescent joins the evening sky

As the days grow shorter
The people need your cloak around them even more
to haven them against their darkness

But you have always done so,
winter or summer
If we but could hear your voice

in the heartbeat of the morning
and the flutter of the evening

saying: "You may find me in the motion
of the rising and the falling of my breath,
the breath of night and day,
of seasons as they come and go

in the star within the morning glory,
in the unfolding of the rose
and the eyes of the newborn child you hold

I am here," She says

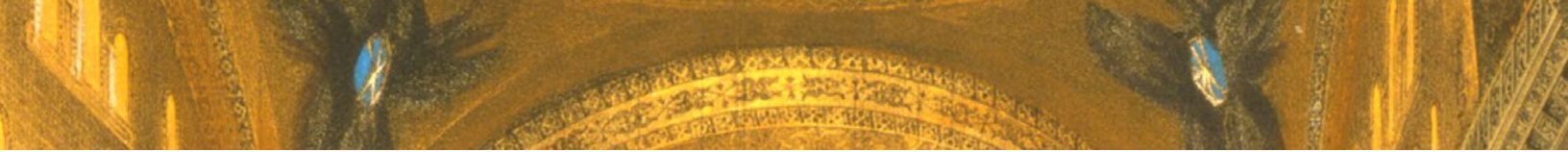
—Linda Bergh



We can learn from William James that reality is

about relations, and from Martin Buber that reality is in the between. I believe it is easy to miss Sophia because she lives in relations and in the between. We can focus on God, Christ, Buddha, angels, and saints and miss Sophia even though she was next to God at the creation of the world, next to Christ in His incarnation, next to every high being, and next to each of us. It is easy to miss the many high and low between where Sophia suffers and inspires. Sophia knows where She is and what She is doing but we mostly don't know either. Anthroposophy can help if we work at it.

—Robert McDermott



I find Sophia, the Divine Feminine, in the practice of social art which is possible in many situations. Social art is a sacred art where a small group of people simultaneously help create and enter into a safe space where each person can speak and be heard. Each person stands in their own individuality while holding the wholeness of the group. Rudolf Steiner's Social motto exemplifies this ideal. "The healing social life is found only when in the mirror of the human soul the whole community finds its reflection and when in the community the virtue of each soul is living." One of the most profound experiences of social art and being aware of the presence of Sophia is when doing natural death care. In this working with others the wholeness is felt where each person lovingly and reverently performs a role. It is important that each person holds the one who is crossing the threshold and all those present without sympathy and antipathy. In the presence of the dead time slows down. Reverence, beauty and awe can be experienced in the room. The veil between the physical and spiritual world thins. "Oh Holy Sophia" is in the practice of the social art of holding, with equanimity, the whole group, both the living, the dead and spiritual beings who are present.

—Sandra LaGrega



Sophia is not only the divine Feminine, she is the origin of Wisdom, which is intelligence infused with love, she is the Good, or morality tempered in experience, she is the Individual, an expression of spirit incarnated. She is also the We, striving for wisdom, goodness, and individuality, in light of the needs of all beings. Since childhood, when my teachers were called The Daughters of Wisdom, I had ambition to be – WISE! A contradiction, for ambition has no place here. In fact, it may be that failure and sorrow can incubate wisdom far better than constant triumph. But joy has a place here, and Sophia rejoices with us.

—Joyce Reilly



Bringing Sophia to Life

A shadow arrives in the desert wrapped in blue and holding a golden sphere
Opening her cloak she reveals galaxies of stars
Let her grab your feet and twist your tongue so that

you are here not there
Walk with Divine Sophia
Drink the water of life she offers and become a stream
to the source
Breathe and s-t-r-e-t-c-h into everything
Fly with legs to sense the earth
Sing until heaven and earth marry
Allow the spaciousness of compassion to dissolve you
Surrender...
Lift the veil and awaken
Unite with Sophia and reveal her face in you
Take yourself home with one conscious breath

—Eyahmna DalBo



As the contours of my soul/spiritual life ever so gently gain in definition, I've begun to perceive Sophia as a prominent presence gracing my inner altar. I experience this intimate sanctuary as an architecture constructed of space rather than filled form, as mood rather than material. Yet the felt experience is far from abstract or immaterial! Sophia reveals herself to me as prayerful softening, actively receiving while giving birth to grace-filled actions. I slowly begin to comprehend how the word "Mother" shares the same source as "Matter." How the flow of Life moves in a figure 8 from conscious imaginations to intuitive, even playful, Will activity and back again. And how this movement passes, each time, through the heart.

—Jordan Walker



The questions and pictures of Sophia that I live with at this time have to do with bringing the divine feminine—the mystery wisdom—into action and manifestation now, as a tool and a key to a loving and healthy future. The clues and the messages and inspiration are all around us, across time and cultures. The seeds for a better way are there, and we must ignite the will across barriers, beyond opinions and intellectuality, and transcending time and space, not to mention self-interest. How can we make this visible? Through art and nature, by recognizing and celebrating this impulse again and again. By connecting with one another. By bringing a path, a breadcrumb trail, a great blaze of light, whatever we can come up with, so that the spiritual world can collaborate with us and support us in this critical journey.

—Deb Abrahams-Dematte



There is an embrace waiting. Waiting when I lay down my self, when I lay down my mind. A vessel holding equally what it also can pour. There is a hand on one's back, a cloak around the shoulders, a wind running fingers through the hair. There is a tidal pool in which to submerge, a dolphin playing rhythm in the waves, an awkward negotiation of rock under bare feet. There is the draping arm of a mighty oak, the generous offer of moss, the hollow call of the owl. An embrace in the shy smile at a check-out counter, the sparkling laughter between friends, the earthquake anger between two lovers, which reveals the tender love that's fighting to be found. An embrace when a long held grief becomes untethered and is absolved in joy. Each time we encounter the unknown there is trepidation, then holy suspension, and then the opening of a mysterious new door. We are embraced each step of the way. The fear of loss becomes the gift of life. The pain of bearing witness becomes the depth of understanding. The crying out of the self becomes a resolve to heal. An embrace transforms the turmoil of bubbling dread and anxiety into the smooth liquid gold of the eternal. The night turns to dawn; the spring to winter.

Deeper we go into our soft and hard places, harmonizing the opposites. To embrace in steadiness and in shakiness. To set the bone; splint the arm; tune the heart. When I brace myself, what am I expecting? When I surrender, what can I find? From the cavernous womb of the forest floor, to the soaring heights of the cathedral sky. What will you find when you allow yourself to be held?

—Tess Parker



For me Sophia is the wholeness of the story. She holds all the polarities that perplex and inspire us—the light and the dark, development and decline, inner and outer, and all the rhythms of life and death. She holds everything with compassion. Her infinite wisdom is all around, awaiting our discovery. She resonates in our knowing, even as she comforts and challenges us in our not-knowing. Long before I heard her name, I felt 'the Lady' knocking in my heart. Now I feel her calling into our times—to wake us up, to help us unveil and bear what is ours to know and hold in our hearts, and also what we might bring to birth. I feel her being now as a mighty verb.

—Signe Eklund Schaefer

The term “Anthroposophy” should really be understood as synonymous with “Sophia,” meaning the content of consciousness, the soul attitude and experience that make a person a full-fledged human being. The right interpretation of “Anthroposophy” is not “the wisdom of man,” but rather “the consciousness of one’s humanity.”

— Rudolf Steiner, *Awakening to Community*



If anyone would like to participate in a future collection of personal words on Sophia, please contact Signe Eklund Schaefer at signeschaefer17@gmail.com



The top border images (pp. 13-17) are details from “View of the Main Nave, looking to the west” of Saint Sophia, Istanbul, “as recently restored by Sultan Abdul Medjid,” by Gaspard Fossati, lithographed by Louis Haghe, published 1852; collection of the Library of Congress.

