

New Traditions Contemplative Wisdom

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The word, contemplative, highlights the core of the spiritual life: a return to that divine reality in which the transformation of the whole person finds its source and rest. Contemplation also implies a temporary liberation from daily concerns in order to devote oneself to study and practice. It is a kind of spiritual protest against the materialism and bustle of society in order to live in the world attentive to the presence of the holy.

Learning in a contemplative model implies the operation of a deeper level of consciousness and a greater receptivity of heart. Here, the normal activities of the human personality come to rest, in order to hear what has remained unheard and to see what has been hidden or veiled. The mystics call this kind of knowing “unknowing” insofar as it approaches reality from the spiritual core of the person and not from the mind alone. Far more than a meditative practice or a temporary respite from worldly concerns, contemplation revolutionizes conventional attitudes and roles in order to transform the foundation upon which life is lived and to illuminate the hidden teaching of love inscribed in our souls.

While contemplation and mysticism throughout much of history have been associated with formal religious institutions, they both proceed and exceed religion itself. New traditions of contemplation—interfaith, interspiritual, intermonastic, ecotheological, ecofeminist—pass beyond religious forms into deep states of consciousness that, while remaining part of the enduring wisdom of the world’s religious traditions, also are the site of new spiritual traditions and forms of practice. This emergence of a new and global spirituality expresses the timeless qualities of the monastic, contemplative experience outside of denominational institutions and structures based on an understanding of the profoundly dialogic nature of truth.

Through the lens of this global spirituality, new contemplative traditions seek the mystical point of oneness that unites in ourselves the divisions of the world. Open to the plurality of spiritual paths, this search for a common spirituality is not a reality every fully achieved, a finished theological project, or a final word. Rather it is the struggle to find the openness of heart in which life is embraced and sustained. Its theology emerges out of the desert experience, because it fosters a spirituality of humility receptive to the voice of the divine speaking in the wilderness of our hearts.

The roots of these new contemplative paths can be traced to the spirit of the desert experience and the wisdom of feminine divine consciousness. Based on the unity of the holy in creation, my work is committed to the practice and study of new spiritual traditions that are being realized in the hearts and souls of people from diverse backgrounds and orientations. This transformative moment in human consciousness honors the centrality of the divine in the life of the individual and the prophetic call for spiritually transformed leaders in our communities.

As the center point of stillness open to the transcendent mystery of life, global spiritual wisdom follows the “wayless way” to the heart of a desert spirituality fully open to life. Intrinsic to all people and spiritual traditions, this monastic dimension of consciousness is the crucible in which the self is transfigured and new visions of the sacred gestate and are given form. Committed to this contemplative archetype, my hope is that we celebrate as a human community the individual search for meaning in a context that is theologically open, deeply nonviolent, and receptive to the wisdom of the earth.

Differing from classical spiritual paths in five important respects, New Traditions of Contemplative Wisdom:

*Explore new spiritual paradigms and a common spiritual language this is inclusive of the entire human-divine-earth community; honors the feminine and masculine spirit; and actively works to alleviate soul and societal suffering.

*Honor and uphold each person's spiritual source and tradition, whether understood and practiced in a specific religious or non-religious context.

*Embrace the shared legacy of the human spiritual quest directed toward the heart of the contemplative ideal, rather than toward one tradition, prophet, or savior.

*Realize that in order to become effective co-creators in the formation of new spiritual traditions, individuals need access to the sacred languages, traditions, and disciplines that have sustained countless humans through history.

*Foster the coming together in community—without adhering to a common location, religion, or structure—by the spiritual capacity for self-reflection, discovery, and growth, which from time immemorial has caused the human heart to measure itself against the splendor of an infinite horizon.

May our hearts be touched by
the beauty of creation
and our souls be opened to
the inflow of divine mystery
granted to us
this day.

~Beverly Lanzetta

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