

Wisdom of the Classical Traditions

Foundation for the New Story



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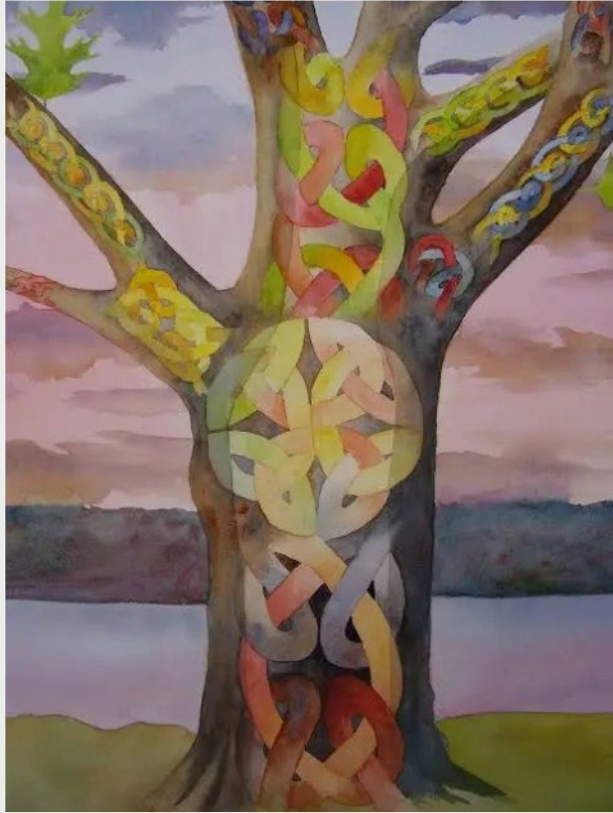
Overview of The New Story

Origins: Humans arise from journey of the universe over billions of years

Premise: Matter & spirit both alive in all living beings, as one, interdependent life system on evolving, dynamic Earth

Purpose: Clarify our Great Work: in transition to Ecozoic Era

- shared sense of belonging to community of living beings,
- active participants in healing Earth's life community

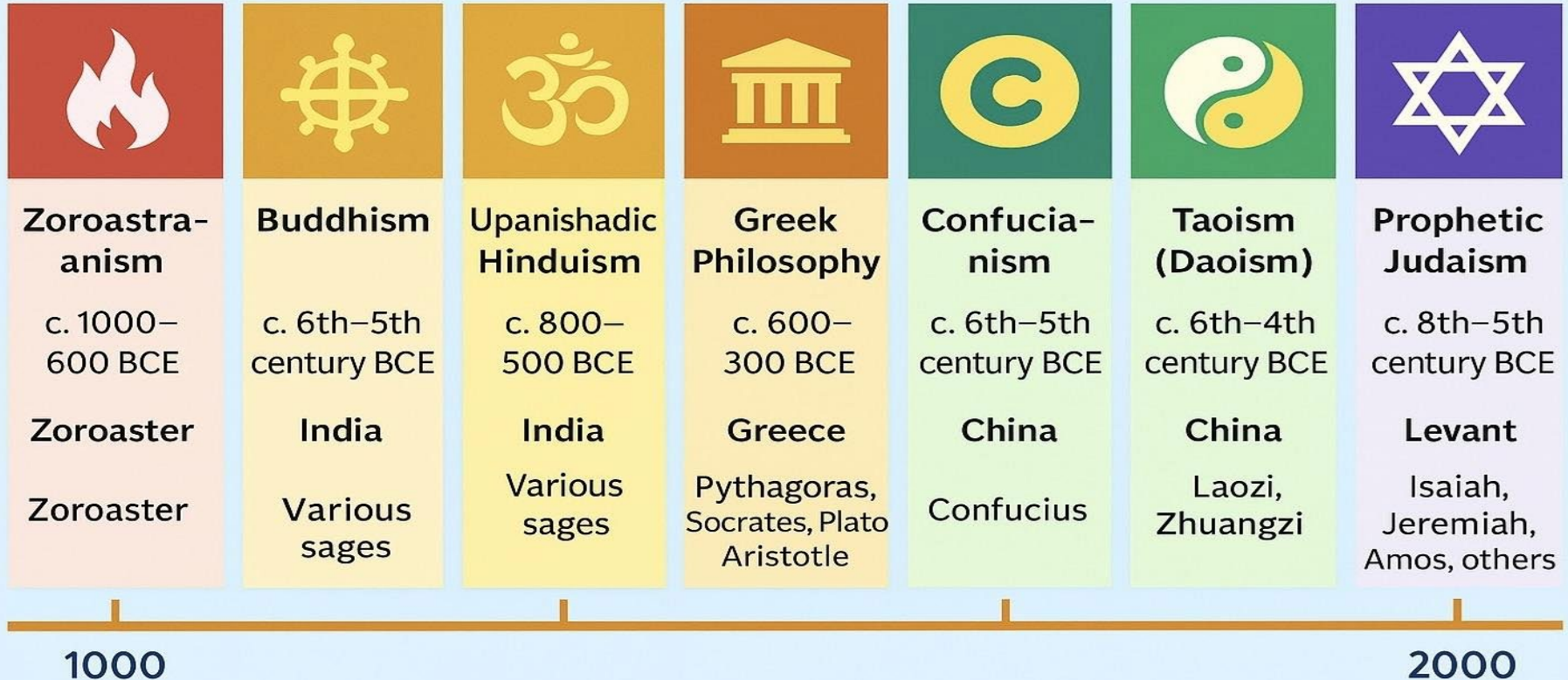


Fourfold Wisdom: Guide for Future

- **Wisdom of Indigenous people**
- **Wisdom of women**
- **Wisdom of classical traditions**
- **Wisdom of science**

(Thomas Berry, *The Great Work*, 176-177)

Axial Age Religions



Classical Tradition: Zoroastrianism in Persia



- **Centered on**
 - worship of one wise God
 - cosmic struggle between good and evil
- **Core beliefs**
 - ethical living
 - free choice
 - good thoughts, words, deeds

Classical Traditions in India: Hinduism



- On revelation of **unity of the deepest self of the universe, the Atman, with inner self of human**
- Individual self finds its **identity in Great Self**
- Founded in a most intensive experience of divine being: **the One beyond all Multiplicity**

Classical Traditions in India:

Buddhism



- Founded on the **enlightenment experience of the Buddha** in India, for whom the **universe** was revealed as **transient** & made of **radically interconnected parts**
- Many local forms developed as teachings received
 - Came to China from India and became **Chan** Buddhism
 - **Zen** - Japanese and Korean form of Buddhism - aiming for fundamental simplicity
 - Many other Asian adaptations
- Two key teachings:
 - **temporary nature of all things**, that is, always evolving
 - **universal compassion**



Classical Chinese Traditions: Confucianism

- Originates in *experience* of **all-embracing harmony of cosmic & human orders** or reality.
- *Experience* moves less toward transcendent world than to spontaneities & **inner rhythms of cosmos**
- supreme *experience*: **unity with “One Body” of all parts of universe**

Classical Chinese Traditions:

Taoism



- Arises from an *experience* of dynamic force (the **Tao**)
 - immanent in the universe
 - gives order and life and meaning to all reality.
- The Tao...wrought **succession of changes** in universal **order of things**.

Thomas' comments on Eastern religions

"He felt that dialogue would grow because these religions **have universal implications for all human beings** in their struggle with

- *suffering & loss,*
- *diminishment & death, along with*
- *celebration & ritual,*
- *rejoicing & renewing."*



Classical Tradition: Jewish prophets



- Great Work of Israel: articulating new experience of divine in human affairs
- People of Israel experienced the divine in human events.
- Biblical-Christian-classical tradition intensified alienation from the natural world.

Classical Tradition: Romans and Greeks



- The Great Work of classical Greek world was **understanding mind & creation of Western humanist tradition**
- Great Work of Rome was **gathering peoples** of Mediterranean world and Western Europe into an **ordered relation with one another**.
- The Greek Humanist philosophy was centered on the **human as separate from natural world**



Challenges in working with classical traditions

- Moving from a deeply encoded worldview to one that continues to emerge & only partially visible
- Birthing the new story of an ecozoic era when we're "between stories"
- Linking mind, matter, Earth spirit & universe



Questions with which we're sitting

- **How to make explicit links of classical traditions to**
 - *old story of domination of & separation from other living beings?*
 - *New story of interdependence of all living beings?*
- **Moving into New Story/Ecozoic Age, what of these traditions to**
 - *Emphasize & build on?*
 - *De-emphasize or set aside?*



How Do Classical Traditions Show Up for Us Now?

- Individually?
- Culturally?
- Institutionally?

**ARE WE ENTERING A
SECOND AXIAL AGE?**

