

## QUANTUM PHYSICS AND PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY: MIRRORS OF KNOWLEDGE

### Abstract

The core of what is defined as Perennial Philosophy is established by ancient traditions of metaphysical thought, which, though arising from the most various historical contexts from East to West, outstandingly share some fundamental truths such as the mutual interrelation of all things. However, even more astonishingly is how the insights of contemporary physics currently back up these various truths which spread among different cultures.

This paper aims at underscoring how undeniably compelling. Yet, uncanny this bond is, primarily on the plane of knowledge, a broader knowledge substantiated by science and philosophy – the two speak here an unknown language, yet with the same voice: the incommunicability of their truths overlapping with the incommunicability of their actual experiences.

Grappling with the dazzling disclosures of these “mirrors of knowledge” is as fascinating as unavoidable. This study takes into account some of them by uncovering how crucial they are both for the present and the (albeit acknowledged by the past wisdom) future understanding of the reality we are entangled with.

Keywords: perennial philosophy, quantum physics, entanglement, consciousness, perennialism, traditionalism, renaissance philosophy, oriental philosophy.

### Introduction

The concept of Perennial philosophy, introduced for the first time in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Agostino Steuco in his work *De perenni philosophia libri X* (1540) (see also Steuco, 2018), then re-proposed by Leibniz in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, became popular in recent times thanks to Aldous Huxley (2009) It refers to all those worldviews that share some fundamental “metaphysical”<sup>1</sup>

truths, which are called perennial as they have been disseminated over the centuries without ever being scratched.

Erwin Schrödinger’s comment on Huxley’s work perfectly frames Perennial Philosophy’s core as well: “It is an anthology from the mystics of the most various periods and the most various people. Open it where you will, and you will find many beautiful utterances of a similar kind. You are struck by the miraculous agreement between humans of a different race, different religions

<sup>1</sup> The adjective “metaphysical” doesn’t refer to classical metaphysics, as Aristotle presented it and later reformulated by Heidegger, it rather refers to what Huxley pointed out: “The metaphysic that recognises a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being - the thing is immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the tra-

ditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions. A version of this Highest Common Factor in all preceding and subsequent theologies was first committed to writing more than twenty-five centuries ago, and since that time the inexhaustible theme has been treated again and again, from the standpoint of every religious tradition and in all the principal languages of Asia and Europe” (Huxley, 2009, vii.).

knowing nothing about each other's existence, separated by centuries and millennia, and by the greatest distances that there are on our globe" (as cited in D'Adamo, 2015, p. 211).

This is indeed an accurate description of the matter at hand. Perennial Philosophy or Sophia Perennis – as Frithiof Schuon preferred to define it<sup>2</sup> – carves itself out as a gripping “anthology” which astounds the “reader” in so far as it is fraught, laden of universal knowledge, which as such, does not address to a single doctrine, a single philosopher, or even less, a single historical context.<sup>3</sup>

It goes without saying that this congenital metaphysical universalism upholds religious pluralism as well, and in that respect, Luca Siniscalco states:

We can assert that in the perspective of Perennialism, the external discrepancies through which religions are manifested on a historical, liturgical, ritual, cultic and folkloristic level are all accounted for original metaphysical harmony. The latter can be acknowledged and spread thanks to esoteric teachings and essential sacred doctrines preserved by the traditions ascribable to the same metaphysical core.

Therefore, it is not about demythologizing the sacred, i.e. religion declined in an existential perspective, “cleansed” of its

mythical, irrational and narrative aspects, as indeed proposed by the theologian Rudolf Bultmann.... The contingent discrepancies of the various religions would, in fact, all refer, albeit in distinct forms, to that “transcendent unity” whose Schuon refers to (Siniscalco, 2020, p. 163).<sup>4</sup>

Significantly, the thread that binds all these metaphysical, perennial traditions finds a shocking confirmation in Quantum mechanics' current discoveries, which is why I would consider Quantum physics and Perennialism<sup>5</sup> as “mirrors of knowledge”. They share three main decisive concepts: interconnectedness, incommunicability, experience. Let us delve deeper into them.

During an interview, Elémire Zolla, considered one of the main perennialists, defining what Perennial Philosophy is, identifies its two main features: unity, meaning universalism (“interconnectedness”, in quantum words) and incommunicability (which could be even considered as a consequence).<sup>6</sup>

Perennial Philosophy is a denomination proposed by Leibniz, but it was created in the XI Century by Agostino Steuco, a monk from Gubbio who took up the thought of Pico della Mirandola, having read his whole work gathered by the bishop of Venice. What does it indicate? The philos-

<sup>2</sup> “We prefer the term sophia to that of philosophia for the simple reason that the second term is less direct and because it evokes in addition associations of ideas with a completely profane and all too often aberrant system of thought. The key to the eternal sophia is pure intellection or in other words metaphysical discernment. To “discern” is to “separate”: to separate the Real and the illusory, the Absolute and the contingent, the Necessary and the possible, *Atmā* and *Māyā*. Accompanying discernment, by way of complement and operatively, is concentration, which unites: this means becoming fully aware – from the starting point of earthly and human *Māyā* of *Atmā*, which is both absolute and infinite” (Schuon, 2007, p. 243).

<sup>3</sup> As Schuon stated: “The truths just expressed are not the exclusive possession of any school or individual: were it otherwise they would not be truths, for these cannot be invented, but must necessarily be known in every integral traditional civilization” (Schuon, 1993, p. xxxiii).

<sup>4</sup> To this regard, it must be mentioned that Perennialism stands also as a claim, on the one hand a claim against scientism, mechanism and materialism, on the other hand it is a claim against theology whose effort to challenge the aforementioned scientism, failed.

<sup>5</sup> Perennialism and Tradition are widely used as synonyms of Perennial Philosophy. Elémire Zolla interchanges the two. See his two works *La Filosofia Perenne. L'incontro fra le tradizioni d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, Milano: Mondadori 1999 and *Che cos'è la Tradizione*, Milano: Adelphi 1998.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of “incommunicability” can be also deemed as a cause for the lack of academic popularity of Perennial Philosophy which instead is worth a greater spread among scholars.

The Persian scientist Al-Biruni who lived in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, in order to describe the insufficiency of language in translating scientific-philosophical concepts, used the metaphor of a camel on a gutter, an image then quoted by Franco Battiato, who with the aforementioned metaphor entitled one of his famous albums.

ophy that everyone had enunciated in various ways, one could even say: in every imaginable way, yet all irreprehensible from the logical point of view. A philosophy that denies the word: the word is not the only means; those who believe in perennial philosophy can bear to enunciate it in words with annoyance because it refers to an understanding that the word can only betray. On the other hand, the way in which it is exhibited is always innovative and transformable: the word is always deception.

Here are some philosophies that can be called perennial: Chinese Taoism, Hindu unitary advaita, speculative Buddhism, and Neoplatonism, the philosophy of the Florentine Platonists at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. ... Perennial philosophy means a philosophy that rejects duality and opposition in order to stick to unity (Fasoli, 1999).

This unity – and here we are introducing the third concept – is not an abstract notion, nor a poetical metaphor<sup>7</sup>: it is uncommunicable, but it does exist, its incommunicability doesn't interfere with its existence, rather with its description. This unity or interconnectedness exists because both Perennialism and Quantum Physics mention the experience of it.

According to the perennial *Weltanschauungen*, the physical world is not the only reality; beyond it, there is another non-physical realm whose (recalling of Plato's cave) the material world is but the shadow. This higher reality can be experienced. However, this experience cannot be described rationally as it takes on a mystic character.<sup>8</sup> Rationality struggles grappling with

the truths unveiled by Quantum physics, the mechanist model a priori fails attempting to explain them; as a result, here as well, an alternative "language" is required.<sup>9</sup>

This assumption brings about two main implications:

1. If this metaphysical reality intertwines with ours, then we are part of this entanglement too.<sup>10</sup>
2. If we are part of it, we should then possess the ability to establish contact with it.

This skill, though, according to perennialists, is unknown to the majority of people and, therefore, never used and got atrophied.<sup>11</sup> The awak-

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is established, and we discover that we are no longer the aggregate of the elements that compose us as individuals: body (*rupa*), sensation (*vedana*), perception (*samjna*), sensitive function (*samskara*), consciousness (*vijnana*). The world that is revealed after these preliminary exercises is described by the great Tibetan masters, but talking about it is almost forbidden, it can be misunderstood". (Zolla, 2009, p. 211, my translation).

<sup>9</sup> Jung investigated the concept of "synchronicity" with the Nobel Prize for physics Wolfgang Pauli, his patient and then friend. The two scholars spoke different scientific languages that had to abdicate when facing phenomena that were over and above the same descriptiveness: an evident embarrassment exactly from the scientific point of view - neither physics nor psychoanalysis could tell what certain experiences showed. The two disciplines unveiled a world never seen before, in which what is material is no longer distinct from what is psychical and with regard to this, Pauli says: "We should now proceed to find a neutral or unitary language in which every concept we use is applicable both to the unconscious and to matter, in order to overcome this old belief that the unconscious psyche and the matter are two separate things" (Quoted by Massimo Teodorani, 2011, p. 77, my translation).

<sup>10</sup> "Patient is the course of idea, it has been reviewed two centuries and only in the present generation do the gains begin perhaps to emerge. Shamanism has been assimilated as Zen Buddhism and the Tibetan dzogchen has, indigenous civilizations have been acknowledged, and the suffocating closure and isolation of humanity and its history begins to dissipate; nature is part of us, it becomes a foregone certainty. Man is naturally transfused into the landscape" (Zolla, 1999, p. 117, my translation).

<sup>11</sup> Julius Evola, speaking of the ability to visualize with the mind's eye, as one of the main abilities in Tantric *sādhana*, states that "in the average type of "civilized" Western man such a faculty has greatly atrophied, parallel to the dominance that in him acquired abstract

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<sup>7</sup> In this respect William Blake's beautiful, famous verses come to mind: "To see a World in a Grain of Sand/ And a Heaven in a Wild Flower/ Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand/ And Eternity in an hour" (Blake, 1982, p. 490).

<sup>8</sup> Elémire Zolla, pondering about Tibetan Buddhism, states: "Once this triple game is activated, it unfolds gradually a lighter, happier life. Intellectual abilities previously unknown and previously unsuspected potential skills, can be seen. A different game of instincts

ening of this skill (i.e. being involved in an initiatory path) coincides with the highest goal as human beings: the exercise and development of this ability match with the purpose of our existence.<sup>12</sup>

This exercise of awakening, namely the development of these skills, may involve mystical experiences that, by shifting the physical parameters of the perceivable world, display its metaphysical foundation as they unfold an interrelated reality. The initiate can experience – again, experience but not describe – these metaphysical planes as they are part of the physical ones; they are only invisible from a materialistic viewpoint.<sup>13</sup>

Exactly to this specific regard, Perennialism tunes in with Quantum physics as in the latter, something similar takes place. Zolla (2009) states: “The electron is our representation: it consists of dots separated in time. The so-called particles are different conditions of motion, and around each particle, there is a field of virtual particles of infinitesimal duration, a fleeting mist. This show of virtual events at speeds above light is mind-blowing. It forces us to free ourselves from our habitual categories, rejecting the notion of “thing”” (pp. 251-252, my translation).

Thus, since particles do bi-locate, their behaviour seems to recall mysticism more than science commonly understood. A wave could also be a particle, depending on the observer who indeed

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thought, “intellectuality” (Evola, 2010, p. 96, my translation).

<sup>12</sup> “Huxley stated that the basic premise of Perennial Philosophy is that the eternal self is one with the Absolute and that each single individual is on a journey to discover that fact and more importantly, to return there” (Friedman, 2012, p. 107).

<sup>13</sup> Elémire Zolla, speaking about the ecstasy that experience brings about, states: “It is born from perfect knowledge, subtracted from the word that wanted to express it, however capable of exploring with intellectual intuition the root and the metaphysical source of joy.

We are faced with a dilemma that arises only from the inability to conceive at the root of physical reality the foundational, metaphysical plane, where there is no space or time course and which constitutes the metaphysical premise where all religions and all philosophies can unify: only perennial philosophy validates it, however warning that verbal expression cannot translate it into language” (Zolla, 1999, p. 71, my translation).

changes its nature by observing it, raising the above mentioned astonishing and dazzling matter: an objective world is not there anymore, and this, surprisingly, echoes the perennial wisdom.

In the twentieth century, it was understood that the position and speed of a particle are not measurable simultaneously, as if to say: the existence of subatomic events is the result of our observation; to the extent that we observe them, we become participants by modifying them.

Is light a wave or a particle? It all depends on the experiment we are conducting (Zolla 1999, p. 250, my translation).

Norman Friedman (2012) states: “Bell’s theorem states that relativity must be nonlocal, since in a local reality information can be transferred at speed not greater than the speed of light, and such speeds are insufficient to explain the quantum facts. Note that Bell’s theorem depends on quantum facts, not quantum theory. Quantum facts are established by experiments. Since Bell’s work is based on established facts, his theorem cannot easily be dismissed” (p. 35). To this regard, the same John Stewart Bell asserts: “I think it’s a deep dilemma, and the resolution of it will not be trivial; it will require a substantial change in the way we look at things” (as cited in Davies & Brown, 1986, p. 48).

This substantial change, though, already occurred centuries ago, and it is what Perennialism has so far been emphasizing through its different voices.

Keeping commentating on Bell, Friedman (2012) practically claims what Plato already did four hundred centuries BC: “To accommodate both special relativity theory and his own non-local view of reality, Bell postulates the existence of another (or “deeper”) level than our universe. The instantaneous interconnectedness of quantum particles must be accomplished outside our three-dimensional universe, in some sort of extradimensional space. Again, the description of the universe requires at least a second level” (p. 35).

This extradimensional space was called “hyperuransion” by the Greek Philosopher.

### An Interconnected Reality

In a mystical experience, the perceiver and the perceived are one single thing. However, as Quantum Physics displayed, something comparable takes place in ordinary reality, at least on a microscopic level.

The movement of particles, which is implied by the act of the observer, proposes an indissoluble entanglement of the subject (mind) and object (matter). If we interfere with particles, they change. Moreover, when they change, they don't do it locally, discrediting the conceptual structure of space and time in classical physics.

As far as we are concerned, what we know prior to the measurement of a particle is nothing more than a cloud of probability in which the particle might be located.<sup>14</sup>

Teodorani (2007), underlines the unavoidable philosophical consequences: “The mathematical method of investigation of physical phenomena is and remains valid, but at profound levels, the physicist's mind is also forced to open up to new horizons of thought that are connected in part to Platonic philosophy and in part to Eastern religions” (p. 41, my translation).

<sup>14</sup> The American physicist David Bohm, wanted to find out what could lead to this dual and mysterious behaviour. He did so by reformulating the Schrödinger equation, which describes the electron's motion, adding a key parameter: the quantum potential. According to Bohm, particles act in synchronicity by dint of a quantum potential which, invisible and as a matter of fact unknowable, guides and regulates the particles' behaviour from a further, or “parallel”, plane. In this explanatory framework, determinism is preserved, but in the light of a process which is utterly inexplicable mechanistically.

To this regard, the Italian Astrophysicist Massimo Teodorani asserts: “There is determinism here, but it is very different from Newtonian determinism in which the causes must always precede the effects: in this context, causes and effects coincide and such determinism is not a clockwork mechanism but a sync order of things, much like a living organism whose all parts act in harmony” (Teodorani, 2007, p. 41, my translation).

In this regard, Fritjof Capra (1999) states: “In recent decades, high-energy diffusion experiments have revealed to us, in the most extraordinary way, the dynamic and ever-changing nature of particles; matter has proved capable of transformation. All particles can be transformed into other particles. They can be created by energy and can disappear into energy. In this context, classic concepts such as “elementary particle”, “material substance”, or “isolated object” have lost their meaning: the whole universe appears as a dynamic network of energy configurations which cannot be separated” (p. 96).

In the later part of his life, the American physicist David Bohm, focused his research on the philosophical implications of his discoveries. His connection with Jiddu Krishnamurti (Bohm & Krishnamurti, 1999) strengthened his aim and set off an alternative philosophical attitude, unacceptable for the academic world close to him, firmly anchored to the Newtonian view of reality and therefore incapable of accepting a combination of philosophy and physics, let alone physics and mysticism.

According to Bohmian thought, particles do not communicate with each other at super speed, a speed faster than that of light. Simply, “they are never moved”, they are never separated. They do not need to move to reach each other since they are already reached. Translating this evidence from the microscopic world to the macroscopic one, it may be assumed that individuals themselves are not separate entities, but extensions of one ultimate reality, like many tips of a submerged iceberg, which outwardly appear to be separate but in-depth are firmly connected, even if this is invisible - at least to the Newtonian mechanistic eye.

Therefore, if Plato (2008) in his *Timaeus* talked about the soul of the world, contemporary physics speaks of “universal hologram”, “zero-point field”, “quantum potential”, and “implicate order”. It is noteworthy to mention that Bruno himself spoke of *mens insita omnibus* (the mind is in everything) and *mens super omnia* (the

mind is over everything).

If, according to the vision of Bohm and Pribram, true reality is at this point only that of the “potential quantum field” or “zero point”, we should deduct that the reality that we experience, the empirical world, is nothing more than a “hologram”, a projection, essentially something entirely illusory. David Bohm (1996) explains: “Relativity and quantum theory implies a divided totality in which analysis of well-defined separate parts is no longer relevant. Nevertheless, there is a tool that can give us an immediate perception of the meaning of this unity.... Such a perception is possible when we consider the hologram (the name derives from the Greek holos, meaning “all” or “whole”, and gram which means “to write”. A hologram is, therefore, a tool that, so to speak, “writes the wholeness”)” (p. 200).<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion, these “mirrors of awareness” deeply affect the various branches of knowledge, split by Cartesianism and all the following mate-

rialistic modern views that have divided a reality that was already united.<sup>16</sup>

As it could ultimately overturn the view we look at our existence, the perennial philosophy “implied” by the new physics claims a role of extreme importance, probably never seen before.

Recalling Sgalambro’s (1990) words: “A philosophy that does not make you forget all the others is not worth anything” (p. 92, Author’s translation). We have probably found this philosophy today: it enfoldes the marriage of the old wisdom and the new science.

#### From East to West: A Perennial Renaissance

In 2011, the Italian musician Franco Battiato (whose output is often fraught with perennial philosophies)<sup>17</sup>, in collaboration with philosopher Manlio Sgalambro, wrote an opera inspired by the Italian Renaissance thinker Bernardino

<sup>15</sup> The neurophysiologist Karl Pribram who had collaborated with Bohm, proposed the holographic model for his studies on the brain, inquiring that it could provide the most valid explanation to the classification of memories and therefore, de facto, to their non-locality. (I refer the reader to PRIBRAM, K (1971). *Languages of the Brain: Experimental Paradoxes and Principles of Neuropsychology*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall).

To this regard, concerning the affinity of certain aspects of quantum physics with the hermetic philosophy of the Renaissance, it would be interesting to evaluate a parallelism between this conception of memory and the famous techniques of Giordano Bruno. Those of Nolan were not only strengthening mnemonic techniques but real operational tools for transmutation of microcosmic and macrocosmic reality, i.e. changing the individual in order to transform the whole of reality: “Bruno not only intends to strengthen the mnemonic muscle, rather he wants to change the cosmos. That is - let me say again - change the very structure of every initiate’s mind and then, through them, change the world, by means of the micro-macrocosm interdependence, in other words mind-universe. This is the work of “his” Ermeticism, changing man’s mind, changing his intimate essence and then, through him - newborn-man, revolutionising the world” (La Porta, 2001, p. 195, my translation).

<sup>16</sup> “The forma mentis that has shaped the modern world derives to a greater extent from Descartes. In the Western world, Cartesian thought was meant to set in motion a revolution as profound as the one created by the Renaissance, a revolution that would lead to the Enlightenment, also known as “The age of reason” (Baigent & Leigh, 2003, p. 247, my translation).

This is why, the hermetic vision of reality, during the rationalist “triumph” age, found shelter in the arts; let us think of William Blake as an example.

Psychology itself is not exempt from this fragmentation that is why Assagioli, through his Psychosynthesis proposes a sort of recomposition. In addition to the main four forces – behaviourism, psychoanalysis, existential-humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology – “in his writings Assagioli added a fifth force called psychoenergetics, a psychological consequence of the new scientific paradigm shift followed by the revolutionary significance of quantum physics’ new discoveries. The father of Psychosynthesis believed these findings would set the way for a new vision both of the world and man, whose great truths – stated by all sacred traditions over thousands of years - were eventually accepted without prejudice. These truths would be finally given the importance they deserve, by dint of their valuable insights and directions for the future development of humanity” (Guggisberg Nocelli, p. 211, pp. 95-96, my translation).

<sup>17</sup> Suffice to say that his album *Fetus* (Bla bla, 1972), inspired by reading Paramahansa Yogananda, was dedicated to Aldous Huxley.

Telesio. The work was presented to the public in holographic form.

“Witnesses at the representation in Cosenza said that the public believed that singers, dancers and the actor Giulio Brogi were on stage, in flesh and blood, deceived by the incredible effects of the holograms”.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, a sort of reality shift is what the audience experienced.

It is no coincidence that Battiato has compared holograms, with apparent reference to David Bohm, creator of the holographic universe theory, with Italian Renaissance philosophy.

It should be considered that affirming the illusion of reality is anything but sensational news; as far as that statement sounds absurd and paradoxical, it is absolutely in line with what has always been claimed by various traditional thoughts. From Gnosticism to Hinduism, from the abovementioned Renaissance to Theosophy, up to the Twentieth Century with the already mentioned Schuon, Guénon, Evola, Zolla<sup>19</sup> and Cooramaswamy.

A reality that cannot be defined as either subjective or objective. The world of matter and that of mind are so intrinsically interconnected as to form a single whole... Yet this concept is not new but dates back two thousand years ago when the Hindu Tantric tradition of the world postulated a similar philosophy. According to Tantric philosophy, reality is nothing more than an illusion and this illusion is called the “veil of Maya”. The main error that we commit is not perceiving this illusory veil: we perceive ourselves as separate from the world around us. This is a realm where the laws of classical physics no longer apply; it stands for the ultimate goal of physics as

well as a major stumbling block: we still can’t find the metric, the geometric domain and the mathematical operators able to describe it formally (Teodorani, 2012, p. 36, my translation).

As Elémire Zolla stated in *Verità segrete esposte in evidenza* (1990): “One cannot demonstrate a difference between the perception of reality and a constant and durable collective hallucination: they are the same thing” (p. 159, my translation).

Unquestionably, these concepts seem shocking and absurd, even ridiculous yet supported and validated by years of laboratory research carried out by the greatest minds in contemporary physics, such as Nobel Prize winners Albert Einstein, Wolfgang Pauli, Max Planck (who devised the concept of the quantum of energy), Louis De Broglie, Richard P. Feynman, Werner Heisenberg, Paul Dirac, J. Von Neumann and obviously Stephen Hawking.

The philosophical implications of their discoveries, as we have already hinted at in the previous paragraph, are massive. Self-evident are the analogies with Hermetic Philosophy:

Hermetic thought had established the interrelationship and interconnectedness of all things so that if in any one area of the textile of reality a filament is pulled, in another point of reality, a filament is stretched or slackened. Nuclear physics, at least, has confirmed the validity of this principle and has translated the theory into practice. ...At the beginning of this century, biology, chemistry and physics were presented as three separate and distinct disciplines... When they were established, these disciplines were hailed as innovative and revolutionary, while they are nothing more than the expression of Agrippa and Paracelsus’ global reality. They express a unity that existed long before analytical processes would come to create an artificial distinction between its components. In reality, biology, chemistry and physics

<sup>18</sup> From the Sicilian singer’s website, my translation: <https://www.battiato.it/telesio/> Retrieved January 2022

<sup>19</sup> On Zolla and Perennial Philosophy see my essays: *Il pensare nell’assenza del sacro: Elémire Zolla tra Filosofia Perenne e modernità* in «Il pensare», Anno I, N.1, 2012 and *Verità metafisiche esposte in evidenza: Elémire Zolla e la Tradizione* in “Frammenti di Filosofia Contemporanea”, *Limina Mentis*, Milano 2013.

have always been interconnected, and Cartesian science has made a mistake assuming that they were separate (Baigent & Leigh, 2003, pp. 268-269, my translation).

Now, what does this interconnectedness mean practically? According to Renaissance hermetic philosophers, the universe was conceived as a large animated body, enlivened by a principle, the *anima mundi*<sup>20</sup>, by dint of which everything was substantiated by occult and spiritual energy. In this perspective, subject and object exchange roles, as everything (animated by the *anima mundi*) is both object and subject of the same reality. The analogies with Bohm's physics are quite evident, let alone the implicated and explicated reality in Nicholas of Cusa (*complicatio* and *explicatio*). Bohm even uses similar words: implicated and explicated order.

If macrocosm and microcosm interpenetrate, it may be assumed that the individual is not just a walk-on actor but an effective, fundamental character of this interpenetration: he is the subject and object of this reality; therefore a fundamental and intimately integral part of it who perennially reminds us of both the Renaissance *homo faber* and the god-man mentioned by both Eastern and Western traditions.

As Gabriele La Porta (2001) points out:

Through progressive emanations, divine ideas penetrate material forms by means of the *spirit mundi*, right down to the most minute particles. Nature is thus deified as an essential complement to the deity.

An Infinite God cannot be separated from the other infinite worlds of which he is the cause and animating force.

Man is an essential part of nature, and the presence of the divine in it inevitably results in the presence of the divine in the human, manifesting itself in that heroic fury, relentless effort in itself, never tired, never satisfied with the search for truth (p. 124, my translation).

<sup>20</sup> The Platonian "soul of the world".

Francesco Pullia (2004), in his essay on the affinity of Bruno's thought with Eastern philosophies and de facto the affinity of both with quantum mechanics, asserts:

Man is not a separate subject from nature and the divine, rather he is, by his very essence, nature and divinity, he is no longer at the centre of the cosmos since everything is composed of the same living matter, the same energy: there is nothing of ours that becomes extraneous and nothing extraneous that doesn't become ours, says the philosopher. ...One cannot but note how this holistic interrelationship, unchanged for millennia, marks the main cognitive core of modernity's horizon from Einstein up to the contemporary outcomes of Fritiof Capra, Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, Gregory Bateson (p. 75, my translation).

What the ancients had intuited - or probably even experienced if we think of the role of magic both in the Renaissance<sup>21</sup> and in the Eastern traditions<sup>22</sup> - is now being demonstrated in the laboratory. This factor casts Quantum mechanics to a top cultural position and imposes a rigorous study by philosophers.

Physicist Fred Alan Wolf stated:

Classical physics holds that there is a real world out there, acting independently of human consciousness. Consciousness, in this view, is to be constructed from real objects, such as neurons and molecules. It is a byproduct of the material causes which produce the many physical effects observed.

Quantum physics indicates that this

<sup>21</sup> "This world of the second century was, however, seeking intensively for knowledge of reality, for an answer to its problems which normal education failed to give. It turned to other ways of seeking an answer: intuitive, mystical, magical" (Yates, 1964, p. 4).

See also Donà, M. (2004). *Magia e filosofia*. Milano: Bompiani.

<sup>22</sup> "The magnified strength of Hatha Yoga is not that of an athlete, but the strength of a magician, of "a mango" (Eliade, 1984, p. 147, my translation).



theory cannot be true – the effects of observation “couple” or enter into the real world whether we want them to or not. The choices made by an observer alter, in an unpredictable manner, the real physical events. Consciousness is deeply and inextricably involved in this picture, not a by-product of materiality (Wolf, 1986, p. 57).

Though consciousness is central in Perennial Philosophy as well, its insights have informed the Indian tradition for at least two millennia, while the West has only become sensitive in the last centuries<sup>23</sup>.

According to Fritjof Capra (1991), the highest aim of the Eastern teaching’s followers, “whether they are Hindus, Buddhists, or Taoists is to become aware of the unity and mutual interrelation of all things, to transcend the notion of an individual isolated self and to identify themselves with ultimate reality” (p. 29).

To this regard, Professor Amid Goswami states:

We all are used to thinking that everything around us is already a thing existing without my input, without my choice. You have to banish that kind of thinking. Instead, you really have to recognise that even the material world around us, the chairs, the tables, the rooms, the carpet, time included, all of these are nothing but possible Consciousness movements. And I’m choosing, moment to moment, out of

those movements, to bring my actual experience into manifestation.

This is the only radical thinking that you need to do. However, it is so radical; it is so difficult because we tend to take the world out there for granted, independent of our experience. It is not. Quantum physics has been so clear about it. Heisenberg himself, the co-discoverer of quantum physics, said, “Atoms are not things, they’re only tendencies.

So instead of thinking of things, you have to think of possibilities.

They’re all possibilities of Consciousness.<sup>24</sup>

On the scientific horizon implicated by these discussions, the aforementioned transpersonal psychology is also included, and this confirms a thriving of cross-sectional studies that structure, within quantum physics, a highly holistic approach. The famous Italian psychiatrist Roberto Assagioli (1988) is quite clear about the illusion of reality:

The state of consciousness of the ordinary man can be called a dreamy state in a world of illusion: illusions produced by imagination, emotions, mental conceptions and more generally illusion of the external world, which our senses perceive as reality. Concerning the external world, modern chemistry and physics have shown that what appears concrete, stable and inert to our senses, on the other hand, is a dizzying swirl of infinitesimal elements, energy charges animated by a powerful force. Therefore, the matter which appears to our senses and which was conceived by materialistic philosophy does not exist. Current science has eventually shared the fundamental theoretical construct of India, the ancient spiritual vision according to which

<sup>23</sup> Professor Oldmeadow (2013) highlights: “Eastern traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, can provide us with highly sophisticated maps of consciousness, and of states of being, which take account not only of what Freud termed the “subconscious” but also the “supra-conscious”, a realm of experience accessible through the individual psyche but by no means bound by it. To cite one example of such a map: the Buddhist Wheel of Life is not only a representation of various post-mortem states but is simultaneously a figuration of various states of consciousness and of the psychic mechanisms which bring them about. Such maps alert us to the limitations of materialistic and mechanistic accounts of consciousness in particular, and of the Cartesian and Newtonian paradigms of scientific inquiry in the West” (pp. 56-7).

<sup>24</sup> From an Interview at “The World Congress of Quantum Medicine”, retrieved January 2021 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnzYVJGjjK8>

everything that appears is Maya, illusion<sup>25</sup>  
(p. 77, my translation).

### Conclusion

Perennial Philosophy, backed up by Quantum physics in some of its assumptions, paved the way towards a further endearing layer of comprehension of reality, with whom scholarship ultimately ought to grapple. This inclusive layer wholeheartedly embraces a broader perspective, abetted by both the old wisdom and the new physics, i.e. two languages still incomprehensible yet compelling and unsettling. Moreover, they struggle with scientism and materialistic worldviews whose codes are instead apparent – at least in comparison with the perennial/quantum idioms – yet poor and mostly important fruitless.

Perennial Philosophy thawed out a path of knowledge which was only metaphysical until Quantum Physics arose: the latter unearthed and made out the same truths, scientifically though: evidence has been adduced regarding what mystics and initiates dared to unveil. The new science is boosting philosophy – in its original Greek meaning philo-sophia id est “love for knowledge” – universal knowledge, perennial philosophy – setting in motion an unrelenting cultural breakthrough, confrontational and unfathomable, which eventually will mightily challenge most of the mainstream certainties about the world we attempted to describe, with no success so far.

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<sup>25</sup> Transpersonal psychologists are often paired to Perennial Philosophy, to this regard the author Norman Friedman (2012) speaking about Ken Wilber asserts that: “his work presents transpersonal psychology as the modern expression of the Perennial Philosophy, or the application of the Perennial Philosophy to psychology” (p. 97).

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