

Religious Pluralism: The Perspective of Twentieth Century Muslim Perennial Philosopher Frithjof Schuon

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Abstract

Religious Pluralism has become an important area of philosophy of religion because of increasing diversity of religions which causes increasing religious conflicts in present-day world. There are diverse thoughts which address the common goals of Religious Pluralism; however in western societies Perennialist scholars are most influential in advocating religious diversity and in bringing reaffirmation of Perennial wisdom. The paper first uncovers the rediscovery of Perennial philosophy in twentieth century while disseminating the belief in universal truth. The paper also focuses on the perspective of Muslim traditionalist intellectual Frithjof Schuon one of the founder of Perennial philosophy for the implication of Religious pluralism in the Globalized world involves not only Abrahamic religions but Buddhism and Hinduism by presenting the idea of Transcendent unity of religions. This is concluded that as a representative of traditional school of thought Frithjof Schuon proposed a unique perspective of religious pluralism based on the indispensable notion of religious diversity, esoterism and exoterism in identifying transcendent unity of religions as the substantiate essence of religious pluralism.

Keywords: Religious pluralism, perennial philosophy, universal truth, religious diversity, esoterism, exoterism

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Introduction

With the technological advancement, the globalization is all about increasing interconnectivity, and extreme dissention of liberal and temporal values as well as controversial religious affiliations. Now, the issue of religious diversity cannot only be limited to academics.¹ In modern times, the religious diversity has not only been politicized; it has been emerged as the central point of international relations and play an important part in policy making of different states, international organizations, and Non-Governmental Organizations all over the world. Many minorities around the world have made it the questions of life and death; while for the growing minority of Muslims in the West, the matter of religious pluralism calls for debates with regard the indispensable nature of Muslim identity, the role of Muslims in a civil society and the extent to which Muslims can or should be amalgamated and regarded within the Western geo-politics.²

Over time, the religious scholars have discussed many different aspects of religious diversity. Alan Race³ has categorized three groups of religious diversity such as "exclusivist", "inclusivist", and "pluralist". Exclusivists believe in only one set of beliefs or religious practice i.e. a Christian exclusivist would assume that non-Christian beliefs and practices are inaccurate and imprecise if not fully false. Christian exclusivist also has the stance that other religious practices are not wholly productive. On the other hand, the Pluralists believe in more than one set of beliefs or religious practices.⁴

¹ Luke M. Herrington, "Globalization and Religion in Historical Perspective: A Paradoxical Relationship." *Religion 4*, (2013):145-165.

² Herrington, "Globalization and Religion," 145-165.

³ See: Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions* (USA: SCM Press, 1993).

⁴ James Fieser ed. "Religious Pluralism", *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer Reviewed Academic Resource*; Domenic Marbaniang, "Theology of

They also claim that there can be one religious demonstration in so many different traditions. Hick believes that there must be a link between the plurality of religions and multiplicity of the objects of worship and musing. He argues "we are left with two options: either endorse the plurality of the objects of worship, i.e. polytheism, or return to exclusivist language saying that mine is true while the rest is false.⁵

Inclusivists as a third approach hold the position that more than one religious tradition can contain true religious factors while at the same time only one tradition expresses ultimate religious truth most completely.⁶ It is noteworthy that arguments of all these three groups are offered separately from "salvific practice" which manifests that one approach to 'diversity of belief' may vary to call for the same approach to "diversity of practice", or vice versa.

Further, the concept of religious pluralism has also been discussed in Perennial philosophy which depicts that each religious tradition is, more or less, shared as a universal truth from which all complex and simplified knowledge doctrines have emerged. There are many merits of Perennial philosophy. To mention only a few, the Perennialists claim that it can be the most appropriate ground for studying about Religion, as it gives full consideration and acknowledgment to certain sacred merits of each religion believing that giving reverence is the most valued factor. The orthodox argued that Perennialist philosophy only talks about knowledge that is transformable. It is also claimed that contrary to the knowledge provided in conventional sense, the sacred knowledge of the Perennial philosophy requires a sacred quality in the apprehender and thus aims at affecting the existing life of the individual.

Religion: Pluralism, Inclusivism, and Exclusivism." (Bangalore: ACTS Academy paper, 2007).

⁵ See: John Hick, *Christianity at the Centre* (USA:SCM Press 1968).

⁶ Domenic Marbaniang, "Theology of Religion: Pluralism, Inclusivism, and Exclusivism", 3.

Rediscovery of Perennial Philosophy in 20th century

Aldous Huxley wrote a book titled as "The Perennial philosophy" published in 1946. In his book, he defines the term 'Perennial Philosophy' as a branch of philosophy which identifies a divine reality necessary for the minds of individuals; the psychology which is very close to divine reality ; this principle enforces that the metaphysical knowledge is universal but ancient.⁷ Although term Perennial Philosophy is often associated with the Leibniz, a theorist who borrowed it from the Augustinus Steuchius who was the theologian of sixteenth century. The base of this ideology indeed goes back to the "Golden Chain of Neoplatonism", in the Islamic tradition it originated as "*Dīn al- Fitra*" or considered as "*Sanathana Dharma*" in the Hindu tradition.

Perennial philosophy also known as perennial wisdom has its roots in the Renaissance and was rediscovered by twentieth century traditionalist, Rene Guenon and his followers Frithjof Schoun, and Annanda Commarswamy. The Perennialists are of the view that the Perennial philosophy is the eternal wisdom, whose form is often changed but not the essence.

René Guénon (1886-1951) considered the founder of modern Perennial philosophy known as *Sophia Perennis* in twentieth century. He argues that ancient religions have knowledge for all as well for those having certain level of spiritual development. Exoteric knowledge is a sort of assertive theology and is wholly based on prescribed religious order. The exoteric ideology is opinion-based rather than intellectual in nature. This exoteric ideology limited to the human state as it differentiate the existence between God and creation Hence, the main purpose is religious redemption resulting in the form of eternal blessing in paradise. Guénon thinks that esoterism is not only an accompaniment to exoterism. At least the former has *de jure*, a legal religious autonomy as its underlying substance is the totally primeval in nature. By metaphysics, Guenon means an ultra-rational understanding of spirituality and spiritual

⁷ Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (London: Fontana Books, 1946), 9.

mysteries not only some theological and conventional principles. The aim is to identify the unification of principle and the individual for the recognition of "Supreme Identity". Guénon discusses ultra-personal essence of God, beyond being the Absolute on principle basis. To him, the underlying spirit of an individual is not different from the Almighty itself. While discussing the "Brahman" as a principle of Hindu Vedanta concept of "*Ātmā*" he argued that Hindu "*Sanathana Dharma*" reveals the direct heritage of the primordial religious societies. The great traditions "Vedanta", "Taoism", and "Buddhism" played a vital role in most of his work. He recognizes the universal manifestation of metaphysics that is for all East and West. According to Guénon great number of people were not able to comprehend the metaphysical facts and supernatural elements in Asian religions which appeared later in human history opposite to the Ancient religions because they do not observe the structure of Esoterism and Exoterism. As a result spiritual seeker is not able to have a reasonable beginning in order to follow an esoteric path. Guénon considers modernity the main reason behind this descending process.⁸ For him, in Renaissance, the tragedy of the Western world lies in the fact that it does no longer have any link with the *Sophia Perennis*. As a traditionalist, in his early writings, Guénon emphasizes to re-establish the Roman Catholicism based traditional "intellectualité" in the West. In 1912, Guénon got inspiration from *Shādhiliyyah* order and he spent rest of his life as a Sufi Muslim. He very openly considered Sufism as an initial path of knowledge, the most approachable form of religious instigation for people of West.

The Perennial philosophers refuse the elements of progress and elevation in modern civilization and consider it a bogus and morally corrupt civilization. Guénon and his follower traditionalists considered tradition as principle which unifying man with divine origin, do not have human origin but sent from heaven. Among many other 20th century Perennial

⁸ See: Rene Guenon, Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2002).

Philosophers, Frithjof Schuon also considered as one of the founders of Perennial Philosophy who initiated the Traditionalist school of thought and influenced many other intellectuals and scholars of 21st century like Syed Hussein Nasr, Reza Shah Kazemi and Joseph Lumbard.

Frithjof Schoun as a messenger of Perennial Philosophy

Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) as early follower of Guénon was one of the major spiritual intellectuals of the traditionalist school of thought. At quite young age, he read the "Bhagavad-Gita", "the Quran" and the works of great philosopher Plato.⁹ Thus, Schuon easily agreed to Guénon's idea of restoration of the Tradition and his criticism of modernity and became his companion to work for Guénon's journal *Les Etudes Traditionnelles*. He actually emerged as a great expositor of the metaphysical subjects and of religious dogmas. He could have benefited a lot from the meditative ambience of the subcontinent had there not been the onset of war which compelled him to return to Europe at once. Developing the idea of "Religio Perennis", Schuon, established his own metaphysical concept, which he does not consider as ambivalent as Primeval Tradition of Guénon. But Schuon's idea of "Religio Perennis" cannot be recognized as a new religion. He himself calls it the "Underlying Religion," the "Religion of the Heart" or the Religio Concordis. In Switzerland, Schuon met a Muslim hermit who belonged to Senegal and deeply influenced his thought. When Schuon talked to esteemed hermit, he drew a circle with radius on the ground and explained: "God is in the center, all paths lead to Him."¹⁰ So the metaphysical reality is the main theme of all the written works of Frithjof Schuon.

Schuon later known as Īsā Nūr ad-Dīn Aḥmad embraced Islam in 1932 in Paris, learned Arabic language and Holy Quran from the Persian scholar,

⁹ Michael Fitzgerald, Frithjof Schuon: Messenger of the Perennial Philosophy (USA: World Wisdom, 2010), 2.

¹⁰ Barbara Perry, Frithjof Schuon: Metaphysician and Artist. (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 1981).

Sayyid Hasan Imāmī.¹¹ During Suchon's journey to Algeria in 1932, he met Shaykh Ahmad al-'Alawī, who introduced to him spirituality and Sufism. It strengthened his link with Islamic tradition as well the traditional Western atmosphere.¹² In the West Schuon, under the influence of Shaykh al-'Alawī turn into a representative of the Shādhiliyyah order. Seyyed Hussein Nasr mentions that "basically Islam and the Muhammadan barakah helped him become a Sufi and spiritual teacher and a shaykh of the Shādhiliyyah Order to reach spiritual and divine states which enabled him to produce his most remarkable and extraordinary works".¹³

Schuon's oeuvre annotates the esoteric magnitude of religion, in which the mythological and religious forms are diffused. His work reasserts the traditional metaphysical ideologies that analyze the modernism which is either unconcerned or absolutely antagonistic to the wisdom of the ages. Various religions and their diverse configurations are unified by the Sophia Perennis that the Traditionalists dedicate their life to inculcate. Schuon's first book "*The Transcendent Unity of Religions*" (1953) duly outlines his stance on spiritualism. Eliot commented on this book that he has never with such kind of remarkable work in the comparative study of Religions.¹⁴ The way this book has detailed the differences between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of religious traditions, and by recognizing the fact that all orthodox religions have the same union is unrivalled. It has contributed immensely towards supplying the consistent and indisputable and perhaps the only foundation for the appropriately composed religious

¹¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Frithjof Schuon and the Islamic Tradition." *Sophia Summer* 5, no. 1(1999): 29.

¹² Nasr, Frithjof Schuon, 44.

¹³ Nasr, Frithjof Schuon, 44; For detailed biography see Jean-Baptiste ymardand Patrick Laude, *Frithjof Schuon: Life and Teachings* (Sunny Press, 2004); Michael Fitzgerald, *Frithjof Schuon: Messenger of the Perennial Philosophy* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2010), 2.

¹⁴ Huston Smith, "Introduction" in *Transcendent Unity of Religions* (1975), ix.

ecumenism. T.S. Schuon's following four books are clearly dedicated to the culture of Islam: *"Understanding Islam"* (1963), *"Dimensions of Islam"* (1969), *"Islam and the Perennial Philosophy"* (1976), and *"Sufism: Veil and Quintessence"* (1981). There are two books written by him that encompasses not only Islamic but Christian customs as well, namely, *"Christianity/Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenicism"* published in 1985 and *"In the Face of the Absolute"* in 1989. At the same time, Schuon has not just written about Islam and Islamic tradition as one might deduce from his Sufi interpretations. He has also delved into Hinduism and Buddhism and wrote two of the prominent books called *"Language of the Self"* (1959) and *"In the Tracks of Buddhism"* (1969). As it has been mentioned earlier, Schuon adopted Islam as a religion and found solace in Sufi teachings but he has always gained insight from the teachings of 18th century sage Shankara, from *"Advaita Vedanta"* and above all from the *"Upanishads"*. This fact also supports Schuon's practice as a universal spiritual leader who took inspiration from miscellaneous faiths all over the world and it is evident from his writings as well where he refers to different dogmas and beliefs. In a compilation of aphoristic essays, *"Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts"* (1954), he has given place to subjects such as Vedanta and sacred art, and contemplation on mystical values. This book, besides being an instance of lucid charm, is more of Schuon's capability to compare the ideologies that all the traditional art carry and that of odd, showy, empty pretentiousness that is portrayed by post-medieval art and which has now stopped to "exteriorize either transcendent ideas or profound virtues"¹⁵. His outstanding witticism seems to be in full swing in his scripts on art. His words are unforgettable where he remarks that a person experiences to be at the center of the world when facing the [mediaeval cathedral while standing before the churches of all the other eras such as

¹⁵ Edward G. Ballard, "In Defense of Symbolic Aesthetics." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12, no. 1(1953): 38-43.

Renaissance, Baroque, or Rococo make him feel to be in Europe.¹⁶ Schuon has elaborated his metaphysical doctrines in *"Gnosis: Divine Wisdom"* (1959), *"Logic and Transcendence"* (1979), and *"Esoterism as Principle and as Way"* (1981). In the former book, he recounts the Christian culture in a dazzling segment while in the latter he repudiates some of the principles and philosophies of the Modern West. Some such ideologies include relativism, rationalism, "concretism", existentialism, and psychologism which according to him are mere vilification and denigration of what is truth. Islamic tradition like Holy Quran, the doctrine of metaphysical unity, Islamic, the path, Islamic law, theology and the relationship between Islam and Perennial philosophy play an important role in most of his work.¹⁷

Schuon was fully aware of the Absolute Truth and Beauty of other religious forms through the exoteric and esoteric elements which he considered the elements of the Islamic tradition and he followed the absolute perfection of Divine principle for more than sixty years until his death in 1998.

Frithjof Schuon Perspective for the implication of Religious Pluralism

As a spokesman of "Sophia Perennis" Schuon claims the principle of fundamental metaphysical as universal and primordial and considered the Sophia wisdom to represent these metaphysical principles in individuals, as expressed throughout the ages, in all revelations and in major teachings of the saints. Schuon articulated two vocabularies Advaita Vedanta and Sufism to explicate the metaphysics, presenting the account of Real, concerning God as the Absolute. "The absolute is the supreme Reality in metaphysics and it is necessary to start from the idea that absolute is infinite. That is supreme which permits of no intensification or reduction, or of no reiteration or division. What's more, that is absolute

¹⁶ Huston Smith, "Frithjof Schuon's The Transcendent Unity of Religions." *American Academy of Religion* 154, no. 4(1976) :721-724.

¹⁷ Harry Old Meadow, Schuon's Oeuvre in Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2010),12-20.

which is not determined by any limiting factor and in this way doesn't end at any limit."¹⁸

The metaphysical highlight differs starting with one tradition then onto the next. Buddhism, for instance, is fundamentally a profound treatment however one which of need requires metaphysical teachings, while Hinduism is, in any case, a mysticism which suggests, under a similar need, a spiritual treatment. "There is no science of the soul," says Schuon, "without a metaphysical basis to it and without spiritual remedies at its disposal."¹⁹ The relationship of religious philosophy to metaphysics is that of exoterism to esoterism. Exoterism is "unable of being conscious of the relationship which, at one and the same time, justifies it and yet limits it."²⁰ Schuon also confers that "God is the Absolute, and being the Absolute, He is equally the Infinite; being both the Absolute and the Infinite, intrinsically and without duality, He is also the Perfect. Absoluteness is reflected in space by the point or the center; in time by the moment or the present; in matter, by ether, which vehicles energy; in form, by the sphere; in number, by unity."²¹ As most of Schuon's writings characterized essential universal metaphysic, esoteric truth and primordial tradition which demonstrate the diversification of revelations but unification of all religions based on the transcendent reality.

Diversity of Revelations

Frithjof Schuon as a supporter of Traditionalist school inscribed "Diversity of Revelation" features in "Gnosis, Divine Wisdom" as a principle idea for the plurality of religions. Schuon, in the face of article, poses the question that strikes the mind of many people. "Seeing that there is only one Truth,

¹⁸ Frithjof Schuon, *Survey of Metaphysics and Esoterism* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2003), 15.

¹⁹ Frithjo Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2009), 14.

²⁰ Frithjo Schuon, *Treasures of Buddhism* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2009), 49.

²¹ Frithjo Schuon, *From the Divine to the Human*, ed. Patrick Laude (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2013), 144.

must we not conclude that there is only one Revelation, one sole Tradition possible?"²²

In the appropriate response of this inquiry Schuon believes that Absolute Truth and divine Revelations are completely various terms as Truth is one, outright and past structures; while Revelations or Traditions are without a doubt gotten from the structure. Along these lines by definition "to discuss structure is to talk about assorted variety, and so of Plurality."²³ To the different human collectivizes are tended to Revelations which are resolved in their conventional perspectives by the current requirements. In this manner, what decides the distinctions among types of Truth is the distinction among human containers. For a large number of years as of now humankind has been isolated into a few essentially various branches establishing the same number of complete humanities, pretty much surrounded themselves; the presence of profound repositories so extraordinary thus unique requests a separated refraction of the one Truth.²⁴

As Schuon demands: The core of all convention and all otherworldliness is wisdom between the Real and the fanciful and fixation on the Real. Everything is contained right now. In an all the more outward sense this is teaching and strategy; there are numerous precepts and numerous strategies, however there is just a single insight between the Real and the deceptive, the Absolute and the unforeseen, the Infinite and the limited, similarly as there is just a single fixation on the Real, just a single Union, just a single Deliverance.²⁵ He emphasize that religion always turns on obvious notion of diverse revelations. As Schuon stated humankind has been divided into numerous different branches having their own particular traits, actually differently perceive the absolute Truth and

²² Frithjo Schuon, *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom* (Indiana: Perennial books, 1978) , 17.

²³ Schuon, *Gnosis*, 17.

²⁴ Schuon, *Gnosis*, 17.

²⁵ James S. Cutsinger, *Prayer Fashions Man: Frithjof Schuon on the Spiritual Life* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2004), 187.

Reality because of their specific culture, orthodoxy and unique exoteric rite. "What determines the differences among forms of Truth is the difference among human receptacles. For thousands of years already humanity has been divided into several fundamentally different branches constituting as many complete humanities, more or less closed in on themselves; the existence of spiritual receptacles so different and so original demands a differentiated refraction of the one Truth."²⁶ As a result Revelation always addresses the diverse racial intellect and it is constrained to the specific race whereas Truth is one and universal and always situated beyond forms. The plurality of religions is not any more conflicting than the plurality of people; in Revelation, God makes Himself in a manner of speaking a person so as to address the individual; homogeneity according to different Revelations is internal and not outward. In the event that humankind were not diverse, a solitary Divine individualization would get the job done; yet man is diverse not just from the perspective of ethnic demeanors, yet in addition from that of profound prospects; the diverse blends of these two things make conceivable and essential the diversity of Revelations.²⁷ So revelations can be observed as formalization of truth but not actually identical with this truth. As Schuon stated "Truth is situated beyond forms, whereas Revelation, or the Tradition that derives from it, belongs to the formal order, and that indeed by definition; but to speak of form is to speak of diversity, and thus of plurality."²⁸

Schuon asserts that diversity of religions has its foundations in the single Divine Truth that has showed itself over the time. These divine revelations happened at various occasions, in better places, and to various human collectivities. Along these lines, they are thought to be unique in relation to each other. Therefore, it should be mainly focused that each and every revelation is the base of a religion. And every religion is self-sustaining

²⁶ Schuon, Gnosis, 29.

²⁷ Schuon, From the Divine to the Human, 133.

²⁸ Schuon, Gnosis, 29.

and contains all elements that are necessary for man's salvation. But yet every religion is restricted as a form. Schuon illustrated this idea in the following words:

"A religion is a form, and so also a limit, which, 'contains' the Limitless, to speak in paradox; every form is fragmentary because of its necessary exclusion of other formal possibilities; the fact that these forms – when they are complete, that is to say when they are perfectly 'themselves' – each in their own way represent totality, does not prevent them from being fragmentary in respect of their particularization and their reciprocal exclusion."²⁹

Schuon believes that Revelation still exists, but now it is covered under a sheet of ice which entails the extreme interference of outward Revelation; but all of these cannot be as perfect as "innate Religion" or the innate perennial philosophy. Esoterism deals with this situation; the non-conformist and theorists most of the time knows it too but in reality they tend not to understand that the religions actually provide the key to pure and universal truth. For example, this might appear contradictory, but each religion not only renews the lost Paradise but also endures the disgrace of the fall of Adam and Eve, from which only supra-formal Truth is exempt. This inward Truth is, true difficult to reach without the assistance of outward demonstrations and goals.³⁰

The Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects of Religious Traditions

Schuon uses the terms esoteric and exoteric to differentiate the greater spirit of religions from their various expressions. What characterizes esotericism "to the very extent that it is absolute, is that on contact with a dogmatic system, it universalizes the symbol or religious concept on the

²⁹ Frithjo Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, (Indiana: World Wisdom, 1976), 144.

³⁰ Frithjo Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy* (University of California: Al Tajir Trust, 1976), 194-195.

one hand, and interiorizes it on the other; the particular or the limited is recognized as the manifestation of the principle and the transcendent, and this in its turn reveals itself as immanent."³¹ Moreover, "If the purest esotericism includes the whole truth—and that is the very reason for its existence—the question of 'orthodoxy' in the religious sense clearly cannot arise: direct knowledge of the mysteries could not be 'Muslim' or 'Christian' just as the sight of a mountain is the sight of a mountain and not something else."³²

The exoteric stance is "doomed to end by negating itself once it is no longer vivified by the presence within it of the esotericism of which it is both the outward radiation and the veil. So it is that religion, according to the measure in which it denies metaphysical and initiatory realities and becomes crystallized in literalistic dogmatism, inevitably engenders unbelief; the atrophy that overtakes dogmas when they are deprived of their internal dimensions recoils upon them from outside, in the form of heretical and atheistic negations."³³

Esoterism looks for the apprehension of Reality accordingly, not Reality as comprehended in such and such a viewpoint and "under the veil of different religious formulations".³⁴ While exoterism sees "essence" or "universal truth" as a function of particular forms, esoterism sees the forms as a function of "essence".³⁵ To put it another way, exoterism particularizes the all-inclusive, while esoterism universalizes the specific: What describes esoterism to the very degree that it is absolute, is that on contact with a closed minded framework. On the one hand, it universalized the religious idea and interiorizes it on the other; the specific or the constrained is perceived as the indication of the principal

³¹ Frithjo Schuon. *Esoterism as Principle and as Way* (Indiana: Perennial Books, 1981), 37

³² Schuon. *Understanding Islam*, 139

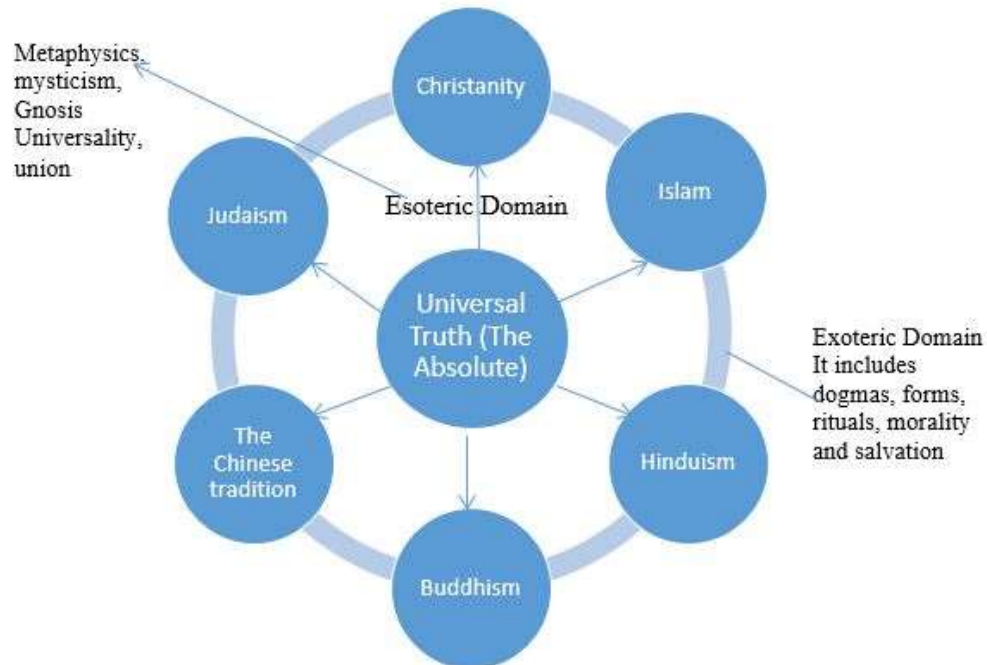
³³ Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, 9

³⁴ Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, 19.

³⁵ Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, 37

and the otherworldly, and this in its turn uncovers itself as natural.³⁶ Esoterism is "situated" on the plane of metaphysical intellection and mystical realization.

A diagrammatical representation can be helpful to present this idea.



The diagram shows that fundamentally all historical religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and other religions occurs from the same divine truth, so esoterically all the Religions are historical manifestation of absolute Truth. But exoterically they are different in their dogmas, rituals and morality. The diversity of religions does not show the indiscretion of the various doctrines of supernatural. It indicates that revelation does not limited to the boundaries of formal but it lies beyond the formal, however human understanding is limited to the formal nature. Thus, the soul and spirit of each religion is same. The diversification and multiplicity actually emerge from human intellect.

³⁶ Schuon, "Understanding Esoterism", 37

Conclusion

Schuon was the luminous interpreter of esoterism and the Sophia Perennis during his lifetime who always spoke of omnipresent and everlasting wisdom which he also called *religio cordis*. His speaking of pure esoterism should not divert anyone from thinking that he is not a Muslim or an apostate.

His perspective can, therefore, be recognized as purely metaphysical, esoteric and primeval in nature but as well as traditional. He was of the view that only revealed religions can provide a spiritual path with a "metaphysical doctrine" to a spiritual seeker. He mentioned that the Religio Perennis is always and necessarily founded upon formal elements of divine institution. A traditional form always represents the most essential setting, even for the most complex spiritual journey.

The division among religions across the globe is not only because of human misunderstandings, it is also because of misconception about the revelations, divine will. The contradiction of principles lies only in the mind of religious scholars who are unable to understand the underlying unity of religions. A single revelation might be possible if all men were metaphysicians but since this not correct, so God (the Absolute) must reveal himself in different ways.

It can be argued that the esoteric and exoteric aspects akin to the unique perspective of religious pluralism of Perennial philosophy in general and particular in Frithjof philosophy envisage the Transcendent unity of religions by disseminating universal truth, metaphysics and primordial tradition.