

the desacralized epoch of today, with an impressive precision:

Riches and piety will diminish daily, until the world will be completely corrupted. In those days it will be wealth that confers distinction, passion will be the sole reason for union between the sexes, lies will be the only method for success in business, and women will be merely the objects of sensual gratification. The earth will be valued only for its mineral treasures, dishonesty will be the universal means of subsistence, a simple ablution will be regarded as sufficient purification....

The observance of castes, laws, and institutions will no longer be in force in the Dark Age, and the ceremonies prescribed by the Vedas will be neglected. Women will obey only their whims and will be infatuated with pleasure.... Men of all kinds will presumptuously regard themselves as the equals of *brahmins*.... The *vaishyas* will abandon agriculture and commerce and will earn their living by servitude or by the exercise of mechanical professions.... The path of the Vedas having been abandoned, and man having been led astray from orthodoxy, iniquity will prevail and the length of human life will diminish in consequence.... Then men will cease worshipping Vishnu, the Lord of sacrifice, Creator and Lord of all things, and they will say: "Of what authority are the Vedas? Who are the Gods and the *brahmins*? What use is purification with water?" The dominant caste will be that of *shûdras*.... Man, deprived of reason and subject to every infirmity of body and mind, will daily commit sins: everything which is impure, vicious, and calculated to afflict the human race will make its appearance in the Dark Age.

Yet, not all is lost during the epochs of forgetfulness for the mercy and dispensations of the Absolute are never absent; restorers of the Primordial Tradition and the One-and-Only Truth are sent in every age as described in the Bhagavad-Gâtâ, IV, 7-8:

*Whenever the Law is forgotten,  
Whenever anarchy prevails,  
I incarnate Myself.*

*In every age I come back;  
to deliver the righteous,  
to destroy the wicked,  
to establish the Law.*

*Hinduism and Its Spiritual Masters* offers readers an invaluable tool in order to wade through the vast and complex dimensions of the Hindu *dharma*. As the doyen authority on the World Religions, Professor Huston Smith, said in his endorsement of this book: "In this book we find an astonishing amount of information compressed into an incredibly small compass. Reading it made me regretful that I retired for a second time—this time from the University of California—at the close of 1992. This volume would have made a nice supplement to the readings I usually assign." We concord completely with the above observations regarding this book which will provide pointers to what is both the transcendent and immanent in the unanimous sapiential tradition—"The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 21)—"*I am seated in the hearts of all.*" (Bhagavad-Gîtâ, XV, 15.)

### Notes

1. For a traditional and orthodox point of view (*darshana*) of the caste system (*varna dharma*) and Hindu tradition altogether see the following work by a providential representative of the *sanâtana dharma*, Jagadguru His Holiness Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Swamigal, Sankaracharya of Kanchi, *Introduction to Hindu Dharma: Illustrated*, ed. Michael Oren Fitzgerald (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2008); See also Sister Nivedita, *The Web of Indian Life* (Calcuta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989); Samuel Bendeck Sotillos, "Book Review: Introduction to Hindu Dharma", *Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 2009), pp. 151-158; Samuel Bendeck Sotillos, "Book Review: Introduction to Hindu Dharma", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, (2009 - Web Edition) available online at: [http://www.studiesincomparativereligion.com/Public/articles/review\\_of-Introduction\\_to\\_Hindu\\_Dharma\\_Illustrated.aspx](http://www.studiesincomparativereligion.com/Public/articles/review_of-Introduction_to_Hindu_Dharma_Illustrated.aspx)

***Frithjof Schuon and the perennial philosophy*, by Harry Oldmeadow. Forward by William Stoddart. (World Wisdom, 2010). 376 pp. Softbound, \$22.95. ISBN 9781935493099.**

Reviewed by Samuel Bendeck Sotillos

"It has been said more than once that total Truth is inscribed in an eternal script in the very substance of our spirit; what the different Revelations do is to 'crystallize' and 'actualize', in differing degrees according to the case, a nucleus of certitudes." – Frithjof Schuon

The axial influence of the perennial philosophy or *philosophia perennis* upon the foundations of transpersonal psychology and its central tenants is extensively recognized by those in the field (Bendeck Sotillos, 2009) and yet fewer individuals are familiar with the ensuing role that Frithjof Schuon (1953, 1968, 1981, 1997, 1998, 2005, 2009) has played both directly and indirectly within what has been termed the “forth force” in modern psychology (Adams, 2006; Anthony, Ecker & Wilber, 1987; Ferrer, 2002, 2002; Ferrer & Sherman, 2008; Gibbs, 2005; Grof, 1998; Murphy, 1992; Paulson, 2008; Rothberg, 1986; Rothberg & Kelly, 1998; Walsh, 1999a, 1999b, 2007; Walsh & Shapiro, 1983; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986; Wilber, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1981a, 1981b, 1982a, 1982b, 1983a, 1983b, 1984a, 1984b, 1991, 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Wittine, 1989; Woodhouse, 1996).

Albeit Ken Wilber has since distanced himself from the *philosophia perennis*, including transpersonal psychology itself,<sup>1</sup> he interestingly began his work in the field quite the contrary. Wilber quoted from Frithjof Schuon to inaugurate what has been acclaimed as a ground-breaking work within the field of transpersonal psychology: “There is no science of the soul without a metaphysical basis to it and without spiritual remedies at its disposal” (Wilber, 1977, p. 11). Wilber then continued by way of disclosure, “One might say that the entire aim of this volume [*The Spectrum of Consciousness*] is simply to support and document this statement of Frithjof Schuon, a statement that the siddhas, sages and masters of everywhere and everywhen have eloquently embodied” (Wilber, 1977, p. 11).<sup>2</sup> In addition one could also propose Schuon’s role in the “third force” of modern psychology *per* the following allusion: “I am in agreement with the thrust of his [Wilber’s (1977)] thesis...that Western psychologies are but parts of a much greater spectrum of consciousness” (Schneider, 1987, p. 197).

Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) is the pre-eminent exponent of the traditionalist or perennialist school of comparative religion along with other significant members such as René Guénon (1886-1951), Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), Titus Burckhardt (1908-1984) including a more contemporary exponent Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933)<sup>3</sup>—a good number of whom have also been widely referenced throughout publications on transpersonal psychology.

*Frithjof Schuon and the Perennial Philosophy,*

## Book Reviews

by Harry Oldmeadow, is intended to be a companion volume and complement to a biography and hitherto unpublished writings of Frithjof Schuon (Fitzgerald, 2010). While this work, as Oldmeadow confirmed, is an introductory guide to Schuon’s work, it nonetheless demonstrates itself to be a luminous contribution to not only the Schuonian *opus*, but the perennialist canon *in toto*.

The book is divided into five parts capturing the breadth and depth of this word-renowned philosopher: I Frithjof Schuon and Perennialism; II Timeless Truths and Immutable Principles; III Religious Forms and Sacred Symbols; IV Signs of the Times and V The Spiritual Life. Included in this elucidation is an overview of integral metaphysics—the “transcendent unity of religions”—a presentation of spirituality East and West including the spiritual heritage of the American Indians, Schuon’s critique of modernism, his paintings and poetry and insights into prayer and virtue on the spiritual path which are all contextualized within the *philosophia perennis* in its plenary expression.

While no single study can present the fullness of Schuon’s work, this book will unquestionably provide those yearning for the essential keys abiding at the heart of the world’s spiritual traditions and correspondingly their integral spiritual psychologies *in divinis*. It hardly needs to be restated the decisive role that the perennial philosophy has upon the roots of transpersonal psychology, for those willing to recall what might be called the essential truths, will clearly benefit from this work.

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### Notes

- 1 Shambhala: Do you consider yourself part of the transpersonal movement today? KW: No, I don't. Shambhala: Tell us about that. KW: Well, the basic

difficulty is that transpersonal psychology, to its great credit, was the first major school of present-day psychology to take spirituality seriously. Yet because there is a great deal of disagreement as to what actually constitutes spirituality itself, there is a great deal of disagreement as to what constitutes transpersonal psychology. These are not minor inner tensions as one might find in, say, the various schools of psychoanalysis or Jungian psychology. They are instead major internal divisions and barbed disagreements as to the nature, scope, and role of transpersonal psychology itself. This makes the field more rife with political schisms and warring ideologies. This is why, I believe, that in three decades, and aside from one or two specific theorists, the actual school of transpersonal psychology has had no major impact outside of the Bay Area, and it is today, many people agree, in an irreversible, terminal decline. What's left of the four forces (behavioristic, psychoanalytic, humanistic, transpersonal) will survive, if they survive at all, only by being taken up and into a fully integral approach [see "A Summary of My Psychological Model," section "The Death of Psychology and the Birth of the Integral," posted on this site.] Ken Wilber, "Part I: The Demise of Transpersonal Psychology" in "On Critics, Integral Institute, My Recent Writing, and Other Matters of Little Consequence: A Shambhala Interview with Ken Wilber", available online at: <http://wilber.shambhala.com/html/interviews/interview1220.cfm/>; In response to the above declaration made by Wilber, one might add the following: "To the extent that 'integral psychology' requires the adoption of a specifically Wilberian paradigm, it essentially precludes alternative perspectives and, consequently, open, critical debate and it will, therefore, alienate many people. Integral psychology, then, is in danger of becoming a dogma and most independent thinkers in the field will, I predict, refuse to have anything much to do with it." [Michael Daniels, "Whither Transpersonal Psychology?" in *Shadow, Self, Spirit: Essays in Transpersonal Psychology* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2005), p. 264]

- 2 Wilber and his colleagues acknowledge *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (1977) as "Romantic" or "Wilber/Phase-1" that emphasizes the "integration of [modern] Western psychology with Eastern mysticism, focusing primarily on individual interior

consciousness (Upper-Left quadrant), yet without a complete pre/trans developmental understanding.” (Reynolds, 2004, p. 76) The latest development of Wilber’s theoretical succession is “Integral Post-Metaphysics” or “Wilber/Phase-5” which has expanded his quadrant theory or known as AQAL—“all quadrants, all levels, all lines, all states, all types”—expressed in such terms as: “the Integral Approach involves the cultivation of body, mind, and spirit in self, culture, and nature” (Wilber, 2007, p. 26). Readers can thus connect the dots for themselves to see that although Wilber first situated all of his work within the *philosophia perennis* during “Wilber/Phase-1” he has along his evolving theoretical trajectory attempted to appropriate the perennial philosophy all together under the guise of “The Neo-Perennial Philosophy” (Wilber, 1992). In *à la* “Wilber/Phase-3” he paradoxically appears to be abandoning the perennial philosophy entirely *via* his “Integral Post-Metaphysics”, but in turn he resurrects his own parody of the “transcendent unity of religions” void of its “metaphysical baggage”. That is not only misleading but fundamentally erroneous on the level of the spiritual principles which are not contingent on subjective speculation or theory nor should they need to prove themselves to the modern or postmodern mindset. As Wilber (2007) points out: “modernity and postmodernity might be wrong in this instance” (p. 233) and we could not agree more. Although Wilber shared much ground with the traditionalist or perennialist authors we cannot consider him to have ever belonged to this school as some have attempted to suggest (Rothberg & Kelly, 1998; Visser, 2003; Woodhouse, 1996). Due to the many seductions of modern thought that Wilber has not been able to renounce, the most evident being evolutionism not to mention syncretism, he is not qualified to be considered a traditionalist or perennialist *de facto*. We cannot be too vigilant in making this clear enough as this very trend of mixing truth with error is a sign of the times which Wilber himself is a consummate example.

- 3 Others associated or strongly influenced by the traditionalist or perennialist school are Martin Lings (1909-2005), Marco Pallis (1895-1989), Whitall N. Perry (1920-2005), Lord Northbourne (1896-1982), Joseph Epes Brown (1920-2000), Leo Schaya (1916-1985), Victor Danner (1926-1990),

William Stoddart (b. 1925), Gai Eaton (1921-2010), E.F. Schumacher (1911-1977), Huston Smith (b. 1919), William Chittick (b. 1943), Kathleen Raine (1908-2003), Philip Sherrard (1922-1995), Keith Critchlow (b. 1933), Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), Henry Corbin (1903-1978), Wendell Berry (b. 1934), Charles Upton (b. 1948), M. Ali Lakhani (b. 1955), Reza Shah-Kazemi, Mateus Soares de Azevedo (b. 1959), Algis Uždavinys (1962-2010), Rama P. Coomaraswamy (1929-2006), Robert Bolton (b. 1941), Marty Glass (b. 1938), Wolfgang Smith (b. 1930), among others.

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