

## Tracing the Discourse of Aristotle's Metaphysics of Substance in Frithjof Schuon's Religious Pluralism

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### Sections Info

#### Article History:

Submitted: 7 January 2025

Final Revised: 17 January 2025

Accepted: 25 January 2025

Published: 31 January 2025

#### Keywords:

Metaphysics

Ultimate Reality

Substance

Final Cause

Perennial Philosophy

Religious Pluralism

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to elaborate on Frithjof Schuon's metaphysical ideas and track the discursive traces of Aristotle's metaphysics of Substance in them. In this regard, the authors first review how Aristotle articulated his metaphysical ideas. After that, the authors focus on Schuon's perennial philosophy project and identify Aristotelian ideas in it. The development of perennial philosophy cannot be separated from the discourse of religious pluralism as an attempt to understand divine reality through a metaphysical lens. This article is a library research that utilizes qualitative research methods. Through an analytical and interpretative approach, the author will elaborate Schuon's metaphysical ideas in the light of Aristotle's metaphysics. The study identified three significant points that demonstrate traces of Aristotle's metaphysics in Schuon's thought concerning the Transcendent Unity of Religion. This unity can be happened only in esoteric level (esotericism). Firstly, the Truth as the ultimate reality is considered the *substantia secunda*, a concept that is so universally applicable that it gives rise to other particular realities, in Schuon case, religions at the exoteric level (exotericisms). Secondly, the Unmoved Mover, which assumes the form of ultimate reality or Absolute "Being", where human "Being" is also included in it without affecting its "Being"; "the Truth" which is at the top of the scheme is the "*causa finalis*", because it is the final cause of the religion's existence. In addition to demonstrating the interconnectedness of metaphysical concepts in Schuon's perennial philosophy with the metaphysical framework established by Aristotle, this article further rearticulates the notion of religious pluralism and reframes it in the context of metaphysics.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Studying the metaphysical thought of Schuon, particularly in relation to the nature of substance, cannot be separated from the philosophical thought that preceded him. Naturally, many philosophers have discussed metaphysics. However, this study will refer to the figure of Aristotle as a representation of the birth of metaphysics, especially the metaphysics of substance, which can be found in the completeness of his theory of objects. Substance is a crucial point in the discourse of metaphysics, from its emergence

in the era of Aristotle to the era of Schuon, who developed his metaphysical ideas. In this regard, Schuon frames his thoughts on metaphysics within the scope of perennialism. The significance of Aristotle's metaphysics in the development of philosophical thought is very important, particularly in the philosophical inquiry into the nature of substance.

The core theme of Aristotle's metaphysics is the unity of substance (Keeling, 2012). Aristotle also explained that asking about the cause of something is the same as asking about the cause of unity in general, where everything is inherently unified (Yu, 2003). In line with this idea, Frithjof Schuon also offers a serious discourse on substance, especially in relation to form. This metaphysical discourse can be found in one of his monumental works, *Form and Substance in the Religions* (Schuon, 2002). Regarding the relationship between form and substance in religion, Schuon elaborates it within the dichotomy of exoterism and esoterism.

According to Schuon, each religion has its source in the One Form, which has absolute substance. This implies that religion contains elements of form that are relative, meaning the clear differences between each religion in the world. However, at the same time, from its substantial side, religion also has an absolute feature. The diversity of religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and other non-Abrahamic religions, is referred to as the exoteric reality. Meanwhile, the substance of religion, which is historically manifested in the diverse religions, is universal. In other words, the substance of truth in each religion is essentially one and the same. Schuon calls this universality of religious truth the esoteric aspect (Nazwar & Syamsuddin, 2015). In short, the exoteric level of religion involves concepts, dogmas, imaginations, ritual practices, and different religious lifestyles that are incompatible with each other because they are realized within specific historical horizons (Schuon, 2009). Meanwhile, the esoteric level of religion is the deepest metaphysical core of all religions, where the diverse religious traditions find their unity because they originate from and ultimately return to a universal and objective Divine reality (Schuon, 2019).

The idea of esoterism is, in fact, an inseparable part of the discourse of traditionalism and perennial philosophy (Sedgwick, 2022). Schuon, along with René Guénon and Ananda Coomaraswamy, is referred to by S. H. Nasr as the Masters in this philosophical school (Aslan, 2004). These thinkers developed the perennial perspective that shares a discursive agreement, particularly emphasizing the inclusivity of particularities, where religious expressions at the particular (exoteric) level are a diversity that should not be forced into one and singular. The imposition of unity is unnecessary because, in the end, all diverse and plural realities will converge into the ultimate reality, which is absolute and transcendental. In other words, the essence of esoterism is the eternal truth, the principle, and the essence of everything that manifests and is expressed in the essences of exoteric truths through diverse languages (Huxley, 1947).

Guénon identifies the esoteric essence as "traditional" because it represents a worldview based on values, principles, and wisdom that have been inherited and collectively and positively accepted by all humans from various tribes and religions throughout time (Guénon, 2001). Guénon then explicitly states that this traditional worldview is an eternal reality that will always remain the same, wherever it may be, regardless of its historical manifestations. In line with Guénon's ideas, Schuon introduced the concept of "the transcendent unity of religions," which affirms that there is an eternal truth underlying all forms of religion (Schuon, 1993). This is none other than the orthodox forms of religion (Lipton, 2017).

Following up on the discussion above, here are the issues to be addressed and explored in this study. (1) Clarifying Schuon's metaphysical stance on divine reality and the reality derived from the existence of that ultimate reality. In other words, there is a

need to clarify how Schuon conceptualizes the substantive movement of reality, which is encompassed within the series of perennialist thoughts he developed. One of the theses he builds is *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, which also serves as the title of one of his monumental works in the field of perennial philosophy. (2) Clarifying the coherence between Aristotle's metaphysics of substance and the metaphysical doctrine developed by Schuon through his ambitious thesis "The Transcendent Unity of Religions." (3) Answering the question, "How does Schuon elaborate on the point of convergence between the plural exoteric features of each religion and the esoteric features that are absolute and universal?"

The point of convergence between Aristotle's metaphysics and Schuon's metaphysics lies in their efforts to bridge substance and form. In Schuon's context, the relationship between substance and form can be seen in the duality of exoterism and esoterism in formulating the relationship between the lowest reality and the highest reality, namely "God." A critical elaboration of these two thinkers will supplement the understanding of substance in the broader narrative of contemporary religious pluralism, while also attempting to reconcile rigid dichotomies with an approach that embraces differences.

## II. METHOD

This study falls into the category of qualitative research by gathering data from various library sources relevant to Aristotle's metaphysics of substance and Schuon's thought on religious pluralism. The data analysis employs a qualitative literature review method combined with a theoretically derived framework of metaphysical and religious pluralism paradigms. Additionally, this study uses meta-analysis to explore the relationship between Aristotle's conception of the metaphysics of substance and Schuon's theory of the form and substance of religion, including the monumental dichotomy between esotericism and exotericism (Yang & Chen, 2020).

The data analysis steps follow the research model adopted from Yu Xiao and Maria Watson, consisting of the following stages: (1) Literature identification. This study utilizes keywords relevant to Aristotle's metaphysics of substance and Schuon's religious pluralism. This step aims to maintain the study's focus. (2) Thoroughly analyzing the relationships between definitions and typologies in the thoughts of Aristotle and Schuon. (3) Reviewing the connections between the ideas of these two figures (Xiao & Watson, 2017).

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Aristotle's Metaphysics of Substance

In its etymological sense, "metaphysics" means 'beyond the physical' or 'something after the physical.' From this, we can interpret metaphysics as a science that seeks to investigate "something" that underlies all physical phenomena (Cohen & Reeve, 2000). Aristotle and the medieval philosophers offered two different views on metaphysics. Sometimes, he characterizes metaphysics as the discipline that studies the first cause, or more specifically, the *Unmoved Mover*. At other times, he characterizes metaphysics as the general science of *being qua being*, or the study of 'being as it is' (Loux & Crisp, 2017). Through his investigation of 'Being as it is,' Aristotle also delves into the question of God (Hanley, 2000).

God, as the *Unmoved Mover* in Aristotle's view, is very different from the concept of divinity offered in religious traditions. Aristotle offers the idea of the First Cause, or the Ultimate Condition, of familiar objects in human experience. Aristotle also attempts to find an alternative explanation to materialism, which was the focus of the work of his predecessors, such as Empedocles and Democritus (Walsh, 1970). In this context, the

concept of substance plays a crucial role in Aristotle's idea of God, where he explains that substance is the essence of something and can be pointed to with words like 'this' or 'that,' for example, 'this is Anto' and 'that is the TV' (Siswanto, 1998).

### **3.1.1 The Unoved Mover**

This concept is Aristotle's proposal in relation to solving the problem of motion or process. There are three key reasons underlying this concept. First, Aristotle was dissatisfied with the concept of pure unity of motion. He argued that continuous motion is impossible. Therefore, he negated infinite and constant motion, or motion without end. Second, Aristotle rejected the principle of enersia. Enersia is a principle held by the Atomists, where motion is inherent in matter and does not require explanation. Aristotle's rejection of this principle is based on the idea that self-movement does not exist. In this regard, Aristotle distinguishes between the existence that moves and the existence that causes motion. Third, Aristotle strongly rejected the idea of an infinite regress of motion, or infinite progress. In other words, every principle always requires another principle. Through this reasoning, Aristotle concluded that there must be an entity that is the source and limit of motion or process. This entity is what he later referred to as the Unmoved Mover (Siswanto, 1998). This prime mover, which does not move, is then identified by Aristotle as 'God' (Defilippo, 1994).

### **3.1.2 The Division of Two Substances**

Aristotle divides substance into two types: *substantia prima* and *substantia secunda*. *Substantia prima* is individual, with all the real determinations that belong to it. This first substance is an individual that is accepted as a whole or as a unit. Because it is something individual, *substantia prima* cannot be divided into many. For example, Peter the human. *Substantia secunda* is universal. This second substance is not a concrete thing that exists; rather, it is a principle through which something exists as a certain thing and as a member of a particular kind. Because *substantia secunda* is universal, it can be used by "many" within a group. This substance becomes a predicate or description for the first substance. For example, humanity. In simpler terms, *substantia prima* refers to concrete individuals like Ahmad and Peter, whereas *substantia secunda* refers to the essence of an individual, namely humanity (the beingness) (Bagus, 1991).

### **3.1.3 Kinesis and Energeia**

Aristotle divides his discussion of the metaphysics of substance into two parts: *kinesis* (motion) and *energeia* (actuality); being and matter. Here is a brief explanation:

As a starting point for understanding *kinesis*, Aristotle uses the example of statements that cannot occur simultaneously, such as seeing and having seen, understanding and having understood, thinking and having thought, learning and being skilled. Therefore, the process of 'becoming' is different from actuality. In other words, *kinesis* is an unfinished process (incompleted/*ateles*). For Aristotle, motion or *kinesis* is the most fundamental characteristic of natural entities. Another explanation is that if an action or process does not or has not yet reached its end, it is *kinesis*.

Unlike *kinesis*, which implies a process, *energeia* is the actuality that becomes the end result of the movement of an entity. On another occasion, Aristotle refers to this final actuality as *entelecheia*, which is the cessation of motion. If we follow Aristotle's explanation regarding the principality of motion becoming a constitutive property of every natural entity, then actuality, as the final point of every motion, changes

something's status from 'becoming' (becoming) to 'being' (being). While kinesis has an external ending, *energeia* has an internal ending, which is something that is actual at every moment (Yu, 2003).

### **3.1.4 Substantial Principles: Potential and Act**

As two substantial principles, potential and act always coexist. They point to each other, making their relationship correlative. In substance, there is a continuous transition from potential to act, where potential is activated and realized. Potential is the seed within possibility based on ability. In other words, potential is the real ability of the subject to change (*potentia subjectiva*). Thus, objective potential is merely a possibility, but subjective potential relates to the activity from within, the ability to develop. According to Warington, there are three main meanings of the concept of potential in Aristotle's thought. First, potential as the source of change. Second, potential as power. Third, potential as the ability to endure destructive change. Potential as power encompasses both rational and non-rational aspects. Act, on the other hand, refers to "something" that has become a reality, achieving perfection in Being (Siswanto, 1998).

### **3.1.5 Theory of the Four Causes**

Here are the four theories of causes proposed by Aristotle (Sontag, 2002):

#### **a. Material Cause**

Something from which something is formed, whether it is physical matter or words arranged to form a speech.

#### **b. Formal Cause**

The form or structure given to matter, such as the pattern of a garment or the logic of discourse.

#### **c. Efficient Cause**

The means by which an event is brought about. For example, the tailor who cuts the fabric or the theoretical skill of the speaker in arranging words.

#### **d. Final Cause**

In relation to metaphysics, the final cause is the purpose or intention of something's existence. The final cause determines the outer limit needed to achieve knowledge. The final cause, far from being a limitation, takes us beyond the object itself. The resolution of the problem of limitation will depend on Aristotle's ability to constrain his entire system without engaging in an infinite regress.

## **3.2 The Discourse of Substance in Frithjof Schuon's Religious Pluralism**

The discourse on religious pluralism is one of the prominent discussions in the modern era and has become a central topic among scholars of religious studies. As a consequence of modernization, the perspectives, epistemologies, and worldviews of humanity have undergone significant transformations. This has prompted global scholarship to seriously reconsider the issues of diversity and differences among the world's religions. Through careful observation of contemporary religious phenomena, scholars have attempted to formulate a "universal" and relevant religious framework for all adherents of faiths. Scholars such as Alan Race (2001), John Hick (1985), and W.C. Smith (1981) have proposed the need for a radical restructuring of religious traditions

that still hold an exclusive belief in the notion that only one tradition possesses universal truth and that salvation can only be accessed through that particular tradition. If summarized, the concept of religious pluralism can be explained through three main theses: (1) all religious traditions refer to the same ultimate reality; (2) all religious traditions equally present paths of salvation for humanity; and (3) each religious tradition is inherently shaped by its specific context and perspective, which limits its ability to fully explain the ultimate reality. In this third thesis, an epistemic framework emerges that assumes the openness of space for critique and revision (Byrne, 1995).

The antithesis of this trend is traditionalism or perennial philosophy. This perspective is referred to as an antithesis because it seeks to critically review and evaluate modernity and its various derivatives, including the trend of religious pluralism advanced by modern scholars. According to Nasr, one of the prominent proponents of perennial philosophy, the religious pluralism framework proposed by Western theologians offers no positive solution to contemporary issues. Instead, the ambition to align religion with the spirit of modernity has led to several crises and negative impacts, such as desacralization, secularization, reductionism, and relativization (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1986, 2003a, 2003b). In response, the proponents of perennial philosophy strive to revitalize the world's religious traditions and restore them to their true horizon, which is sacred, sacral, perfect, and absolute. In other words, as an antithesis to the global-modern theology currently developing, perennial philosophy aims to reintroduce the vitality of eternal wisdom (*Sophia perennis/al-hikmah al-khalidah*) into the modern world (Schuon, 1991; Sedgwick, 2016, 2023). Here, it is essential to clarify how the perennialists conceptualize reality. According to Aldous Huxley, perennial philosophy is a metaphysics that seeks to recognize divine reality and its substantial connection to the world; a psychology that investigates the similarities or congruences between the human soul and divine reality; and an ethics that explores the purpose of human life, culminating in knowledge of the foundation of all that exists (Inge, 1947). From Huxley's explanation, we can still regard the ideas of perennial philosophy as a discourse that engages with and provides an alternative to the development of religious pluralism. This is because perennialists strive to offer a framework for understanding and managing religious plurality and diversity in a fair and equitable manner.

In line with the objectives of this article, the researcher will not focus extensively on the ethical discussions of religions but rather on the issue of metaphysical substance in Schuon's religious pluralism project. As an introduction to understanding Schuon's pluralism project, the researcher wishes to emphasize how Schuon critically evaluates religious dogmatism. Dogmatism manifests itself as a religious attitude that fails to comprehend the depth or implicit aspects of symbols—the universality capable of addressing opposition from external aspects. Furthermore, dogmatism, through its inability to reconcile two seemingly contradictory truths, fails to grasp the profound (implicit) connections of each segment of religiosity within the context of a shared truth (Schuon, 2005) (also read: (Seyyed Hosein Nasr, 2005)).

In his discussion of substance, Schuon explains that where there is an object, there must also be a subject—something that bears witness to the formation of all things and is inseparable from "creation." The world derives from the substance of "free will" and "necessity." Free will represents infinitude, while necessity represents absoluteness (Schuon, 2002). As a perennialist, Schuon transcends the boundaries of immanent identities that often become entrenched in religious perspectives and practices. Schuon's metaphysics, in proposing the idea of religious pluralism, is closely tied to the traditionalist approach and perennial philosophy in understanding religious plurality.

They perceive religion not merely by referring to the historicity of a particular faith but in a more general sense, by referring to the absoluteness of the existence of the Sacred (Divine) without negating the manifestation of the Sacred as an unavoidable necessity (Chittick, 2007). In this regard, Nasr explains that tradition represents the original divine realities or principles revealed to all humanity and the inhabitants of the universe through prophets, messengers, avatars, and others, along with the various branches of these principles and their applications in fields such as law, art, societal order, symbols, culture, and more (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 1988).

Religious plurality is an inevitability in human life, as diversity and differences are part of the unity of the absolute divine substance. This idea is deeply embedded in Schuon's perennialist thought, particularly in his concept of religious pluralism. The contribution of perennial philosophy to the discourse on religious pluralism lies in its offer to deeply understand the ethics of a religion and relate it to the ethical foundations found in other religions (Philips, 2014). These ethical foundations are closely linked to the concrete lives of religious adherents and represent a major issue that often triggers disputes and conflicts among followers of different faiths, leading to total negation. Besides ethical foundations, the proponents of perennial philosophy argue that the Absolute Truth is one and indivisible, yet from this singular Truth emanate various truths (Kuswanjono, 1997). From this standpoint, it is evident that perennialism views religious plurality as a plural reality, with each fragment standing on its own level and identity, yet all are bound by an absolute connection to the Single Truth. This Single Truth derives the metaphysical assumption regarding the nature of substance, where the Single Truth is the ultimate reality. The relationship between the ultimate reality and other realities is dichotomized by Schuon into exotericism and esotericism, which are closely related to the hierarchical realities in the perennialist perspective.

When discussing religious adherents, it is impossible to separate them from diverse religious experiences. In the discourse on religious pluralism—including Schuon's thought on the transcendental unity of religions—the subjective experience of encountering the presence of the Sacred becomes crucial because humans are "thinking subjects" and the subjects of religion itself. Religious experience in Schuon's thought correlates with the concept of experiencing God, which he articulates in his concept of seeing God everywhere, a subheading in his book *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*. Schuon begins with a question: "How can humans see God—when God is invisible and not bound by space and time—within the category of 'visibility' and 'limited by human categorial qualities' without deceiving themselves?" (Schuon, 2006).

To address this question, Schuon emphasizes the need to consider the Miracle of Existence. Existence itself partakes in the miracle, where through existence, entities that "are" are distinguished from nothingness. The gap between "what exists" and "nothingness" is "infinite," which is none other than God. Therefore, every entity that "exists" in the world, particularly humans as "thinking subjects," inevitably sees God in the existence of all things, including themselves. This aligns with Aristotle's concept of the Unmoved Mover.

Furthermore, the Truth as the ultimate reality is also a *substantia secunda*, encompassing universal aspects that derive particular realities, such as the religious experiences of various faiths, which at the exoteric level remain distinct from one another. This *substantia secunda* is the predicate of the first substance, the concrete/real substance. In the context of Schuon's religious pluralism, the exoteric dimensions of religions—such as rituals, cultural identities, and historical characteristics—represent the

substantia prima united by the ultimate reality at the transcendental level. The transcendental level is highly universal because it is esoteric in nature, focusing vertically on unity with the Truth, which is God. Schematically, Schuon's conceptualization of the unity of religions can be understood as follows.

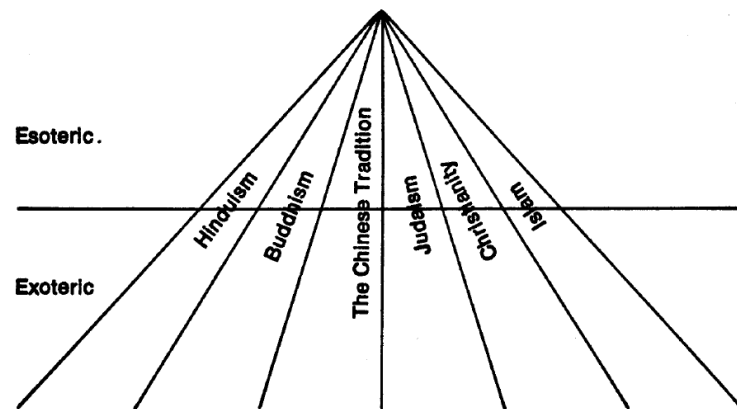


Figure 1. The Transcendental Meeting Point of Religions (Schuon, 2005)

All religions are similar at their core or essence (read: esoteric) but differ at the level of form (exoteric). For Schuon, existence is hierarchical, and this includes the cognitive aspects. Metaphysically, God occupies the highest position, while religions and their differences exist below. The epistemological dimension aligns with the metaphysical fact of the wisdom of religions, united at the top and fragmented at the bottom. In other words, the esoteric essence is separated from the exoteric essence by a horizontal epistemic line rather than a vertical metaphysical boundary. All religions, which unfold within specific epistemic horizons and spatiotemporal contexts, ultimately converge toward the "One" metaphysical reality (Schuon, 1982).

From an anthropological perspective, the idea of "unity" anticipates the ultimate difference between humans and the Divine, or epistemologically, between "the knower" and "the known." Thus, the unity of religions must, in particular, be accompanied by everything else. Absolute unity must encompass all possibilities on one side, while on the other side, each possibility must be actualized within it (Schuon, 2005).

The Truth, located at the peak of the scheme, is the *causa finalis*, as it represents the purpose or aim of existence. Therefore, God is far removed from the categories of limitation and creaturehood that occupy space and time. The difference with Aristotle's principle of substance lies in the autonomy of God as the ultimate reality from other realities. Conversely, other realities are merely fragments of existential principles that are continually influenced and caused by God as the ultimate or highest reality. Schuon emphasizes that the unity of religions can only be achieved and understood at the "eternal" level, which is the metaphysical level, where knowledge of the Divine reality can only be attained intuitively through the human "intellect" (Bush, 1976).

Bush, in his critique of Schuon's thesis on The Transcendent Unity of Religions, argues that this concept is a vague and biased reflection of actual reality. He bases his arguments on his criticism of the distinction between exotericism and esotericism, which he views as ambiguous. For example, Bush points to doctrinal statements such as "What must I do to be saved?" "Praise to the Saving Lord Amida Buddha," "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful," and "From the Unreal lead me to the Real." The implication, according to Bush, is that individuals who express these statements are "my brothers," even though they worship in churches, temples, mosques, and other places.



For Bush, all of these expressions are exoteric, rooted and fundamental in the "ultimate" reality, though differently named in their exoteric experiences. However, he asserts that the unity of religions lies in human experience, where no hidden wisdom or insight exists within the esoteric dimension (Bush, 1976). Following Bush's critique, the researcher proposes an important problem to address: the position of substance in Schuon's conception of the "unity" of religions at the transcendental level.

### **3.3 The Position of Substance in the Esoteric-Exoteric Dichotomy**

Long before Schuon introduced his ideas on Perennialism and the religious pluralism he advocated in *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, the discussion of substance in the realm of philosophy, particularly metaphysics, was first addressed by Aristotle. According to Siswanto (1995), Aristotle was the first thinker in the history of philosophy to utilize and discuss the concept of substance as a distinctive philosophical term. He used the Greek word *ousia* (essence, nature, character), which became the foundation of all dynamic, concrete reality. This eventually influenced the dichotomy of substance and accident. When related to Schuon's division of reality into exoteric and esoteric realms, the fundamental question arises: what is the position of substance between these two realities? In other words, does the concreteness of substance in the exoteric reality also apply to the esoteric reality?

Substance is divided into two categories: primary substance and secondary substance. Primary substance is individual and concrete, referring to specific objects that can be pointed to with terms like "this" or "that," such as "this table" or "that person named Joko." Secondary substance, on the other hand, is universal and applies to all groups, often representing the essence of individuals; for example, "humanity" represents the essence of being human (Siswanto, 1995).

Although Schuon emphasizes that the unity of religions lies in the esoteric reality, this does not mean abandoning the exoteric reality. Manifestations of faith as particular dimensions of universal reality always exist within the concrete reality where various religious traditions, rituals, and symbols of identity can be observed. In other words, the exoteric reality is not entirely dismissed. Every religion in the world has its unique characteristics in the form of rituals, symbols, and religious traditions.

However, Schuon highlights the challenges in finding the sacred within the scriptural basis. He explains that when reading sacred texts of different religions, one must recognize that not everyone is capable of appreciating a sacred text from another perspective—such as when a Muslim reads the Bible or when a Christian reads the Qur'an. As an illustration, Schuon uses the Qur'an, which all Muslims believe to have preserved its originality, particularly the authenticity of its scriptural form. No matter how much effort is made to imitate the Qur'an, it is bound to fail, as the Qur'an possesses a linguistic style impossible to replicate. Written by Allah in a language comprehensible to humans, the Qur'an is extraordinary and serves as a normative form, unparalleled in its grammar and syntax.

Nonetheless, Schuon argues that such features are not unique. The Divine quality of a Book cannot be discerned solely through the absolute appearance of its earthly form or its conceptual content. In reality, the Divine, the supernatural, its miracles, and its inimitable qualities are entirely different from even the most brilliant poetry. The Divine reveals itself through the richness of meaning—a feature that is inimitable—and through what Schuon describes as the fundamental Divine substance, clearly evident in its formal

expression and particularly manifested in its effects on souls, in the world, and within space and time (Schuon, 2002).

Regarding the position of substance, Schuon pays attention to multiplicity within Being. He explains that the Divine substance – through one of its dimensional virtues – grants the world "desire" and "necessity," along with its multiplicity. Similarly, His will and command are evident in the world and its multiplicity. Otherwise, the universe would become an unknown place, composed of mere stones, rather than a world comprehended as a whole. Where there is an object, there must also be a subject. The substance "desired" and "necessitated" the creation of the world. Referring to the idea that "desire" and "necessity" coexist within God, if these terms are understood as freedom and certainty within God, then they do not represent "limitation" or "arbitrariness." It should be clarified that "desire" refers to "infinity," while "necessity" refers to "absoluteness" (Schuon, 2002).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, traces of Aristotle's metaphysical discourse can be found in Schuon's thought. In this context, three crucial points can be identified as intersections between Aristotle's metaphysics of substance and Schuon's project of religious pluralism. *First*, The Truth as the ultimate reality is also a substantia secunda, whose universal scope derives other particular realities. This derivation is explicitly observable in the diverse forms of religious experiences facilitated by the exoteric traditions of different religions. *Second*, the concept of The Unmoved Mover can be implicitly found in Schuon's religious pluralism as the ultimate reality or the Absolute Being, within which human existence is encompassed without affecting the Absolute Being. *Third*, The Truth at the apex of the schema represents the causa finalis, as it is the purpose or ultimate aim of existence. Specifically, Aristotle's idea of primary substance is situated in the exoteric reality, where the empirical and concrete aspects of human religiosity, such as physical symbols, rituals, and other tangible manifestations, emphasize the uniqueness of each religion. Meanwhile, the concept of secondary substance lies in the esoteric reality, where the universality of the profane and sacred relationship – or the connection between humanity and God – occurs, forming the plane where religions can meet. In Schuon's proposition of the unity of religions on the transcendental level, this unity is also a consequence of the ultimate reality as the Absolute, whose existence is unaffected by the motion of everything within the exoteric realm. Therefore, the esoteric dimension is equivalent to The Truth as the ultimate or absolute reality, where all physical and conceptual dichotomies dissolve.

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