

# **SURVEY OF METAPHYSICS -AND ESOTERISM**

**by Frithjof Schuon ( Isa Nur-ud-Din) Published by World Wisdom  
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Frithjof Schuon (Isa Nur-ud-Din) has mastered both metaphysics and esoterism. He has a keen perception of the entire Western metaphysics and has very ably brought forth the pitfalls inherent in this mode of thought. His deep understanding of Eastern metaphysics has made him the finest critic of modern metaphysics. He has learnt much from Rene Guenon but has added beautiful chapters on Islamic metaphysics and esoterism in the dying world of positivism and scientism.

Survey Of metaphysics And Esoterism is a book which is a beautiful summary of his thought. Each line is wedded to the central vision; Sophia perennis. The author starts with an introduction to the epistemological premises. 'There are truths inherent in the human spirit which are contained as potentialities or virtualities in the pure Intellect, These principle and archetypal truths prefigure and determine all others. They can be known intuitively and are infallible by nature. It is by dint of pure Intellect that the faculty of reason comes into being. Man's access in principle to the supranational vision of the Real and consequently to metaphysical certitude makes him capable of possessing reason together with language. The truth of the Absolute coincides with the very substance of our spirit. 'Revelation is to the macrocosm what intellection is to the macrocosm', likewise, 'free will proves the transcendence of its essential goal', 'for human will is proportioned to God, and it is only in God, and by Him that it is totally free. Man has to transcend himself by separating the Real and the Illusory. 'Man is made of thought, of will and of love'. 'Forms are doors to the essences in thought and in language as well as in all other symbolisms'.

The author gives a summary of integral metaphysics. 'In metaphysics, it is necessary to start from the idea that the Supreme Reality is absolute, and that being absolute it is infinite'. The Absolute and the infinite are the two fundamental aspects of the Real. The former expresses essentiality while the

latter manifests potentiality. The Infinite, in the ultimate analysis, coincides with All-Possibility. Both define the relationships of Transcendence and Immanence. It takes various forms; 'firstly, the Principle in itself; secondly, the prefiguration of Manifestation in the Principle; thirdly, the projection of the principle in Manifestation; and fourthly, Manifestation in itself'. The structure of the Universe is expressed by the words of perfection and Projection. 'Good is absolute and infinite. It is His intrinsic nature to radiate. The author further discusses 'Dimensions, Modes and Degrees of the Divine Order'. Here one enters into the heart of traditional metaphysics. Unlike the modern metaphysicians, Schuon reflects a true understanding of the metaphysical notion of the Substance and the corresponding problems of subject and object. Creation is considered as a Divine Quality and is understood in reference to Atma and Maya. He further discusses the dimensions of Omnipotence and puts Scholasticism to a searching criticism. The problem of good and evil is understood in a true perspective. Eschatology is considered a part of cosmology which in turn is a 'prolongation of metaphysics.' In 'The Mystery of the Hypostatic Face' the author again turns to the problem of 'substance and form in each religion'. It forms a basis for his views on religious typologies. Also, there are two types of esoterisms. The one is embraced by metaphysics whereas the other is clothed in religion and takes a sentimental form. The phenomenon of faith is discussed in detail and its deficiencies are brought-out. It is not a disinterested perception of the nature of things' but as a simple belief is based on self-interest and volition. It leads to 'pious myopia'. Likewise, there are pitfalls in the language of faith. The problems of necessity and freedom, good and evil, transcendence and immanence, Omnipotence and freedom etc. are manifested in different religions in different forms. 'The imagery is nothing, the underlying geometry is everything'. The author goes on to discuss, 'Enigma and Message of Islamic Esoterism'. Sufism is examined and its various perspectives are explored.' Sufism is in principle the third dimension, without which Islam is incomplete and after which there is no other'. Also, esoterism is to exoterism what the centre is to the circle in the geometry of Islam!

Schuon reveals the world of the Soul. He discusses the ambiguity of the emotional element. It is 'a subordinate mode of Knowledge'. He critically examines psychoanalysis and the method it involves for the study of Man.

He further stresses on the anonymity of the virtues and warns us against passion and pride. 'Passion reveals itself by attachment and pride by ambition.' An enlightening discussion takes place on the rationale of trials and happiness. In his 'Synthesis and Conclusion' he makes a beautiful discourse on Transcendence and Immanence. 'Truth and holiness, all values are in these two terms; all that we must love and all that we must be'.

Schuon has gathered pearls of metaphysics and esoterism. It is a finest introduction to his entire thought. His style is methodical, logical and imaginative. Each line is tied with other and is integrated with the central idea. It is a reflection of true phenomenology based on objective, intellectual principles. It is a masterpiece of true art.

**Shahzad Qai'ser**