

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR'S PERENNIALISM PERSPECTIVE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN INDONESIA

Syarif Hidayatullah

Faculty of Philosophy, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Doctoral Program of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: syarifhidayatullah@ugm.ac.id

Mahmud Arif

Doctoral Program of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Arqom Kuswanjono

Faculty of Philosophy, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Abstrak

Salah satu fenomena yang bisa dicermati dalam kehidupan manusia modern adalah disfungsi peran agama dalam ruang sosial dan pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi. Dalam upaya mengatasi krisis modernitas semacam ini, Seyyed Hossein Nasr menawarkan filsafat perenial dengan cara menghadirkan kembali kearifan tradisional Islam dalam kehidupan manusia modern yang telah kehilangan dimensi spiritualnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan, pertama, mengetahui perspektif filsafat perenial Seyyed Hossein Nasr, dan, kedua, menelusuri relevansi filsafat perenial dalam pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr tentang studi agama. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa: pertama, filsafat perenial merupakan karya paling monumental dari pemikiran Nasr untuk mempertemukan antara agama Islam, filsafat, dan sains. Bagi Nasr, filsafat perenialisme adalah pengetahuan yang bersifat universal; yang berupaya menerapkan nilai-nilai atau norma-norma yang bersifat kekal dan abadi yang bersumber dari agama sepanjang sejarah manusia. Kedua, Nasr menawarkan filsafat perenial sebagai suatu perspektif bagi studi agama, khususnya Islam. Menurut Nasr, ada tiga respons yang bisa dilakukan,

yaitu: pertama, mengkritisi krisis manusia modern yang nir-spiritualitas akibat paradigma sekularistik sains dan teknologi Barat modern; kedua, penggalian dan penguatan kearifan tradisional yang dimiliki Islam; dan, ketiga, kesatuan atau titik temu agama-agama dalam prinsip-prinsip universal yang abadi.

Kata kunci: *Filsafat Perennial, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Studi Agama, Kearifan Tradisional, Islam*

Abstract

One of the phenomena that can be analyzed in the modern life of human beings nowadays is the dysfunction of religion in the social sphere and the development of science and technology. In the context of getting a solution to such crisis of modernity, Seyyed Hossein Nasr offers perennial philosophy, by representing Islamic traditional wisdom in the modern life of human beings who suffer from a loss of spiritual dimension. This research aims, first, to know the perspective of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's perennial philosophy, and, second, to explore the relevance of perennial philosophy in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thought about the study of religion. The research results are: Firstly, perennial philosophy is a monumental work of Seyyed Hossein Nasr that unites the religion of Islam, philosophy, and science. For Nasr, perennial philosophy is a universal knowledge; that applies eternal and lasting values or norms that emerged from religion throughout the history of human beings. Secondly, Nasr offers perennial philosophy as a perspective for the study on religions, especially Islam. According to Nasr, there are three responses, namely: firstly, to criticize modern human beings whose non-spirituality caused by the secularist paradigm of the West modern science and technology; secondly, excavation and reinforcement of the traditional wisdom; and, thirdly, unity or meeting point of all religions in eternal universal principles.

Keywords: *Perennial Philosophy, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Religious Studies, Traditional Wisdom, Islam*

Received: February, 20 2023 | **Reviewed:** April, 11 2023 | **Accepted:** August, 21 2023

INTRODUCTION

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was one of the few Muslim thinkers of the 20th century who paid attention to the need to revive traditional values (Sufism) as an alternative offer of healing the modern human crisis. In the Islamic world, in general, Muslims have a great concern for the revival of civilization as a social construction. This concern arises based on the view that Muslims have been far behind and dominated by the West, due to traditional values and Islamic Sufism that have eliminated the spirit of Islamic dynamics in Muslims (Mumtaz, 2014).

Nasr saw that this view was unjustified, because of the rejection of sufism and blacking it out as the cause of decline, which resulted in Islam being reduced to the point of remaining merely a rigid doctrine of *sharia*, and in the end *sharia* itself was powerless in the face of Western "barrage of intellectual attacks". Nasr gives the view that the existential or spiritual crises experienced by man stem from the rebellion of modern man to God. That is when man forsakes God in order to establish his existence. Man has moved from the center of his own existence towards the fringe region of existence. This phenomenon is not only experienced by the Western world but also by the Eastern world in general and the Muslim world in particular, making the mistake of repeating what the West has done (Mumtaz, 2014).

Thus, researching the intellectual thought and Muslim philosophers of the modern era such as Nasr, who had concern for the humanitarian crisis and spirituality resulting from modernity is important and fundamental. Spirituality, for Nasr, is a necessity of today's man, and as a permanent necessity for man. A person who has high spirituality is someone who reflects on God as vital, who determines the norms in everyday life to define spirituality as nothing but knowing, loving, and obeying God. God is not only the master of nature, but also the path, function, beginning, and end of Islamic spirituality. God is the center of life that is all Islamic spirituality. God is the center of life whose all dimensions and rotating surfaces surround Him, seeking Him, with Him in the

purpose of the existence of humanity. Such a view is actually an old view that has been widely ignored by modern man. They no longer know the traditional wisdom, as a hallmark of philosophy, that is in its spiritual life (Kuswanjono, 1997). The results of research like this will further enrich insights and strategic solutions to overcome the modern human crisis.

With the context as mentioned above, the problem setting in this study is: first, what is the epistemological conception of Sayyed Hossein Nasr's perennial philosophy?; and, second, what is the relevance of perennial philosophy in formulating Sayyed Hossein Nasr's thoughts on the study of religion?

PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY AS A FORMAL OBJECT AND PERSPECTIVE OF STUDY

A study needs to establish the object of its research, because, to be recognized among the scientific community all study in any field must fulfill scientific conditions, one of which is that it must have an object. The object of research in philosophy can be distinguished from formal objects and material objects (Kaelan, 2005). The material object of this study is Nasr's thoughts on the study of religions, with perennial philosophy as his perspective as well as the formal object of research. Thus, perennial philosophy was offered by Nasr as an alternative perspective to religion studies, the study of religion and religions.

The Perennial, etymologically, is derived from the Latin *perennis*, meaning eternal or enduring, so perennial philosophy is also known as the philosophy of immortality. Perennial philosophy, according to Frithjof Schuon, is universal mystical knowledge that has existed and will remain there forever (Malik, 2021). Perennial philosophy, defined by Aldous Huxley, is a philosophical tradition that includes three main branches: metaphysics, psychology, and ethics. In addition to Huxley and Schuon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Owen C. Thomas are two important figures in the contemporary era who are interested in defining perennial philosophy (Malik, 2021).

Recently, Nasr's thoughts on perennial philosophy have received more attention among researchers of Islamic philosophy, including in Indonesia. Therefore, in this study the authors are interested in making the perennial philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr as the material object that is studied in more depth, with the philosophy of science as its perspective as well as being the formal object of research. Methodologically, in the discussion of philosophical studies, a descriptive-analytical approach will be used, namely by describing Sayyed Hossein Nasr's thoughts on the study of religions in the perspective of perennial philosophy, then providing sufficient analysis to better understand the description.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPTION OF PERENNIAL NASR'S PHILOSOPHY

Based on deep and serious research on perennial philosophy, Nasr managed to bring together Islam, philosophy, and science. Islam, as a universal religion, is a continuation of the religion of the apostles, of Adam (pbuh) until it was attributed to the prophet Muhammad (pbuh). All religions are called al-Islam, the essence of whose is the total surrender to God. If what is at the core is surrender to God, then basically all monotheistic religions claim to submit only to God. This means that surrender (al-Islam) is an eternal religious teaching and applies all the time, *religion perennis* (Sahrin, 2019).

The term religion perennis or philosophy perennis (perennial philosophy) was first used by Frithjof Schuon in his book entitled *Islam and The Perennial Philosophy* (1976), which Nasr viewed as universal metaphysics. Related to religion perennis or religion cordis, according to Schuon, is a term used for the religion of revelation or the religion of prophecy. Another word used for the term religion perennis is esotericism. Although the two terms have different words and meanings, they have the same soul in principle, namely the meeting point of religions, with different emphasis. In perennial philosophy, something that is considered eternal in

religion and tradition, when immortality is also found in other religions and traditions (Sahrin, 2019).

In Nasr's fact, "philosophy perennis" is derived from the language of English, perennial philosophy, for the same meaning as *philosophia perennis* derived from Latin, which has been widely used by sects of thought, from neo-Thomism to Aldous Huxley. According to Nasr, Huxley was the figure who made the term "philosophy" famous among students who were not specialists in the study of religion and philosophy, because he used the term as the title of his very famous book, *The Perennial Philosophy*, published in New York in 1945 (Nasr, 1992). Nevertheless, Nasr, along with several other figures, regarded Agostino Steuco (1490-1548) as the first to use the term perennial philosophy, when in 1540 he wrote a book called *De Philosophia Perennis*. However, Leibniz, based on a letter he wrote in 1715, is considered by Aldous Huxley to be the first to use the term perennial philosophy (Amin, 2012).

Perennialists have devoted their attention to every aspect of religion, man and God, theology and metaphysics, *sharia* and religious rites, social ethics and mysticism, images and symbols, and revelation and sacred art. The sect devoted its attention to religion in trans-historical reality, rejecting the historicist academic approach in religious science (*religionswissenschaft*) developed in Europe in the 19th century. Perennialists believe that only this sect is capable of providing the key to understanding religion or religions as a whole with all its complexities and puzzles, and its plurality (Nasr, 1992).

In Islam, according to Nasr, this notion can be equated with *fitrah*, as affirmed in the Qur'an as a human value based on the occurrence of a holy human origin (*fitrah*) that makes him have a character of chastity and goodness. The *fitrah* is a continuation of the basic covenant between God and the human spirit, so that the human spirit is imbued with something called the awareness of the Absolute and Most Holy (Transcendent), that is, the awareness of the power of the Most High which is the beginning and purpose of all that exists and that is above this realm (Mumtaz, 2014). According to Nasr, although Islam and Western religions and

traditions have similarities in some ways, Muslims should not take Western values and views for granted. There must be checks and balances, there must be criticism and autocriticism regarding Western ontology, let alone dealing with modern science (Sahrin, 2019).

Citing Schuon's opinion, Nasr explained that philosophy has a broad view of Islamic traditions. In fact, the Islamic tradition is contained in the quintessence of other traditions. With this perspective of perennial philosophy, his studies does not only look at the inner side of Islam, but discusses problems in all religions (Nasr, 1993). This view sorts out two dimensions of essence, namely esoteric and exoteric. The esoteric dimension is the basis and essence of everything that is manifested in outer forms called exoteric. With this way of looking at nature, then Islam or other formal religions are only exoteric incarnations, the essence of its teachings is the same as other religions, that is the esoteric dimension, where the peak of this dimension is the form of the God of hosts (Nasr, 1993).

The perennial sect of philosophy believes that there are primordial traditions that make up the intellectual and spiritual heritage of man, the original or in the form of divine revelation. This primordial tradition is reflected in all later traditions, but what follows is not merely historical continuity. Each tradition is marked by a fresh vertical derivative of the Origin, a revelation that blesses every religion. In this context, revelation lies at the heart of a tradition that speaks of its spiritual genius, fresh vitality, uniqueness, and the "grace" that makes its rites and practices workable. This revelation is not to speak of heavenly visions per se; which is the origin of his sacred knowledge and wisdom that lies at the heart of his message. But since the Origin is One, and also because of the profound unity of man, in addition to the existing cultural, ethnic and racial differences, there are primitive traditions and there are also traditions that do not lose the permanence (immortality) and universality of philosophy (Nasr, 1993).

The fundamental difference between traditional sects and most other sects of thought in the study of religion arises from the

difference in views between the two regarding the nature of reality. Traditionalists reject the present Western worldview that narrows reality, which arose originally from post-medieval rationalism and empiricism, which underlies many religious studies today, especially in academic settings. However, the traditional view is similar to the worldview that religions themselves have created and explored. This is why traditional studies of religion contradict most research by modern religious scholars, highly regarded by traditional authorities of different religions, outside beyond the modern Western world and other parts of the world that accept the expansion of modern Western culture (Nasr, 1993). In recent developments, a number of well-known religious scholars have taken this traditional perspective, and in greater numbers are interested in this sect, at least as one of the sects in religious studies that should be seriously considered (Nasr, 1992).

PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY AND NASR'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a philosopher and mystic, who is known as one of the Islamic scholars with a very rich understanding of Islamic traditions (Siregar, 2016). Nasr, according to Meuleman, is an adherent of philosophy, which is to understand that there is a fundamental Divine knowledge that is achieved in principle by everyone and is interfaith and cross-historical. Philosophy does not deny the importance of rites and social aspects and social aspects of each religion but teaches that behind it lies a tradition of origin (Meuleman, 2002).

Perennial philosophy Nasr offered is an alternative perspective for the study on religions. Established approaches to the study of religions among Western orientalist are trapped in historicism. In this context, Nasr expresses religious truth as a guide, a guide using philosophy. Truth always claims to be the best, existing in the infinite eternity. Essence or authenticity is another form of God's existence. The essence of religious truth is that it is inseparable from the existence of God as the source of truth.

Authenticity is the ultimate truth, always connected with the Creator. Religion must come from the All-True One (Rusdin, 2018).

Through his perspective, Nasr reflects on the epistemological building of Islamic thought in response to the secular Western currents of modernity that Muslims present and face on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Muslims are internally in a downturn in its various dimensions, including the development of science and technology and its contemporary culture and civilization. In this context, in general, there are three responses carried out by Nasr, namely: *first*, to criticize the crisis of modern man that experiences a spiritual vacuum due to the secularistic paradigm that exists in the dynamics and progress of modern Western science and technology; *second*, the excavation and strengthening of traditional wisdom possessed by religions (including Islam) and local and authentic cultures and traditions (including mysticism and the cultural heritage and civilization of Persian Islam); and, *third*, the unity or intersection of religions in enduring universal principles (Harahap, 2017).

One of the pillars of perennial philosophy constructed by Nasr is the critique of modern Western scientific epistemology. For Nasr, the modernization process carried out in the Western world since the renaissance has had a negative influence, namely giving birth to spiritual dryness and the void of meaning of life. Nasr as a contemporary Muslim thinker sees that the inner dryness and emptiness of the meaning of modern human life requires urgent and potent healing. In this connection, Nasr is so zealous in defending Sufism and traditional wisdom as well as offering it as a solution to the crisis of modern human spirituality. In response to this Western misconception of Islam, through his philosophy, Nasr intends to introduce the inner (esoteric) dimension of Islam as an alternative to the healing of the spirit in this modern era. Nasr sees that modern society, consciously or not, has lost its vision of divinity so that it is no longer able to see life and life in reality and intellect. So the loss of boundaries that are considered and believed to be sacred and absolute gives rise to modern man circling the circumference in a

relative world, especially the value system and morality. In this respect the West has massively lost its supranatural flavor. It is in this perspective that Nasr offers a traditional approach to Sufism as an alternative that can answer the spiritual needs of modern man (Harahap, 2017).

Nasr believes that spirituality is an essential requirement for contemporary individuals, as well as a timeless necessity for humanity. A person with deep spirituality is someone who regards a connection with God as crucial, and who establishes moral guidelines for daily life, defining spirituality as synonymous with recognizing, cherishing, and adhering to God. God is not solely the controller of nature, but also the guide, purpose, origin, and destination of Islamic spirituality. The entirety of Islamic spirituality revolves around God, who occupies the central position in life. All aspects of existence encompass and revolve around God, aiming for Him, with the presence of humanity finding its meaning in alignment with Him. This perspective is an age-old concept that has been largely disregarded by modern society. The traditional wisdom, which was once a hallmark of philosophy, is no longer recognized in the spiritual lives of contemporary individuals (Kuswanjono, 1997).

After criticizing the dryness and emptiness of modern human spirituality due to the secularism of Western science and technology, Nasr continued with the excavation and strengthening of traditional Islamic wisdom as the second pillar of his philosophical framework. In this context, Nasr interprets tradition more broadly than the definition that Western scientists and scholars in general do, which defines tradition as synonymous with customary custom, or any other definition, as Noah Webster defines it as belief in all the teachings of Muhammad that are not written in the Quran, both moral and doctrinal. In contrast to these definitions, Nasr defines it more broadly, a tradition implies something sacred as conveyed to man through revelation as well as hope and the development of that sacred role in the history of a particular humanity. According to him, the tradition referred to by

tradition in this context is a teaching handed down by God, accompanied by its interpretation, so that it can be applied by humans in the course of their lives. Hence basically the tradition in Nasr's view is sacred, a holy, eternal truth that culminates in continuous human behavior (Harahap, 2017).

Tradition, according to Nasr, includes three things: *al-Din*, *al-Sunnah*, and *silsilah* (genealogy). *First*, *al-Din*, as a religion that encompasses all its aspects and branches. *Second*, *al-Sunnah*, as something sacred and has been a custom for generations among the people. *Third*, genealogy, as a link that associates each of the periods, episodes and stages of life and thought with all sources of things (Harahap, 2017). In this case, tradition is like a branched root whose roots are deeply immersed, and it is from that depth that the stem and its branch grow. Thus, living in tradition means living inseparably from the source of that tradition, namely God. And that's what all humans have in common. In this context, although tradition and religion are different entities, they are inseparable. Through his traditional philosophy, Nasr offered Sufism as an alternative offered by Nasr in an effort to free modern man from various complexities of life, both tension due to primordialism and loss of meaning of life due to modernist materialism (Harahap, 2017). According to Nasr, Sufism (*tasawuf*) is like a soul that breathes the whole body: without the soul, the body loses passion, then does not move and dies. Likewise, Sufism is a source of enthusiasm for the entire structure of Islam both in individual reality, social manifestation and intellectual movement. Even more, Sufism is an organized institution that is able to play roles in various aspects of life, such as, law, politics, management, and so on (Harahap, 2017).

The third pillar in Nasr's perennialism is the unity or intersection of religions in enduring universal principles. According to Harahap, in the study of religions, Nasr continued to use the traditional philosophical approach in his philosophy. At that time, in America, a view that all religions are equal developed, which in terms of thought was called Neo-Vedantism. The traditional approach in the study of religions that Nasr carried out always paid

attention to aspects of the equation, such as the origin of religion, man's relationship with God, symbols, rites and so on. According to Nasr, the fundamental differences of most sects of religious thought arise from differences in views on the nature of reality. Traditionalists reject Western worldviews that complicate and narrow reality as an effect of rationalism and empiricism. Nasr explained that the field of traditional studies covers the entire area of religion, ranging from ethics, mystical theology, rites, symbols with the spirit of Divinity without rejecting manifestations and other possibilities that undergo changes due to changes in time. Hence the traditional people do not recognize religious slogans that come from the same origin but cause problems in the order of practice (Harahap, 2017).

Thus the traditional tradition of seeking common ground of religions is with a metaphysical approach. With this approach, the truth of a religion is not only measured to the extent of the birth ceremony, but transcends every manifestation of the birth towards a transcendental essence. This means that Nasr's perennial philosophy holds the view that absolute truth is only one. But because religions appear in different time and space, the plurality of forms and discussions of those religions is inevitable. This is where religious content always considers and adopts the cultural values of the community in which a religion is born and develops. Therefore, according to Nasr, the meeting point of religions is at the esoteric level (*Ilahiyah*) not at the exoteric level (*Sharia*) (Harahap, 2017).

In order to establish a dialogue of religions, according to Harahap, Nasr used comparative methods and historical methods. The comparative method is that mutual understanding is achieved between different religions, especially between East and West, so that the tensions during this time can be eliminated, or at least reduced. The intersection of those religions must be based on eternal truth. It is this amalgamation of intellectual institutions and spiritual experience that makes it possible to reach the intersection of religions. On the other hand, the historical method is reopening the historical sheets of the Prophets, that basically religions are derived

from the one that is God. In addition, all human beings also come from the one, namely Adam, who was created by God who brought down the religion as well. Man therefore does not deserve to omit the origin of that unity simply because of the differences in its branches and twigs (Harahap, 2017).

The rejection of hierarchical reality by many modern scholars in the metaphysical sense has influenced the abstinence of the world and their methodology in every religious study, while for traditionalists, acceptance of the metaphysical view has formed an essential feature in the study of religion in its different aspects. Traditionalists hold that religion itself is hierarchically shaped and will not be destroyed by external reality and its appearance. Religion has an exoteric, outward, born, dimensional, dimension that relates to the birth and formal aspects of religious human life. It is enough to enable man to follow the teachings and have faith in the truth for guidance and salvation. However, religion also has an inner or esoteric dimension associated with the invisible, the essential through which man can attain the supernatural here and now. Furthermore, there are other levels in exoteric and esoteric, so in any religion there is a hierarchy or levels from the outermost center to the innermost center, from lowest to highest (Nasr, 1992).

There is also a hierarchy of the highest practical approaches to religion: Work, love and knowledge; *karma marga*, *bakti marga* and *jnana marga* in Hinduism; or *al-mukhaffah*, *al-mahabbah* and *al-ma'rifah* in Islam. There is also a hierarchy between religious believers. In the tradition of ancient Greek wisdom, known hierarchy: *hylikai*, *psichoi*, and *pneumatikoi*. In Islam, too, there is a known difference in degree between *muslim*, *mukmin*, and *muhsin* (possessor of spiritual virtue or *ihsan*) (Nasr, 1992).

The hierarchy of the paths to God or the types of people on the religious journey cannot be separated from the paths taken, the superior understands the lower, in the sense of understanding and enclosing it, but the lower cannot understand it. Thus, internal tensions between different religious and street traditions occur in the traditional context. But the traditional opposition to the whole

hierarchical perspective in the traditional tradition, is fundamentally very different from the attacks of the modern, where the latter views it as some kind of "elitist" perspective. This sect asserts that not everyone is capable of knowing everything. But the semi-religious level comes from the sky, all human beings can be saved if they follow the religion that suits their abilities and abilities, it also says that all human beings are equal, capable of surpassing man until finally reaching to the Holy Spirit. However, this similarity does not mean destroying the hierarchy, but rather seeing the real differences between the types of human beings, in terms of their talents and abilities. In this sense, philosophy is "elitist", distinguishing between those who know and those who do not know, as insinuated in a verse of the Quran, "Are the knowers and the ignorant the same?" to which the Quran replied emphatically, "No!" Perennial philosophy sees the unity that underlies the differences in the form and practice of religion, a unity that lies in essential truths at the heart of religions that are none other than perennial philosophy itself. But this unity is not in an outward form. All religions do not only say the same thing, although there is a remarkable commonality of views of principles and doctrines, and the application of these principles (Nasr, 1992).

With reference to Schuon, Nasr stated that the unity that traditional people speak of is a transcendentalist unity that is earnest and transcends every outward form and manifestation. Followers of this sect received recent criticism from academic scholars who opposed the rise of a "religious unity" movement that generalized all religions, mostly originating in India during the last decades of the 19th century and the early 20th century. What distinguishes most modern academic scholars from traditional ones is that traditionals live in the traditional realm, where the reality of things, almost all religious forms, rites and symbols, is believed to be imperishable by space-time changes. Every form has an essence, every *phenomenon* has a *noumenon*, all accidents have substance. Using the sacred language of traditional Western philosophy, which reflects perennial philosophy in medieval Latin and even

afterwards, traditional people distinguish between outward form and essence, or form and substance. The outward forms of a religion are seen as accidents, which come out of and return from a substantiation that remains independent of all its accidents. The work of a particular religion is only at the highest level of essence, even beyond the *logos*, or at the highest level of substance that stands above all cosmic parts, from the level of angels to the physical ones, so that the highest unity of religions is found. If Sufism says "the doctrine of unity is unique" (*al-tauhid, wahid*), then the transcendental unity behind religious diversity must also be unique, namely the One itself. Below that level, each religion has different qualities and characteristics (Nasr, 1992).

Relying on philosophy, the traditional tradition judges the degree of Divine incarnation, the prophetic degree and degree, the magnitude of destiny from the heavens, the magnitude of the path, in a particular religion. He considered the normative dimension and the study of religion to be carried out in the light of truth but not deep into subjectivism. Rather, this truth allows a scholar to be free from the prisons of subjectivism and fashion from a certain period in which the scholar lives. Because, this truth is intrinsically supra-individual and is perennial and universal wisdom (Nasr, 1992). In the light of philosophical truth, the traditionalist sect can also talk about truth by its degree, as well as errors in this or that religious tradition. The presence of this truth is also the reason why this sect is able to judge. Certain religious phenomena and talk of "pseudo-religion" and authentic religion without falling into a narrow dogmatism on the one hand, and indifference in the truth of religions on the other, where both dominate the religious scene in the modern world (Nasr, 1992). On the basis of the vision of truth embodied in philosophy, this sect not only distinguishes between religion and "false religion" and different types of manifestations of the Divine Principle, but also enters into each religious realm to bring out the meaning of its teachings, comparing with other religions in the light of wisdom, without ending with the relativization of religious truth. Now one of the great problems for

man in a world where the traditional boundaries and boundaries of the physical realm and the religious realm are uprooted, is how the study of other religions can sympathetically be carried out, without losing its absolute meaning, which is the *sine qua non* of religious life, reflecting a fact that religion comes from the Absolute (Nasr, 1992).

Traditional sects emphasize religious studies religiously and oppose all relativization, which marks much of the study of religion in the modern academic environment. But simultaneously, he opposed the conception of parochial truth, which saw a certain incarnation of a truth as truth itself. This sect emphasizes the principle of tautology, which is clear but often forgotten, that the Absolute is the absolute. All the others are relative. There is also a key concept, also largely developed by Schuon, from the realm of "seemingly contradictory", but metaphysically meaningful, namely the concept of "the relative absolute". In our solar system for example, our sun is the sun when viewed in the perspective of galactic space, even though it is only one among many suns (Nasr, 1992).

Traditional sects examine the ethics, theology, mysticism or art of each religion with the spirit of absolute Divine Origin without rejecting His manifestations or other possibilities that undergo changes due to changes in time. But this sect does not recognize the reality of religion being limited only to religion in history. Every religion has certain principled possibilities contained in its celestial archetypes. These possibilities were realized or became unfolding in the historical and humanities periods that became the human and temporal containers of religion. Each religious phenomenon is a phenomenon of religious character itself, not reduced to any other category, and a phenomenon that reveals its meaning as a whole only in the sarcasm of the archetypal reality of the tradition in line with its historical expanse. Here, traditional traditions strongly emphasize the importance of considering the esoteric dimension in understanding religious phenomena, in addition to observing the

exoteric dimension. Thus each religion has different possibilities of actuality at a moment of human history (Nasr, 1992).

The area of religion that adherents of perennial philosophy studies is very broad, and their studies are always in-depth and related to the essential. Studies born from this sect cover deep aspects from Christianity to Jodo-Shin Buddhism, from ancient Egyptian religion to contemporary Islam. Traditional people in the modern West do a lot of religious studies or major sects of thought such as Tibetan Buddhism and Ibn 'Arabi Sufism. The sacred meaning of art from the East in general and Hindu and Buddhist art in particular, first gained attention in the West through A. K. Coomaraswamy, one of the leading figures of the traditional tradition, while the link between Islamic and Christian spirituality in its diverse dimensions has never been studied in such depth as Schuon did. The religious issues that this sect studies extend from metaphysics and cosmology to the sacred arts. Only through this sacred can one arrive at the "Formless", from psychology and traditional anthropology to ethics and social structures (Nasr, 1992).

Among the traditional authors, especially those who have given a comprehensive explanation of religion from the point of view of philosophy, conducted a large number of studies, concerning the spiritual meaning of *anthropos* and the role of the so-called "human margin" in certain aspects of religious life and thought that cannot be understood or explained except by understanding the nature of the capture and ambiguity of the human soul (Nasr, 1992). Through his perspective on perennialism, Nasr reflects on the epistemological building of Islamic thought in response to the secular Western currents of modernity that Muslims present and face on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Muslims are internally in a downturn in their various dimensions, including the development of science and technology and contemporary culture and civilization. In this context, in general, there are three responses carried out by Nasr, namely: first, to criticize the crisis of modern man who is non-spiritual due to the secularistic paradigm that is cloaking in the dynamics and advances of modern Western

science and technology; second, the excavation and strengthening of traditional wisdom possessed by religions (including Islam), local and authentic cultures, and traditions (including mysticism and the cultural heritage and civilization of Persian Islam); and, third, the unity or intersection of religions in enduring universal principles. These three responses are important to do simultaneously and continuously, without sorting them into priority scales based on the level of urgency.

Perennialism, as suggested by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, carries the idea that the essences of the world's major religions have fundamental similarities, and that research on those essences can be carried out through a philosophical or metaphysical approach. However, there are several critical analyses of perennialist thinking that need to be considered in the development of religious studies in Indonesia, including:

First, it is critical of the assumption of the similarity of religious essences: The thought of perennialism assumes that religions have fundamental essences in common, but there is a critique of those assumptions. Some religious experts argue that the difference between religions lies not only in practical and symbolic differences, but also in the worldview and values underlying those religions. Therefore, an approach to perennialism that only emphasizes similarity can ignore the important differences that exist between religions.

Second, it is critical of philosophical or metaphysical approaches: Nasr argues that research on the essence of religion can be done through a philosophical or metaphysical approach. However, there is criticism towards this approach because philosophical or metaphysical views tend to be abstract and difficult for ordinary people to understand. Therefore, the approach of perennialism may not be effective in developing religious understanding in general circles.

Third, it is critical of the political implications: The critique of perennialism also involves the political implications that may be contained in the thought. Some scholars argue that the thought of

perennialism can produce a homogeneous and oppressive discourse. This criticism is related to the idea that the approach of perennialism encourages people to see religious differences only as semantic or cosmetic differences, thus ignoring the broader political and social implications.

In the development of religious studies in Indonesia, these criticisms need to be considered so that religious studies not only put forward one view, but also accommodate the differences and complexities of existing religions. This can be done through an interdisciplinary approach involving various disciplines, including history, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy, to produce a more complete and holistic understanding of religion in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

From the studies conducted in this research, the author can conclude two things, namely:

First, perennial philosophy, for Nasr, is a perspective that actualizes the eternal values or norms and universal principles of religion and traditional wisdom. According to Nasr, the foundations of perennial philosophy have existed in every authentic religion, including Islam. Perennial philosophy has a broad view of the Islamic tradition. In the perspective of Nasr's perennial philosophy, Islamic tradition is contained in the essence of other traditions. With this philosophical perspective, his studies not only look at the inner side of Islam but address problems in all religions. Islam or any other formal religion is only an exoteric incarnation. The essence of its teachings is the same as that of other religions, that is, the esoteric dimension, where the pinnacle of this dimension is the form of the God of the universe.

Second, Nasr offers perennial philosophy as a perspective for developing the study of religion. This perennial perspective is offered because Nasr considers that the established approach to the study of religion and religion among Western orientalists is stuck in historicism. This trap of historicism risks religions losing their transcendental meaning, uprooted from their universal Divine

Origin traditional roots, thus distancing religion from its center and giving birth to the modern man suffering from a spiritual drought. In this context, Nasr expressed religious truth as a guide in philosophizing. This is because the essence of religious truth is inseparable from the existence of God as the source of truth.

REFERENCES

- Amin, H. (2012). Makna Agama Sebagai Tradisi dalam Bingkai Filsafat Perennial. *Jurnal Filsafat*, 22(2), 187–217. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.3094>
- Harahap, J. (2017). Sayyed Hossein Nasr Tentang Filsafat Perennial. *Aqlania*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.32678/aqlania.v8i02.1026>
- Kaelan. (2005). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Bidang Filsafat*. Paradigma.
- Kuswanjono, A. (1997). Filsafat Perennial dan Rekonstruksi Pemahaman Keberagamaan. *Jurnal Filsafat (Edisi Khusus)*, 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.31778>
- Malik, J. (2021). Philosophy of Perennialism and Its Relevance To Contemporary Islamic Education. *Ri'ayah*, 6(1), 84–94.
- Meuleman, J. H. (2002). Pergolakan Pemikiran Keagamaan. In *Ensiklopedia Dunia Islam Dinamika Masa Kini*. PT. Ichtiar Baru Van Hoeve.
- Mumtaz, N. M. (2014). Hakikat Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Indo-Islamika*, 4(2), 169–178. <https://doi.org/10.15408/idi.v4i2.17393>
- Nasr, S. H. (1992). Filsafat Perennial: Perspektif Alternatif untuk Studi Agama. *Ulumul Quran*, 3(3), 86–95.
- Nasr, S. H. (1993). *Islam dan Filsafat Perennial*. Mizan.
- Rusdin. (2018). Kebenaran Agama Dalam Filsafat Perennial (Prespektif Seyyed Hossein Nasr). *Rausyan Fikr*, 14(2), 243–265.
- Sahrin, A. (2019). Agama Dan Filsafat Perennial Perspektif Perennial Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Theosofi Dan Peradaban Islam*, 1(1), 1–24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.51900/alhikmah.v1i1.4034>
- Siregar, R. L. (2016). Teori Belajar Perennialisme. *Al-Hikmah*, 13(2), 172–183.