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Universal Values as a Meeting Point in Abrahamic Religions: Insights from Schuon and Smith

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of universal human values within the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, exploring their potential to foster global peace and solidarity. Drawing on the profound insights of Frithjof Schuon and Huston Smith, this research highlights the shared core values present across these three distinct religions, despite their differences in form, doctrine, and ritual. These shared values include justice, compassion, respect for human dignity, and responsibility toward others and the environment. Through the lens of the Perennial Philosophy, both thinkers posit that these values are manifestations of a single, underlying Truth common to all religions. Schuon focuses on the transcendental principles underpinning each tradition, emphasizing the metaphysical and esoteric dimensions of these values as reflections of divine truths. For instance, he points to teachings on social justice, respect for human dignity, and responsibility toward nature in Judaism; the emphasis on compassion and solidarity, including the call to love one's neighbor and even enemies, in Christianity; and the concept of Tawhid, stressing the unity of God and humanity, which underpins teachings on social justice and fair treatment in Islam. Smith, while acknowledging the metaphysical aspects, emphasizes the practical, ethical, and social implications of these values, particularly their role in building a just and harmonious society.

Keyword

Abrahamic Religions, Frithjof Schuon, Huston Smith, Perennial Philosophy, universal values

Introduction

Universal human values have long been a focus of study in religion and philosophy, especially in the context of interfaith dialogue (Aqil, 2020). These values aim to identify moral and ethical principles that can be accepted by all religious traditions, regardless of differences in doctrines and ritual practices (Kostina et al., 2015). In an increasingly global and pluralistic world, the pursuit of universal human values has become crucial for fostering harmony amidst religious and cultural diversity. In this regard, major religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam hold great potential as bridges for peace by emphasizing their shared core values.

The thoughts of Frithjof Schuon and Huston Smith offer significant contributions to this discourse. As a figure in perennial philosophy, Schuon proposed the idea of the “transcendental unity of religions” (Haramain, 2018), asserting that beneath the formal differences of religions lies the same metaphysical essence. This perspective highlights that values such as justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity are central to all religious traditions. Meanwhile, Huston Smith, an expert in comparative religion studies, expanded this approach by emphasizing how universal human values can serve as a foundation for interfaith dialogue and social reconciliation (Irfan, 2018). Smith argued that world religions, despite their doctrinal differences, advocate values such as social justice, compassion, and moral responsibility, which can strengthen interfaith relationships.

Amid the complexities of the modern world—characterized by social fragmentation, interreligious conflicts, and moral crises (Krismiyo, 2023)—the ideas of Schuon and Smith have become increasingly relevant. These universal values can function not only as individual guidelines but also as a collective foundation for building more peaceful, inclusive, and just societies. Through a study of the thoughts of these two figures, this paper seeks to delve deeper into how universal human values can serve as common ground among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and how these principles can be applied in today’s global context.

This research aims to address several fundamental questions, such as: What universal values are contained within the teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam? How do Frithjof Schuon and Huston Smith formulate these concepts in their works? And how can these values be utilized to strengthen interfaith relations in an increasingly pluralistic world? By adopting this approach, the study offers not only theoretical analysis but also practical contributions to efforts aimed at fostering global harmony.

Frithjof Schuon: Life and Legacy of a Perennial Thinker

Frithjof Schuon, born in Basel, Switzerland, on June 18, 1907, grew up in an environment rich in cultural and literary influences from various traditions, such as the works of Goethe, the Vedas, and *One Thousand and One Nights*. His interest in metaphysics began at an early age and was further solidified by his encounter with the works of René Guénon, which deepened his understanding of metaphysical principles (Kania, 2014; Nasr, 2005). Schuon’s travels to countries such as Algeria, Morocco, India, and Egypt enriched his understanding of spiritual traditions,

including Islam and Sufism, under the guidance of Sheikh al-Alawi. His intellectual relationship with René Guénon continued through correspondence and a direct meeting in Cairo in 1938.

Schuon is renowned as a thinker in perennial philosophy, emphasizing the transcendental unity of religions. He sought to integrate elements from various religious traditions, including Native American spirituality, which he studied directly during his visits to the Sioux and Crow reservations in the United States in 1959 and 1963 (Nasr, 2005). His syncretic approach often drew controversy, particularly regarding his interpretation of Islam and his veneration of the Virgin Mary, reflected in the Maryamiyya order he founded. His works, encompassing both artistic and intellectual dimensions, have garnered attention from scholars in both the East and the West.

Schuon passed away on May 5, 1998, in Switzerland, leaving a significant intellectual legacy in the study of religion and intercultural dialogue. His funeral reflected the plurality of his life, incorporating prayers from various traditions, including Quranic recitations and tributes from Native American tribes (Fitzgerald, 2010). Despite criticism, his ideas remain relevant for fostering harmony among religious traditions in a pluralistic modern world.

Frithjof Schuon's thoughts are encapsulated in perennial philosophy. This philosophy posits a transcendental unity underlying all major world religions. The fundamental concept of perennial philosophy is the "transcendental unity of religions," asserting that at the heart of every religion lies the same core truth about God and humanity, as well as worship and morality (Stoddart, 2008). Although world religions may appear different in their external forms and practices, their essential core is identical. These differences are, in fact, the reason for the existence of each religion. All major world religions are considered divinely revealed, and each speaks in an absolute manner. If a religion did not speak in absolute terms, it would cease to be a religion and could not offer a path to salvation. The common essence of religions does not lie in their external forms or ritual practices but in the transcendental truths they teach.

In his works, Schuon explains that every religion shares an identical core in terms of metaphysics and spirituality, despite their differing external expressions. To understand Schuon's ideas, it is essential to consider eight key elements, as outlined by Stoddart (2008):

1. The Difference Between the "Absolute" and the "Relative"

Frithjof Schuon explains the distinction between the "Absolute" and the "Relative" using terms from the Vedanta tradition, namely Âtmâ and Mâyâ. Âtmâ represents the Absolute, the ultimate truth or divine essence that is unchanging, unaffected by space and time, and not bound by the physical world. It is the most fundamental reality, beyond all limitations. Mâyâ, on the other hand, represents the Relative, encompassing everything we see and experience in this world. Mâyâ includes all that is transient, impermanent, and illusory. Although the world we experience seems real, according to Schuon, it lacks the ultimate truth possessed by Âtmâ.

Schuon posits that God as the Creator exists between Âtmâ and Mâyâ. God

is the first determination of the Divine Essence and belongs to the domain of the Relative. However, God is still considered absolute in relation to His creation and is thus referred to as “relatively absolute.” This doctrine asserts that only the Divine Essence is truly Absolute, while the Creator exists within the Relative realm but is still regarded as absolute in relation to His creation. This understanding is also reflected by metaphysical figures such as Shankara (Hinduism), Plato (Ancient Greece), Eckhart (Christianity), and Ibn ‘Arabi (Islam).

2. The Doctrine of Logos

Logos is a metaphysical concept referring to the fundamental principle that connects the human world with divine reality. There are two main aspects of Logos. The Uncreated Logos refers to the Personal God or the Creator, who exists beyond creation and is not bound by space and time. This reflects the Absolute essence of God, which is unchanging. Conversely, the Created Logos represents how divine principles are manifested in the created or Relative world. This includes Avatâras, Prophets, Savors, as well as symbols and sacraments that enable humans to understand and experience the divine aspect in accessible forms. In other words, Logos serves as a “bridge” between humans and God, allowing humans to connect with and comprehend the higher divine reality through sacramental and symbolic manifestations in daily life.

3. The Three Spiritual Paths (or Three Spiritual Temperaments)

Frithjof Schuon identifies three universal approaches to worshipping God that appear across various religious traditions: the Path of Action, the Path of Devotion, and the Path of Knowledge. In Hinduism, these are known as Karma, Bhakti, and Jñâna; in Islam, as Makhâfa, Mahabba, and Ma’rifa; while in Christianity, they are illustrated through the story of Mary and Martha—Martha representing the Path of Action and Mary the Path of Contemplation. Schuon emphasizes that although the terms and methods differ, these three approaches share the same goal: to bring humans closer to God and to deeply understand His nature.

4. The Six Themes of Meditation

The Six Themes of Meditation according to Frithjof Schuon reflect the passive and active aspects of three spiritual levels: Fear, Love, and Knowledge. The Fear themes involve self-denial (passive) and perseverance in facing spiritual challenges (active). The Love themes are expressed through surrender and gratitude (passive) as well as zeal and generosity (active). The Knowledge themes are achieved through ego dissolution and the pursuit of truth (passive) and union with the divine (active). These themes are not merely stages but are interconnected as prerequisites and outcomes of the spiritual journey toward salvation.

5. The Five Levels of Reality (or Five Divine Presences)

In Frithjof Schuon’s metaphysical teachings, there are five levels of reality forming a hierarchy of existence: Divine Essence, God, Spirit/Intellect, Soul, and Body. The Divine Essence or “Beyond-Being” represents the

unmanifested aspect of God, while God as the Creator resides at the Divine manifested level. Spirit or Intellect is the universal or supra-formal manifestation related to spiritual and intellectual aspects, distinct from the mind or soul, which are individual. The Soul and Body are the formal human levels, with the soul being subtle and the body physical. Schuon stresses that intellect, associated with truth and spiritual reality, differs from the mind, which focuses on rational processes, imagination, and memory—a distinction often overlooked in modern philosophy.

6. The Four Ages

According to ancient classical and Hindu traditions, the four ages of humanity—Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Iron—depict the decline of spiritual and moral quality in humans from an ideal state to moral darkness. The Golden Age represents a period of virtue and perfection, while the Iron Age reflects the peak of moral decay. This decline accelerates over time, paralleling the concept of “signs of the times” in Christian, Islamic, and other traditions. René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon identify the current era as the final phase of the Kali Yuga or “Age of Darkness.”

7. The Four Social Stations (or Four Castes)

René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon adopt the concept of dividing society into four main castes, as reflected in the Hindu caste system: Brahmins (spiritual and intellectual leaders), Kshatriyas (temporal rulers), Vaishyas (middle class such as farmers, artisans, and merchants), and Shudras (manual laborers and workers). This system is comparable to the medieval social structure in Europe and includes additional categories like Chandalas or Pariahs, who are outside the caste system and considered lower class. According to Schuon and Guénon, the caste system reflects profound differences in individual roles and functions within society.

8. The Meaning of Race

Schuon’s perspective on the relationship between religion, race, and modes of thought explains that each major religion emerged in response to the spiritual and mental needs of particular human groups, aligned with their ways of thinking and cultural characteristics. Major religions did not arise randomly but as manifestations of the deep needs of specific communities with distinct social structures or ways of thinking. Schuon also argues that there is a relationship between race and religion, where certain races have spiritual tendencies that shape different religious forms. However, religion is not confined to a specific race but is influenced by the culture and mindset of the group.

Mapping the Spiritual World: Huston Smith’s Life and Ideas

Huston Smith was born on May 31, 1919, in Soochow, China, into a Methodist Christian missionary family. His religious upbringing and exposure to Eastern cultures shaped his early views on spirituality. In 1936, he moved to the United States to continue his education at The Divinity School of The University of Chicago, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1945 (Smith, 2009). Smith began his academic career

at the University of Denver and taught at several prestigious universities, including MIT and the University of California, Berkeley. He gained recognition through his renowned work, *The World's Religions*, which explores the teachings and practices of the world's major religions.

Smith's intellectual journey was influenced by Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley, who introduced him to the concept of perennialism—the belief that all major religions share the same core truth. He delved into various religious traditions, including Hindu Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, and Islamic Sufism, further strengthening his perspective on the essential unity of religions. Additionally, Smith argued that science and technology must be guided by spiritual values to prevent a spiritual crisis in modern society.

Huston Smith passed away on December 30, 2016, leaving behind a significant legacy in religious studies and interfaith peace (Saputra, 2022). His commitment to integrating ancient spiritual traditions with the modern world was reflected in the many awards he received, including the Courage of Conscience Award from The Peace Abbey. His views continue to inspire interfaith dialogue and the promotion of global peace.

In his book, *The World's Religions*, Huston Smith examines the central teachings of major world religious traditions, including Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. In his exploration, Smith highlights several core themes that not only define the uniqueness of each religion but also demonstrate their fundamental similarities. The book goes beyond factual descriptions, delving into the spiritual and philosophical meanings behind the practices and beliefs of each religion. Five important themes discussed by Smith in the context of these three religions are as follows (Hasan, Habib, and Bhadroo, 2024):

Monotheism, or belief in one God, is the cornerstone of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. While these religions hold different views on the nature of God, they all agree on the oneness of God as the essence of their teachings. In Christianity, the concept of the Trinity introduces the idea of one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates the complexity of God's unity, encompassing diversity. Islam, on the other hand, emphasizes absolute oneness (*Tawhid*) through the shahada: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger." Judaism proclaims the oneness of God through the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is One." While the interpretations and expressions of God's oneness differ, all three religions stress one God as the center of faith and worship.

Some of Smith's key thoughts include:

1. Sacred texts and revelation are essential elements that form the theological and ethical foundation of these three religions. Judaism has the Torah, which is considered the revelation of God given to Moses and serves as a guide for law and morality for the Jewish people. Christianity has the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments, with the latter covering the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as the core of Christian faith. Islam has the Qur'an, which is regarded as the final and most complete revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad, and serves as the primary

guide for Muslims. These three scriptures are considered the word of God given to humanity through chosen prophets, and they play a crucial role in religious practice and the daily life of their followers.

2. Prophets are considered the conveyers of God's word and play a significant role in delivering divine messages to humanity. In Islam, Muhammad is considered the last prophet, the seal of the long line of prophets that includes many biblical figures such as Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), and Isa (Jesus). Christianity focuses on Jesus Christ, who is not only seen as a prophet but also as the Son of God and the embodiment of God's word. Judaism reveres prophets like Moses, who is regarded as the lawgiver and an important spiritual leader. Each religion has a rich prophetic tradition, which not only provides theological teachings but also ethical and moral guidelines for its followers.
3. Each religion offers comprehensive moral guidelines, covering ethical behavior and social duties. Christianity provides strong ethical teachings through the teachings of Jesus, such as the Law of Love and the Sermon on the Mount, as well as apostolic writings emphasizing love, forgiveness, and justice. Judaism provides moral and ethical law through the Ten Commandments and the Talmudic law, which governs all aspects of life, from religious practices to social interactions. Islam emphasizes the importance of Sharia, a legal system derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, which includes criminal, civil, and moral law, guiding Muslims in their daily lives. All three religions stress the importance of living a life in accordance with the moral principles revealed.
4. Rituals and forms of worship are vital aspects of religious life and serve as ways for followers to draw closer to God. In Islam, worship is governed by the Five Pillars of Islam, which include the declaration of faith (Shahada), the five daily prayers (Salat), fasting during the month of Ramadan, almsgiving (Zakat), and the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). Judaism emphasizes the observance of the Sabbath, adherence to dietary laws (Kashrut), and other religious ceremonies such as the observance of Yom Kippur and Passover. Christianity has various sacraments, the most important being baptism and the Eucharist (Holy Communion), which symbolize the acknowledgment of faith and communion with Jesus Christ. These rituals are not only expressions of faith but also ways to strengthen community and religious identity.

"World's religions" refers to the major world religions that encompass key beliefs and practices such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shinto, and others (Tsonis, 2013). In the book *The World's Religions*, Huston Smith presents an in-depth and respectful overview of these teachings, emphasizing the spiritual wisdom as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of each tradition. Smith adopts the perennial philosophy approach, which states that all religions are expressions of the same metaphysical truth, and that there are ethical commonalities among them, such as goodness, justice, and the pursuit of truth. The concept of "world religions"

was originally used to refer to “universal” religions like Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, but now it includes various major religious traditions living in the world.

The Perennial Philosophy, as proposed by Huston Smith, follows Aldous Huxley’s formulation. The Perennial Philosophy, which encompasses the study of metaphysics, psychology, and ethics, seeks to explore the fundamental basis of existence and spiritual reality. In this approach, the philosophy asserts that all reality—both immanent and transcendent—is deeply connected and leads to an understanding of Ultimate Reality or Divine Reality. This philosophy not only explores the rational and empirical aspects of existence but also seeks understanding that transcends the limitations of human logic and language through deep spiritual experiences. Additionally, the Perennial Philosophy explores the psychological dimension within humans and universal ethical values that guide the ultimate human goal. Through this understanding, the Perennial Philosophy offers insights into the profound relationship between humans, the self, and Divine Reality, going beyond mere rational comprehension. This philosophy seeks to explain various aspects of human existence and spiritual reality with an approach that transcends traditional boundaries in philosophy and psychology (Riki, 2022).

First, metaphysics in the Perennial Philosophy focuses on the search for the immanent and transcendent basis of all things. Smith explains that this philosophy is ontological, studying Being or existence, which has a hierarchical structure. In this view, each level of reality is interconnected and leads to Ultimate Reality or Divine Reality. This Divine Reality—which is known by various names such as Godhead in Christianity, Tao in Taoism, Sunyata or emptiness in Buddhism, Brahman in Hinduism, and al-Haqq in Islam—is the absolute substance that transcends human logic and language. To understand this Ultimate Reality, humans must experience and realize it through inner purity and spiritual emptiness, not just through a rationalistic or empirical approach.

Second, psychology in the Perennial Philosophy explores the eternal or Divine aspect within humans. Unlike conventional psychology, which often focuses on the ego or personal self, Perennial psychology emphasizes the “limitless and eternal self” within the individual. This concept teaches that the “self” can free itself from the limitations of the ego and senses, leading a person to the innermost center of their being—spirit. In this perspective, the spirit is not just the soul, but a Divine reality that permeates the depths of the human self.

Third, ethics in the Perennial Philosophy refers to the system of values that guide the ultimate goal of humanity. Smith quotes Lewis’s work *The Abolition of Man* to emphasize that Perennial ethics encompasses values similar to the concept of Tao. Tao, as a value system, integrates various moral imperatives from different traditions into three primary virtues: sincerity, humility, and generosity. These three virtues are in contrast to three poisons—pride, greed, and ignorance. Sincerity involves the ability to see things objectively and accurately, humility is about eliminating the ego to gain clearer vision, and generosity is the attitude of seeing others as oneself. These values are closely tied to the human order and universal ethics.

Universal Values in Abrahamic Religions

Universal Human Values in Judaism

In the Jewish tradition, the universal moral order is divided into three levels, which describe the relationship between humans, and with non-human beings (Novak, 2008). The first level is the principle of universal reciprocity, which emphasizes that all individuals should act towards others as they themselves would want to be treated. This principle creates a moral world where justice and equality form the foundation of human interaction. At this level, moral relationships are not transactional or based on direct rewards; instead, they reflect a commitment to deeper justice and goodness. To prevent this principle from disrupting the community with ontological and historical priorities, this moral order is regulated and constrained by the norms of the second and third levels, as well as transcendental sources such as God's commandments. This ensures that human interactions are not solely based on personal gain but also include a broader moral responsibility.

The second level involves nonreciprocal morality, which deals with individuals who have physical or mental limitations and are unable to reciprocate the good deeds of others. At this level, the moral object is those who lack the capacity for action or intention, and thus cannot participate in moral reciprocity. Recognition of transcendental sources at this level is important because respecting and caring for individuals who cannot repay is an expression of honoring the human status bestowed by God. This teaching reflects the recognition that humans have intrinsic value that must be respected, even if they cannot meet the same moral expectations of reciprocity.

The third level focuses on human responsibility towards non-human beings, such as animals, plants, and minerals. At this level, humans are expected to show respect and care for these beings, even though they may be used for human needs. The importance of recognizing transcendental sources at this level lies in the fact that responsibility towards non-human beings comes from the acknowledgment that all creatures are created and valued by God. This means that, although non-human beings cannot reciprocate or interact directly with humans, they still deserve respectful treatment based on the principle that all creation holds value and meaning bestowed by God. Thus, our moral responsibility towards non-human beings involves a deep respect for their existence as part of God's creation, which encompasses the entire universe, including animals, plants, and minerals.

The concepts of morality and law in the Jewish tradition, as expressed through various religious texts and rabbinic interpretations, also reflect universal human values. According to Michael Walzer, a prominent political philosopher in the United States and professor emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study (2001), some key points of universality in Judaism are as follows:

1. **The Teaching of Prophet Amos:** The teaching of Prophet Amos reflects the principle of universal equality and justice. In Amos 9:7, the prophet emphasizes that Israel does not have a special position before God compared to other nations such as the Philistines and Aram. This highlights the view that God sees all nations as equal, and that morality and justice are not limited to one ethnic or religious group. By teaching that all

nations are subject to the same moral standards, Amos underscores the importance of viewing all humanity as one valuable moral community that deserves fair treatment.

2. **The Messianic Vision in the Books of Micah and Isaiah:** The messianic vision in the Books of Micah and Isaiah depicts an ideal world where peace and justice become global norms. Micah 4:1-4 and Isaiah 2:2-4 describe a future where all nations will live in harmony and no longer engage in military conflict. This vision emphasizes a universal aspiration to create a peaceful world, where all humans, regardless of background, will live together in welfare and justice. It reflects a commitment to universal human values that transcend ethnic and religious boundaries, signaling hope for a more inclusive and just future.
3. **Rabbinic Maxim on Exile:** The rabbinic maxim “dina d’malkhuta dina” or “the law of the land is the law” reflects a practical approach to interactions with non-Jewish societies in the context of the diaspora. This principle teaches that Jews should obey the laws of the country they reside in, as long as they do not contradict the principles of Halakhah. This reflects universal human values in that, despite cultural and religious differences, principles of justice and adherence to the law are vital for harmonious coexistence. This maxim also shows flexibility in maintaining religious identity while respecting broader social rules.
4. **The Noahide Code:** The Noahide Code consists of seven commandments considered a universal moral standard for all humanity, not just Jews. The code includes prohibitions against murder, theft, and other evil deeds, and mandates the pursuit of justice. By establishing basic ethical principles that everyone must follow, the Noahide Code serves as a foundation for fair coexistence between Jews and non-Jews. It reflects the belief in a universal moral law that applies to all humans and demonstrates a commitment to human values that transcend religious and national boundaries, promoting global justice and peace.

The moral concepts in the Jewish tradition illustrate a profound view of the relationship between humans, fellow humans, and non-human beings. These three levels of the universal moral order emphasize justice, compassion, and responsibility that transcend personal and communal boundaries. The recognition of transcendental sources, such as God’s commandments, forms the ethical foundation for guiding life with universal values of justice and compassion. The teachings of Prophet Amos, the messianic vision in the Books of Micah and Isaiah, the rabbinic maxim on exile, and the Noahide Code all highlight the aspiration to create a just and harmonious society. This tradition offers an inclusive moral perspective that is relevant in the context of global and intercultural interactions today and enriches the dialogue on universal human values and our responsibility toward the world.

Universal Humanitarian Values in Christianity

Christianity, as one of the major monotheistic religions, offers values that reflect respect for human dignity and the establishment of harmonious social relationships.

Khan (2020) asserts that human dignity is the most fundamental universal value, where every individual has equal worth regardless of gender, age, social status, or profession. In this view, humans are seen not only as having basic rights but also as having a responsibility to respect one another. The teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:18, "Do not kill," emphasizes respect for human life as a fundamental principle that serves as the cornerstone of community life. This value is meant not only to prevent physical violence but also to maintain the moral and social integrity that supports the dignity of each individual.

Furthermore, respect for human dignity can also be seen as the core of universal moral teachings that transcend religious differences. Israr Ahmad Khan highlights how this respect is upheld in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all of which emphasize the protection of human life as a moral and spiritual obligation. In the framework of these humanitarian values, human equality becomes a central essence that eliminates discrimination based on social or biological identity. This value directs humanity to respect diversity and build an inclusive social life, making it a solid foundation for harmony and justice.

Madzamba's (1998) perspective enriches this by highlighting key Christian values that reflect universal humanitarian principles. Love, as taught in Galatians 5:13-14, is central to human relationships. Love is not merely an emotion but a concrete action that strengthens solidarity and social justice. Peace, as another essential value, teaches harmonious living both internally and externally, as conveyed in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers." This value blends with patience, which, according to Ecclesiastes 7:8, teaches calmness and self-control when facing challenges. These three values form the foundation for creating respectful and inclusive relationships.

Additionally, Havatidi Kizito Madzamba also emphasizes the importance of gentleness, kindness, and freedom as pillars of humanity. Gentleness reflects humility, as exemplified by Jesus when washing the feet of His disciples. Kindness, as taught in Ephesians 4:32, emphasizes acts of empathy toward others, especially those in need. Freedom, as explained in Romans 6:18, refers to human liberation from the bondage of sin to live in truth. With these values, Christianity not only guides human relationships with God but also provides a framework for building a just, loving, and supportive society. These values affirm the universality of Christian teachings, placing humanity at the heart of communal life.

Universal Humanitarian Values in Islam

Islam, as a universal religion, provides a strong foundation for universal humanitarian values, including justice, compassion, peace, and brotherhood (Karimullah & Mahbubi, 2023). These values are not only a guide for Muslims but also relevant in global society. Through the concept of tawhid, or the oneness of Allah, Islam emphasizes the unity of humanity under one Creator. With this belief, all humans, regardless of religion, culture, or ethnicity, are part of one large family. This concept is manifested in the idea of "ummah," which teaches the importance of brotherhood, equality, and collective responsibility.

Justice ('adl) is the cornerstone of universal Islamic values. From the Islamic perspective, justice is not only moral but also a legal norm that must be upheld.

Islam even commands being just, including towards those who are disliked. Injustice (zulm) is viewed as a serious threat to the social order and harmony of society. This justice encompasses all aspects of life, whether personal, social, or systemic. As emphasized by Karimullah and Mahbubi (2023), the values of justice and compassion in Islam not only strengthen the unity of the Muslim community but also serve as the basis for harmonious relations with non-Muslims.

Islam also holds human life in high regard. The Qur'an teaches that killing one soul without just cause is equivalent to killing all of humanity, while saving one soul is equivalent to saving all of humanity. This reflects a universal respect for life, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or cultural background. This principle serves as an important guideline in advocating for human rights globally.

Islam also acknowledges freedom of religion, tolerance, and pluralism (Karimullah & Mahbubi, 2023). The principle of "there is no compulsion in religion" (la ikraha fi al-din) affirms respect for an individual's freedom to choose and practice their beliefs. By encouraging interfaith and intercultural dialogue, Islam lays the foundation for peace and cooperation in a diverse society.

In Ahmad's (2006) view, the global ethical values of Islam include seven key elements that are relevant to building a just and harmonious society. First, the principle of unity in life teaches harmony in all aspects of life, whether spiritual, social, or material. Tawhid is not only the core of faith but also an ethical framework that integrates all dimensions of human life. Second, justice ('adl) forms the foundation for upholding human rights and maintaining social balance. Third, respect for human life reflects a collective responsibility to protect life as a trust from God.

Fourth, respect for religious freedom and diversity affirms the importance of tolerance in multicultural societies. Fifth, Islam places intellect ('aql) as a key element in understanding ethical values and human rights, urging humanity to use their intelligence to create social harmony. Sixth, respect for human dignity, honor, and lineage demonstrates Islam's commitment to equality and justice. Seventh, the protection of property (mal) is an important aspect of universal Islamic values, supporting economic stability and the well-being of society.

Through the application of these values, Islam offers an inclusive, just, and peaceful global vision (Ahmad, 2006). These universal values not only help build a dignified social order but also provide a framework for addressing global challenges such as poverty, social inequality, intercultural conflicts, and climate change. Islam, with its universal message, invites humanity to unite in creating a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world. Anis Ahmad's perspective plays a crucial role in affirming that Islamic values can contribute to the creation of a harmonious and respectful global order, where human rights are valued as part of moral and global ethical obligations.

Frithjof Schuon and the Transcendent Unity of Religions: Universal Values Across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Frithjof Schuon, a highly respected metaphysical thinker of the 20th century, had profound views on universal human values that connect the major religious

traditions of the world, especially Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. His thought emphasized that although each religion has different expressions and forms, the core of these spiritual teachings is rooted in the same source—the transcendental principles that underpin human life and the entire creation. This perspective becomes highly relevant in the context of interfaith dialogue, where universal human values are seen as a foundation that can strengthen relationships among religious communities, even though theological and ritual differences often pose challenges in interfaith communication.

In the Jewish tradition, universal human values are not only reflected in moral rules governing human relationships, but also in a profound understanding of the honor and dignity of each individual as a creation of God. One of the fundamental principles found in Jewish teachings is the universal principle of reciprocity, which states that each person should treat others as they would want to be treated. This principle, often referred to as the “Golden Rule,” emphasizes the importance of justice and equality in social interactions. For Schuon, this principle is one of the universal values that bridge social and ethnic divides within human communities, providing a moral foundation for peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, Jewish teachings also include an understanding of nonreciprocal morality, which teaches that every human has intrinsic value that must be respected, regardless of physical or mental condition. This includes an understanding of the inviolable dignity of humans, which protects the most vulnerable members of society, such as children, the elderly, or those with disabilities.

Additionally, the Jewish tradition emphasizes human responsibility toward non-human creatures. Teachings such as these highlight the importance of respecting nature and all of God’s creation, which is considered part of the divine command to care for and protect the Earth and its contents. This adds a broader dimension to the Jewish understanding of human values, showing that moral responsibility is not only limited to human relationships, but also encompasses the relationship between humans and the universe, as well as other forms of creation. These values, as described in the teachings of the Prophet Amos and the messianic vision in the books of Micah and Isaiah, point toward the creation of a more just and peaceful world, where humanity not only lives in harmony with one another but also with all of creation.

In Christianity, universal human values are also reflected in the teachings of Jesus Christ, who emphasized the respect for human life and the dignity of every individual. One of the most profound teachings found in the Gospel is the commandment “You shall not kill” (Matthew 19:18), which not only forbids physical killing but also provides a broader understanding of the protection of human dignity, both physically, morally, and socially. In Schuon’s view, this teaching is an important reminder that human life is valuable not only in a physical sense, but also in terms of the moral and social integrity that must be protected from all forms of exploitation or oppression.

Moreover, Christian teachings emphasize the value of love, which is central to all of Jesus’ teachings. In Galatians 5:13-14, it is expressed that Christians should love and serve one another, just as Jesus has loved them. This reinforces social solidarity and justice as the primary principles in living together. For Schuon, love

in Christian teachings is not just a feeling, but a calling to do good and serve others, especially those in need. This love strengthens human relationships and serves as a foundation for building a more just and harmonious society. Additionally, Christian teachings also include values such as peace, patience, gentleness, and freedom, which further enrich the construction of these universal values, showing that the goal of humanity is to achieve happiness and peace together. These teachings provide a strong moral foundation for individuals and societies to live in harmony, prioritizing the common good and avoiding conflict or division.

In Islam, universal human values are reflected in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, which teach that all humans, regardless of race, ethnicity, or social status, have equal rights as creations of God. One of the central concepts in Islam is Tawhid, which teaches that God is one, and this unity reflects the unity of humanity. The concept of Tawhid in Islam influences how Muslims view their relationships with fellow human beings, as they believe that all people originate from the same source, the one God. Therefore, Islam emphasizes the importance of equality and social justice for all people. The principle of justice, as stated in Surah An-Nisa (4:135), teaches that Muslims must act justly to everyone, even to those considered enemies. In Schuon's view, this is one of the most important universal principles, as it teaches that justice is not only for those close to us but for all of humanity, regardless of differences.

The value of mercy is also very important in Islam, reflected in two of God's names, Ar-Rahman (The Most Merciful) and Ar-Rahim (The Most Compassionate). These names show that God has unlimited mercy for all of His creation, and Muslims are expected to emulate these qualities in their everyday lives. In many Hadiths, Prophet Muhammad teaches the importance of doing good to others, especially to the weak and those in need, such as orphans, the poor, and the marginalized in society. For Schuon, the value of mercy is a key aspect of Islamic teachings that makes it one of the religions emphasizing universal humanity, teaching its followers to care not only for the welfare of fellow Muslims but for all of humanity.

Frithjof Schuon viewed that despite differences in form and expression, the essence of the teachings of these religions remains deeply similar. Universal human values such as justice, mercy, and respect for human dignity are principles that can be found across the major world traditions. For Schuon, religion is not just an individual belief system but also a source of moral values that can guide humanity to live in justice, mercy, and peace. In today's increasingly fragmented world, Schuon's teachings remind us that despite our differences in religious rituals and doctrines, we can find common ground in universal values that honor life, human dignity, and compassion toward others.

By integrating these values into social and political practice, Schuon demonstrates that religion can be a force that transforms the world, not only to improve human relationships but also to create a more inclusive and peaceful world. In a globally complex context, Schuon's thoughts offer highly relevant insights, suggesting that universal human values should form the foundation for a stronger global solidarity. Schuon invites us to delve deeper into these transcendental values, which can serve as the basis for creating a more just, peaceful, and compassionate society.

Religious Common Ground: Huston Smith's Concept of Universal Human Values in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Huston Smith, a prominent religious philosopher, is well known for his profound works on the world's religions. In his writings, Smith seeks to explore the common values found in various major religious traditions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, despite differences in doctrine and practices. According to Smith, although these religions are rooted in different backgrounds, there are universal human principles that can serve as a meeting point between them. These values include fundamental moral aspects such as justice, compassion, respect for life, and responsibility toward others and the environment. By examining these values, we can see that these different religious traditions actually share a deep commonality regarding the ultimate goal of human life, which is to create a just, compassionate, and respectful society.

According to Huston Smith, the major world religions do not only teach a spiritual view of life but also shape moral patterns that can be applied in human social life. The values outlined in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, although conveyed in different ways, have a similar goal, which is to build a harmonious and just society. Principles such as compassion for others, justice, and respect for life are at the core of the teachings of these three religions, and they converge in a vision of life that is meaningful and mutually supportive. Smith emphasizes that to understand these teachings more deeply, we need to explore more universal values and not only focus on the doctrinal differences between religions.

In the Jewish tradition, concepts of justice and social responsibility form the foundation for building relationships among individuals. The principle of "tzedek" or justice teaches the importance of fair treatment for every individual, regardless of their background. In Judaism, God not only wants His people to live in personal piety but also to uphold social justice. One of the most well-known teachings in the Jewish tradition is "love your neighbor as yourself," which teaches that every individual should treat others as they themselves would like to be treated. This is not a teaching limited to Jews alone but applies to all of humanity. Therefore, this teaching contains a universal dimension that teaches us to respect and love others as part of our moral duty.

In the Christian tradition, the human values that are highly regarded are closely related to the teaching of love, which is central to the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught the importance of love not only for one's neighbor but also for enemies and those who harm us. This teaching creates a higher moral foundation for humanity to live in peace and harmony. The principle "love your neighbor as yourself," as explained in the Gospel, as well as the teaching to love one's enemies, shows that love is not merely a feeling but is about concrete actions that can repair human relationships and build peace. Love in Christian teachings is not limited to a particular individual or group but applies to all of humanity, regardless of race, religion, or social status.

Meanwhile, in the Islamic tradition, the concept of tawhid, or the oneness of God, is profound and teaches that humanity is one large family that originates from the same God. In Islam, human dignity is honored and upheld, and every

individual is expected to act justly toward others. The concept of justice in Islam, known as 'adl, encompasses fair treatment of every individual, whether in personal, social life, or in matters of human rights. Islamic teachings also emphasize the importance of charity and almsgiving as a means to help those in need and fulfill social responsibility. Islam teaches that compassion for others is an inseparable part of spiritual life for Muslims, and this is reflected in many teachings that stress the importance of caring for the weak, helping the needy, and respecting all living creatures.

These three religions, although differing in rituals and doctrines, teach values that are in harmony regarding the importance of justice, compassion, and the protection of human life. These values are not confined to the teachings of a particular religion but are considered moral principles that must be applied in everyday life, both at the individual level and within the broader societal context. These values also affirm humanity's responsibility to the environment and other living beings, as part of the preservation of God's creation that must be safeguarded and respected.

Huston Smith, in his perspective, suggests that we view these universal human values as a bridge that can connect religious differences. In an increasingly plural and complex world, it is important for humanity to understand and appreciate the common values present in the major world religions, in order to create a more peaceful and supportive world. By emphasizing the universal human values taught by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, we can strengthen interfaith dialogue and create a more inclusive society, where every individual, regardless of their religious or cultural background, is valued and treated justly.

Finally, Huston Smith's construction of thought shows that although we may differ in how we practice religion, we all share the same goal of realizing a better, more just, and more compassionate life. The universal values upheld by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam provide a solid moral foundation for building a world that is not only better for certain religious groups but for all of humanity. In this regard, Huston Smith reminds us to continue to explore these commonalities, because through understanding and applying these universal values, we can create peace and harmony in an increasingly interconnected world.

Conclusion

Frithjof Schuon and Huston Smith offer profound insights into the universal human values found within the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. Although these three religions differ in form, doctrine, and ritual, they share similar core values, including justice, compassion, respect for human dignity, and responsibility toward others and the environment. Through the lens of the Perennial Philosophy, both thinkers argue that these values are manifestations of the One Truth underlying all religions. For Schuon, these values are rooted in the transcendental principles that underpin each religious teaching, while Smith places greater emphasis on the ethical and social implications of these values in building a just and harmonious society. Although each tradition has different emphases and interpretations of these values—for example, social justice in Judaism, compassion in Christianity, and Tawhid in Islam—the presence of these values in all traditions demonstrates

their potential as a point of convergence for building solidarity among religious groups. However, it is important to acknowledge that differing interpretations and applications of these values can also be a source of conflict. Therefore, despite the challenges, recognizing the universal human values contained within these religions can be a crucial foundation for interreligious dialogue, understanding, and cooperation, guiding humanity toward a more just, peaceful, and compassionate life.

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