

## “Signposts to the suprasensible”

### Notes on Frithjof Schuon’s understanding of “Nature”\*

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“ A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees. ”

**William Blake**<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Seyyed Hossein Nasr opens his book, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996), with these words:

“ The Earth is bleeding from wounds inflicted upon it by a humanity no longer in harmony with Heaven and therefore in constant strife with the terrestrial environment. ”

That we are now in a state of “constant strife” is widely recognized but the root causes of this condition are rarely understood. We witness a plethora of writings on the “ecological crisis,” often well-intentioned and sometimes enlivened by partial insights, but fundamentally confused because of an ignorance of timeless metaphysical and cosmological principles. It has been the task of figures such as René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy and Frithjof Schuon, authoritative expositors of the *sophia perennis*, to remind the modern world of those principles which can be ignored but not refuted. My purpose here is to provide a sketch, largely through direct quotation, of a few of the key principles and doctrines which govern Schuon’s understanding of the natural order. I will not present a comprehensive explication but rather an elliptical series of jottings, quoting primarily from Schuon’s early works, *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (1965) and *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts* (1967), and from his writings on the American Plains Indians which have been collected together in *The Feathered Sun: Plains Indians in Art and Philosophy* (1990).

*The Feathered Sun* is one of Schuon’s most personal books, textured as it is with direct references to his own experience—his usual cloak of anonymity is momentarily drawn back. A further token of this aspect of the book is that one cannot imagine any of his fellow-traditionalists writing anything like it. The book, in both text and image, is pervaded by the pathos which marks the disappearance of a spiritual economy and a way of life of extraordinary beauty and nobility. There is also a peculiar poignancy in the fact that Schuon was adopted into both the Crow and Sioux tribes, remembering their heroic resistance to the encroachments of European “civilization.” Furthermore, one cannot but see in Schuon himself just those qualities which he extolled in the Indians—“a stoical and combative heroism with a priestly bearing [which] conferred on the Indian of the Plains and Forest a sort of majesty at once aquiline and solar.”<sup>3</sup>

Schuon's love of nature, a beautiful leitmotif his writings, was deepened during the two periods which he and his wife spent with the Plains Indians in the late '50s and early '60s. As Schuon has observed,

“The Indian is predisposed towards the suprasensible and strives to penetrate the hard wall of the sensible world, seeks openings where he can, and finds them chiefly in phenomena themselves, which indeed, in their contents, are nothing other than signposts to the suprasensible. Things are hard-frozen melodies from the Beyond.”<sup>4</sup>

Schuon's sensitivity to the metaphysical transparency of phenomena and the “symbolist outlook” of the Indians were in deepest accord. What one commentator has written of the metaphysician applies no less to the Indians themselves: “For Schuon, virgin nature carries a message of eternal truth and primordial reality, and to plunge oneself therein is to rediscover a dimension of the soul which in modern man has become atrophied.”<sup>5</sup> Schuon himself, writing in the context of the Red Indian receptivity to the lessons of nature, said this:

“Wild Nature is at one with holy poverty and also with spiritual childlikeness; she is an open book containing an inexhaustible teaching of truth and beauty. It is in the midst of his own artifices that man most easily becomes corrupted, it is they who make him covetous and impious; close to virgin Nature, who knows neither agitation nor falsehood, he had the hope of remaining contemplative like Nature herself.”<sup>6</sup>

### **The Absolute, the Relative and the Origin of Maya**

Let us move now to our series of jottings: firstly, to the question of why the world, the universe, the realm of *maya*, exists at all, and what are the relationships between the Absolute unqualified (referred to variously as the Godhead, Beyond-Being, *nirguna Brahman* and the like), God as Creator, and the manifest world? Here is a characteristically dense passage from Schuon on this question:

“As for the question of the “origin” of illusion [*maya*] it is amongst those questions that can be resolved... though this resolution cannot be adjusted to suit all needs of causality... the infinitude of Reality implies the possibility of its own negation... and this negation being impossible in the Absolute itself, it is necessary that this “possibility of the impossible” should be realised in an “internal dimension” which is “neither real nor unreal,” that is to say which is real on its own level while being unreal in respect of Essence, with the result that we touch everywhere the Absolute, from which we cannot emerge, although it is at the same time infinitely far off so that no thought can ever circumscribe it.”<sup>7</sup>

There is nothing abnormal or idiosyncratic in Schuon's formulation of a dimension which is “neither real nor unreal”: compare this, for example, from St Augustine:

“I beheld these others beneath Thee, and saw that they neither altogether are, nor altogether are not. An existence they have because they are from Thee; and yet no existence, because they are not what Thou art. For only that really is that remains unchangeably...”<sup>8</sup>

Approaching our question from another angle, Schuon writes this:

“If the world is necessary by virtue of a mystery of the divine infinity-and there must be no confusing of the perfection of necessity with constraint, nor yet of the perfection of liberty

with arbitrariness—the necessity of the Creative Being arises before that of the world, and with all the more reason: what the world is to being, Being is—*mutatis mutandis*—to the supreme Non-Being. *Maya* includes not only the whole of manifestation, she is already affirmed a fortiori “within” the Principle; the divine Principle “desiring to be known” —or “desiring to know”—stoops to the unfolding of an inward infinity, an unfolding at first potential and afterwards outward or cosmic. The relationship “God-world,” “Creator-creature,” “Principle-manifestation” would be inconceivable were it not prefigured in God, independent of any question of creation.[9](#)”

Elsewhere Schuon elaborates the Creator-creature relationship further:

““ That we are conformed to God—made in His image—this is certain; otherwise we should not exist. That we are contrary to God, this is also certain; otherwise we should not be different from God. Without analogy to God we should be nothing. Without opposition to God we should be God. The separation between man and God is at the same time absolute and relative... The separation is absolute because God alone is real and no continuity is possible between nothingness and Reality; but the separation is relative—or rather “not absolute”—because nothing is outside God. In a sense it might be said that the separation is absolute as from man to God and relative as from God to man.[10](#)”

To those who want variously to claim that the very idea of God is a “projection,” a “wish-fulfilment,” a “delusion,” an “expedient,” or whatever, Schuon has this to say:

““ There are those who claim that the idea of God is to be explained only by social opportunism, without taking account of the infinite disproportion and the contradiction involved in such a hypothesis: if men such as Plato, Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas—not to mention the Prophets, or Christ, or the sages of Asia—were not capable of remarking that God is merely a social prejudice or some other dupery of the kind, and if hundreds and thousands of years have been based intellectually on their incapacity, then there is no human intelligence, and still less any possibility of progress, for a being absurd by nature does not contain the possibility of ceasing to be absurd.[11](#)”

Before leaving the realm of metaphysical speculation (and let us not be confused by the modern misunderstanding of this latter term but rather remember the link between this word and “speculum”) we might profitably recall another of Schuon’s dictums: “The Infinite is what it is; one may understand it or not understand it. Metaphysics cannot be taught to everyone but, if it could be, there would be no atheism.”[12](#)

Next we might ask, what is the nature of the manifested world? What are we dealing with in this manifest time-space ensemble? When we look around us, asks Schuon, what do we see?

““ Firstly existence; secondly, differences; thirdly, movements, modifications, transformations; fourthly, disappearances. All these things together manifest a state of universal substance: that state is at once a crystallization and a rotation, a heaviness and a dispersion, a solidification and a segmentation. Just as water is in ice, and the movement of the hub in the rim, so is God in phenomena; He is accessible in them and through them; this is the whole mystery of symbolism and immanence. God is “the Outward” and “the Inward,” “the First” and “the Last.”[13](#)”

This world of *maya* is “illusory,” not in the sense that it is a mirage or a fantasy, but in that its “reality” is only relative: it has no independence, no autonomy, no existence outside the Divine Principle Itself. It is an ever changing and fugitive tissue of relativities, one which both veils and discloses the Absolute.

So, then, what are to make of the phenomena of this world—the creatures, the forms and processes of nature, the qualities which inhere in the natural order? To answer this question adequately we must understand not only that *maya* is indeed “cosmic illusion” but

“...she is also divine play. She is the great theophany, the unveiling of God “In Himself and by Himself” as the Sufis would say. Maya may be likened to a magic fabric woven from a warp that veils and a weft that unveils; she is the quasi-incomprehensible intermediary between the finite and the Infinite—at least from our point of view as creatures—and as such she has all the multi-colored ambiguity appropriate to her part-cosmic, part-divine nature.”[14](#)

Thus,

“...the term *maya* combines the meanings of “productive power” and “universal illusion”; it is the inexhaustible play of manifestations, deployments, combinations and reverberations, a play with which Atom clothes itself even as the ocean clothes itself with a mantle of foam ever renewed and never the same.”[15](#)

It is in this context that we might best understand the many apophthegms which characterize Schuon’s writings on nature. Here is a small sample:

“For the sage each flower is metaphysically a proof of the Infinite.”[16](#)

The sun, not being God, must prostrate itself every evening before the throne of Allah...[17](#)

God reveals himself to the plant in the form of the light of the sun. The plant irresistibly turns itself towards the light; it could not be atheistical or impious.[18](#)

The fruits of the earth and the rain from the sky, which make life possible, are nothing if not manifestations of the Goodness that penetrates everywhere and warms the world; and we carry that Goodness within ourselves, at the bottom of our chilled hearts.[19](#)

It goes without saying that in this domain a material and empirical science is of no help:

“...modern science is a totalitarian rationalism that eliminates both Revelation and Intellect, and at the same time a totalitarian materialism that ignores the metaphysical relativity—and therewith the impermanence—of matter and the world. It does not know that the supra-sensible, situated as it is beyond space and time, is the concrete principle of the world, and consequently that it is also at the origin of that contingent and changeable coagulation we call “matter.” A science that is called “exact” is in fact an “intelligence without wisdom,” just as post-scholastic philosophy is inversely a “wisdom without intelligence.”[20](#)

## The Nature of Symbolism and the Symbolism of Nature

An adequate comprehension of the natural order must be informed by the doctrine of archetypes and the attendant understanding of symbolism.<sup>21</sup> In former times the doctrine of archetypes was espoused the world over. No integral tradition has been able to do without it though the language in which it is clothed may speak not of archetypes but of “essences,” “universals,” “lights,” “Divine Ideas” and so on. Plato gave the doctrine its most definitive European expression but there is nothing peculiarly Occidental about it as such. It lies at the root of all traditional theories of art. By way of introduction, let us consider the following sample of suggestive quotations:

“ A form is made in the resigned will according to the platform or model of eternity, as it was known in God’s eternal wisdom before the times of this world. ” (Jacob Boehme)

“ All forms of being in this corporeal world are images of pure Lights, which exist in the spiritual world. ” (Suhrawardi)

“ The Sages have been taught of God that this natural world is only an image and a copy of a heavenly and spiritual pattern; that the very existence of this world is based upon the reality of its celestial archetypes. ” (Michael Sendivogius)

“ Things in every instance involve universals... If there were no universals we could not speak of things as things. ” (Kung-sun Lung)<sup>22</sup>

“ Crazy Horse dreamed and went Out into the world where there is nothing but the spirits of things. That is the real world that is behind this one, and everything we see here is something like a shadow from that world. ” (Black Elk)<sup>23</sup>

Formulations of this kind could be multiplied more or less indefinitely but their burden is clear enough. Meister Eckhart provided a concise statement of the doctrine in writing “Form is revelation of essence.”<sup>24</sup> Everything that exists, whatever its modality, necessarily participates in universal principles which are uncreated and in immutable essences contained, in Guenon’s words, in “the permanent actuality of the Divine Intellect.” Consequently, all phenomena, no matter how ephemeral or contingent, “translate” or “represent” these principles in their own fashion at their own level of existence. Without participation in the immutable, they would “purely and simply be nothing.”<sup>25</sup> The doctrine of archetypes also implies the multiple states of being and a hierarchic structure of the cosmos. As Abu Bakr Siraj Ed-Din writes:

“ ...if a world did not cast down shadows from above, the worlds below it would vanish altogether, since each world in creation is no more than a tissue of shadows entirely dependent on the archetypes in the world above.<sup>26</sup> ”

The analogies between the archetypes or “Divine Ideas” and the transitory material forms of this world, “this changing and ephemeral multiplicity” as Guénon calls it, give to phenomena certain qualitative significances which render them symbolic expressions of higher realities. The same idea is implicit in Mircea Eliade’s claim that *homo religiosus* is also, necessarily, *homo symbolicus*.<sup>27</sup>

The traditionalist understanding of both nature and sacred art is predicated upon a very precise understanding of the nature of symbolism. A symbol may generally be defined as a reality of a lower order which participates analogically in a reality of a higher order of being. Therefore, a properly constituted symbolism rests on the inherent and objective qualities of phenomena and their relationship to spiritual realities. It follows that the science of symbolism is a rigorous discipline which can only proceed through a discernment of the *qualitative* significances of substances, colors, forms, spatial relationships and so on. This is crucial. Schuon:

“...we are not here dealing with subjective appreciations, for the cosmic qualities are ordered both in relation to being and according to a hierarchy which is more real than the individual; they are, then, independent of our tastes...”[28](#)”

So important is this principle that it deserves re-stating, this time in the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr:

“The symbol is not based on man-made conventions. It is an aspect of the ontological reality of things and as such is independent of man’s perception of it. The symbol is the revelation of a higher order of reality in a lower order through which man can be led back to the higher realm. To understand symbols is to accept the hierarchic structure of the Universe and the multiple states of being.”[29](#)”

Symbolic significances cannot be invented or imputed. Traditional symbolism, then, is an objective language which is conceived not according to the impulses of individual or collective “taste” but in conformity with the nature of things. It will take account not only of “sensible beauty” but “the spiritual foundations of this beauty.”[30](#) Because of its precision and objectivity a traditional symbolism may be called a “calculus” or “algebra” for the expression of universal ideas: “the function of every symbol is to break the shell of forgetfulness that screens the knowledge immanent in the Intellect.”[31](#)

The conception of symbolism as an objective language is axial in Coomaraswamy’s mature work, much of which was directed towards reawakening a proper understanding of the symbolic vocabulary of traditional arts. A characteristic formulation:

“Symbolism is a language and a precise form of thought; a hieratic and a metaphysical language and not a language determined by somatic or psychological categories. Its foundation is in analogical correspondences... symbolism is a calculus in the same sense that an adequate analogy is a proof.”[32](#)”

The study of traditional symbols, therefore, demands methods no less rigorous or sensitive than those of the philologist. Nothing could be more ill-conceived than a subjective interpretation of traditional symbols which are no more amenable to guesswork than is an archaic language. As Coomaraswamy points out, the study of such symbolisms is no easy business, not only because the same symbol may be deployed in different senses but because we are no longer familiar with the metaphysical burden which it once carried.[33](#)

The science of symbolism is a kind of objective analogue of the gift of “seeing God everywhere,” that is, the awareness of the transparency of phenomena and of the transcendent dimension which is present in every cosmic situation.[34](#) Ramakrishna, who could fall into

ecstasy at the sight of a lion, a bird, a dancing girl, exemplified this gift though in his case, Schuon adds, it was not a matter of deciphering the symbolism but of “tasting the essences.”<sup>35</sup> Eliade, approaching the whole question from a different angle, has noted how, for *homo religiosus*, everything in nature is capable of revealing itself as a “cosmic sacrality,” as a hierophany. He also observes that for our secular age the cosmos has become “opaque, inert, mute; it transmits no message, it holds no cipher.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Divine Rays**

A few words on Beauty which we find everywhere in the natural order as well as in the human form itself, and in sacred art. Firstly, there is the intimate nexus between truth, goodness and beauty. The inter-relationships of the three are more or less inexhaustible and there is no end to what might be said on this subject. Here we shall establish only a few general points, taking the nature of beauty as our point of departure. Marsilio Ficino, the Renaissance Platonist, defined beauty as “that ray which parting from the visage of God, penetrates into all things”.<sup>37</sup> Beauty, in most traditional canons, has this divine quality. Beauty is a manifestation of the Infinite on a finite plane and so introduces something of the Absolute into the world of relativities. Its sacred character “confers on perishable things a texture of eternity.”<sup>38</sup> Schuon:

“ The archetype of Beauty, or its Divine model, is the superabundance and equilibrium of the Divine qualities, and at the same time the overflowing of the existential potentialities in pure Being... Thus beauty always manifests a reality of love, of deployment, of illimitation, of equilibrium, of beatitude, of generosity.”<sup>39</sup>

It is distinct but not separate from truth and virtue. As Aquinas affirmed, beauty relates to the cognitive faculty and is thus connected with wisdom.<sup>40</sup> The rapport between beauty and virtue allows one to say that they are but two faces of the one reality: “goodness is internal beauty, and beauty is external goodness” or, similarly, “virtue is the beauty of the soul as beauty is the virtue of forms.”<sup>41</sup> To put it another way, and Oscar Wilde notwithstanding, there are no beautiful vices just as there are no ugly virtues. The inter-relationships of beauty, truth and goodness explain why, in the Oriental traditions, every *avatara* embodies a perfection of Beauty. It is said of the Buddhas they save not only by their doctrine but by their superhuman beauty.<sup>42</sup> Schuon gathers together some of these principles in the following passage:

“ ...the earthly function of beauty is to actualize in the intelligent creature the Platonic recollection of the archetypes... there is a distinguish to make, in the sensing of the beautiful, between the aesthetic sensation and the corresponding beauty of soul, namely such and such a virtue. Beyond every question of “sensible consolation” the message of beauty is both intellectual and moral: intellectual because it communicates to us, in the world of accidentality, aspects of Substance, without for all that having to address itself to abstract thought; and moral, because it reminds us of what we must love, and consequently be.”<sup>43</sup>

Beauty, whether natural or man-made, can be either an open or a closed door: when it is identified only with its earthly support it leaves man vulnerable to idolatry and to mere aestheticism; it brings us closer to God when “we perceive in it the vibrations of Beatitude and Infinity, which emanate from Divine Beauty.”<sup>44</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to draw explicit connections between Schuon's affirmation of traditional principles and the particular issues and problems which beset the contemporary debate about the "environment" (itself a rather problematic term).<sup>45</sup> Suffice it to say that all those concerned about the current "ecological crisis" (which is actually a symptom of a deeper spiritual malaise) would do well to ponder the implications of the following passage from Schuon:

“ This dethronement of Nature, or this scission between man and the earth—a reflection of the scission between man and God—has borne such bitter fruits that it should not be difficult to admit that, in these days, the timeless message of Nature constitutes a spiritual viaticum of the first importance. .. It is not a matter of projecting a supersaturated and disillusioned individualism into a desecrated Nature—this would be a worldliness like any other—but, on the contrary, of rediscovering in Nature, on the basis of the traditional outlook, the divine substance which is inherent in it; in other words, to “see God everywhere.”..<sup>46</sup> ”

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\* This paper is a slightly modified version of a paper presented to a postgraduate philosophy seminar at La Trobe University, Bendigo. November 1999.

1 *The Proverbs of Hell*

2 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 3.

3 Frithjof Schuon, *The Feathered Sun: Plains Indians in Art and Philosophy*, Bloomington: world wisdom Books, 1990, 39-40.

4 Frithjof Schuon, *The Feathered Sun*, 154.

5 Barbara Perry, *Frithjof Schuon, Metaphysician and Artist*, Bloomington, 1981, 6.

6 Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, London: Perennial Books, 1965, 84.

7 Frithjof Schuon, *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*, London: Perennial Books, 1979, 72-73. As Schuon has also written, “the Divine Maya, relativity, is the necessary consequence of the very infinitude of the Principle , *Logic and Transcendence*, New York: Harper & Row. 1975,89. See also Frithjof Schuon, “*Atma-Maya*,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 7:3. Spring, 1977, *passim*.

8 *Confessions* 9.vii, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

9 Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, 190.

10 Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, London: Perennial Books, 1967, 160-161.

11 Frithjof Schuon. *Stations of Wisdom*, London: Perennial Books, 19110, 36.

12 Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, 50.



- [13](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, 111-112.
- [14](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient World*, 119. See also the Editorial, “What Thirst is For” in *Sacred Web*, 4, 13-14.
- [15](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, 89n.
- [16](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, 10.
- [17](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient World*, 93.
- [18](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, 134.
- [19](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient World*, 115.
- [20](#) Frithjof Schuon. *Light on the Ancient World*, 117.
- [21](#) Considering the popularity of Jung’s ideas about “archetypes” it is as well to make it clear that these do not constitute any kind of metaphysical doctrine but a precarious hypothesis about certain psychic phenomena.
- [22](#) The four quotations above are taken from Whitall Perry’s magisterial compendium. *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1971, 671, 673, 672 & 670 respectively.
- [23](#) In John Neihardt (ed), *Black Elk Speaks*, London: Abacus, 1974, 67.
- [24](#) Meister Eckhart in *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*, 673.
- [25](#) René Guénon, *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, quoted in *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*, 302.
- [26](#) Abu Bakr Siraj Ed-Di, in *The Book of Certainty Samuel Weiser*, New York, 1974, 50. This book gives an account of the doctrine of archetypes and of the multiple states of being from a Sufic perspective. See also René Guénon, *The Multiple States of Being*, New York: Larson, 1984.
- [27](#) See Mircea Eliade, “Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism” in Mircea Eliade & Joseph Kitagawa (eds), *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, 95.
- [28](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*, 110.
- [29](#) Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1972, 88. See also Marco Pallis, *A Buddhist Spectrum*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1980, 144-163.
- [30](#) Frithjof Schuon: “Foundations of an Integral Aesthetics,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*. 10:3, 1976, 130. See also Brian Keeble, “Tradition, Intelligence and the Artist,” *Studies in Comparative Religion*, 11:4, 1977, 240-241.

[31](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, London: Perennial Books, 1981, 11. See also Frithjof Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, 40.

[32](#) A.K. Coomaraswamy, "The Nature of Buddhist Art" in *Selected Papers I: Traditional Art and Symbolism*, ed. Roger Lipsey. Princeton: Bollingen Press, 1977, 174-175. See also Coomaraswamy's undated letter to an anonymous recipient and to Robert Ulich, July 1942, in *Selected Letters of Ananda Coomaraswamy*, ed. Alvin Moore, Jr. & Rama P. Coomaraswamy, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, 210-212 & 214-215.

[33](#) A.K. Coomaraswamy, "The Iconography of Durer's 'Knots' and Leonardo's 'Concatenation'", *The Art Quarterly*, 7:2, 1944, 125; quoted in *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*, 305.

[34](#) See Frithjof Schuon, *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*, 106-121 and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1976, 131.

[35](#) Frithjof Schuon, "Foundations of an Integral Aesthetics," 135n. See also Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1974, 61ff.

[36](#) Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1959, 12 & 178.

[37](#) Quoted in R.J. Clements, *Michelangelo's Theory of Art*, New York: New York University Press, 1971, 5.

[38](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1976, 48.

[39](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, 241.

[40](#) See A.K. Coomaraswamy, "The Mediaeval Theory of Beauty" in *Selected Papers I: Traditional Art and Symbolism*, 211-20, and two essays, "Beauty and Truth" and "why Exhibit works of Art?" in *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, New York: Dover, 1956, 7-22 (esp. 16-18) & 102-109.

[41](#) Frithjof Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, 245-246. See also Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, 95.

[42](#) As Schuon notes, the name "Shunyamurti" -manifestation of the void -applied to a Buddha, is full of significance; *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, 25n. See also Frithjof Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1968, 121.

[43](#) Frithjof Schuon, "Foundations of an Integral Aesthetics," 131-132.

[44](#) Frithjof Schuon, "Foundations of an Integral Aesthetics," 135.

[45](#) Some of these are briefly discussed in my earlier article, "'The Translucence of the Eternal': Religious Understandings of the Natural Order", *Sacred Web*, 2, 11-31.

[46](#) Frithjof Schuon, *The Feathered Sun*, 13.

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