

## PHILOSOPHY OF PERENNIALISM AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*Perennialism is born as a reaction to progressive education. Perennialism opposes the progressive view which emphasizes change and something new. Perennialism views the world situation today as full of chaos, uncertainty, and disorder, especially in moral, intellectual and socio-cultural life. Aspects of the study of the application of perennialism in Islamic religious education include the purpose of education as an effort to inherit culture and maintain the nature of students, learning material according to perennialism, curriculum development and selection of learning methods in Islamic religious education. The idea of perennialism that tends to be regressive, traditionalist and conservative causes the application of perennialism in Islamic education to have two sides, on the one hand it can have a good effect and on the other hand it has a negative impact.*

**Keywords:** *perennialism, education, Islam, philosophy*

### A. Introduction

In modern times, many crises have arisen in various fields of human life, especially in the field of education. To restore this crisis situation, perennialism provides a way out, namely in the form of returning to the past culture which was considered quite ideal and its toughness was tested. For this reason, education must focus more of its attention on the tested and resilient ideal culture. Perennialism views education as having to focus more of its attention on the proven and resilient ideal culture. In other words, education that exists today needs to return to the past, because by restoring this past situation, this culture which is considered a crisis can be resolved through perennialism because it can direct its focus of attention to education from the past to the present.

Perennialism as a school of educational philosophy born in the twentieth century, emerged as a reaction to progressive education. Perennialism opposes the view of progressivism which emphasizes change and something new. According to Perennialism, the current world situation is full of chaos, uncertainty and disorder, especially in moral, intellectual and socio-cultural life. There needs to be an effort to save human culture from the brink of collapse. The path taken by the Perennialists is to go backwards, that is, to return to general values or principles that have become a solid way of life in ancient and medieval times. The civilization of ancient Greece and the Middle Ages is considered the cultural basis of the peoples of the world from time to time. The views of Plato and Aristotle represent Antiquity and Thomas Aquinas represents the Middle Ages, believed to have had qualities that could be relied on to be used as a guide for human life and life to fill the void and chaos that plague the world today.

## B. Discussion

### 1. Definition of Perennialism

Etymologically, the word perennial comes from the Latin word *perennis*, which means eternal or eternal, so that perennial philosophy is also said to be the philosophy of immortality. As Frithjof Schuon said, perennial philosophy is a universal mystical knowledge that has existed and will always be there forever<sup>1</sup> *Philosophia Perennis* Which literally means eternal philosophy. Regarding this word "eternal", there are two different interpretations. First, as a proper name of a particular philosophical tradition. Second, as a quality which refers to a philosophical system that has eternal teachings, whatever its name.<sup>2</sup>

Jaspers does not accept perennial philosophy as a system. He argues that basically any philosophy of any form and type is perennial or eternal. Philosophy is an ongoing contemplation and no end to the mystery of the eternal manifestation which is one and only one object, which the thinkers of each era to give contributions that are equally as valid. The view of Jaspers is reinforced by James Collins, who firmly rejects the use of the term perennial philosophy as the proper name of a particular philosophical system. According to him, the term perennial philosophy is an adjective, that is, perennial philosophy or philosophy that is timeless.<sup>3</sup>

Different from Karl Jaspers, Charles B. Schmitt, who actually considered the term perennial philosophy as a proper name, namely the name of a certain philosophical system, Schmitt said that since the emergence of perennial philosophical thought patterns in ancient times (the era of early thinkers), it was only in the century -16, the term perennial philosophy is used as the name of the philosophical system. Perennial term of type This, according to Schmitt, means that this philosophy has survived throughout the ages and in fact can be inherited from generations and can transcend the trends of alternating philosophical features.<sup>4</sup>

From several philosophers working in perennial philosophy, there are different understandings about its essential meaning. Steuco defines perennial philosophy as an intellectual tradition synthesized between theology, ancient philosophy, and Christianity. So it is not merely related to one form of wisdom. Ancient philosophy which is Steuco is all ancient philosophical tradition that had been there before the emergence of Plato.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Aldous Huxley defined perennial philosophy as a philosophical tradition consisting of three main branches, namely metaphysics, psychology, and ethics. The three of them are considered perennial because since their existence they have been visible since ancient times and are

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<sup>1</sup> Komaruddin Hidayat and Muhammad Wahyuni Nafis, *Religion of the Future Perspective of Perennial Philosophy* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Nora Permata, *Between Syncretic and Pluralist, Nusantara Perennialism Traces the Footsteps of Eternal Philosophy*, (Yogyakarta: PT Tiara Wacana Yogya, 1996), p. 2

<sup>3</sup> Emanuel Wora, *Perennialism Criticism of Modernism and Postmodernism*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2006), p. 11-12

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 13

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 14

universal and are valid throughout the ages which further lead us to the awareness of the existence of God as the basis of the world and everything in it. Apart from these two figures, in contemporary times there are also several figures who define perennial philosophy, including Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Owen C. Thomas.

## 2. The History of the Development of Perennial Philosophy

Perennial philosophy is an old philosophical discourse, which existed in pre-modern times, but is claimed to be current throughout the ages. There are different views between the figures regarding the emergence of perennial philosophy. One opinion says that the term perennial philosophy comes from Leibniz who was written in a letter to his friend Remundo dated August 26, 1714 and was subsequently popularized by Huxley. However, Leibniz never applied the term as a name to any philosophical system including his own philosophical system.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, another view denies that before Leibniz there was a figure who first used perennial philosophy, namely Agostino Steuco in his work entitled "De Perenni Philosophia" in 1540. The book is an attempt to synthesize philosophy, religion and history departing from a philosophical tradition that already established. From this tradition Augustino tried to synthesize philosophy, religion and history which was named philosophia perennis.<sup>7</sup>

According to Huston Smith, there are two major philosophical traditions that are in stark contrast, namely "Modern Philosophy" and "Traditional Philosophy". Traditional philosophy or better known as perennial philosophy always talks about the existence of "The Sacred" (The Sacred) or "The One" (The One) in all its manifestations, such as in religion, philosophy, science and art. Meanwhile, modern philosophy on the contrary cleanses "the Holy" and "the One". They do not only separate matters of spirituality from worldliness, they even want to eliminate them altogether.<sup>8</sup>

The development of perennial philosophy according to Griffiths experienced its heyday between the 6th and 15th centuries, which not only in the Western world and in the context of other religions ula, although indeed it progresses more visible in the western world. Augustino Steuco who was a perennialist of the Renaissance and also a scholar of the Bible and theologian. His work influenced many people, among others, Picino and Pico. For Picino, perennial philosophy he called the ancient philosophy of antiquity (*philosophia priscorium*).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Arqom Kuswonjono, *Divinity in Perennial Philosophy Study Reflections on Religious Pluralism in Indonesia*, (Yogyakarta: BPFU, 2006), p. 10

<sup>7</sup> Charles B Schmith, et al, *Perennialism Tracing the Traces of Eternal Philosophy*, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana Yogya, 1996), p. 34

<sup>8</sup> Komaruddin Hidayat and Muhammad Wahyuni Nafis, *Religion of the Future, Perspective of Perennial Philosophy*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), p. xxii / 22

<sup>9</sup> Emanuel Wora, *Perennialism Criticism of Modernism and Postmodernism* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2006), p. 18

Perennial philosophy or what is called universal wisdom began to crumble towards the end of the 16th century. One of the most dominant reasons is the rapid development of materialist philosophy. In contrast to perennial philosophy which views the universe as a single whole, materialist philosophy sees that the universe is based on a mechanistic model / pattern, so that it does not leave room for transcendent reality. Materialist philosophy later became the core thought of modern society. Some of the figures include Rene Descartes, Francis Bacon, Galile Galilei, and Isac Newton.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. The relevance of Perennialism Philosophy with the Islamic Education Process

Perennialism can be traced from historical roots and influenced the development of educational philosophy. Sabri quoted Sayyed Hussein Nasr's view that the Islamic intellectual tradition, both in its gnostic (ma'rifah or irfan) and philosophical and theosophical aspects (philosophies-wisdom), saw this unique source of truth as a "religion of truth" (din al-haqq) in the teachings of the prophet ancient prophets where Adam as a place to return and look at the prophet Idris identified with Hermes as "the father of philosophers" (Abu al-Hukama). Muhammad Sabri (2012: 39). Abu al Hukama passed down a scientific tradition from generation to generation to Ancient Greece. Because of this, the development of perennialist concepts was influenced by influential figures such as Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Aquino.

1. According to Plato, science and value are manifestations of an eternal and ideal universal law so that social order will only be possible if the idea becomes a standard that has normative principles in all aspects of life.<sup>11</sup>
2. According to Plato's psychology, humans essentially have three basic potentials, namely lust, will and mind. These three potentials are the principles for the building of human personality and character. These three potentials will grow and develop through education, so that the three of them run in a balanced and harmonious manner. Humans who have the potential for a large ratio will become a class leader, high social class. A human with great potential will become a human warrior, middle class. Meanwhile, people with great lust potential will become working people, the common people class. The perennialist education philosophy, in this case, should be oriented to the psychological potential of the community, develop the potential of their minds, so that they can become big, intelligent and thinkers, and can realize the fulfillment of social classes in that society. And educational philosophy directs humans to reach the level of perfection.<sup>12</sup>
3. The philosophy of perennialism views education as the process of guiding the sleeping abilities (hidden talents) of a person to become active or real

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<sup>10</sup> Emanuel Wora, *Perennialisme.*, P. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Ramayulis, *Philosophy of Islamic Education, Philosophical Analysis of the Islamic Education System*, Cet. IV; (Jakarta: Kalam Mulia, 2015). 26.

<sup>12</sup> Jalaluddin and Abdullah Idi, *Philosophy of Education*, (Jakarta: Gaya Media Pratama, 1997), 321.

(real, tangible, application ) depending on the awareness of each individual who has these abilities.<sup>13</sup>

4. Aristotle argues that educational orientation is aimed at happiness, through the development of spiritual abilities such as emotions, cognition and human body.
5. According to Thomas Aquino, the purpose of education is an effort to realize the capacity in each individual human being so that it becomes actuality. The expected output according to perennialism is humans who are able to recognize and develop works that become the basis for developing mental discipline. These works are the brainchild of great figures of Ancient Greece.
6. Perennialism argues that students (students, students) are the subject as well as the core in the implementation of learning, and the teacher is only tasked with helping to raise the hidden potential of students so that they become active and real, not forming or giving abilities to students. Therefore, the task of an educator is to prepare students towards intellectual maturity. With intellectually, students can live happily for the good of their own lives.

Perennialism views education as cultural regression or education as a way back, a trip backward, or a process of returning to the current state and human culture as in past cultures by reusing general values or principles that have become a strong, firm way of life, and ideal in ancient times, as well as in medieval times. Thus, it can be said that the task of education is to provide knowledge about definite, absolute, and eternal truth values that exist in past cultures which are seen as ideal cultures.

The purpose of Islamic education itself is equivalent to the goal of national education which is taken from the nation's philosophy, namely Pancasila which aims to improve human quality, namely humans who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, personality, discipline, work hard, are tough, responsible, independent, intelligent and skilled and physically and mentally healthy. Meanwhile, the purpose of perennial education itself aims to humanize humans. In this context, what is meant by humanizing humans is to make moral humans have good morals and have faith in their God. In other words, the purpose of perennial education is based on noble values, norms and religion and is a teaching and learning process that must be returned to the noble values, norms of norms and religion in the past. Education must be able to give birth to people who obey the norms and *istiqomah* on the path of truth.

Education must be centered on the teacher, because teachers have the ability and norms and values. From the comparison between the objectives of the Islamic religious education curriculum and the perennialist educational philosophy, it can be said that the objectives of the Islamic religious education curriculum and both perennialist education are quite relevant. According to the author, the purpose of the curriculum, seen from the point of view of both, is essentially the same, namely to form a human who is usually independent in the context of his personal life, social life, nation and state and lives as a being

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<sup>13</sup> Teguh Wangsa Gandhi, *Philosophy of Education: Schools of Educational Philosophy*, Cet. I; (Jogjakarta : AR-Ruzz Media. 2011), 167.

devoted to the One and Only God (religion). Thus the goals of perennialism education with Islamic religious education can be said to be quite relevant.

In the aspect of the content / materials pembelajaran bahwasannya good and relevant curriculum in order to achieve the aim of Islamic education is integrated and comprehensive nature and make the Qur ' an and As Sunnah as the main guideline in life. As we know the basic teachings of Islam are included: problems aqidah (faith), shari'ah ' ah (Islamic), and character (ihsan). Likewise in the case of curriculum, perennialism thinks that the most important thing in the curriculum is the content (content) of subjects that are correct and correct. The view of perennialism in education is that education must be based on noble values, norms and religion and is a teaching and learning process that must be returned to the noble values, norms of norms and religion in the past. Education must be able to give birth to people who obey the norms and istiqamah on the path of truth.

Education must be centered on the teacher, because teachers have the ability and norms and values. Based on the analysis of the content / learning materials of Islamic religious education with perennialism education, it can be seen that the content / material contained in perennialism education with Islamic religious education has similarities , so the perennialism education curriculum with the Islamic religious education curriculum can be said to be relevant. According to the author in the content / subject matter, the perennialism curriculum with the Islamic religious education curriculum the content / subject matter both aims to introduce and teach learning in accordance with the teachings of the religion he adheres to.

From this analysis the authors see the similarity of the content / subject matter of perennialism education with Islamic religious education, thus it can be said that the content / subject matter of perennialism education with Islamic religious education is quite relevant.

Figures perennial philosophy is not as popular as flow figures like the philosophy of the others, though in fact thought to convey them that give the effect of a great against the thought of society and the philosophers another moment of it. Keberdaan philosophy that called Huston Smith as "the philosophy of the traditional" who always menyuaraka to the wisdom of such sense of the word philosophia that, "the love of wisdom", now quite the opposite, in terms of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, fell into "hate to wisdom" ( miso-sophia ) and consider it "anti- philosophy". The highlight of hate, according to Huston Smith, happened just this time, in an era called " post-Nietzchean deconstruction of meta-physics " deconstruction of the metaphysics of post-Nietzche. Metaphysics became unpopular and meaningless in the minds of many deconstructionist philosophers.

Even neo-Thomism, which in centuries mid filled with musings metaphysics, has now become very pragmatic, following the current movement of the dominant philosophy today. The culmination of all these tendencies is a very persistent rejection of traditional philosophical ideas. In the language of the deconstructionist: traditional philosophy said, filled with klaim- claims of truth (

claim of truth ) that do not can be accounted for.<sup>14</sup> What is the most important of the existence of credible crisis contemporary philosophy is the loss of intuition - of which only tool adequatio (adequate) according to the assumption among perennialis or traditionalist, to understand the psyche ( soul ) of man. If we read the history of modern western philosophy , we find that modern philosophy from Rene Descartes to Ludwig Wittgenstein, no longer pays attention to the human faculties which in traditional philosophy - including in all the descriptions of Islamic philosophers are so strongly preserved and passed down from generation to generation.<sup>15</sup>

The figures of perennial philosophy are as follows:

Marcelio Ficino (1433-1499) is the founder of the Platonic Academy in Florenzy Italy, once a translator works of Plato, Plotinus serata philosopher of Neo- Platonism more. His most famous work is *Theologia Platonica*, a work which shows himself as a Platonist.<sup>16</sup>

One of one of the central themes of philosophy Fisino is the unity and integrity of the world 's, which is deep more to be real rather than diversity that appears on appearance. Ficino talks about unity in various ways. In his book *Commentary on the Symposium* Ficino argues that love is the binding force that organizes and unites the world. In *Platonic Theologia* , he taught that the soul is a *vinculum universi* (the central link between the world above and the underworld). Metaphysical unity of this world has a parallel development in the history of philosophy that theology which is known by the term "fraternity".<sup>17</sup>

He believed in the existence of a fountain of truth , which was the source, from which flowed two historical streams, namely philosophy and theology. For Ficino true philosophy is Platonism, while true theology is Christianity. These two truths have an ultimate unity, and he accepts the Nominous expression that Plato is the " Greek- speaking Moses ". Ficino emphasizes that the philosophy of the past ( *prisci* ) is none other than the religion that was revealed (*dogta religio*).

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Prisci theology has developed the authenticity essential, and at the peak of bloom development as a unified system of philosophy and comprehensively in noster Plato. So important is Plato's philosophy and the tradition that was born from it for Ficino, that he made the phrase: "Whoever wants to feel the most delicious freshness of the water of wisdom, must drink it straight from the peak of his perennial".<sup>19</sup> Sayyed Hossein Nasr is a philosopher and mystic who was born in 1933 in Tehran, he is known as one of the Muslim scholars who have very rich insight into the repertoire of Islam. His work is very well known is the "Science and Civilization in Islam" , a book that lifted from his dissertation on the history of science.

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<sup>14</sup>Komaruddin Hidayat and Mohammed Wahyuni Nafis, *Religion of Future Home*

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Arqom Kuswanjono, *Belief in Perennial Philosophy Studies* , 15.

<sup>17</sup> Charles B.Schmitt, *Philosophy Perennial: from Steuco Until Leibniz, in Perennialisme Track Traces of Philosophy*, 36.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 38.

Nasr said that Perennial Philosophy is knowledge that has always existed and will exist which is universal. "There" is meant to be in every era and every place because of its universal principle. This knowledge acquired through the intellect is at the core of all religions and traditions. Realization and achievement just may be done through methods, rituals, symbols, images and means another y ang sanctified by the holy order of Heaven ( Heaven ) or origin of the Divine (the divine origin ) who creates every tradition.

In addition to the figures mentioned above, there are still many figures who call themselves adherents of philosophia perennis et universalis such as Titus Buckhardt, Martin Lings, Marco Pallis, Jean-Louis Michon, Victor Danner, Joseph E. Brown, William Stoddart, G. Durand, Huston Smith, EF Schumacher and J. Needleman, William Chittick and his wife Sachiko Murata Kimberly Cattern and James Cuttinger.

Giovani Pico della Miradola said that authenticity does not appear in certain philosophical, theological and scientific traditions, but all of them have something that can contribute to a complete authenticity. From this it can be seen that Pico does not take its source in a reopening of certain or some in between, but take it from a source that is very broad, both in number and variety. This view is of course very different from that of Ficino who directed various philosophical traditions to Plato's philosophy and Christianity. According to Pico, authenticity does not only come from two sources, but also comes from various sources. Prisca theological version of Pico does not have a source of uptake special. Aspects of authenticity that can also be found in the writings writings of Ibn Rushd, Al-Qur'an, the traditions kaballa and others. Pico's views have a very high syncretistic and eclectic tendency, which then grew in popularity and spread in the sixteenth century.

Agustino Steuco born in the city of mountains Umbrian in the area of Gubbio in 1497 or early 1498. He began entering Augustiniani pilgrims in the city of his birth in 1512 or 1513 and remained until the year 1517. Furthermore, in the years 1518 to 1552 most big time used to follow the lectures at the University of Bologna. That is where he started interested in the field of language with a lot to learn about the language of Aramaic, Syrian, Arab and Ethiopia in addition to the language of Jewish and Greek.

The most famous works of Steuco is *De Perenni Philosophia*, works which received rave warm from among the thinkers until two centuries later. But after that gradually began to be forgotten until then William rediscovered it at the end of the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century the book received such high esteem that Kaspevon Barth (1587-1658) called it " A Golden Book " and Daniel Goerg Marhof "Opus Admirable".

Steuco states that the aim of philosophy is knowledge of God, and thus, real union with Him. Furthermore, the " true and perfect philosophy " is that which falls beyond the rest, shows about God, and most clearly returns all causes and principles to the One source, namely God. 35 Steuco explained that hikamah purely derived from the divine, sacred knowledge given by God to Adam, which for some people is slowly largely forgotten and transferred to a life of dreams of religion and philosophy is theosis (orientation divinity) and the achievement of the penetahuan sacred that has existed from the beginning of human history and



can be achieved through historical expressions of truth in various traditions or through intellectual intuition and philosophical contemplation .

The key to Steuco's philosophical thinking is seen in his view that there is a "single principle of all things" which is one and always the same in all human knowledge . The superiority of philosophy lies in its belief in the existence of a single wisdom that can be known by all humans. In the context of history, Steuco said that history runs like the passage of time, not knowing the dark ages or the resurrection times. There is only a Single truth that covers all periods of history that those who seek it will find. True theology is nothing but the authenticity that is revealed and has been known since the early days of the history of mankind. Wisdom and truth are as old as human history .

According to Steuco, religion is a natural human ability to achieve authenticity. Religion is an absolute requirement for humans to become human, and is a vera philosophia (true philosophy) that is a philosophy that leads to piety and contemplation of God. True philosophy and religion always encourage to be God's subjects, do what God wants and leave what He forbids, so as to make "like" God. According to Steuco perennial philosophy is a philosophy that has existed "even since the beginning of the emergence of the human species ". As that he uttered in sections beginning of his work, Steuco stated that indeed there is a genuineness single, a wisdom single that exist and will always exist. We can achieve this Sapientia by studying the history in which it has appeared; or by direct application, by using our intellectual faculties , in a philosophical contemplation. The result of this knowledge can we call " Universal Agreement " or also " filasafat Perennial ".

Frithjof Schuon was born in Basel, Switzerland in 1907 and was educated in France. Since 1936 he has been listed as a regular author in the French-language journal *Etude Traditionelles* and the journal *Connaissance des Religions*, *Comparative Religion*. In a word pegantar on book Schuon are entitled *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy (Islam and Philosophy Perennial)* Seyyed Hussein Nasr says that the view is the view regarding metaphysics Schuon universal, concerning religio perennis or religio cordis that has been presented to humans through a variety of traditions heavenly. By combining the metaphysical insight with extensive knowledge of the various religious and doctrinal aspects, ethics and artistic, Schuon has investigated the essence of traditions are different and mengkritin modern civilization with the various aberrations denagn guidance truths of eternal of tradition it.

According Frithjof Schoun, metaphysics religious or philosophical perennials are not separated at all from tradition, and transmission (eye chain) traditional ermasuk in the realization of the spiritual. Metaphysics is this that makes every religion is religio perennis , the religion which is eternal. Philosophy Perennial pay attention to the religion of the reality that most transinden or metaphysics that is transinden histories, not only religion in fact factual only.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, was born in Cylon in 1877 to an English mother and Hindu father. He was educated in England and graduated from the University of London in botany and geology. He was a lot of researching the meaning of art that is sacred from the east in general and the art of Hinduism

and Buddhism in particular, then he writes it into English for public consumption West.

Due to the loss of traditional values in aspects of the modern world, Coomaraswamy carried out attacks on philosophy in various aspects, in order to provide a clean basis for the presence of true metaphysics, and prevent distortions or deviations due to confusion between profane philosophy and sacred knowledge, preventing the loss of gnosis. from modern Western thought due to the narrowing of meaning experienced by philosophy itself; ie, when the philosophy of getting the elements of his theology, and finally followed by the movements which call themselves as theosophy in the centuries that then, but the substance is more an inverse of the knowledge of traditional.

Coomaraswamy understands the term al-din (bond) is the bond of a human being with his God, which makes people free from ties or domination by something lower in rank than the human himself. So that in fact the term al-din is better understood as a tradition and primordial human character. Only to God humans deserve submission, because humans are the best of creation. So when a man devotes himself the material it will fall in the degree of humanity.

### C. Conclusion

The essence of this flow seeks to apply values or norms that are eternal and eternal in nature which have always been like that throughout human history, so perennialism is considered a school that wants to return or regress to the values of past culture. Returning to the past in the context of this flow, is not in the sense of reminiscing and simply reminiscing about past life patterns, but to rebuild belief in past human values to deal with the problems of human life today and even whenever and wherever. even. Thus, this perennialism wants that the culture, customs that they are accustomed to doing is something that is eternal, eternal without end.

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