



The Philosophy of Illumination: Esotericism in Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī's Sufism

Discussing Suhrawardī, certainly, cannot be separated from his concept of thinking about illumination (ḥikmat ishrāqiyyat), which has contributed to the foundation of human knowledge and awareness. The research question in this paper is how esotericism in Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī's Sufism relates to the philosophy of Illumination. The discussion of this study is based on qualitative library research. In each section, this paper is supplemented with an explanation using the methods of description, interpretation, and data analysis to build a consistent and thorough understanding. This paper found that, according to Suhrawardī, knowledge is the presence of an object to know. Knowledge can only be attained by the mystic into the inner sanctum of higher visionary experiences (mushāhadat wa mukāshafat), not merely through logical reasoning. To achieve the truth of implicit knowledge, the philosophy of illumination suggested the combination of reason and intuition, which are complementary to one another. Regarding esotericism, in this case, the soul is interpreted as a part of the realm of light, but it is trapped in darkness, so spiritual training must be carried out in the spirit of soul-giving. Suhrawardī believes that only a clean soul can be connected to the divine light, wherein at that level, one can get intuitive wisdom, or in Sufism, it is called the laduni knowledge.

Keywords: Esotericism; Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī; Intuitive wisdom; Illumination.

Membahas Suhrawardī, tentu tidak terlepas dari konsep pemikirannya tentang pencerahan (ḥikmat ishrāqiyyat) yang berkontribusi pada landasan pengetahuan dan kesadaran manusia. Pertanyaan penelitian dalam tulisan ini adalah bagaimana esoterisme dalam tasawuf Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī berkaitan dengan filsafat pencerahan. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif yang merupakan penelitian kepustakaan. Pembahasan dilengkapi dengan penjelasan melalui metode deskripsi, interpretasi, dan analisis data dalam setiap pembahasan sehingga menghasilkan pemahaman yang konsisten dan komprehensif. Hasil tulisan ini menurut Suhrawardī, pengetahuan adalah adanya suatu objek untuk diketahui. Pencapaian ilmu hanya dapat dilakukan melalui musyahadah dan mukasyafah, serta bukan hanya nalar yang logis. Berangkat dari pemikiran Suhrawardī, pencapaian kebenaran pengetahuan implisit dalam filsafat iluminasinya dengan memadukan dimensi akal dan intuisi, dalam hal ini keduanya saling melengkapi. Mengenai esoterisme, dalam hal ini jiwa dimaknai sebagai bagian dari alam terang, tetapi terperangkap dalam kegelapan, sehingga Latihan spiritual perlu dilakukan dalam spirit pemberian jiwa. Suhrawardī percaya bahwa hanya jiwa yang bersih yang dapat terhubung dengan cahaya Ilahi dimana pada tingkatan itulah seseorang dapat memperoleh kebijaksanaan intuitif atau dalam tasawuf disebut ilmu laduni.

Kata Kunci: Esoterisme; Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī; Wawasan intuitif; Iluminasi.

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Introduction

If one looks back to history, it is not taboo if, from the Middle Ages to the present, the discourse regarding science and religious thought is deemed to have shown significant developments. This development can be seen when the emergence of a renewal of awareness of religion, which was initially believed to be limited to belief and the way of life, has transformed into an important material in scientific studies. This transformation turned out to be in line with the goals of religion, especially Islam, which has a vision of "*ṣāliḥ li kulli zamān wa makān*". In practice, this means that religious discourse is not only used to describe things through the development of an empirical method but also that of an esoteric one in the hopes that it will lead to new discourses within the space of religious knowledge.

According to Suhrawardī, the main focus of science actively underlies all other modes of knowledge and human consciousness and has an advantage over all self-intentional actions. His thoughts are presented in his magnum opus entitled *Hikmat Ishrāqiyyat*, the philosophy of illumination.¹ The process of acquiring knowledge requires a method of searching for the essence of that knowledge. On the other hand, it needs testing to find out how much the method fits into what you want to know. In this case, Suhrawardī offers his concept of illumination to get to the truth of knowledge.

The latest reviews on the philosophy of illumination, and of Suhrawardī's philosophy, reveal aesthetic dimensions within Iranian arts and music. Following the trend of studies of Suhrawardī, this article establishes two main arguments; *First*, Suhrawardī's philosophy of illumination must be reflected in the cynicism of Iranian musicology; *Second*, the current

direction of Iranian music exemplifies Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī's philosophy.²

Contemporary discourses on the Master of Illumination tend to focus on the practical realm of his philosophy. Those tendencies can be seen in certain studies such as regarding the ontological dimensions in creative industries and music architecture;³ The role of the Qur'an in Suhrawardī's narratives; The intersection between mysticism, Iranian philosophy, and Greek wisdom;⁴ or compromising Suhrawardī's thoughts with contemporary thinkers such as Martin Heidegger.⁵ Nevertheless, none of these studies provide a detailed analysis of the philosophy of illumination within the context of esotericism. At this point, the novelty of this investigation becomes apparent, residing in its revelation of the esoteric layer of Suhrawardī's philosophy of illumination. This dimension becomes an appeal to obtain the truth of fundamental knowledge.

Biography and Educational Background

Abū al-Futūḥ Yahyā ibn Amirak Shihāb ad-Dīn as-Suhrawardī al-Kurdī was born in 549 Hijri or 1153 AD in the Suhraward village of Jibal region, the northwest side of Iran. During his lifetime, he was known by various names, such as Master of Illumination (Shaykh Val-Isyrāq), The Judge (al-Hākim), and The Martyr

² Mohammad Reza Azizi, Pouya Saraei, and Hossein Yazdi, "Study of the Showed of the Aesthetic Concepts of Suhrawardī's Illumination Philosophy," *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation* 23, no. 01 (n.d.).

³ Fatemeh Goodarzi and Hamid Reza Sharif, "A Comparative Study of the Iranian Architecture and Music Based on the Suhrawardī's Philosophy of Illumination," *The History of Islamic Culture and Civilization A Quarterly Research Journal* 9, no. 30 (2018): 123–148.

⁴ Reza Rezazadeh and Hoda Habibi Manesh, "Cognitive Origins of Illuminated Philosophy; Quran and Narrative Sources' Role and Effect," *Quarterly Sabzevaran Fadak* 10, no. 37 (May 22, 2019): 59–79.

⁵ Abbas Manoochehri, "The Right to Excellence Illumination and Human Rights," *Sophia Perennis* 12, no. 27 (September 1, 2016): 17–32.

¹ Mehdi Aminrazavi, "Suhrawardī's Theory of Knowledge" (PhD Thesis, Temple University, 1989). 134





(Shaykh al-Maqtūl). The last honorific title is a reference to his execution for the accusation of heresy sometime between the end of the twelfth and the early thirteenth century.⁶

In studying various sciences, Suhrawardī visited various places, starting from Maragha in Azerbaijan, Isfahan in Central Iran, Anatolia, and Persia where he studied fields such as law, theology, philosophy, literature, and sufism. Later, Suhrawardī proceeded his journey to Syria, Damascus, and ended in Aleppo.⁷

Suhrawardī's activities in the scientific world were adorned with his relationship with the king of Aleppo, al-Malik az-Zhāhir, the third son of Saladin. As a devotee of science, Malik az-Zhāhir was reported to have glorified Muslim scholars whom he gladly invited to the palace to convey his ideas and thoughts.⁸ Nevertheless, Suhrawardī's intelligence and expertise ignited anxiety and rivalry among the jurists, so they began to try to get rid of his influence from the sultanate. Such attitude is the impact of the socio-political competitions of jurist-Sufis.⁹

Within this fragmented context of society and intellectuality, Suhrawardī's statement on esoteric doctrine caused a strong reaction from the jurists, hence they state that such teachings could harm the Islamic faith.¹⁰ Shortly, the Sufi was imprisoned until his murder at the age of

38.¹¹ The neglect of Suhrawardī in Aleppo is not necessarily caused by his esoteric thought, but rather, the accident is caused by political motive when the Sulthan of Aleppo at the time demands massive support from the jurists to fight the Crusaders.

Suhrawardī is a charismatic and prolific author despite his short lifespan. His works are systematically enlisted in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's academic reports which can be divided into the following; *First*, the doctrinal writings consist of four works, three of which are analogous writings in Arabic, explaining the peripatetic philosophy of Suhrawardī and his interpretation and modification on the issues. His analogies include *Kitāb al-Talwīḥāt* on the intimacy, *Kitāb al-Mashāri' wa al-Muṭārahāt* on dialogue, *Kitāb Muqāwamat* on the opposition, and *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* on the discussion of East light theosophy.¹² The last work of his contains Suhrawardī's core values.

Treatises of Suhrawardī are presented in Persian or Arabic. His writings consist of short treatises containing explanations of the dialed which were narrated effectively and concisely. His works in Persians include *Al-Alwah-i al-'Imadi* (treatises dedicated to 'Imad ad-Din), *Fī I'tiqad al-Ḥukamā'* (symbol of the philosophers' faith), *al-Lamahat* (sparkling light), *Hayakil al-Nūr* (the temple of light); *Patrawnamah* (the treatise of Illumination); *Bustan al-Qulub* (the garden of hearts), and *Yazdan Shinākht* (God's wisdom). Suhrawardī dedicated the last two treatises to leaders of the jurists, Sayyid Syarif al-Jurjani and 'Ain al-Qudhat al-Hamdani.¹³

Literary works in Persian and partly in Arabic are mystical and symbolic novels that tell the story of the soul's journey through the cosmos to illumination. These works, among

⁶ Aminrazavi, "Suhrawardī's Theory of Knowledge."

⁷ Muhammad Obaidullah, "Philosophical Sufism: An Analysis of Suhrawardī's Contribution with Special Reference to His School of Illumination (Ishraqi)," *Afkar-Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 16, no. 1 (2015): 135–158.

⁸ Michael Edward Bylebyl, "The Wisdom of Illumination: A Study of the Prose Stories of Suhrawardī" (PhD Thesis, The University of Chicago, 1976).

⁹ Mohsen Habibi and Atefeh Nasiri Nasr, "Sources and Bases of Invocations and Prayers in Philosophical Illumination (Wisdom of Ishraq) of Shayakh Shahab al-Din Suhrawardī," *Contemporary Wisdom* 6, no. 4 (2016): 75–98.

¹⁰ Amroeni Drajat, *Suhrawardi: Kritik Falsafah Peripatetik* (PT. Lkis Pelangi Aksa, 2005). 31-34

¹¹ Hasyimsyah Nasution, *Filafat Islam* (Jakarta: Gaya Media Pratama, 1999). 144

¹² Bylebyl, "The Wisdom of Illumination." 45

¹³ Salahaddin Khalilov, "Al-Suhrawardī's Doctrine and Phenomenology," in *Islamic Philosophy and Occidental Phenomenology on the Perennial Issue of Microcosm and Macrocosm* (Springer, 2006), 263–276.





others, include *Al-ghurbat al-Gharbiyah* (exile to the West); *Awaz-i par-i jibra'il* (humming of Gabriel's wings); *'Aql-isurkh* (the angel); *Risalat al-Abraj* (treatise on night trips); *Lughat-i muran* (the language of the Termites); *Ruzi ba jamaat-i sufiyan* (one day with Sufi community); *Risalah fi Halat al-Thufuliyah* (treatise on childhood); and *Safir -were Simurgh* (Graffin's chanting).¹⁴ His works were also in the form of elaboration and interpretation of philosophical thoughts as well as scriptures on sacred religious texts, such as translation of *Risalat al-Thair*, surgery and responses to *Sign-i*, and *Risalat Fi Haqiqat al-'Isyq* by Ibn Sina; Minutes of prayers and meditation, *wazifa*, in Arabic.¹⁵

The Genealogy of Thought

The chain of knowledge that influenced Suhrawardī's philosophy is interesting and diverse. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr in A. Khudori Soleh, Suhrawardī's knowledge of *ishrāqi* comes from at least five schools. His thoughts on the principle of Sufism were taken from several works of Muslim philosophers, namely the works of Imam al-Ghazali and Mansur al-Hallaj. Although some of Ibn Sina's thoughts did not escape his criticism, Suhrawardī still positions peripatetic Islamic philosophy, especially Ibn Sina's thoughts, as an important principle in understanding the concept of *ishrāqi*.¹⁶ He was also influenced by philosophical ideas in the pre-Islamic period, which were derived from Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras (582-496 BC), Plato (427-347 BC), and Hermes (circa 4533-4188 BC) and developed in Alexandria.¹⁷ According to Suhrawardī, ancient Iranian thinkers were the heirs of wisdom that perished before the

disaster that befell the prophet Idris PBUH., a prophet of Islamic tradition who associated with Hermes, the famous God of Messenger in Greek mythology. Therefore, Suhrawardī tries to revive these beliefs. Relying on Zoroaster by using the symbolization of light and darkness, Suhrawardī however emphasized that he was not a dualist, instead, he called himself a member of the Iranian *jamaah*, namely the owners of 'mysticism' beliefs with the concept of divine unity.¹⁸

The source of Suhrawardī's thought has roots not only in the Islamic world itself but also outside Islam, which in general consists of philosophical thoughts and Sufism.¹⁹ His long career in intellectualism has finally placed him in the mix between two pearls of wisdom at once, philosophy and *tasawwuf*.²⁰ It is said that Suhrawardī's wisdom was awakened in the same manner as medieval thinkers who considered the wisdom of ancient Persian wisdom experts with the esoteric (spiritual dimension) doctrine who believed that God had sent His wisdom to all of humanity through the Prophet Idris, whom Muslim writers identified as Hermes. Hermes himself in Greek mythology is the son of Zeus who is widely regarded as the originator of wisdom (philosophy) and is spread it to two places, namely Egypt and Persia.

In short, Suhrawardī's philosophy led to the rise of Islamic civilization.²¹ The lineage of scholars, thinkers, and philosophers aspiring

¹⁸ Behroz Delam Salehi, "The Doctrine of Cosmic Harmony with the Philosophy of Illumination of Suhrawardi," *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research* 4, no. 14-15 (2002): 116-128.

¹⁹ Obaidullah, "Philosophical Sufism."

²⁰ Mahfud Junaedi, *Paradigma Baru Filsafat Pendidikan Islam* (Depok: Kencana, 2017). 81-82

²¹ Hossein Ziai, *Sang Pencerah Pengetahuan Dari Timur, Suhrawardi Dan Filsafat Iluminasi*, trans. Afif Muhammad and Munir A. Muin (Jakarta: Sadra Press, 2012), 52-53; Alim Roswanto, "Studi Islam: Konsepsi, Kemunculan Polemik-Ideologis Dan Filsafat Ilmu Pengembangannya," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 17, no. 2 (October 1, 2016): 155-174.

¹⁴ John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai, "The Philosophy of Illumination" (2000). 78

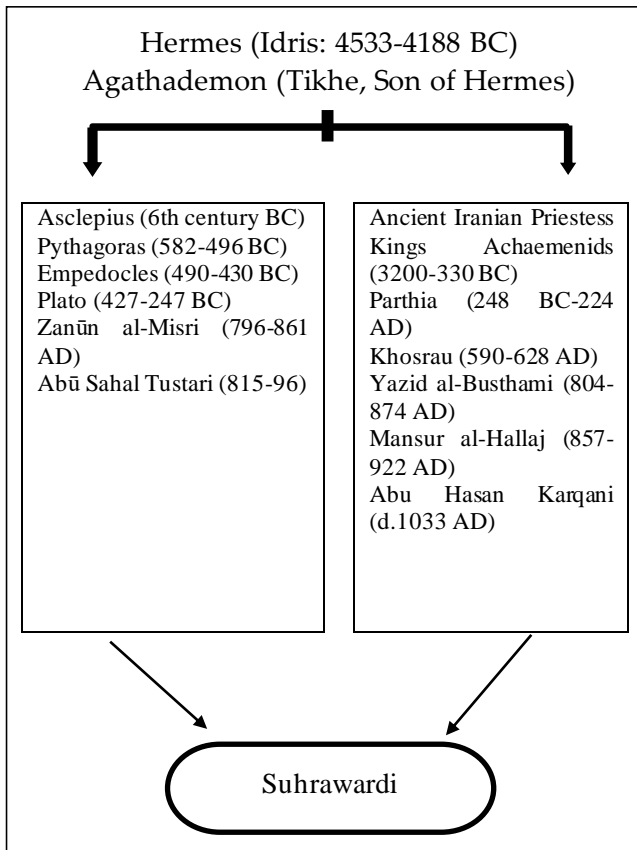
¹⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Tiga Mazhab Utama Filsafat Islam*, trans. Ach. Maimun Syamsuddin (Yogyakarta: Ircisod, 2014). 108-109

¹⁶ Khalilov, "Al-Suhrawardī's Doctrine and Phenomenology." 90

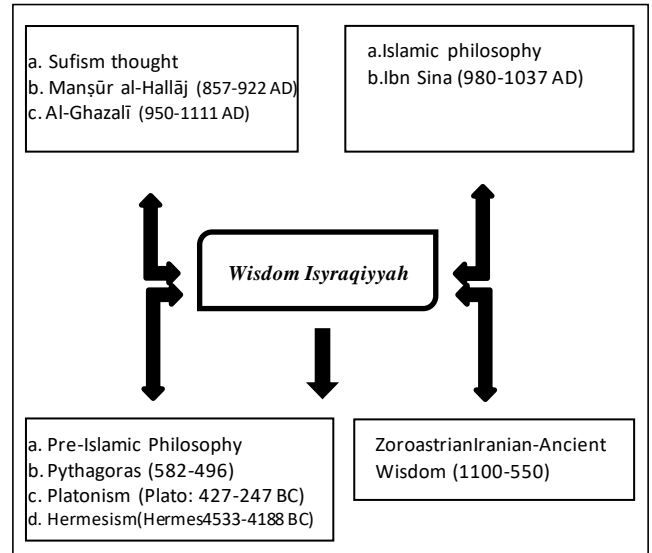
¹⁷ Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* (Routledge, 2014). 78



Suhrawardī in the making of *ḥikmat ishrāqiyyat* can be seen in the following scheme:



Picture 1. Suhrawardī's Genealogy of Thought



Picture 2. The knowledge interconnection of the philosophy of knowledge (*ḥikmat ishrāqiyyat*)

The Philosophy of Illumination

The word *ishrāq* is an Arabic word that means the illumination of the sun that rises from the East and illuminates nature with its light. This word is intended to symbolize the *ma'rifat* obtained from *Nūr al-Anwār* in Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī's philosophy.²² M. Sa'rasio Shaykh interprets *ḥikmat ishrāqiyya* as a school of religious philosophy among Muslims who associate Greek philosophy with knowledge ('ilm) and intuitive wisdom (*ma'rifat*), not only with the typical philosophy containing abstract speculations and rational systematizations.²³

The terms and symbols used by Suhrawardī in his philosophy are different from those commonly understood by people in general. For example, the word *barzah*, according to Suhrawardī, does not involve death, rather it describes the separation between the realms of light and the realms of darkness.²⁴ Also, the terms *Mashriq* (East) and

²² Hadariansyah AB, *Pemikiran-Pemikiran Filsafat Dalam Sejarah Pemikiran Islam* (Banjarmasin: Kafusari, 2016). 125

²³ M. Sa'id Syaikh, *Kamus Filsafat Islam*, trans. Machnun Husein (Jakarta: CV. Rajawali, 1991). 61

²⁴ Habibi and Nasiri Nasr, "Sources and Bases of Invocations and Prayers in Philosophical Illumination



Maghrib (West) do not merely refer to geographic locations. The East for Suhrawardī is a picture of the world with the dimensions of light (brightness), while the West for him is a picture of darkness (matter).²⁵

Shortly, *ishrāqi* symbolizes the brightness of light as a sign of absolute truth, one which cleanses the darkness and contrasts with evil.²⁶ In English, *ishrāqi* is equivalent to illumination, which also means light and illumination. The Ishraqi school views that knowledge comes from the light which connects with the substance of light.²⁷ In the *Ishrāqi* School, Suhrawardī tries to combine the way of reasoning and the way of intuition and thinks that they are complementary. In his illuminating philosophy, reason without intuition could not reach the transcendent source of all forms of truth and reason.²⁸

1. The Ontological View

Suhrawardī, in this case, states that the whole reality is graded by light, so nothing can be defined in various terms because everything is made visible by light so it should be defined by referring to light as well. Thus, it can be understood that the ontological status of everything depends on how close someone is to the highest-purest light of truth.²⁹

In the hierarchy of being, Suhrawardī stated that the closer to the light source,

the more light rays are received and vice versa, the farther away from the highest light, the lower the hierarchical level of existence and the closer he is to darkness.³⁰

Suhrawardī emphasized the theory of levels of existence, in which he rejected the distinctions made for God and man,³¹ and in line with this, he attacked the notion of duality. He formulated the distinction in existence as merely "more or less" and he saw reality as a single unit that was broken off by the levels of existence; the unity of being is God and God is the unity of being itself. From this principle, pantheism is evident in Suhrawardī's thoughts.³²

2. Self-Awareness

Suhrawardī's concept of self-awareness is closely related to his critique of the views of previous thinkers who categorize the acquisition of knowledge through definition, conception, and intermediary predicate.³³ This categorization is caused by the understanding of the position of objects that are outside the existence of the subject, so that tisis said to be true tisis said that if there is conformity between the understanding of the subject and the state of the object, this can turn into an error if what happens is the opposite.³⁴

In addition, Suhrawardī criticized the concept that, according to him, has several

(Wisdom of Ishrāq) of Shayakh Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi."

²⁵ Hasyimsyah Nasution, *Filafat Islam*. 145-146

²⁶ Aminrazavi, "Suhrawardī's Theory of Knowledge"; Delam Salehi, "The Doctrine of Cosmic Harmony with the Philosophy of Illumination of Suhrawardi."

²⁷ A. Khudori Soleh, "Filsafat Isyraqi Suhrawardi," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 1 (January 22, 2011): 5.

²⁸ Mahfud Junaedi, *Paradigma Baru Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*. 83

²⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Tiga Mazhab Utama Filsafat Islam*, 127; Imam Iqbal, "Logika Keilmuan Kalam: Tinjauan Filsafat Ilmu," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 2 (October 1, 2015): 187-205.

³⁰ Haidar Bagir, *Buku Saku Filsafat Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 2005). 147

³¹ Aminrazavi, "Suhrawardī's Theory of Knowledge." 111

³² Muhammad Sabri, "Metafisika Cahaya Suhrawardi," *Jurnal Al-Fikr* 14, no. 03 (2010): 429.

³³ Majid Ehsanfar, Hossein Falsafi, and Seyyed Hossein Vaezi, "Analysis of Self-Awareness Based on Suspended Man from the Perspective of Ibn Sina and Suhrawardi," *Journal of Philosophical Investigations* 14, no. 32 (December 14, 2020): 72-82.

³⁴ Hekmat Nasrollah and Hajizadeh Mahboobe, "Light In Suhrawardī'S Philosophy" 0, no. 661 (January 1, 2012): 55.





weakening tendencies; *First*, the concept refers to something whose form is not present; *Second*, its object is very limited because it is bound by conceptions and definitions; *Third*, the non-identification of objective reality and mental concepts do not guarantee validity; *Fourth*, it makes attachment to the dimensions of space and time.³⁵

Suhrawardī argued that something to be known should appear a tisis, so in this case, it does not necessarily require a definition to present the knowledge gained. Furthermore, Suhrawardī stated that subjects who are known to be able to understand objects directly without obstructions. In this case, the question arises: how can the subject capture the essence of the object? Then how can the object describe the essential appearance that lies in its subject? In this problem, Suhrawardī uses the term “self-awareness” to come up with an answer. He said that “self-awareness means direct knowledge of oneself; this kind of knowledge is clear, such as hunger experienced in a conscious state, which does not need to be asked again, never being unaware of your essence,” said Suhrawardī.³⁶

Based on this principle, self-awareness can be equated with the manifestation of existence with pure light; then the idea arises that everyone who understands himself is pure light, where pure light is a manifestation of his essence.³⁷ The existence of self-awareness in *ishrāqi* philosophy can introduce humans to themselves and the essence of the universe. In this context, the knowledge is obtained directly from self-awareness without a subject-object relationship. So

the tisis free from the principle of duality of right-wrong in modern logic.³⁸

3. Stages of Gaining *Ishrāqi* Knowledge

Suhrawardī explained that the *Ishrāqi* philosophical principle, in terms of its content, obtains the true value as the basis of epistemology through the power of intuitive experience and then selects and states experience (verification) logically (rationally). The principle that Suhrawardī uses is that knowledge is the same as experience.³⁹ Related to this principle, he stated four stages that must be passed by anyone trying to get enlightenment.⁴⁰ These stages include;

First, it begins with activities where, for example, a person must be willing to break free from the world to receive divine experiences. Suhrawardī argues that a person with intuitive power resides in a beam of "God's light" (*al-bāriq al-Ilāhi*) from which he can accept the reality of existence and acknowledge the truth of his intuition through inspiration and spiritual disclosure (*mushāhadat wa mukāshafat*). Therefore, the first stage consists of a person's activity, followed by a condition where everyone has intuition and resides in God's light, and then closes with personal inspiration;

Second, is the illumination stage, where he gets a vision of divine light. Light in this case is in the form of disclosure (*al-anwar as-sanīhah*) and through that light, a person gets wisdom that acts as essential knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-haqīqiyyat*);

³⁸ Soleh, "Filsafat Isyraqi Suhrawardi."

³⁹ Sayed Payam Aldin Sajjad and John Giordano, "The Problem of Presential Knowledge in the Illumination Philosophy of Suhrawardi," *Prajñā Vihāra: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 21, no. 1 (July 8, 2020): 43–43.

⁴⁰ Hossein Ziai, "Suhrawardī on Knowledge and the Experience of Light" (2005); Nasrollah and Mahboobe, "Light In Suhrawardī'S Philosophy."

³⁵ Soleh, "Filsafat Isyraqi Suhrawardi," 13–14.

³⁶ Hossein Ziai, "Knowledge and Illumination a Study of Suhrawardi's Hikmat Al-Ishraq" (1990).

³⁷ Walbridge and Ziai, "The Philosophy of Illumination." 70



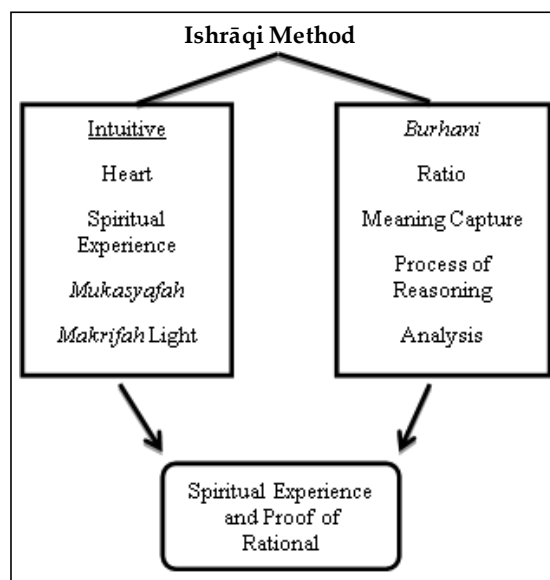


Third, is the construction of absolute knowledge (al-'ilm aṣ-ṣaḥīḥ). At this stage, one is based on discursive analysis. The thinking system tests and proves the validity of the experience even though the experience has ended;⁴¹

Last, is the disclosure or writing. At this stage, the knowledge that has been obtained from the previous stage is described in writing so that it can be accessed by others.⁴²

These stages prove that the steps for obtaining *ishrāqi* knowledge do not necessarily prioritize intuitive form but also give portions to the logic and ratio forms. The methodological description in his "introduction" of *al-hikmah al-ishrāqi* describes his general theory of philosophy of illumination, especially regarding intuition and experience as two important things to gain knowledge.⁴³

Suhrawardī mentions three categories of human abilities responding to the taste (dzauq); first, humans who are like Sufis who have a deep experience of *dzauqi*, but are unable to express it in discursive philosophical language. Second, humans are like philosophers with the ability to express ideas in a philosophical-discursive manner but do not have deep mystical experiences. The third ability is the mutuals who have deep experience of mystical things and can express their thoughts in discursive philosophical language. According to Suhrawardī, this third group is the highest truth seeker.⁴⁴



Picture 2. The Categories of Human Abilities

Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī views that proper knowledge, or the divine light, can be obtained by direct contact with objects without being obstructed. The subject and the copy object are capable of meeting each other without obstructions and both are appearing in their essence as part of the divine light itself. The process of acquiring absolute knowledge might be illustrated in the following scheme:

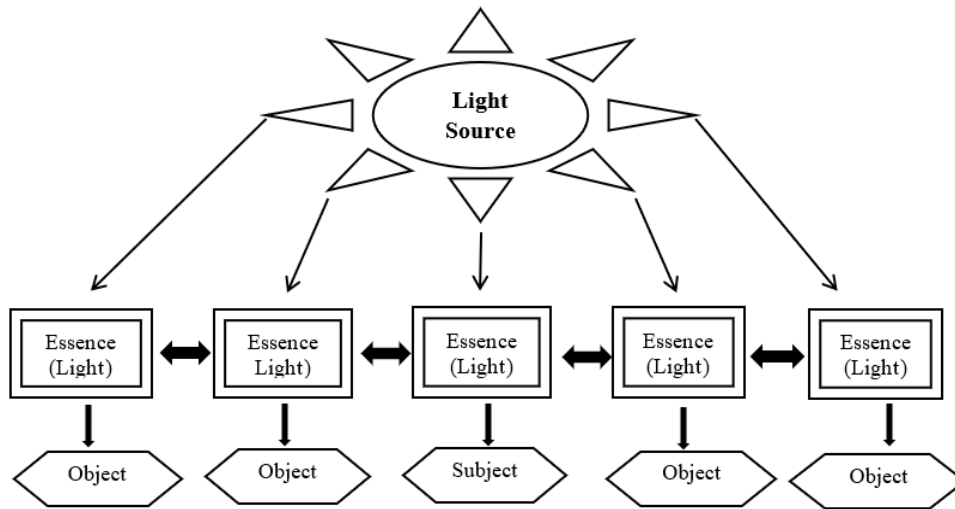
⁴¹ Hossein Ziai, *Sang Pencerah Pengetahuan Dari Timur, Suhrawardi Dan Filsafat Iluminiasi*. 50

⁴² Haidar Bagir, *Buku Saku Filsafat Islam*. 144-146

⁴³ Hossein Ziai, *Sang Pencerah Pengetahuan Dari Timur, Suhrawardi Dan Filsafat Iluminiasi*. 48

⁴⁴ Mulyadi Kartaneraga, *Menembus Batas Waktu Panorama Filsafat Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 2002). 65



Isyraqi Knowledge Presence Scheme

Picture 3. Ishrāqi Knowledge Presence

Suhrawardī's Influence on the Development of Islamic Philosophy

Suhrawardī's philosophical influence has brought new breaths into Islamic philosophy. The reason is that it cannot be denied that this current philosophy has had a major influence until now. The thought of *Hikma Muṭa'āliyya* of Mulla Sadra cannot be separated from the history that has a direct connection to *Hikmah Isyraqiyyah*.⁴⁵ The importance of the philosophy of illumination in modern times can be proven by the fact that much has been written about Suhrawardī's views on the development of philosophy. These writings commonly emphasize Suhrawardī's role as a generator of Iranian wisdom designed using the symbols of Pahlevi or Fahlavani and Kiyani.⁴⁶

Abū Najīb Suhrawardī was not spared from Muslim circles himself, and he wrote a standard book of sufism called *Adab al-Muridin*. There are also certain influences on illuministic epistemology spread by Muslim thinkers such

as Shams al-Dīn al-Syahrūzi and Shiraz al-Dīn al-Shirazi. One of the most important recognitions of the Ishrāqi school came from French philosopher Henry Corbin, a professor of Islamic studies at Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.⁴⁷ Throughout his life, he dedicated his intellectual career to translating Suhrawardī's works.⁴⁸ According to him, Suhrawardī's illumination has opened up modern discourse and dialogue on how to seek and find religious and mystical things in the scientific world.⁴⁹

Suhrawardī and the Esoteric Sufism

In general, *Hikmah Ishrāqiyya* is a concept of Sufism constructed from mysticism and it is associated with spiritual and transcendental things. *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* with its intuitive doctrine is one of the teachings that contains an esoteric element. The term "esoteric" in the *Philosophical Dictionary* is defined as something that is hidden from all, other than only for a small circle of specially selected people; from

⁴⁵ Zohre Zarei and Amir Shirzad, "Analysis and Study of the Components of Suhrawardī's Theory of Knowledge With Regard to Mulla Sadra's Critiques," *Biannual Scientific Journal SADRĀ'I WISDOM* 8, no. 1 (November 22, 2019): 71–87.

⁴⁶ Hossein Ziai, *Sang Pencerah Pengetahuan Dari Timur, Suhrawardī Dan Filsafat Iluminasi*. 52

⁴⁷ Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (routledge, 2014).

⁴⁸ Samir Mahmoud, "From 'Heidegger to Suhrawardī': An Introduction to the Thought of Henry Corbin," WordPress, *The Association Des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin*, last modified 2006, accessed September 17, 2021, www.amiscorbin.com.

⁴⁹ Haidar Bagir, *Buku Saku Filsafat Islam*. 137-140



this understanding, it can be understood that an esoteric thing is something that cannot be experienced universally.⁵⁰

Regarding the Sufism teachings, Hammis Syafaq, in *the Relationship of Islamic Exoteric and Esoteric Knowledge*, quoted Nasr's opinion on the outline of the esoteric Sufism teachings, which is about the transcendent unity concept of being and a perfect human being.⁵¹ Nasr explained that in an esoteric view, humans are seen as creatures that are created to show the nature of God's form, in the sense that humans are the recipients of the emanation of divine qualities from a single Being, by becoming *insan kāmil*, humans can spread divine qualities in themselves. Thus, in this sense, God seems to have manifested in the form of a creature.⁵²

Ja'far argued that the soul is central in the spiritual journey; in this case, the soul is interpreted as a part of the realm of light, but it is trapped in darkness, so spiritual training must be done in the spirit of soul-giving—only the pure soul can be reconnected to the divine light—at that level, one can get intuitive wisdom or what is referred to in Sufism as *laduni* knowledge.⁵³

The concept of a soul is quite abstract and difficult to define and reason with reason. This is because the soul is something transcendent and esoteric. Starting from the tendency of Suhrawardī's mystical thoughts, it is clear that there is an esoteric dimension that is deeply rooted and characterizes Suhrawardī's Sufism.

Suhrawardī loudly stated in the prologue of *Hikmah al-Isyrāq* that this work is intended for new learners who have a great interest in

theosophy. He further said that “at minimum, readers of this work are people who get divine radiance and an understanding of the process becomes skills in itself for him.” He believed that merely enthusiasm for the work was not enough to understand it, because inspiring and transferring intuitive wisdom was determined by the divine light. For Suhrawardī, a person who reads his work without receiving divine radiance will only waste his time because his writing is of no use to such readers.⁵⁴ From this claim, Suhrawardī implicitly expressed that there is a specialization in his Sufism concept. Esotericism is an inner concept for oneself that is abstract and incomprehensible by physical senses, therefore, there must be a specialty to this sphere because, as suggested by the Shaykh himself, esotericism is unreachable for anybody but the enlightened one.⁵⁵

Reconsidering the Intuitive Wisdom

The urge to systematically elaborate the notion of *ishrāqi* is challenging. This is due to the ambiguity of this philosophical concept in which Suhrawardī, on the one hand, tried to maintain an intuitive commitment and, on the other hand, wanted to be in line with the flow of rational philosophy. At best, Suhrawardī's philosophical outlook shares similarities with spiritualist-idealism, which holds that the source of existence is something that does not occupy space. Therefore, the material is considered a nonexistent spiritual incarnation. However, Suhrawardī uses the terms “light” for the essence of knowledge and “darkness” for its matter, hence, the notion of light in his philosophy corresponds to the term “idea” in

⁵⁰ Simon Blackburn, *Kamus Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2013). 291

⁵¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man And Nature: The Spiritual Crisis Of Modern Man* (London: Mandala Book, 1976).

⁵² Hammis Syafaq, “Relasi Pengetahuan Islam Eksoteris Dan Esoteris,” *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 2, no. 2 (2012): 339.

⁵³ Ja'far, “Tasawuf Suhrawardi Al-Maqtul” (Program Pascasarjana Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, 2015). 273

⁵⁴ Syihab ad-Din Yahya as-Suhrawardi, *Hikmah Al-Isyraḡ: Teosofi Cahaya Dan Metafisika Huduri*, trans. Muhammad Al-Fayyadl (Yogyakarta: Islamika, 2003). XXXV

⁵⁵ L. W. C. van Lit, *World of Image in Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, Shahrasturi and Beyond* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017). 65





Platonism. Shortly, Ishrāqi philosophy becomes an anti-realism school of thought.⁵⁶

Suhrawardī emphasized the aspect of direct experience without hindrance in attaining true knowledge, but it should be understood that the experience referred to is not in an empirical sense but is a spiritual experience that is spiritual. If you look at the characteristics of Suhrawardī's intuitive-based thinking, then the question arises whether the philosophy of illumination can bring advanced technology and science in the future. This requires further study because modern science and technology are in direct contact with the context of realist-empirical scientific studies, while illuminationist epistemology is known to be anti-realist.

Moreover, in connection to science, it is a must that Muslims should improve in a variety of subjects. For this reason, it is vital to do research into the evolution of the concept of illumination, so that it might contribute to the advancement of Muslims in different spheres of life. Thus, the development of studies is not centered only on abstract concepts but also on reality as the foundation of knowledge.

Conclusion

Suhrawardī, an Iranian philosopher is renowned for his philosophy of illumination that has imparted an influential hue to human thought. Even though that he is no follower of divine dualism, Suhrawardī is influenced by diverse modes of thinking ranging from Sufism of Islamic tradition and the peripatetic Islamic philosophy, Greek philosophy, ancient Iranian wisdom, and Zoroastrianism. His long career in the intellectual field has finally positioned him between philosophy and taṣawwuf, the pair pearls of wisdom that greatly contributed to Islamic civilization.

Suhrawardī believed that knowledge is the presence of a thing that needs to be known.

⁵⁶ Eko Sumadi, "Teori Pengetahuan Isyraqi (Illuminasi) Syihabudin Suhrawardī," *Jurnal Fikrah* 3, no. 2 (2015): 300.

The attainment of knowledge can only be done through *mushāhadat* and *mukāshafat*, not only by logical reasoning. In order to get the truth of implicit knowledge, logical thinking and intuition must be combined to interpret the soul as belonging to the realm of light, but it is imprisoned in the realm of darkness; therefore, spiritual training must be conducted in the spirit of soul-giving. He claimed that only a pure soul is capable of attaining *laduni* knowledge, or intuitive understanding, and making a connection with divine light.

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Author's Contributions

All enlisted authors contribute to this article. Ridhatullah Assya'bani composes the initial draft, conceptualizes the study, and manages the project administration, and journal submission. Ghulam Falach arranges the research method and data validation, hence narrates the formal analysis and compiles the resources.

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