

THE PRESENCE OF LIGHT

*Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*

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## CHAPTER TWO

# Suhrawardī on Knowledge and the Experience of Light

*Hossein Ziai*

### ILLUMINATIONIST THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

In this chapter I discuss the nature and systematic position of the "experience" of "light" in the theory of knowledge as defined in the philosophy of Illumination founded by the Persian philosopher Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (executed 1191).<sup>1</sup> Illuminationist philosophy is a novel reconstruction of a holistic philosophical system. We do not know in what circles or how Illuminationist works were studied immediately after Suhrawardī's execution in Aleppo, but several decades later, in the latter part of the thirteenth century, they were revived notably by the philosopher Shams al-Dīn Shahrazūrī, who wrote commentaries on selected texts, hailed Suhrawardī's philosophy of Illumination as a major achievement, and stated it to be both distinct from and more complete than Islamic Peripatetic philosophy.<sup>2</sup> The founder of this new system, the young, charismatic (also controversial) thinker Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, was born in the village of Suhraward in northwestern Iran during a period when some remote highland areas still had not succumbed to the Muslim rule of the Abbāsīd Caliphate. Suhrawardī, who had authored nearly fifty books and treatises, was only thirty-six years old when brutally executed by the direct command of Islam's great champion against the crusaders, the Ayyūbid king Saladin. The king twice directed his son, al-Malik al-Zāhir, governor of Aleppo, who had befriended the philosopher and had brought him to his court and studied with him, to kill the young thinker. The young prince had at first refused the order, but finally succumbed to the command of his father. The execution in the year 1191, the same year King Richard "the Lion Hearted" had landed in Acre and was engaged in battle against Saladin, was an unusually important but also enigmatic event. I have elsewhere demonstrated that Suhrawardī's execution was due to a real and explosive political dimension artfully woven into the very core of the new scientific methodology he named "Science

of Lights" (*ʿIlm al-Arwār*), which I have named "Illuminationist political doctrine."<sup>3</sup> Suhrawardī was in effect proposing a new political order to be ruled by an enlightened philosopher-king, whose sign of authority was described in terms of a manifest, radiating divine "light" named "Farreh-ye ʿIzādī" that recalled the divine aura of the ancient kings and Khosrows of Iranian mythology.

Illuminationist philosophy's Science of Lights employs a constructed metalanguage named "Language of Illumination" (*lisān al-ishrāq*) where "light," as symbol, permeates every domain of the constructed Illuminationist system, including the practical and political. Thus, the term "light" (Arabic *nūr*, used also in Persian), as well as a range of attributes and related terms, such as "luminosity" (*nūriyya/istināra*), "apparentness" (*Zuhūr*, best signified by the German term *Evidenz*), "presence" (*ḥuḍūr*, as a manifest and thus "lit" quality of a "light"), and "intensity" (*shadda*), as well as the key technical terms "illumination" (*ishrāq*) and "vision" (*mushāhada* in the noncorporeal realm of being, and *ibṣār* in the corporeal as "sight"), are all used technically with assigned meanings determined by context. Thus all things—that is, all existent entities—are depicted as light and may be abstract, or noncorporeal, or bodily. Such entities differ in terms of their luminosity, intensity, and other attributes that may be perceived by the senses or apprehended intellectually based on rules of inference including the deductive *and* the intuitive.

The Illuminationist theory of knowledge is complex. I have discussed it in greater detail elsewhere and have indicated Suhrawardī's achievement in describing the unified theory named "knowledge by presence." This theory rests on a general proposition that is indicated by the sameness of knowing and being, generalized as the sameness of any apprehending subject and the object apprehended in any domain of apprehension, where "apprehension" (*idrāk*, in some contexts "perception") includes all its specific types: the noetic, the sensory, the inspirational, and so on. The symbolism of light is also employed in discussing epistemological processes. For example, let us take a subject, the self-conscious "I" whose degree of consciousness is stated in terms of luminous intensity. That is, the more knowing, the more intense the degree of luminosity of the subject. The measure of luminosity is determined by proximity to the Light of Lights, which is the most conscious, most intense luminous thing in the Illuminationist cosmos. Next, the knowable object is also measured in terms of its light attributes; it has to be "lit" to be "seen" and thus knowable. In this scheme the "knower" generalized (*al-mudrik*) and the "known" generalized (*al-mudrak*), when "related" by an identity-preserving operator as a one-to-one relational correspondence, signifies "knowing" generalized (*idrāk*).

For our present purposes, it is important to bear in mind that the knowing associated with any knower, whatever type of knowing it may be (the sensed, the intellected, the intuited, the dreamed, and so on), is stated in terms of the conscious "I's" knowing as determined and measured by the "experience" of light. Simply stated, a thing is known when "seen"; to know is to be illuminated; and the thing seen, thus known, must be visible. "Visibility" is also determined by the degree of light and will mean different things depending upon the context. In external reality, for example, the healthy eye will see the lit object and thus come to know what it is. In a similar manner, in the noncorporeal realm, the knowing subject, whose degree of knowing is determined by consciousness, itself a function of the experience of light, will also "see" the luminous object—but here "seeing" is extended to mean "vision." Finally and ultimately, the knowing subject, depending on the degree and nature of its experience of light, may come to have a vision of the very source of the Illuminationist cosmos, the Light of Lights.

In order to explain the new epistemology's uniform validity over the entire range of reality—the seen and the unseen, the sensed and the intellected, the phenomenal and the noumenal—Suhrawardī recognizes the need to define a different structure of the universe from that described by Avicenna in his Aristotelian theory of intellectual knowledge marked by numbered, discrete intellects. This also requires that priority be given to "essence"—the real—over existence—the derived, logical ideal. Knowledge, for the Illuminationist, is not founded on the input of sense data and the extrapolation of universal concepts. At best the universals established in logic are relative truths. Rather, knowledge rests on these foundations:

1. A knowing subject that is self-conscious and knows its "I" necessarily by means of the principle of self-consciousness. This "I" recovers, intuitively, primary notions of time-space, accepts the validity of such things as the primary intelligibles, and confirms the existence of God. Thus, knowledge is founded on innate principles, which in a somewhat Platonic manner are recovered "in" the knowing subject.
2. Knowable objects, which in accordance with Illuminationist cosmology are part of the continuum of monadlike, but continuous, luminous entities, stated to be abstract lights (*anwār mujarrada*) that are all part of the continuum whole and differ only in terms of degrees of intensity.
3. An atemporal relation between the knowing subject and the object in what is defined as "durationless time" (*ān*).

This type of knowledge is called "knowledge by illumination and presence" and is activated whenever an Illuminationist relation (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) is obtained between the subject and the object.

Light symbolism is also applied to the realm of political philosophy, and this is done in a manner consistent with Illuminationist theory of knowledge. A ruler's legitimacy is seen in his manifest "luminosity," which is described by Suhrawardī using symbolism from the ancient Iranian mythos. It is "seen" in his manifest aurallike "luminous" quality named Farreh, the New Persian term for the Avestan *xvarena*, meaning "radiating light." In terms of the Illuminationist political doctrine, a ruler must obtain knowledge, which determines his Farreh. In turn his Farreh may be seen and known to be his sign of legitimacy. Consider the following passage which illustrates this point: "Whoever knows philosophy, and perseveres in thanking and sanctifying the Light of Lights, will have royal Kharreh and with luminous Farreh bestowed on him, and—as we have said elsewhere—divine light will further bestow upon him the cloak of royal power and value. Such a person shall then become the natural Ruler of the Universe. He shall be given aid from the High Heavens, and whatever he commands shall be obeyed; and his dreams and inspirations will reach their uppermost, perfect pinnacle."<sup>4</sup>

The philosophy of Illumination begins with an attack on the Peripatetic notion of definition, which Suhrawardī modifies and expands into a more comprehensive theory of knowledge that emphasizes self-knowledge and self-consciousness as the grounds of all knowledge. This view of knowledge then serves as the foundation for a cosmology in which real essences or the true being of things is set forth in a continuous sequence of self-conscious and self-subsistent entities within a continuum, depicted as "lights," which together constitute the whole cosmos. The God of this cosmos is the Light of Lights, from whose self-radiating being emanates a light that covers all of existence, and where light is no longer is the world of privation, of nonbeing, and of the darkness wherein resides evil. According to Illuminationist epistemology, knowledge is obtained when both the subject and the object are present and manifest, that is, when there is no obstacle between them. Then and only then is the knowing subject able to grasp the essence of the object.

As stated above, the experience of light is what determines knowledge in Illuminationist epistemology. In order now to see exactly how "experiencing light" leads to knowledge, we should examine, albeit briefly, the epistemological process defined by Suhrawardī. The principles that inform the subject in the Illuminationist scheme are formed as the result of a process consisting of several stages. The first stage is marked by an activity on the part of the philoso-

phēr (the subject): he has to "abandon the world." The second stage is marked by types of experience: the philosopher attains visions of a "divine light" (*al-nūr al-ilāhī*). The third stage is marked by the acquisition of unlimited and unbound knowledge, which is Illuminationist knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ishrāqī*). The philosophy of Illumination consists of three stages which concern the question of knowledge—how to prepare for the experience of it, receiving it through illumination, and constructing a systematic view of it—plus an additional stage consisting of the process of setting down the results of the experience of illumination and of the inquiry concerning it, in written form. In sum, the first stage is an activity through which the philosopher prepares himself for Illuminationist knowledge, a certain way of life preparing for the readiness to accept "experience" and confirm its validity. The second stage is the stage of illumination. The third stage is the stage of construction. The last stage involves depicting, symbolically whenever necessary, in written form, the structure that has been constructed during the third stage.

The very beginning of the first stage is marked by such activities as going on a forty-day retreat, abstaining from eating meat, and preparing for inspiration and revelation. Such activities fall under the general category of ascetic and mystical practices, though not in strict conformity with the prescribed states and stations of the mystic path, or *Ṣūfī tariqa*, as known in the mystical works of Suhrawardī's time. Through these activities, the philosopher with intuitive powers, in whom, as Suhrawardī tells us, there resides a portion of the "light of God" (*al-bāriq al-ilāhī*), is able, through "personal revelation" and "vision" (*mushāhada wa mukāshafa*), to accept the reality of his own existence and admit the truth of his own intuition. The first stage therefore consists of (1) an activity, (2) a condition (met by everyone, since we are told that every person has intuition and that in everyone there is a certain portion of the light of God), and (3) personal revelation.

The first stage leads to the second, when the divine light enters the being of the human. This light then takes the form of a series of "apocalyptic lights" (*al-anwār al-sāniḥa*), and through them the knowledge that serves as the foundation of real sciences (*al-'ulūm al-ḥaqīqīyya*) is obtained.

The third stage is that of constructing a true science (*'ilm ṣaḥīḥ*). It is during this stage that the philosopher makes use of discursive analysis. The experience is put to the test, and the system of proof used is the Aristotelian demonstration (*burhān*) of the *Posterior Analytics*. The same certitude obtained by the movement from sense data (observation and concept formation) to demonstration based on reason, which is the basis of discursive scientific knowledge, is said to obtain when visionary data upon which the philosophy of

Illumination rests are "demonstrated." This is done through a discursive analysis aimed at demonstrating the experience and constructing a system in which the experience itself can be situated and its validity readily deduced, even when the experience has ended.

The last stage consists of writing down the philosophy of Illumination. This stage, and the above-mentioned third stage, are the only components of the philosophy of Illumination to which *we* have access. The practitioner, the disciple of the Illuminationist way, would have recourse to the first two stages through experience. The disciples would have joined Suhrawardī in his retreats and would have experienced the "presence" of the experience for themselves, either individually or as part of a gestalt. Suhrawardī may have discussed his visions with the disciples (we so presume based on indications in the texts); his personal way, his "presence," would have served as the testimony for such visions, and the physical manifestations, the observed phenomenon, associated with the visionary experience, described in the *Philosophy of Illumination*, would have been witnessed by those present. What *we* have access to are the texts which are said to be symbolic portrayals of the phenomenon of the visionary experience, and we have to decide what they symbolize. Consider the following passages illustrative of the experience of light leading to knowledge and thus to apparently miraculous attributes of the subject who undergoes the experience:

(273) All of these are illuminations upon the managing light reflected upon the temple and the spirit of the soul. These are the goals of the intermediate. These lights may bear them up, allowing them to walk on water and air. They may ascend to the heavens with their bodies and associate with one of the celestial masters.

(274) The mightiest state is the state of death, by which the managing light sheds the darkneses. If it has no remnant of attachment to the body, it will emerge into the world of light and be attached to the dominating lights. There will it behold all the veils of light as though transparent in relation to the glory of the eternal, the all-encompassing Light: the Light of Lights. It will become as it were, placed within the all-encompassing Light. This is a station mighty indeed! Plato spoke from his own experience of this station, as did Hermes and the great sages.

(275) Those lights in which there is an admixture of might are of use in matters dependent upon might, and the lights in which there is an admixture of love are of use in matters dependent upon love. There are wonders among the lights! Whosoever is able to move his two faculties of might and love, his soul will hold sway over things exactly in accordance with that which corresponds to each faculty. Whoso ascends and thinks and endures will attain. Among the spiritual powers are stations, perils, terrors, and bewildermments. Each of these is known individually by those whose thought and opinion concerning divine and satanic matters is sound and whose resolve is steadfast toward

the perceptibles that strengthen each faculty: the might that strengthens dominance and the love that strengthens attraction.

(276) The visionary will understand the implication completely, learning much from a few hints. He will have patience to be resolute in all matters, the secret of this patience being entrusted to the one who holds the authority to teach the Book. He will be characterized by nearness to God most high, a spare diet and little sleep, supplication to God to ease the path for him, and a heart made refined by refined thoughts. He will ponder the clues to God's holiness enshrined in beings. He will be sincere in turning toward the Light of Lights, which is the basis of this realm, making his soul sing with the remembrance of God, the Master of the Kingdom—but worthy though this is, the sadness of the second state is more so—reciting revealed pages, in haste to return to Him in whose hand is creation and command. All these are conditions.

(277) Once the divine lights are dispersed within a man, he is clothed in a robe of might and awe, and souls bend to his command. For seekers of the waters of life, God hath a mighty spring! Who is there who will seek refuge with the light of One possessed of sovereignty and the Kingdom? Who is there who will hammer in longing upon the gate of divine glory? Who is there who will humble himself in the remembrance of God? Who is there who will go forth in search of God's guidance? No one who seeks His court will perish; neither will He disappoint the hopes of him who stands before His door.<sup>5</sup>

#### KNOWLEDGE, VISION, AND ILLUMINATION

The foundation of knowledge in Illuminationist epistemology is unqualified knowledge known with certitude (*yaqīn*).<sup>6</sup> There are distinctions in knowledge to be noted. Discursive philosophy, according to Suhrawardī, establishes formal validity, but knowledge based on intuition is given epistemological priority. In this way Suhrawardī does modify Aristotle's view of science portrayed in the *Posterior Analytics* by insisting that the most valid kind of knowledge is based on the "experience" of "apocalyptic lights" (*al-sawāniḥ al-nūriyya*) by the subject, which may be regarded as knowledge by means of a mode of cognition referred to as "mystical" experience.<sup>7</sup>

The validity of all discursive reasoning depends in principle and first upon the subject's experience. Here mystical visions, intuitions, and the experiential mode of knowledge in general are given the same epistemological certitude as the primary, self-evident (*badīhī*) premises of demonstration. Suhrawardī uses a favorite analogy to describe his view of knowledge. He compares physical observation (*irṣād jismānī*) with spiritual observation (*irṣād rūḥānī*) and states that the same kind of certitude, if not a higher level, as obtained from the world of sense data (*al-maḥsūsāt*) is obtained from observing or "seeing" all "light entities" within the continuum whole.



Illuminationist epistemological theory demands the ontological position that real existence, or the essence of the "seen" (sensed or intellectually perceived) entity, is the foundation of being and regards being in the univocal sense as purely abstract, or mental, or what may be called ideal. This ideal entity exists in the mind only and cannot serve as the foundation for the being of things "seen." The essences of these "seen" and "luminous" entities determine what they are, and in the real world what we see or experience is determined by them. Here the epistemological principle emphasized by Suhrawardī is that, to be known, a thing has to be seen (*mushāhada*) as it is (*kamā huwa*), especially if it is simple (*basīṭ*).<sup>8</sup> The knowledge thus gained by the person who "sees" the thing as it is will allow him to dispense with definition (*istaghṇā 'an al-ta'rīf*).<sup>9</sup> Definition here is what Suhrawardī considers the essentialist definition, the Aristotelian *horos*, or *horismos*, which is the formula that combines genera and differentia, which in the Illuminationist scheme do not inform us of the essence in the foundations of knowledge. These arguments provide a transition from the mental approach to knowledge to the approach that emphasizes direct "vision" of the essences of real things and insists that knowledge is valid only if the objects are "sensed, seen, or experienced."<sup>10</sup>

Illuminationist epistemology demands that the knowing subject obtain the kind of experience, outlined above, in order to be in a position to perceive or apprehend the essence of a thing *directly*. This is said to occur in a manner that corresponds to sight as an actual encounter between the "seeing subject" and the "object seen," an encounter in which any obstacle between the two is lifted and what is obtained is a "relation" between them that determines the knowledge of essence. It is this kind of "Illuminationist relation" (*iḍāfa ishrāqiyya*) that characterizes Suhrawardī's view of the foundation of knowledge. In sum, Suhrawardī stipulates that, "should a thing be seen, then one can dispense with its definition" (*man shāhadahu [al-shay'] istaghṇā 'an al-ta'rīf*), and that in this case, "the form of the thing in the mind is the same as its form in sense perception" (*ṣūratuhu fi'l-'aql ka-ṣūratihī fi'l-ḥiss*).<sup>11</sup> This view of knowledge is a main principle in the foundation of the philosophy of Illumination. We can therefore state that for Suhrawardī, knowledge is fundamentally obtained by means of a special mode of perception, which is called "seeing" or "vision" (*mushāhada*).<sup>12</sup> This special mode, said to be higher and more fundamental than predicative knowledge, emphasizes intuitive knowledge, where the subject has an immediate grasp of the object without the mediation of a predicate.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while for the Peripatetic, knowledge takes the form of a predicative proposition (*X is Y*), Suhrawardī's intuitive knowledge can be reduced to

what is nowadays called an existential proposition (X is) where "is" signifies the essence, considered symbolically as a luminous light.

Suhrawardī accepts the formal Peripatetic division of knowledge into conception and assent. But for knowledge of anything to have more than purely formal validity, it must be founded on divine inspiration. The Illuminationist position stipulates that divine assistance allows the person to come to know the thing as it is.<sup>14</sup> The epistemological characteristic of knowledge founded on inspiration is that it is knowledge by presence and consists of the conception of a thing together with the immediate assent to it. In this way knowledge by presence distinguishes Illuminationist epistemology from the Peripatetic theory of intellectual knowledge. Further, the division of knowledge into what is self-evident (*badīhī*)—also called primary (*awwalī*)—and speculative (*naẓarī*) or acquired (*muktasab*), which is the Peripatetic division of both conception and assent, is abandoned by Suhrawardī in favor of the division of both into innate and acquired.<sup>15</sup> Innately knowable things, knowable because of their inherent luminosity, serve as the foundation of "sight" or "vision" (*mushāhada*), the process by which knowledge is established.<sup>16</sup> Certitude in knowledge is based on the recovery of innately knowable essences through visions and intuitions, which then serve as the foundation for any validity in science and thus serve as the psychological foundations of certitude in knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

Suhrawardī stipulates that "perception" (*idrāk*),<sup>18</sup> as the most general act of knowing an "absent thing" (*al-shay' al-ghā'ib*), occurs when the idea (*mithāl*) of the reality (*ḥaqīqa*)<sup>19</sup> of the thing is obtained by the person, that is, in the knowing subject.<sup>20</sup> Suhrawardī considers this to be a more general view of knowledge than that signified by the Peripatetics' use of the terms *ma'rifa* and *'ilm*.<sup>21</sup> The term *idrāk*, translated as "apprehension," or "perception," indicates various ways or levels of knowing, including sense perception (*idrāk ḥissī*) and intellectual perception (*idrāk 'aqlī*),<sup>22</sup> as well as intuition and vision. This kind of Illuminationist knowledge is validated by the experience of the "presence" (*ḥudūr*) of the object and is immediate; it occurs in a duration-less instant (*ān*). The examples given by Shīrāzī of such Illuminationist knowledge are the following: knowledge of God (*'ilm al-bārī*), knowledge of incorporeal separate entities (*'ilm al-mujarradāt al-mufāraqa*), and knowledge of oneself (*'ilm bi-anfusinā*).<sup>23</sup> Emphasizing what I mentioned above, Suhrawardī's theory of knowledge requires complete correspondence between the "idea" obtained in the subject and the object.<sup>24</sup> This means that to obtain knowledge, a kind of "unity," or "sameness" in contemporary language, has to be established between the subject and the object, and the subject's immediate experience of the

"presence" of the object determines validity of knowledge. This view of knowledge is distinguished from Peripatetic theory of intellectual knowledge, where knowledge is established by a kind of "union" (*ittiḥād*) or "connection" (*ittiṣāl*) with the Active Intellect, after an initial separation or disjunction (*infiṣāl*). For Suhrawardī, however union and/or connection with the Active Intellect is rejected, because unity of subject and object obtained in the knowing person by an act of self-realization precludes disjunction in favor of a continuum reality, where being is a "light" determined by gradations of the manifestation of essence.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

In the fourth "book" of the physics in his text *Intimations*, which corresponds to *De Anima*, Suhrawardī devotes an entire chapter (chap. 4) to problems such as self-knowledge, knowledge of one's essence, and self-consciousness.<sup>25</sup> The problem is introduced by the question "Is it not the case that you are never unconscious of your own essence [*dhātuka*] in both sleep and waking?"<sup>26</sup> The question is answered: If one postulates in the mind a human being who is instantaneously (*daf'atan*) created in a perfect state, not using his limbs or sense perception, this human being will not be conscious of anything except his own being (*inniyya*),<sup>27</sup> and this knowledge of one's essence is necessary (*wājib*).<sup>28</sup> Suhrawardī is here elaborating on the Avicennian doctrine that posits a kind of *cogito* that serves as the basis for the individual's knowledge of self.<sup>29</sup> By means of the fundamental epistemological priority given to self-knowledge, Suhrawardī establishes validity of knowledge, that is, that knowledge of essence (not possible according to the Aristotelian formula of essentialist definition) is obtained through knowledge of self by the self.

Suhrawardī's view of self-knowledge further makes a two-way identification among various "levels" of consciousness. Consciousness is identified as an essential component of the rational soul,<sup>30</sup> and any subject conscious of its own essence is an "abstract light" (*nūr mujarrad*).<sup>31</sup> Further, an "abstract light" is said to be a "self-subsisting light."<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the rational soul, through an "activity" of self-consciousness, is identified as, or equated with, the concept "abstract light," which links the cosmic order to the physical order via the intermediary principle of consciousness and its various levels of intensity.<sup>33</sup> Here self-consciousness, both as a cosmic principle and as a psychological principle, constitutes the foundation of Illuminationist knowledge and is associated with the special mode of perception referred to as "sight" or "vision" (*mushā-*

*hada*).<sup>34</sup> Again, the basic principle of Illuminationist knowledge is the relation of the “I” (*ana*, ipseity of the subject) to the essence of anything by means of the “being” (*huwa*, objectified ipseity, the that-ness) of the thing, both conscious of themselves and “in” themselves, and cognizant of what they are, necessarily.<sup>35</sup> From this basic Illuminationist principle of epistemology Suhrawardī draws a general conclusion, namely, that everything which is conscious of its own essence shares consciousness with all other things of the same rank; thus, consciousness becomes the principle of Illuminationist knowledge which holds true of all self-conscious beings, starting with cosmic consciousness and progressing down to individual human consciousness.<sup>36</sup> He concludes further that self-consciousness is equivalent to being manifest, or apparent (*Zāhir*), identified with “pure light” (*nūr mahd*).<sup>37</sup> Self-consciousness is thus identified with “apparentness [or manifestation] and light-as-such” (*nafs al-Zuhūr wa al-nūriyya*).<sup>38</sup> Finally, Suhrawardī formulates the Illuminationist principle of self-knowledge and its connection to cosmic lights as follows: “Everyone who perceives his own essence is a pure light. And every pure light is manifest to, and perceives, its own essence.”<sup>39</sup> This principle also distinguishes Suhrawardī’s position from that of the Peripatetics: “A thing’s perception of its own self is [the same as] its being manifest to its own essence, not its being abstracted from matter as is the Peripatetic theory.”<sup>40</sup>

The most significant “light,” in terms of knowledge and the experience of light, is the light called *Isfahbad al-Nāsūt*, which is qualified as the “managing light” (*al-nūr al-mudabbir*),<sup>41</sup> and is an abstract light that “controls” what is below it in rank.<sup>42</sup> This light is like the Holy Spirit,<sup>43</sup> *dator scientiae* (*wāhib al-‘ilm*) and *dator spiritus* (*ravān bakhsh*), and acts as *dator formarum* (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*),<sup>44</sup> which thus links the human and the cosmic realms. The light, *Isfahbad al-Nāsūt*, knows its self through its own self-consciousness.<sup>45</sup> The conclusion is that the link between the cosmic and the human is the principle of self-consciousness and self-knowledge. Multiple lights emanating from one source symbolize the light *Isfahbad al-Nāsūt*; these lights are called the *Isfahbadiyya* lights.<sup>46</sup> The multiple lights act in accordance with their “archetype” (*arbāb al-ṣanam*) at all levels, and since human self-consciousness itself is an “abstract light,” there is no discontinuity between the cosmic and the human realm;<sup>47</sup> rather, they form a continuous whole. This theory is in marked contrast to the Peripatetic view of the Active Intellect, which is “one” and acts not in continuous, multiple manifestations (as do the *Isfahbadiyya* lights in relation to their “source,” the light *Isfahbad al-Nāsūt*), but as the *one* ultimate perfection of the intellect.<sup>48</sup>

Let me sum up what has been presented so far. The Illuminationist mode of perception and knowledge depends on

1. The subject: its experience of essence;
2. The object: its apparentness or manifestation (*Zuhūr*, similar to Husserl's *Evidenz*) and presence (*ḥudūr*); and
3. The Illuminationist relation (*al-iqāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) between the subject and the object, active when the subject and the object are "present" and "manifest" to their own essence, and thus to each other.

Knowledge is obtained when the identity preserving relational correspondence, that is to say, "sameness," relates the subject and the object, or any type of knower to its known.

Vision illumination (*mushāhada-ishrāq*) acts on all levels of reality: outwardly as sight (*ibṣār*),<sup>49</sup> and cosmically in that every abstract light "sees" the "lights" that are above it in rank, while the higher "lights" instantaneously, at the moment of vision, illuminate the lower in rank. The Light of Lights (*Nūr al-anwār*) illuminates everything, while the Heavenly Sun, the "Great Hürakhsh," lights things up and so allows for vision to take place. By means of the process of illumination "light" is propagated from its highest origin to the lowest elements,<sup>50</sup> for example, the "controlling lights" (*al-anwār al-qāhira*) and the "managing lights" (*al-anwār al-mudabbira*).<sup>51</sup> Among the "managing lights" the principle lights, which directly effect the human soul, are the Isfahbad lights.<sup>52</sup> In general, all higher lights control and illuminate the lower ones, which, in turn, are capable of "seeing" the higher ones. The Light of Lights controls everything.<sup>53</sup> It is the most apparent to itself, and thus it is the most self-conscious being in the universe.<sup>54</sup> All "abstract lights" are illuminated directly by the Light of Lights, whose luminosity (*nūriyya*), essence (*dhāt*), and power are all one and the same.<sup>55</sup> The Light of Lights is self-emanating (*fayyad bi-al-dhāt*), and its attributes and essence are one.<sup>56</sup> Human souls who have experienced the "apocalyptic lights" are called "abstract souls" (*al-nufūs al-mujarrada*), because they have freed themselves from the physical bondage of the body and are able to obtain the "creative light" (*al-nūr al-khāliq*) which bestows on them the power to know.<sup>57</sup> The experience of light by the Brethren of Abstraction (*ikhwān al-tajrīd*)<sup>58</sup> and the Masters of Vision (*aṣḥāb al-mushāhada*)<sup>59</sup> is described by Suhrawardī as a gradual experience of "light" in fifteen steps, starting with the experience of the "flashing pleasurable light" (*al-nūr al-bāriq al-ladhīdh*) and ending with the experience of a "light" so violent that it may tear the body apart at the joints.<sup>60</sup> The following passage illustrates this fully:

(272) Lights of sundry kinds shine upon the brethren of abstraction: a flash of light descending upon the beginners, shining and receding like the flash of a thunderbolt of pleasure; a stronger flashing light descending upon others, more like a terrifying thunderbolt, with which often a sound is heard like the sound of thunder or a roaring in the brain; a pleasant descending light whose descent is like warm water pouring upon the head; a light fixed for a long period, great in power, accompanied by a stupor in the brain; a light most pleasurable, not resembling a thunderbolt, but accompanied by a sweet and subtle joy moved by the power of love; a burning light moved by the motion of the power of might—when hearing drums and trumpets, it may result in things terrifying to the beginner, or in thought and imagination it may give him glory; a glittering light in a mighty blast, which in a drowning pleasure makes contemplation and vision more keen than does the sun; a flashing light, greatly pleasurable, during which one seems to be suspended by the hair of the head for a long time; a propitious light by which one seems to be seized—it seems as though the hair of the head is grasped and one is dragged roughly and tormented with a pleasurable pain; a light with a seizing that seems to be fixed in the brain; a light, extremely pleasant, shining from the soul upon the entire spirit of the soul, in which it seems as though something armors the body, and the spirit of the entire body might almost seem to have a luminous form; a light that begins as an assault, at the beginning of which a man imagines that something is being destroyed; a propitious light negating the soul, in which the soul appears to itself as something utterly suspended and wherein it beholds its own abstraction from dimensions, even if the one who experienced this had not known it beforehand; a light accompanied by the feeling of a weight almost too heavy to bear; a light accompanied by the power to move the body so great as to nearly tear asunder the joints.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, “light” must exist at all levels of reality for Illuminationist theory of knowledge to hold, both manifest light (*al-nūr*) necessary for sight and the abstract light (*al-nūr al-mujarrad*) necessary for the visionary experience. Stated simply, it is the Illuminationist theory of the propagation of light that determines how light comes to exist at all levels. The very origin, principle, and nexus of Illuminationist cosmology is the Light of Lights who radiates or emanates “light” because of what it is, and the propagated “rays” reach the entire cosmos.<sup>62</sup> The existence (self-consciousness) of the Light of Lights is not separate from its activity (illumination). Unlike the Plotinian One, from which Nous appears, from the Light of Lights another “light” is obtained which is not essentially different from it. In effect, that the Light of Lights is what it is and that it does what it does are one and the same. Thus, that the Light of Lights exists becomes a first axiom from which the whole of reality may be deduced.

Illumination and emanation, as delineated by Suhrawardī, combine two processes. The first process is the emanation of the First Light—also called the Closest Light (*al-nūr al-aqrab*)<sup>63</sup>—from the Light of Lights. The First Light is

simply obtained (*yuhṣal*); that is, it is not created by a willing entity.<sup>64</sup> The only difference between this light and the Light of Lights is in their relative degree of intensity (*shadda*), which is a measure of perfection, the Light of Lights being simply the most intense light.<sup>65</sup> There is no difference between these two lights regarding their modalities, and when the First Light is propagated it is not disjoint from the Light of Lights; it is *continuous* with It. This is also true of all the "abstract lights"; they, too, differ from one another and from the Light of Lights only in respect to intensity. The First Light (*a*) *exists* as an abstract light;<sup>66</sup> (*b*) has a twofold movement—it "loves" (*yuhibbu*) and "sees" (*yushāhidu*) the Light of Lights above it and controls (*yaqharu*) and illuminates (*ashraqa*) what is below it;<sup>67</sup> (*c*) has a "rest," and this rest implies something like "matter," called *barzakh*, which has a "shape" (*hay'a*)—and together the "matter" and "shape" serve as a receptacle for light;<sup>68</sup> and (*d*), in addition, has something like a "quality" or an attribute—it is "rich" (*ghanī*) in relation to the lower lights and "poor" (*faqīr*) in relation to the Light of Lights.<sup>69</sup> The "richness" and "poverty" of a light corresponds to the degree of its perfection and its degree of intensity. This scheme is true of all lights. Through seeing the Light of Lights, and motivated by love and sameness, another "abstract light" is obtained from the First Light.<sup>70</sup> When the First Light "sees" its own poverty, its own "matter" and shape are obtained. As this process continues, the spheres and the elemental world all come to be.<sup>71</sup> These lights, so obtained, are the principal abstract lights, and they are multifarious.

The second process is not separate from the first, but is the result of the activity of the abstract lights. This process itself is the coupled process of illumination and vision. When the First Light is obtained, it has an immediate vision of the Light of Lights in a durationless, discrete "moment," whereupon the Light of Lights instantaneously illuminates it and thus "lights up" the "matter" and the shape associated with the First Light.<sup>72</sup> The light that comes to reside in the first abstract light is an "apocalyptic light" (*al-nūr al-sānih*) and is the most receptive of all lights.<sup>73</sup> The process continues and the second light receives two lights: one light from the illumination of the Light of Lights directly, and one light from the First Light, the First Light having received it from the Light of Lights and now passing it on because of this light's transparency.<sup>74</sup> In the same manner, the third light receives four lights: one directly from the Light of Lights, one from the First Light, and the lights of the second light. The process continues, and the fourth light receives eight lights, the fifth sixteen lights, and so on. The result is that the number of lights (and with it the activity, intensity, and the very essence of the Light of Lights, which is self-

consciousness and is symbolized as abstract light) increases according to the sequence  $2^{n-1}$ , the Closest Light being the first member of this sequence.<sup>75</sup>

## NOTES

1. There are several works that serve to introduce Suhrawardī's thinking; among them the following are noted: Carra de Vaux, "La philosophie illuminative d'après Suhrawardi Meqtoul," *Journal Asiatique*, xix, vol. 19 (1902): 63–94; Max Hörten, *Die Philosophie der Erleuchtung nach Suhrawardī* (Halle, 1912); Muhammad Iqbāl, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (London, 1908), pp. 121–50; *Arwāriyya: An 11th Century A.H. Persian Translation and Commentary on Suhrawardī's Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, ed. Hossein Ziai (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1980; 2nd ed., 1984); Louis Massignon, *Receuil de textes inédits* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1929), pp. 11–13; Otto Spies, *Three Treatises on Mysticism by Shihabuddin Suhrawardī Maqtul* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935); Helmut Ritter, "Philologika IX: Die vier Suhrawardī," *Der Islam* 24 (1937): 270–86, 25 (1938): 35–86; H. Corbin, *Suhrawardī d'Alep, fondateur de la doctrine illuminative* (Paris, 1939); idem, *Les Motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohravardī* (Tehran, 1946); idem, *L'Homme de Lumière dans le soufisme iranien* (Paris: Sideron, 1971). See especially Corbin's *Prolegomènes* to each of his following critical editions of Suhrawardī's works: *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica I* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaasi, 1945); *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica II* (Tehran: Institut Franco-Iranien, 1954); *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica III* (Tehran: Institut Franco-Iranien, 1970). See also Corbin's translations of Suhrawardī's works: *L'Archange empourpré: Quinze traités et récits mystiques traduits du persan et de l'arabe*, ed. Henry Corbin (Paris: Fayard, 1976); and *Le Livre de la Sagesse Orientale, Kitāb Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, trans. Henry Corbin (Paris: Verdier, 1986).

2. *al-Nizām al-Atamm*. See Shahrazūrī, *Commentary on the Philosophy of Illumination*, ed. Hossein Ziai (Tehran, 1993), p. 5. See also Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Tehran, AH 1313), p. 12.

3. See my "The Source and Nature of Authority: Illuminationist Political Doctrine," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Charles Butterworth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 314–84.

4. From *The Book Of Radiance*, ed. and trans. Hossein Ziai (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998), pp. 84ff.

5. From *The Philosophy of Illumination: A new Critical Edition of the text of "Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq,"* pt. 2, "The Fifth Discourse," sec. 9, "On the State of the Wayfarers," ed. and trans. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo: BYU Press, 2000), pp. 159ff.

6. Suhrawardī often uses the term *yaqīnī* or *mutayyaqqana* when he wants to modify knowledge with the attribute "certain." E.g., Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 21. The term *yaqīnī* may be compared with ἐπιστέμη; e.g., Thābit ibn Qurra, *al-Madkhal*, pp. 4, 14, 185.



7. The distinction between discursive reasoning and intuitive knowledge had been made by Aristotle. However, he does not allow for intuition to play a principal position in philosophical construction, a point on which Suhrawardī insists. For a discussion of Aristotle's views concerning this issue see Victor Kal, *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), especially pp. 44–53.

8. See Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, p. 204: 11–14.

9. *Ibid.*

10. See Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, pp. 42, 134–35.

11. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, pp. 73–74.

12. By *mushāhada*, Suhrawardī means a special mode of cognition that enables the person to have an immediate grasp of the essence of the object. Suhrawardī, *Kalimat al-Taṣawwuf* (Tehran: Majlis MS, *Majm.*, 'a 3071), p. 398: “al-mushāhada hiya shurūq al-anwār ‘alā al-nafs bi-ḥaythu yanqaṭi’ munāza’at al-wahm.” Cf. Mullā Ṣadrā, *Ta’līqāt*, *Sharḥ*, p. 204 (margin).

13. I mean a kind of knowledge which is beyond ordinary knowledge. This kind of knowledge is “purely intuitive,” writes Philip Merlan, “which grasps the object without the mediation of a predicate” (Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968], p. 185). This is knowledge pertinent to things whose very nature dictates that they not have any predicates, such as God. This knowledge has to do with things “above being” and is called ἀκίνητα by Aristotle (*ibid.*, p. 186). It is usually translated as “intuition,” or “quick wit.” Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 2.34, 89<sup>b</sup>10ff.: ἀκίνητὰ ἔστιν εὐστοχία τις ἐν ἀσκέπτῳ χρόνῳ τοῦ μέσου. Cf. *idem*, *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.9, 1142<sup>b</sup>6ff. “The essentials of the intuitionist theory are these: I have immediate or direct acquaintance with external reality in my sense perceptions. I have immediate or direct acquaintance with internal reality, that is, with the process of mind, by introspection as the inner sense” (Joseph Alexander Leighton, *Man and the Cosmos* [New York: D. Appleton, 1922], p. 51). Plotinus is often considered the most significant Greek proponent of intuition (e.g., by Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* [Glasgow: J. MacLehose, 1923], 1220–21). Cf. the distinction between πειθώ and ἀνάγκη (literally, persuasion vs. logical necessity, thus the distinction between discursive and immediate knowledge), in Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.3.6.

14. Suhrawardī, *Intimations: Logic* (Berlin MS 5062), p. 2: “yua’yyid ibn al-bashar bi-rūḥ qudsī yurīh al-shay’ kamā hurwa.” “Divine assistance” is similar to the role of the Active Intellect in Peripatetic epistemology. The Holy Spirit, *rūḥ al-quḍus*, and *raḥīm bakhsh*, which is the Persian equivalent, meaning *Dator spiritus*, as the giver of divine assistance, is identified by Suhrawardī in many instances with the the Active Intellect. It is also named the “giver of knowledge and divine aid” (*wāhib al-‘ilm wa’l-ta’yīd*). Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 201. Cf. *idem*, *Opera III*, p. 221: “rays emanate from the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is further identified as the *Dator formarum* (*wāhib al-suwar*) and with the archangel Gabriel (*idem*, *Opera II*, p. 265). In Illuminationist cosmology the equivalent of the Holy Spirit is an abstract (noncorporeal) light called *Isfahbad al-Nāsūt*, which, in addition to acting as the Active Intellect and the *Dator formarum*,

has a special function (which is also a kind of pure self-consciousness), because it indicates its own essence by its own self "wa huwa al-nūr al-mudabbir al-ladhī huwa Isfahbad al-Nāsūt wa huwa al-mushīr ilā nafsīhi bi'l-anā'iyya" (idem, *Opera II*, p. 201). For a detailed discussion of the role of the *Dator formarum* in Illuminationist epistemology as well as its position in physics, see Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 263–69. Its "highest" function is said to be to give being (*wāhib al-ṣuwar yu'fī al-wujūd*) (ibid., p. 268).

15. Suhrawardī, *Intimations: Logic*, p. 2; idem, *Paths and Havens: Logic* (Leiden MS: Or. 365), fol. 96r; idem, *Opera II*, p. 18. Cf. Baghdādī, *al-Mu'tabar* 1.7–8.

16. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, pp. 18–19. Cf. Baghdādī, *al-Mu'tabar*, 1.4; 3.35–41.

17. This Illuminationist position in theory of knowledge may be indicative of a "Platonic" theory. Cf. F. E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 173: "The weapon of *a priori* knowledge (*ma'rifa awwaliyya*) is used against the whole structure of Peripatetic psychology, and it is through his application of the same criterion that Abu'l-Barakāt arrives at Razian or, better, Platonic positions on absolute time and absolute space."

18. Translation of the term *idrāk* (as used by Suhrawardī) into English poses some difficulties. The term "perception" is probably an adequate equivalent, but it should be understood in the most general sense of "apprehension." For the various shades of the meaning of the term "perception" as used in philosophy, see R. J. Hirst, "Perception," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 6:79–87. For various Greek equivalents of *idrāk* and its modifications such as *idrāk bi'l-'aql*, *idrāk bi'l-fahm*, *idrāk bi'l-ḥiss*, etc., see Soheil Muhsin Afnan, *Vazih'namah-'i falsafi: A Philosophical Lexicon in Persian and Arabic* (Beirut: Dar El-Mashreq, 1969), pp. 98–99. Cf. F. Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 278; Avicenna, *al-Najāt*, pp. 277–79. For a history of "perception" in Greek philosophy, see D. W. Hamlyn, *Sensation and Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 1–39.

19. Suhrawardī uses the term *ḥaqīqa* to designate *māhiyya*, i.e., *quiddity*. *Opera II*, pp. 16–19. Cf. Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, p. 45: 1–3.

20. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 15: "*idrāk . . . huwa bi-ḥuṣūl mithāl ḥaqīqatihi fika*." Cf. idem, *Opera III*, pp. 2–3: "*shinākht . . . ān bāshad ki ṣūrāt as ān-i ū dar tu ḥāsil shavad*." The same statement is made by Suhrawardī in one of his mystical works, *Kalimat al-Taṣawwuf*, pp. 353–54.

21. Thus, the term *idrāk* as used by Suhrawardī is like a genus that covers a number of species, such as *'ilm*, *ma'rifa*, *ḥiss*, etc. Al-Ghazālī divides *idrāk* into *'ilm* and *ma'rifa* (al-Ghazālī, *Mihāk al-Nazar*, ed. al-Nā'sānī [Beirut, 1966], p. 102). In recent Iranian philosophy, *idrāk*, which is taken synonymously with *shinākht* or *shināsā'i*, is divided into *idrāk ḥissī*, *idrāk dhūmī*, *idrāk 'aqlī*, and *shu'ūr* (both internal and external). See A. M. Mishkāt al-Dīnī, *Tahqīq dar Ḥaqīqat-i 'Ilm* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, AH 1344), pp. 2ff.

22. See F. Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima*, pp. 18–22, 25, 34; idem, *Avicenna's Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 38–40.

23. Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, p. 38: 16–19: “al-‘ilm al-ishrāqī al-ladhī yakfī fīhi mujarrad al-ḥuḍūr ka ‘ilm al-bārī ta‘ālā wa ‘ilm al-mujarradāt al-mufāraqa wa ‘ilminā bi-anfusinā.” Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.2, 982<sup>b</sup>28–983<sup>a</sup>11; 12.7 1178<sup>b</sup>14–16. Suhrawardī develops the details of such concepts as al-‘ilm al-ishrāqī, ḥuḍūr, and al-mushāhada al-ishrāqīyya in his *Paths and Havens* (*Opera I*, pp. 480–96).

24. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 15. Cf. Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, pp. 40:8–41:5.

25. Suhrawardī, *Intimations: Physics*, ed. S. H. Musawi (Tehran, 2001), p. 67.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 61: “alyasa annaka lā taghīb ‘an dhātika fi ḥalatay nawmika wa yaqzatika?”

27. *Ibid.* In this *Gedankenexperiment* Suhrawardī, though undoubtedly aware of Avicenna’s similar idea of the “suspended” man, does not refer to him.

28. *Ibid.*

29. See Rahman, *Avicenna’s Psychology*, p. 10; Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs*, p. 173 n. 216.

30. E.g., Suhrawardī, *Paths and Havens: Physics* (Leiden MS: Or. 365), fol. 175r ff.

31. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 110.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*; cf. Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, p. 290: 3–17.

34. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 110.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 112: “mā anta bihi anta . . . huwa anā’iyyatuka.”

36. Cf. Suhrawardī, *Opera III*, pp. 23, 37: “dhāt-i tu dhātist qā’im bi khud mujarrad az mādda ki az khud ghā’ib nīst.” The idea of cosmic and human consciousness as a principle of metaphysics, by means of which the same principle is applied to corporeal as well as noncorporeal entities, is found in Plotinus. See Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.3, 2–3.

37. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, pp. 113–14.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

39. *Ibid.*: “kull man adraka dhātahu fa-huwa nūr maḥḍ, wa kull nūr maḥḍ zāhir li-dhātihi wa mudrik li-dhātihi.” Shīrāzī considers this to mean the union of the subject and the object. Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, p. 297: 2–3: “fa’l-mudrik wa’l-mudrak wa’l-idrāk hāhunā wāḥid.”

40. *Ibid.* This section (§119) bears the title “Ḥukūma,” and the description given is taken from Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ*, p. 297: 5–8.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

43. See above, n. 14.

44. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 201.

45. *Ibid.*: “huwa mushir ilā nafsihi bi’l-ana’iyya.”

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 226–28, 237.

47. In the Illuminationist cosmology, what is “emanated,” or simply obtained, from the Source of light, designated Light of Lights (*Nūr al-Anwār*), is not separate from it, but is continuous with it; nor are the emanated lights discrete. E.g., Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 128: “wujūd nūr min Nūr al-Anwār laysa bi-an yanfaṣil minhu shay’”; *ibid.*, p. 137:

“ishrāq Nūr al-Nūr ‘alā al-anwār al-mujarrada laysa bi-infiṣāl shay’ minhu.” Cf. *ibid.*, p. 146: “al-nūr al-mujarrad lā yaqbal al-ittiṣāl wa’l-infiṣāl.” The Light of Lights and what emanates from it form a continuum, and thus, unlike Peripatetic cosmology, Illuminationist cosmology is made up of noncorporeal, separate entities that are not discrete. The metaphor of “light” and its properties in propagating from one source describes the Illuminationist cosmology very adequately.

48. I do not wish to discuss the problem of the Active Intellect in Peripatetic philosophy in detail here. Briefly, in the common Peripatetic scheme, the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘āl*) serves both as *Dator formarum* and as “link” with the acquired intellect (*al-‘aql al-mustafād*). But the significant difference between the Peripatetic Active Intellect and Suhrawardī’s Isfahbad al-Nāsūt is that the latter is a continuous part of both what is below it in rank and what is above it. And unlike the Peripatetic Active Intellect, which is the tenth intellect in a “mechanical” cosmological scheme where the intellects are numbered, the Isfahbad al-Nāsūt is itself a multiplicity of abstract lights, for which it serves as *one* archetype. For a discussion of the Active Intellect, see F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958), chap. 2. Cf. Aristotle, *De Anima* 3,5, 430<sup>a</sup>10ff., where νοῦς ποιητικός is to be compared with *al-‘aql al-fa‘āl*; Avicenna, *al-Najāt*, 2.6; Alfarabi, *Aḥl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, ed. M. Kurdi (Cairo, 1948), pp. 10ff; Suhrawardī, *Opera III*, pp. 53–55.

49. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 134.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 142–43.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40, 166–75, 185–86. Note that the managing lights function on the human level, as *al-anwār al-insiyya* (*ibid.*, p. 201), as well as on the cosmic level, as *al-anwār al-falakiyya* (*ibid.*, p. 236).

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 201, 213–15.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 135–36, 197.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–24.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

57. This is when the knowing subject, as the self-conscious monad, becomes the creative subject.

58. Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 252. These “brethren” enjoy the highest possible human rank, which is the rank of “creation,” by means of which they are able to bring into being (the term used is *ijād*, which can be translated as “create”) any form they wish. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 242: “wa li-ikhwān al-tajrid maqām khāṣṣ fihi yaqdirūn ‘alā ijād muthul qā’ima ‘alā ayyi šurat arādū, wa dhālika mā yusammā maqām kun.”

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 156, 162.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 252–54.

61. This passage is taken from “On the State of the Wayfarers,” pp. 159ff.

62. The Light of Lights is self-emanating (*fayyād bi al-dhāt*) and is the “active knower” (*al-darrāk al-fa‘āl*) (Suhrawardī, *Opera II*, p. 117). Since any act of “knowing”

(*idrāk*) is self-manifestation, self-knowledge, and self-consciousness (ibid., pp. 110–13), the Light of Lights is pure self-consciousness and unchanging, eternal emanation (ibid., pp. 121–22, 152, 175).

63. Ibid., pp. 126–27, 132.

64. Ibid., pp. 125, 138–39. Suhrawardī does not use the more common terms *ṣudūr* or *fayḍ* to describe the emanation of light from the Light of Lights. The term used, *ḥuṣūl*, which means “to obtain,” is less restricted than the other terms and conveys more of a “natural” process of propagation of light than a “desired” or “willed” emanation from the Source.

65. Ibid., pp. 119, 126–27.

66. Ibid., p. 126.

67. Ibid., pp. 135–37.

68. Ibid., pp. 132–34.

69. Ibid., pp. 133, 145–47.

70. Ibid., pp. 138–43.

71. Ibid., p. 138.

72. Ibid., pp. 139–40.

73. Ibid., pp. 138, 140.

74. Ibid., pp. 190–91, 195.

75. Ibid., pp. 138–41. The series  $2^{n-1}$  and the series  $3^{n-1}$  are the two series that serve as the basis of the harmony of Plato's World-Soul. See F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, n.d.), p. 49.