



Suhrawardi's Self-Awareness Argument: A New Path to Proving the Existence of God¹

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Abstract

Traditionally, proofs for the existence of God have been classified into three categories: ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments. The Iranian-Islamic philosopher Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, in his most important work, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (*The Philosophy of Illumination*), presents a proof for the existence of God that may be described as a *self-awareness argument*. This argument introduces a new category of proofs, namely, epistemological proofs, alongside the three traditional classifications. Whereas ontological arguments proceed from the concept of being, cosmological arguments from the contingency or origination of the universe, and teleological arguments from the order and purposiveness of the cosmos, epistemological arguments begin from the reality of consciousness itself. At first glance, Suhrawardi's proof resembles the well-known argument from necessity and contingency and therefore appears similar to cosmological arguments. However, a closer examination within the framework of Suhrawardi's metaphysics of light (*'ilm al-anwār*) reveals that the point of departure is not merely existent being, but rather *self-aware being*. Moreover, the movement of the argument does not proceed from an external, third-person perspective; instead, it arises from an inward and first-person mode of awareness. In this sense, the proof is discovered through introspection and only later expressed propositionally. Suhrawardi demonstrates how the human encounter with one's own self-awareness necessarily leads to the recognition of a higher self-awareness beyond which nothing greater can be conceived. Thus, he opens a new path

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for proving the existence of God, one that may be summarized in the following form: “*I am self-aware; therefore, God exists.*”

Keywords: Self-awareness Argument, Epistemological Proof, consciousness, Proving the Existence of God, Suhrawardī.

1. Introduction

Today, following Kant, arguments for the existence of God are generally classified into three major categories: ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments. The most significant arguments proposed by Muslim thinkers in support of God’s existence can also be situated within these classifications. For example, certain versions of *Burhān al-Ṣiddīqīn* may be regarded as ontological arguments, while the *Burhān al-Ḥudūth* (argument from origination) and *Burhān al-Ḥaraka* (argument from motion) belong to the cosmological category. Likewise, the *Burhān al-Naẓm* (argument from design) is a teleological argument.

Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī (d. 587 AH / 1191 CE), the founder of Illuminationist Philosophy (*al-Ḥikmah al-Ishrāqīyah*) within the Islamic philosophical tradition, proposed an argument for the existence of God that, from at least one interpretive perspective, does not fit neatly into any of these three categories. Rather, it may be understood as a new form of proof, an epistemological argument grounded in consciousness and self-awareness. In his most important philosophical work, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, Suhrawardī seeks to establish the existence of God through human self-awareness. Although his reasoning begins with the existence of a self-conscious being and structurally resembles Ibn Sīnā’s argument from necessity and contingency, it should not necessarily be interpreted as a cosmological proof, as some commentators on Illuminationist philosophy have suggested, or as their writings appear to imply (Shahrazūrī, 2001, p 316; Shirāzī, 2005, p 299).

Within the Islamic philosophical tradition, there also exists an argument known as the *Burhān al-Nafs* (Argument from the Soul) for the existence of God, which may be seen as related to Suhrawardī’s proof in *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shahrazūrī, the earliest commentator on *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, presents this argument in his work *Al-Rasā’il al-Shajara al-Ilāhiyya*, where he enumerates five proofs for the existence of God. The fifth proof is explicitly identified as the *Burhān al-Nafs*, proceeding from the origination (*ḥudūth*) of the soul and the impossibility of a bodily cause for it, toward the necessity of a divine cause. However, in his commentary on *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, Shahrazūrī does not describe Suhrawardī’s proof using the term *Burhān al-Nafs*. If the argument were interpreted solely in this way, it

would no longer represent a distinct or innovative proof, but would instead become merely another form of the traditional *Burhān al-Hudūth* (argument from origination). Furthermore, among contemporary scholars, I have not encountered any sustained attention to the uniqueness of Suhrawardī's argument. At the very least, I have not seen anyone explicitly regard it as one of his philosophical innovations. In my view, however, if greater emphasis is placed on the epistemological dimension of self-awareness, the argument can be reconstructed in a fundamentally different manner. The present article therefore proposes a new interpretation of Suhrawardī's proof and seeks to demonstrate its distinctive advantages over other arguments for the existence of God.

2. Philosophical Foundations of Suhrawardī's Argument

Before explaining Suhrawardī's argument itself, it is necessary to examine the philosophical foundations upon which it rests. Although Suhrawardī emerged only about a century after the culmination of Peripatetic philosophy in the Islamic world through Ibn Sīnā, his philosophical system differs radically from the Aristotelian tradition and departs from it on many fundamental issues. At the same time, the overwhelming influence of Avicennian philosophy has often led interpreters to read Suhrawardī through a Peripatetic lens.

Suhrawardī consistently employed new terminology, even in cases where his ideas did not fundamentally differ from those of earlier thinkers, in order to emphasize the originality and independence of his philosophical vision. It is also important to recognize that not everything found in Suhrawardī's writings necessarily reflects his own final philosophical position. Many of his works were deliberately composed in the style of the Peripatetics, and he explicitly states that they were written *'alā ṭarīqat al-mashā'īn* ("in the manner of the Peripatetics"). Even in *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, which represents the mature expression of Illuminationist philosophy, one must carefully distinguish between Peripatetic elements and genuinely Illuminationist doctrines.

In this section, I will examine the foundational principles of Suhrawardī's philosophy and show how his intellectual system develops into a metaphysics of light and darkness, how self-awareness functions within that framework, and how this ultimately provides the basis for his theology.

2.1. Self-Awareness

Suhrawardī's Illuminationist philosophy (*Hikmat al-Ishrāq*) is a metaphysical system grounded in the duality of light and darkness, according

to which all existents are fundamentally divided into these two categories. But how does the Illuminationist philosopher arrive at such a foundational distinction? Suhrawardī himself discloses the origin of his philosophical transformation through a visionary experience in which he engages in dialogue with a figure identified as the “First Teacher” (*al-mu‘allim al-awwal*). In this vision, Suhrawardī complains about the difficulty of the problem of knowledge and cognition, and the First Teacher responds: “Turn to yourself, and the difficulty will be resolved.” (*Suhrawardī, Al-Talwīḥāt*, p 70). For this reason, Suhrawardī’s philosophy has been regarded, most notably by Shahrāzūrī, as fundamentally rooted in Illuminationist psychology (*‘ilm al-naḥs al-ishrāqī*) (Shahrāzūrī, 2001, p 16). The dialogue makes clear that the call to “return to oneself” refers to the soul’s immediate awareness of itself. This awareness is direct, immediate, and inseparable from the very essence of the soul. In other words, the soul’s identity is identical with its self-awareness. Suhrawardī refers to this pure and immediate self-awareness as “pure light” (*al-nūr al-maḥḍ*). But why should self-awareness, or light, serve as the starting point of philosophy? This question leads directly to the issue of self-evidence (*badāha*) in Illuminationist philosophy.

2.2. Self-Evidence

According to epistemic foundationalism, the starting point of philosophical thought must be self-evident. If the understanding of this initial principle itself depends on something else for its comprehension, then that other principle must instead be the true starting point. This process cannot regress infinitely; ultimately, one must arrive at a self-evident and immediately known principle, which serves as the foundation of philosophical inquiry. This is the basis that Aristotle first presented in his *Posterior Analytics* (Aristotle, 1984, p. 75.), and philosophers of the Islamic world, including Suhrawardī, also accepted this foundational principle. (Suhrawardī, 2001b, p. 18.). Suhrawardī adheres to this foundationalist approach in epistemology, yet he diverges from the philosophical tradition preceding him in the way he identifies this foundational principle.

The notion of self-evidence (*badāha*) in Illuminationist logic differs from that in Aristotelian and Avicennian logic, a distinction rooted in Suhrawardī’s epistemological framework. While the Peripatetic tradition conceives of knowledge as the representation of an external object in the mind, Suhrawardī rejects this view. Instead, he argues that knowledge is a form of direct presence (*ḥuḍūr*), not the acquisition of an image of an object, but the

actual presence of the object itself before the knower. This presence occurs through illumination (*ishrāq*) of the soul and the radiation of the knower upon the known. Consequently, the concept of mental representation (*taṣawwur*) has no place in Suhrawardī's epistemology except after the emergence of the Illuminated soul. In Aristotelian logic, self-evidence is defined within the domain of concepts and propositions: a concept is self-evident if its apprehension does not depend on any other concept. However, in Illuminationist logic, which eliminates conceptual knowledge altogether, self-evidence is equated with direct perceptual experience. Whatever is immediately perceived, whether by the external senses or by inner intuition, is self-evident and requires no further justification. On this basis, unlike Peripatetic metaphysics, which begins with the most self-evident concept, existence (*wujūd*), Illuminationist metaphysics begins with the most self-evident experience: the self (*man*). The most fundamental of all self-evident truths is not the concept of existence but rather the soul's immediate awareness of itself. Here, "soul" (*nafs*) does not refer to an abstract concept, but rather to the direct and immediate self-awareness that every individual has of their own existence, an awareness that is nothing other than the unmediated cognition of the self by itself.

2.3. The Light

Suhrawardī identifies three fundamental attributes of the self (*man*): self-awareness, life, and awareness of others. On this basis, he characterizes the soul (*nafs*) as light. Light is self-luminous, it radiates, and it illuminates others. Similarly, the self perceives itself and, through its awareness of itself, becomes aware of others. The true essence of the self lies in its awareness and conscious activity. That which is not self-luminous requires light in order to be known. Everything in the world is either a living, conscious being, which is self-aware and, through its own radiance, perceives others, or a dead, unconscious entity, which is alienated from itself and attains awareness only through something else. Therefore, at the most fundamental level of classification, all existents are either light (*Al-Nūr*) or darkness (*Al-Zulmah*). The realm of light encompasses: The Light of Lights (*Nūr al-Anwār*), God, Dominant Lights (*Anwār Qāhira*), the angelic intellects, Managing Lights (*Anwār Mudabbira*), and human souls. In contrast, the realm of darkness consists of: Dark substance (*Jawhar Ghāsiq*), corporeal bodies, and Dark accidents (*A'rāḍ Zulmāniyya*), bodily attributes.

The first point at which this ontological division between light and darkness becomes apparent to the Illuminationist philosopher is in the distinction

between soul and body, a division that manifests in one's awareness of oneself as "I" in contrast to one's body as "it" or "other". From this fundamental distinction, all other distinctions emerge. Thus, the use of the term "light" in Suhrawardī's metaphysical system should not be regarded as mere metaphor. The elements signified by the term light manifest in two domains: In the sensory realm, as visible, physical light, and in the realm of separate beings and intellectual existents, metaphysical light.

As noted earlier, the domain of light in Suhrawardī's philosophy extends from the identity of human souls to the existence of angels and God. Every argument for the existence of God seeks to establish His existence based on a particular attribute. Each argument proceeds from a specific conception of God, advancing until it reaches its intended conclusion. Suhrawardī follows this same methodological necessity. Since, in his system, existence is either light or darkness, and the essential characteristic of light is awareness and presence, then God must be the most aware and the most present of all beings. One could also argue that the defining feature common to all conceptions of God is His worthiness of worship. The attribute that renders God worthy of worship is precisely the aspect of transcendence (ta'ālī) ascribed to Him by His believers.

Peripatetic philosophers consider necessary existence (wujūb al-wujūd) to be the mark of God's transcendence. Theologians (mutakallimūn) regard eternity (al-qidam al-zamānī) as the basis of His transcendence. For Suhrawardī, however, whose entire ontological framework is based on awareness and presence, God's transcendence lies in the intensity of His presence and the infinite scope of His awareness. Thus, Suhrawardī's God is the Light of Lights (Nūr al-Anwār), the source of all luminous beings. He is the Light from which all other luminous entities derive their radiance, and since light is equivalent to true life, He is the source of all living existence.

With these philosophical foundations in place, we may now turn to Suhrawardī's proof for the existence of the Light of Lights (God).

3. Suhrawardī's Argument from Self-Awareness

Suhrawardī presents a unique proof for the existence of the Light of Lights (Nūr al-Anwār) in only one place in his works, namely, in his magnum opus *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*. He states: "If an abstract immaterial light (al-nūr al-mujarrad) is contingent in its essence, its dependence cannot be upon the dark, lifeless substance (al-jawāhir al-ghāsiqah), for the latter is incapable of bringing into existence something nobler and more complete than itself in any respect. How could the dark bestow light? If, then, the abstract

immaterial light is dependent in its actualization, its dependence must be upon a subsistent light (nūr qā'im). Moreover, the hierarchical order of subsistent lights cannot regress infinitely, as has been demonstrated by the proof establishing the impossibility of an infinite regress in cumulative sequences. Therefore, all subsistent and accidental lights, as well as the bodies (barāzikh) and their properties, must ultimately terminate in a light beyond which there is no further light, namely, the Light of Lights (Nūr al-Anwār), the Encompassing Light (al-nūr al-muḥīṭ), the Self-Subsisting Light (al-nūr al-qayyūm), the Sacred Light (al-nūr al-muqaddas), the Supreme and Most Exalted Light (al-nūr al-a'zam al-a'lā). This is the All-Dominant Light (al-nūr al-qahhār), the Absolutely Self-Sufficient (al-ghaniyy al-muṭlaq), beyond which nothing else exists" (Suhrawardī, 2001b, p 121).

Based on Suhrawardī's broader discussions in *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, this argument can be structured as follows:

1. If an abstract immaterial light (nūr mujarrad), i.e., a self-aware existent, is dependent for its existence, then its dependence must be upon a subsistent light (nūr qā'im), i.e., a self-aware, independent existent, rather than upon anything else (such as a dependent self-aware being or a non-self-aware being (= darkness).
2. I am an abstract immaterial light.¹ (Established through Suhrawardī's epistemological arguments for human self-awareness.)
3. I am dependent upon something beyond myself. (Requires further elaboration.)
4. I am dependent upon a subsistent light, not anything else. (Based on the principle that an inferior entity depends on a superior one).
5. The hierarchy of subsistent lights cannot continue indefinitely (impossibility of infinite regress).
6. (Conclusion) A self-sufficient subsistent light must exist. (This is the proof of God's existence).

The first point to consider is that the starting point of Suhrawardī's argument is neither any contingent being nor merely any needy entity, but rather the pure immaterial light (al-Nūr al-Mujarrad). As previously mentioned, al-Nūr al-Mujarrad refers to the self-aware being. Suhrawardī defines al-Nūr al-

¹ . It could be argued that Suhrawardī presents the argument concerning immaterial light in a third-person manner. However, in my interpretation of the argument, I have framed it from a first-person perspective. This is because Suhrawardī explains the understanding of immaterial light solely through each individual's return to their own self.

Mujarrad as follows: "Whoever possesses a self that is never absent from their awareness is not darkened, for their essence is manifest to them... It is pure immaterial light, purely abstract, which cannot be pointed to [with a sensory indication]." (Suhrawardī, 2001b, p. 110).

Thus, the argument begins with self-reflection and an awareness of the first-person perspective of consciousness. Although the argument refers to "I" in a general and universal sense, its intended meaning requires each individual to reconstruct it within themselves and to adopt a first-person perspective toward their own being. Suhrawardī expresses the argument in a universal form because written discourse necessarily involves generality, given that the realm of mental concepts is inherently universal. However, this universality arises from the recognition of a singular and particular reality within oneself.

The argument asserts that whoever possesses such an awareness can thereby arrive at the stated conclusion. A potential objection here is that such reasoning does not qualify as a demonstration (*burhān*) because a demonstration must possess intersubjectivity and be evident to all. Suhrawardī, however, maintains that intersubjectivity is achieved through shared experiences among different souls. In another place in *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, regarding the intersubjectivity of self-awareness, he states: 'And in this, everyone who perceives their own essence and individuality shares with you.' (Suhrawardī, 2001b, p. 112). The second point to consider is that if we attempt to explain Suhrawardī's argument by relying on the contingency (*al-Imkān al-Khāṣ*) or the occurrence of being (*al-Ḥudūth*) of the self-aware being, we would be reducing it to a particular instance of the *burhān al-wujūb wa al-imkān* (the argument from necessity and contingency) or the *Burhān al-Ḥudūth* (the Argument from Origination), thereby effacing its originality. However, for Suhrawardī, only the self-aware being shares ontological congruence (*al-wahdat al-sinkhīyah*) with God, making it the only possible path to Him. In contrast, darkness (*ẓulmah*) is merely the negation of light and, by its very nature, has no direct path to *Nūr al-Anwār* (the Light of Lights)¹. Thus, the choice of pure light (*al-nūr al-maḥḍ*) as the means to access *Nūr al-Anwār* is a deliberate and necessary one. For Suhrawardī, there is no alternative path, only through the realm of light can one reach the Light of Lights, and this realm is none other than the domain of human selfhood

¹ . A detailed exposition of the relationship between darkness and light in Suhrawardī's philosophy requires a separate discussion.

(nafs al-insān). The third point is that all the premises of the above argument are straightforwardly clarified through recourse to self-evident propositions and other aspects of Suhrawardī's philosophy. I have written the justification for each of the premises in parentheses next to it. However, the third premise presents a challenge: how does one infer one's neediness (faqr) from the awareness of one's luminous (nūrī) and self-conscious identity? The crucial issue is that this perception of need must be epistemologically explained, rather than being justified through concepts such as the occurrence of being (ḥudūth), contingency (imkān), or causality ('illiyya). If such notions are introduced, the argument would be reduced to the traditional proofs that preceded it. Even in Suhrawardī's own exposition, there may be an implicit suggestion that he follows this traditional path, particularly when he invokes the impossibility of an infinite regress.

However, I contend that we should interpret the implications of Suhrawardī's texts in light of the fundamental principles of his philosophy. Even if, at times, the philosopher himself appears to deviate from his system due to linguistic constraints or the dominant conceptual framework of earlier philosophical traditions, it remains our task to reconstruct his argument in alignment with his core epistemic commitments. Therefore, our endeavor should be to articulate how the recognition of one's neediness can be derived epistemologically from the experience of self-awareness.

One indication that Suhrawardī's argument is epistemological rather than cosmological lies in the justification of the second premise. The supporting arguments Suhrawardī provides for this premise emphasize the fundamental distinction between immediate knowledge of oneself and conceptual knowledge of objects. Among these, the most significant argument is the following: "A being that subsists through itself and perceives itself does not know itself through an image (mithāl) of itself within itself. For if its knowledge were through an image, and if the image of its 'I-ness' were distinct from itself, then the image would stand in relation to it as an 'other.' In that case, what is perceived would be the image rather than the self itself. This would lead to the consequence that the perception of 'I-ness' would be identical to the perception of something other than the self. Likewise, the perception of the self's essence would be identical to the perception of something other than itself. [And this is clearly false]. "(Suhrawardī, 2001b, p 111).

Suhrawardī's emphasis in this argument is on the irreducibility of self-knowledge to conceptual or representational knowledge. Knowledge through

concepts (*ṣuwar* or *mithālāt*) is always third-person, an external perspective on an object. In contrast, self-knowledge is inherently first-person and immediate. Since Suhrawardī's proof of *Nūr al-Anwār* is grounded in the self-awareness of pure light, I insist that the need identified in the third premise must also be explained from this first-personal standpoint. That is, the realization of neediness must arise internally, rather than being inferred from an external or third-personal framework. And in my opinion, it is clear that proving need through becoming, contingency, or causality is an argument from the third-person perspective toward the object. This remains the obscure point of the argument, which must be further clarified by demonstrating how it can be accounted for within Suhrawardī's philosophical system.

When we turn to self-awareness, it does not seem to intrinsically indicate any form of need, lack, or dependence on something other than itself. Self-awareness is simply the presence of the I within itself and for itself. However, it is also a fact that this self-awareness never emerges except in relation to something other than itself. In other words, I necessarily entails not-I. Suhrawardī expresses this point as follows: "Your apprehension of other things is consequent upon your essence, and the capacity for apprehension is accidental (*ʿaraḍ*) to your essence" (Suhrawardī, 2001, p113). Suhrawardī does not explicitly specify whether *ʿaraḍ* in this context refers to an essential accident (*ʿaraḍī dhātī*) or a separable accident (*ʿaraḍī mufāriq*). However, I argue that the apprehension of the other (*ghayr*) cannot be a separable accident, because the I is always I in distinction from the other, a distinction that even encompasses the objects perceived by its faculties. Furthermore, Suhrawardī emphasizes that the identity of light (*nūr*) not only entails self-manifestation (*ẓuhūr li-l-dhāt*) but also manifestation of the other (*izhār li-l-ghayr*) (Suhrawardī, 2001, p113). This manifestation of the other is equivalent to other-awareness, which is an essential accident (*ʿaraḍī dhātī*) of the self-aware being. Thus, self-awareness necessarily entails other-awareness. This observation provides a crucial clue for clarifying the third premise of Suhrawardī's argument.

If self-awareness entails other-awareness, then what is the precise relationship between the self-aware entity and that other which becomes manifest in its light? Here, two fundamental points are clear:

- As a self-aware being, I am not the creator (*jāʿil*) of the existence of everything that becomes manifest to me.

- As a self-aware being, I possess only a limited range of other-awareness, yet this range is capable of expansion, and I inherently desire this expansion of my awareness of the other.

These two insights guide us toward the epistemological realization of the contingency (*faqr*) of our self-aware essence. This is a contingency that we discover within ourselves through self-awareness itself, from a first-personal standpoint, rather than through a third-person conceptual framework. In the first case, self-awareness finds itself subjugated (*maqhūr*) by external realities, as the others of its awareness determine its field of perception. In the second case, self-awareness finds itself yearning (*tālib*) for the expansion of these others within its sphere of cognition. Both this subjugation and this yearning indicate a fundamental lack and contingency (*faqr*) inherent in self-awareness. And crucially, both are experienced internally within the self-aware being from a first-person standpoint.

At this point, one can introduce additional philosophical principles, such as causality and the impossibility of infinite regress, as Suhrawardī himself does in the subsequent premises. However, the essence of the argument, its core insight into the necessity of a higher being, is fundamentally epistemological, not merely ontological or cosmological. Thus, the argument can be summarized as follows: "I am self-aware; therefore, God exists." For it is only through self-awareness that I become conscious of my intrinsic contingency (*faqr*). And it is from this awareness of contingency that I am led to recognize the necessity of a higher being, which must itself belong to the order of light (*nūr*) and be absolutely independent.

4. The Advantages of Suhrawardī's Argument

I have attempted to show that Suhrawardī's argument represents a distinctive approach, one that differs both from the argument from origination (*ḥudūth*) employed by the theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and from the argument from necessity and contingency (*al-wujūb wa al-ḥikmān*) developed by Avicenna. In this section, I will discuss several advantages that Suhrawardī's proof appears to possess in comparison with these two classical arguments.

The first major advantage lies in its point of departure, namely, a domain in which being and knowledge are inseparable. Unlike other arguments that begin with a concept, such as motion (*ḥaraka*), origination (*ḥudūth*), or contingency (*ḥikmān*), and then infer the existence of a being characterized respectively by immobility, eternality, or necessity, Suhrawardī's argument begins with a reality whose very essence is already cognitive and self-aware.

By reflecting on this immediately experienced cognitive reality, one is led toward the recognition of a higher and more comprehensive awareness.

As a result, one of the central difficulties associated with many traditional metaphysical arguments, the gap between mind and reality (*al-faṣl bayn al-dhihn wa al-‘ayn*), does not arise in the same way within Suhrawardī’s framework. In many classical arguments, the question remains whether the concepts formed in the mind genuinely correspond to realities external to thought. In Suhrawardī’s proof, however, the epistemological and ontological dimensions are intertwined from the outset. The argument begins with a reality that is simultaneously known and existent, thereby minimizing the tension between conceptual inference and metaphysical reality.

A second advantage of Suhrawardī’s argument is that, unlike the classical cosmological arguments, it does not presuppose the existence of an external world. Its starting point is the “I” and the direct awareness I have of myself, regardless of whether anything outside me exists. Even if one suspends judgment concerning the independent existence of the external world, the structure of Suhrawardī’s argument remains intact. This does not mean that Suhrawardī denies the existence of the external world; on the contrary, he clearly accepts it. The important point is simply that his proof does not depend upon that assumption. By avoiding unnecessary metaphysical presuppositions, the argument acquires a certain theoretical economy and simplicity, which may be regarded as a philosophical strength in light of the principle of parsimony.

The third advantage is that Suhrawardī’s proof is not merely conceptual in nature. It is not simply an argument about consciousness or self-awareness; rather, it is an argument that must first be encountered within lived experience itself. One may object that an argument without concepts is impossible, since all reasoning ultimately requires propositional structure. In this sense, the idea of a “non-conceptual proof” may appear paradoxical. Yet what is intended here is not the complete absence of concepts, but rather the priority of immediate experience over conceptual formulation. The arguer must first encounter the reality of self-awareness from a first-person perspective before subsequently expressing it in conceptual and propositional language.

For this reason, Suhrawardī’s proof may be described as concrete (*inḍimāmī*) rather than purely abstract (*intizā‘ī*). Its point of departure is not an abstract universal concept detached from experience, but an immediate and existentially present reality: the lived awareness of oneself.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi's argument for the existence of God through his concept of pure immaterial light (*al-nūr al-mujarrad*). By analyzing the epistemological foundations of his philosophy, especially his emphasis on self-awareness as the basis for higher knowledge, it becomes clear that Suhrawardi's approach differs significantly from traditional cosmological arguments. Rather than beginning from external causes, physical motion, or metaphysical contingency, his argument starts from the inward experience of self-awareness and thereby foregrounds the epistemological dimension of existence itself. Within this framework, the realization of one's own self-consciousness, and the recognition of the limitations and dependency inherent within it, leads to the affirmation of a transcendent source: a self-sufficient, eternal, and supreme Light. In this way, Suhrawardi offers an introspective and phenomenological path toward the existence of God, one that constitutes a distinctive contribution to philosophical theology and the philosophy of religion.

By emphasizing the ontological affinity between the self-aware subject and the divine Light, Suhrawardi's argument also reveals a profound relationship between consciousness and transcendence. God is not approached merely as an external metaphysical object standing apart from the knowing subject, but as the ultimate ground that becomes intelligible through the very structure of self-awareness itself. Suhrawardi's philosophical framework thus opens an alternative avenue for reflecting upon divine reality, one that highlights the centrality of consciousness and the metaphysical significance of self-awareness in understanding the nature of the divine.

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