

IRJĀ‘ ILĀ NAFSI-KA

Suhrawardī’s apperception of the self in light of Avicenna

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Abstract

Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d.687/1191) proposed a theory of apperception that constitutes the core of his “illuminative” epistemology. His theory of apperception purports to account for the soul’s immediate, reflexive, and unmediated knowledge of its own essence. Apperception may be defined as the direct experience the soul has of its essence. A closer examination of the Avicennan tradition (Avicenna died in 420/1037) reveals the existence of a number of arguments for the demonstration of an apperception of the self/soul similar to the arguments Suhrawardī later proposes. Contrary to admitted views, Avicenna had tackled issues related to the soul’s apperception, a type of perception distinct from the soul’s intellection of its essence. Avicenna alluded to the existence of a mode of perception specific to the soul that would guarantee both the soul’s unity and its personal identity. This apperception is defined as an unmediated presence of the soul to itself. These elements recur in Suhrawardī’s theory of apperception and numerous versions of Avicenna’s arguments for the demonstration of the presential nature of apperception.

Apperception of the self is at the heart of Suhrawardī’s (d.687/1191) epistemology.¹ This “presential” (*ḥuḍūrī*) knowledge is considered his contribution to Islamic philosophy: a theory of apperception that accounts for the soul’s immediate, reflexive, and unmediated knowledge of its essence.² The soul’s apperception consists in its ability to perceive directly its own essence (*al-shu‘ūr bi-dhāti-hi*). Apperception differs from any precognitive process that

may be associated with one of the traditional peripatetic internal faculties (*sensus communis*, phantasia, active imagination, recollection, estimation). The only requirement is that an essence perceives itself.³

Pines and Sebtī have both studied Avicenna's (d.429/1037) theory of apperception, while Daynānī has written about Suhrawardī's concept of self-knowledge in relation to Mulla Ṣadrā's (d.1050/1640) interpretation. To our knowledge, Kobayashi is the only one who has compared the works of Avicenna and Suhrawardī, devoting the greater part of the article to Avicenna. A number of Suhrawardī's arguments are indeed presented, but without any in-depth analysis.⁴ A closer examination of the Avicennan tradition may shed some light on the prior use by Avicenna of a number of Suhrawardī's arguments (some in slightly different formulations) for the demonstration of the soul's apperception of its essence.

In a number of passages from his *al-Ta'līqat* and *al-Mubāḥathāt*, Avicenna discusses the soul's apperception. Although these two works are the least systematically written of all of Avicenna's works on account of their composition (compilation of his notes, remarks and answers), they contain some of the most detailed discussions on the issue.⁵ In his *al-Mubāḥathāt*, Avicenna introduces a distinction between (i) the intellective knowledge the soul has, as a substance, of its own essence (*dhāt*) and (ii) the unceasing apperception it has of itself (*al-shu'ūr bi-wujūdi-ha*).⁶ The first perception, an apperception of one's apperception (*shu'ūr al-shu'ūr*), amounts to an intellective state in which the rational soul is able to reflect upon its own essence that occurs at a metaphysical level (immateriality of the soul). The second type of perception, the soul's apperception of itself, however, must be distinguished from the first type of perception. This second perception corresponds to the presence the essence has to itself and, in a sense, alludes to a mode of being. The soul may be said to have an ontological presence to itself

that occurs at a psychological / existential level.

Suhrawardī places the second type of perception, the soul's apperception of itself distinct from the soul's intellection of its essence, at the heart of his epistemology. He aims at demonstrating the existence of a radically different mode of perception, akin to the mystic's direct knowledge of metaphysical truths and realities.⁷ The soul's apperception of itself, what he calls the presential knowledge provides him with the means to account for the soul's access to metaphysical realms and to explain knowledge possessed by intelligible substances, celestial souls, and even the Necessary Existent (*wajib al-wujūb*).⁸

Both Avicenna and Suhrawardī are concerned with establishing the existence of a distinctive primary mode of being, a primary awareness of the soul's own existence distinct from intellection. Both appear concerned with the identification of that which can guarantee the soul's personal identity throughout time. And finally, both attempt to demonstrate the presential and unmediated character of this apperception. Contrary to Avicenna who only alludes to this distinct type of perception, Suhrawardī, however, provides various detailed arguments to demonstrate the presential character of the soul's apperception.

Avicenna's theory of the soul's apperception relies on the existence of a primary mode of being that characterizes the human soul. In *al-Ta'liqāt*, he notes that once the soul has come into being, its essence is accompanied by an awareness of itself, an apperception (*shu'ūr*) that is constitutive of its own mode of being. Avicenna notes that the soul's ability to perceive itself is the result of the perception of its own realized essence (*tash'ur bi-hā bi-dhāti-hā*) and nothing else.⁹ Apperception, or the primary and unmediated perception of the self, is not added knowledge to the essence such that apperception would consist in some kind of acquisition (*kasb*).¹⁰ Avicenna is

adamant that the essence (*dhāt*) is never absent from itself. The essence is at all times present (*hāḍira*) to itself such that the existence of the essence consists of the actual perception of its essence.¹¹ Noteworthy in this equation is the fact that Avicenna appeals to a notion of presence – the essence being present (*hāḍira*) to its own essence – to describe this particular epistemic process by which the essence is capable of perceiving itself. An identical notion of presence (*ḥuḍūr*) occupies a central place in Suhrawardī’s epistemology.

Suhrawardī also argues that apperception of the self find its origin in the soul’s unceasing primary awareness its own essence. In the *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, he explains that the soul’s apperception is a primary mode of being, a primary apperception of one’s own individual and singular existence. The soul can, therefore, never be unaware of itself.¹² Apperception of the self thus amounts to the soul’s ability to grasp its own individual essence by the mere fact of coming into being. This particular mode of being corresponds to the presence the self has to itself or, more fundamentally, the presence the essence has to its essence. This primary mode of being (that seems to correspond to existence) accounts for the possibility of the soul’s perception its own existence. Suhrawardī then provides a number of arguments to demonstrate the existence of this primary mode of being that is, as he notes in his *Hayākil-i Nūr*, “continuous (*payvasta*) and permanent (*dāyim*).”¹³

In a number of his works such as his *Hayākil-i Nūr* and *Alwāḥ-i ‘Imādiyya*, Suhrawardī argues that the soul’s apperception must be different from the perception of any physical or bodily part. Apperception of one’s self cannot amount to the perception of physical organs in which the self would be located: if awareness of one’s self were somehow conditional on the perception of bodily parts, then ignorance or unawareness of the existence of some of these organs, such as the heart, the brain, and other internal organs,

would amount to a partial ignorance or unawareness of one's self.¹⁴ He introduces an argument by the absurd, stipulating that, in fact, some bodily parts can only be known through anatomical studies and by means of comparison with other animals, i.e., they are bodily parts that we do not perceive.

In the *Partū-nāma*, Suhrawardī provides a slightly different demonstration. Apperception of the self cannot be located in any bodily part, because in the event of the natural or accidental loss of a limb, the individual essence would be deprived of a portion of itself, i.e., the portion associated with the now missing limb. Apperception is, however, neither altered nor rendered deficient by the loss of any physical limb or, for that matter, by the lack of perception of any of them, such that apperception of the self cannot be reducible to the perception of the corporeal and the bodily.¹⁵

Avicenna emphasizes the unity of the soul's essence and of its apperception. The soul's primary mode of being and its intimate and unmediated knowledge of itself guarantee the soul's unity. The hypothetical example of the suspended person provides Avicenna with an illustration of the soul's ontological presence to its own essence as an immaterial substance capable of perceiving itself without the need of any bodily organ. Above and beyond the bodily, there exists a perceiving entity that remains one.¹⁶ The non physical and bodily entity has often been identified with the rational part of the soul, the intellective essence of the soul, akin to Descartes *cogito*.¹⁷ In the *al-Shifā'*, Avicenna notes that the self (*anā*) corresponds to that which perceives and knows. The self / soul is the subject of all these activities. It is able to recognize itself as being the subject of these numerous perceptions, thoughts, and actions.¹⁸ In his *al-Ta'liqāt*, Avicenna notes that in spite of the variety of activities, the unity of the soul's essence and its apperception are preserved. The soul's essence remains unaltered, although it is simultaneously that which perceives and that which is the object of perception.¹⁹

In a similar fashion, Suhrawardī holds that the presence of the self to itself – in the sense of a primary mode of being – guarantees the unity of the soul. The same one and permanent essence continuously perceives itself. In the *al-Mashāri‘*, Suhrawardī notes that the substance that perceives is “one (*wāḥid*) and permanent (*thābit*).”²⁰ This substance neither constitutes the whole of the body, nor a part of it. This substance is the rational soul capable of perceiving its individual essence. It functions as the unifying agent for the different activities of the human soul and guarantees the unity of its primary activity of apperception.

For Avicenna, the permanence of the soul’s apperception also guarantees the permanence of each individual soul’s personal identity.. In his *al-Ta‘līqāt*, Avicenna proposes the following argument that Suhrawardī includes in his own analysis of the soul’s apperception. Avicenna notes that the self cannot be associated with any bodily parts, because that which perceives itself would no longer remain identical and the same through time, since it would be subjected to the same changes to which the part or parts with which it would be associated are subjected. That which perceives must, therefore, be distinct from the bodily in order to now guarantee the unity and the permanence through time of its individual identity.²¹

Avicenna argues that the self or what he calls his substantial ipseity (*anniyyatī al-jawhariyya*) is neither eliminated nor replaced by another entity, in spite of ongoing and constant bodily transformation. The essence that perceives that it experiences what it has experienced yesterday, or remembers what it had forgotten it had previously experienced remains one and the same. One knows that one has learned something and one knows that it is one’s self that has learned it, because one perceives (*idrāk*) one’s own essence.²² In his *al-Mubāḥathāt*, Avicenna notes that changes that affect the bodily do not affect the essence that perceives itself. The perceiving essence

remains unaltered and this now guarantees the permanence of one's personal identity through time.²³

Suhrawardī similarly acknowledges the fact that the permanence of the soul's apperception guarantees its personal identity through time. In the *Hayākil-i Nūr*, he argues, like Avicenna before him, that apperception cannot be associated with the bodily, if the essence of the soul is to be perceived. On account of their inherent deficiencies, all living organisms undergo a natural transformation.²⁴ If the soul's apperception were somehow associated with any bodily parts, its apperception would equally be subjected to a transformation similar to the one undergone naturally by the bodily part with which it would be associated. The person of yesterday would no longer be identical to the person of today, while the person of tomorrow would not yet exist. Although this assertion may be open to a number of objections, Suhrawardī notes that the individual being or the ipseity of last year (*tū'ī-yi parīna*) does not change; it remains identical to the individual being of this year. The ipseity (*tū'ī-yi tū*) of each individual, therefore, remains unaltered.²⁵ How could one's individual identity be guaranteed through time, if the soul's apperception were to suffer changes similar to the ones undergone by the bodily? On the contrary, every soul has an intuitive knowledge of the experience of its own self as an unchanging and unaltered entity. Apperception of the self is not subject to change.²⁶

In his *Partū-nāma*, Suhrawardī proposes another type of analysis of the soul's apperception. The subject of the psychological / existential experience of the self is able to recognize itself in the different activities of the body and of the soul, because both, that which perceives and the apperception that all beings necessarily have of themselves, are permanent. Suhrawardī attempts to demonstrate the existence of an ipseity (a self) by defining that which is the subject of various individual experiences.

Any attempts to isolate a subject of the soul's apperception

raise, however, the issue of the relationship between the subject and the object of such an apperception. The individual essence simultaneously corresponds to the subject and the object of apperception. The individual essence is simultaneously that which perceives and that which is perceived.²⁷ The only way to account for this primary perception of the soul is to concede that it consists in a unmediated and a presential type of perception.

In *al-Ta'liqāt*, Avicenna notes that one of the fundamental characteristics of the soul's apperception of itself is the absence of any mediation in this particular epistemic process. Apperception of the self precludes the existence of a distinction between object and subject. Contrary to intellection, apperception of the self operates on a different mode and it does not require any abstraction of the form of the object (in its Aristotelian understanding). Avicenna explains that if an impression (*athār*) of the essence (*dhāt*) were to occur in the essence, then the ensuing perception of the essence would occur the same way as the perception of any other object occurs: perception would require the impression, in the perceiving essence, of something that would correspond to the essence. Avicenna, however, argues that if apperception of the essence were the outcome of an impression of the essence occurring in the essence, the essence (or the self) could only perceive that it actually corresponds to that impression *if* it possessed a prior knowledge of its own essence. The ability to judge that an impression of the essence actually corresponds to the essence requires the presence, side by side, of both the impression (of the essence) and the essence. However, if the essence were able to judge that the impression is that of its own essence, then it would have had a prior perception of its essence such that apperception could not originate with the perception of the impression. Moreover, if one accounted for this prior knowledge by arguing that it is the result of the presence of another impression (of the essence) in the essence, this second impression would be no different than the first impression. Similarly, the essence would require a prior knowledge

enabling it to distinguish between the two. Avicenna notes that such an argument results in an infinite regression. He then concludes that the soul's apperception of its essence does not occur through the intermediary of an impression of the essence in the essence. Apperception of the self consists in the true presence (*wujūd fī al-a'yān*) of the essence in that which perceives, and not in the presence of an impression of one's essence.²⁸

Avicenna can argue for the absence of any type of intermediary between the essence and the perception it can have of itself. Apperception of the essence does not, and cannot occur by means of any other entity added to the perceiving essence. A *presence* of the self (of one's essence) to the self is all that is required.²⁹ Avicenna is quite clear that apperception of the essence is an absolute and unconditioned perception (*shu'ūr 'ala al-iṭlāq*).³⁰ The essence only requires its own existence in order to perceive itself, because it is simultaneously that which perceives and that which is present to its essence (*hiya mudrida wa hādira la-hā*). Avicenna explains that this particular type of perception precludes any distinction between that which perceives (*mudrik*) and that which is perceived (*mudrak*).³¹ Similar concerns, as we will see, animate Suhrawardī's discussions on the soul's apperception.

Suhrawardī similarly argues for the absence of any mediation between subject and object of the soul's apperception. His theory of apperception is argued by appealing to the presential character that defines this particular type of epistemic process. Once it has come into being, the individual essence of the soul cannot be absent to itself. The intimate experience the soul has of itself manifests itself in the act of being. This ontological presence of the essence to itself corresponds to the essence's direct experience or perception (*idrāk*) of itself by means of a presence of the self to the self, or of the essence to the essence. This presential relationship enjoyed by the self precludes any type of mediation between subject and object. The

soul's apperception is, therefore, a distinct epistemic process. The object and the subject of knowledge are both embodied in one and the same individual. But how is this relation of the self to the self to be understood?

In his *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, Suhrawardī writes that, “you do not need, for the perception of yourself anything other than your own self (*dhāti-ka*).”³² This is not different from Avicenna's own position. The experience of one's individual existence manifests itself through the mere experience of that particular existence. Apperception of the self does not occur through the knowledge of an objective entity that would correspond to the self. Nothing stands between the self and its perception. The ontological presence of the essence to itself corresponds to the soul's apperception.

Suhrawardī provides at least four arguments to demonstrate the unmediated nature of apperception and to allude to its distinctive epistemic process. These arguments serve to demonstrate the impossibility of an apperception of the self through any sort of entity that would be other than the individual perceiving essence itself, whether it be an (i) image (*mithāl*), (ii) a form (*ṣūra*), (iii) a notion of the self's essence (*dhāt*), or (iv) an attribute (*sifa*) of that essence.

The (i) first version of the argument proposes a demonstration of the impossibility of the existence of any type of mediation by means of a representation (*mithāl*) that would stand between the soul and its apperception. The soul's apperception does not occur through a representation (an image or a simile) of itself that would correspond to the self. Again, in the *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, Suhrawardī writes that a self-subsisting entity (*qāyim bi-dhāti-hi*) which perceives itself (*mudrik bi-dhāti-hi*) through itself (*mudrik li-dhāti-hi*) does not know its essence through an image (*mithāl*) of its essence which would then be located in its own essence (and thus distinct from it), because if its knowledge of its essence were by means of an image, the image of

the essence's individual being (*anā'iyya*) would be other than itself. In such a case, perception and knowledge of the self would only amount to the perception of the representation of the essence.³³

Suhrawardī refutes the possibility for the soul to know itself in any manner other than through a presence of the self to the self. The soul's perception functions differently from sensory perception. The latter occurs through the abstraction of the forms of objects (Aristotelian hylomorphism) that interpose themselves between the objects and the subject of these sensory perceptions. Objects of sensory perception (*maḥsūsāt*) and objects that exist in the reality, and from which the abstracted forms are representations, both correspond to objective realities (*huwa*) for the one who perceives them. In this particular case, apperception of the self through any such representation would amount to the perception of that other entity that interposes itself between the two and becomes the object of the self.³⁴

Apperception of the self is radically different from any perception that relies on the occurrence of a representation of the object (as an abstraction of its form). Any representation of the self, in fact, can only constitute an obstacle that prevents the possibility for any direct perception of the true self. In this particular case, the only type of perception the soul could have would be of a derived nature, since it would only know itself through the mediation of these representations. Representations would become the only means by which the self could access, perceive, and know itself. Apperception would, thereupon, consist in the perception of this other entity – the representation – as an object of the self. Any type of real apperception of the essence (of the self) would, therefore, be impossible, whereas common experience shows it to be otherwise. Everyone has an immediate knowledge of her or his own experience of being. The soul's apperception through any kind of representation is consequently unsustainable.

This argument raises the difficulty to which any analysis of this particular type of perception is confronted. Any representation that may be postulated as taking part in apperception becomes an objective reality that possesses an existence outside or beside the self and through which the essence perceives itself. The problem is one of “objectivation” of that which is to be the subject of the soul’s apperception. To postulate the existence of such an entity as a representation that should correspond to the subject of apperception transforms the subject into some sort of necessary objective reality by means of which the essence (out of which is constituted the individual being) knows itself. Knowledge of the self would, therefore, be equated with the knowledge of a representation that stands for the self and stands outside the self. Any representation, therefore, inescapably prevents the soul to directly perceive its own real essence.

In his demonstration for the impossibility of the occurrence of a representation of the essence to account for the soul’s apperception, found in the *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, Suhrawardī notes two absurd consequences that necessarily follow from such an argument. On the one hand, the subject perceiving itself would not know that the representation is its own image, because the knowledge of itself through this representation would require the existence of a prior knowledge enabling the essence to distinguish between the self and the image. Paradoxically, this knowledge would itself require a representation. This, however, leads to the introduction of an infinite regression of representations. On the other hand, the subject perceiving itself would be aware of the fact that the representation is an image of itself, in which case, it would already have known itself – being able to distinguish between itself and its representation – without having any need for any image of itself.³⁵ By raising these two absurd consequences to which the postulation of the soul’s apperception through a representation or an image leads, Suhrawardī demonstrates the impossibility for the soul’s perception by way of the

mediation of a representation. His concerns and the argument he proposes to demonstrate his claim are not different from what Avicenna had himself, in a less systematic way, alluded to.

The (ii) second version of the argument Suhrawardī proposes to demonstrate the unmediated nature of the soul's apperception is a refutation of apperception through the intermediary of a form (*ṣūra*) of the self, of which it would be an abstraction. Suhrawardī now questions the application of the Aristotelian theory of abstraction of forms to this particular epistemic process, since the Aristotelian theory of abstraction is unable to account for the soul's apperception. Contrary to sensory perception, the soul's apperception does not occur through the perception of an abstracted form of its individual essence that would then find its way into the *sensus communis* (*ḥiss mushtarak*), the receptacle of forms.³⁶ Each individual being is itself, and knows itself without having to resort to any kind of abstraction of the form of its own reality.

In the *al-Mashāri'*, Suhrawardī rejects the possibility for the soul's apperception of its essence to occur through a form, arguing that that which perceives its own essence perceives its very essence by which exists its individual being (*anā'iyya*) and not another entity to which it would correspond. There could never be an identity between the two, because that which would be added to the essence would necessarily become an object (*huwa*) and be other than the perceiving subject. The form would not correspond to the ipseity – the "I" (*anā*) or the self – of the individual being that perceives itself as it is, and not as an alterity.³⁷ This second argument Suhrawardī proposes is, therefore, very similar to the previous one. He only substitutes the notion of form for the notion of representation, while constructing his argument in a similar fashion. He aims at preserving the ontological presence of the self to the self and, by the same token, to demonstrate the existence of the particular epistemic process on which rests the soul's apperception of itself.

In the same work, Suhrawardī proposes a different type of argument to refute the mediation of any form in the soul’s apperception by appealing to the nature of the form that occurs to the soul. By definition, forms are universals, such that the form of a human being (*insāniyya*) can be applied equally to different individuals – to Zayd and to ‘Amr. How then could the form that is to be abstracted from a given individual correspond to its individual essence, if, as is the case with the form of human beings, it can be applied to more than one individual? Suhrawardī discusses here the problem that arises with the need for a correspondence between the universality of the form and the singularity of the realized individual essence. He even notes attempts at conceiving individual essences as aggregates of universal characteristics as being a possible solution to the problem of correspondence between the universal form and the individual being.

Suhrawardī rejects, however, this solution on the basis that any single combination of universal characteristics that might be used to define an individual soul – for instance, through its unique combination – remains universal and, therefore, is still capable of being applied to more than one individual.³⁸ Once more, the need for any form of the self to account for apperception introduces an “objectivation” of the self and of its reality.

Suhrawardī proposes a (iii) third version of the argument to demonstrate the unmediated nature of the soul’s apperception in a passage from his *al-Talwīhāt*, where he explains how the self cannot perceive itself through the particular notion of essence (*dhāt*) that would define its own nature. Once more, the demonstration is similar to those used in the first two arguments. Apperception of the self cannot occur through the intermediary of an entity that would correspond to the nature or the essence of the self. Any notion of the self or of its essence would remain an intermediary whose existence

again would interpose itself between the self and the knowledge it would have of its essence. Therefore, any notion of the essence of the self would have a similar function and constitute an objective reality of the self preventing the self to access its own essence and experiencing it directly, since the latter would amount to something other than that which constitutes its essence.

In a dream-vision, Suhrawardī is instructed about the true nature of apperception and of its distinctive epistemic character by the first master, Aristotle (in Plotinian garb). The argument used by the latter to instruct Suhrawardī is that if the essence (*dhāt*) needed another entity to perceive itself, this would lead to an infinite regression. The essence would always require a further, more prior notion of the essence that it is perceiving.³⁹ Hence, the soul's apperception of its essence does not occur by means of a notion of essence, because an individual essence would, once more, never be able to have a direct access to what constitutes its own reality, as was the case in the first two versions.

The (iv) fourth version of the argument to demonstrate the presential and unmediated nature of apperception summarizes quite well what is implicitly held in all three previous versions. It amounts to a general principle that may be expressed in the following manner: apperception of the self does not occur by means of any added element to the perceiving essence. In the *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, Suhrawardī argues that any type of entity that would be postulated to account for the soul's apperception would stand between the subject and the apperception it would have of itself. If anything were added (*amr zāyid*) to the essence – a representation, a form, or a notion corresponding to the essence of the self – in order for the essence to have an apperception of itself, this added entity would be an attribute (*ṣifa*) that would belong to the existing and knowing essence and consequently be necessarily part of its essence. The soul would require the presence of this attribute to perceive itself. However, if the

knowing essence were to judge that this added entity was indeed an attribute added to its essence – whether it be the attribute of knowledge (*'ilm*) or any other attribute – the essence would already have had a prior knowledge of its own self in order to be able to judge that this particular attribute (or attributes) was indeed added to its essence. The essence would, therefore, have had the perception of itself without having had to resort to any added attribute to know itself. The argument is again very similar to the one used in the other three versions where Suhrawardī, once more, employs a demonstration by the absurd.⁴⁰

It has become evident from the numerous passages where Suhrawardī discusses the soul's apperception that he seeks to demonstrate the existence of a particular type of epistemic process that explains the soul's apperception in terms of its presence to itself. For this purpose, he proposes a number of arguments to reject the idea that the soul's apperception can be mediated by any type of mental representation – an image, a form, a notion of its own essence, or any type of attribute – of its individual essence. The rejection of any mediation is argued essentially on the assumption that the soul's apperception is direct, unmediated, undoubted, and unceasing. Apperception of the self is, in a sense, akin to a pre-conceptual perception or presence of one's self, of one's existence, and ultimately of the presence of one's essence to one's self.

In his *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, Suhrawardī reaffirms the idea that the soul's apperception of its essence (*idrāk li-dhāt*) requires nothing but the essence that is manifest by itself and to itself (*zāhira li-nafsi-hā*), or again, that it is not absent from itself (*al-ghayr al-ghāyib 'an nafsi-hā*). He can then conclude that the soul's apperception of its essence is constitutive of its being, as it exists, such that the occultation of one's self from the essence is impossible.⁴¹

And finally, Suhrawardī provides an analogy to illustrate a mode of knowledge specific to the soul's apperception. The personal

experience that each individual has of pain provides the analogy for a type of perception that does not occur as a result of the perception of an abstracted form, in this case, an abstracted form of pain. Suhrawardī argues that the perception of pain results from the actual experiencing of a particular given pain. There is no such thing as an object of the perception of a pain. For instance, the perception of the cutting or severing of a bodily limb does not arise from the occurrence of a form of the actual cutting or of the perception of an abstracted form that originates with the pain produced at the time of the injury. Pain amounts to the perception of the cutting or the severing. It is this cutting or severing that becomes itself the object of the senses and produces pain.⁴²

Contrary to admitted views, Avicenna did tackle the complex issue of the soul's apperception, a perception distinct from an intellection of its essence. Avicenna, like Suhrawardī, established the existence of a mode of perception specific to the soul's apperception that guarantees both the soul's unity and its personal identity. Avicenna also defined apperception as an unmediated presence of the soul to itself. These elements are all found in Suhrawardī's theory of apperception of the soul. Suhrawardī, however, painstakingly argues for the unmediated nature of apperception, hence, his numerous versions for the demonstration of the presential nature of apperception, exemplified with the experience of pain. In Avicenna's works, however, a tension arises from the adoption of an ambiguous position regarding the relation between the soul's apperception and its possible intellection.⁴³ Further research is needed to investigate the manner in which Suhrawardī tackles this particular issue.⁴⁴

Notes

¹ Ghulam-Husayn Daynānī, “Khūd-āgāhī Maḥṣūl-i Suvar-i Idrākī Nīst,” in Ḥasan Sayyid ‘Arab, *Muntakhabī az Maqālāt-i Fārsī dar Barāh-yi Shaykh-i Ishrāq-i Suhrawardī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Shafī‘ī, 1378/1998). For a biography of Suhrawardī, cf. Roxanne D. Marcotte, “Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl – the Martyr of Aleppo,” *al-Quantara*, 22.2 (2001): 395-419.

² Hossein Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination. A Study of Suhrawardī’s Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 149-50.

³ Parviz Morewedge, “Epistemology. The Internal Sense of Prehension (*wahm*) in Islamic Philosophy,” in Idem, *Essays in Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism* (Oneonta, NY: State University of New York at Oneonta, Dept. of Philosophy, 1995), 123-59.

⁴ Shlomo Pines, “La conception de la conscience de soi chez Avicenne et chez Abu’l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī,” in Idem, *The Collected Works of Pines*, 5 vols. – *Studies in Abu’l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī. Physics and Metaphysics*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1979), 181-258; cf. Meryem Sebti, *Avicenne. L’âme humaine* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000); cf. Haruo Kobayashi, “Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī on Self-Consciousness: Some Comparative Remarks,” *Orient*, 26 (1990): 62-77, esp. 70-4.

⁵ These works consist of collections of discussions, i.e., answers provided by Avicenna to the queries of some of his disciples such as Bahmanyār Ibn Marzūbān (d.458/1066) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Kirmānī (fl. ca. 422-432/1030-40), cf. Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Mubāhathāt*, ed. M. Bīdārfar (Qum: Bīdār, 1413/1371/1992) and Idem, *Kitāb al-Ta’līqāt*, ed. and intro. ‘A. Badawī (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li al-Kitāb, 1392/1973). For a study, cf. David C. Reisman, *The Making of the Avicennan Tradition: The Transmission, Contents, and Structure of Ibn Sīnā’s al-Mubāhathāt (The Discussions)* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For a translation, cf. Jean Michot, “La réponse d’Avicenne à Bahmanyār et al-Kirmānī. Présentation, traduction critique et lexique arabe-français de la Mubāhatha III,” *Le Muséon*, 110 (1997): 143-221.

⁶ Avicenna, *al-Mubāhathāt*, 550, 185.10-7; cf. Idem, *al-Shifā’, al-Ṭabī‘iyyāt*, VI, *al-Nafs*, ed. G. Anawati and S. Zayid, ed.-in-chief Ibrāhīm Madkūr (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li al-Kitāb, 1390/1975), V, 7, 228.2, hereafter, *al-Shifā’, al-Nafs*.

⁷ Roxanne D. Marcotte, “Métaphysique néoplatonicienne orientale et anthropologie philosophique (Avicenne et Suhrawardī),” in Langlois, Luc and Jean-Marc Narbonne, eds., *Actes du XXVIIe Congrès de l’Association des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française (A.S.P.L.F.): La métaphysique, son histoire, critique, enjeux (Québec, 18-22 août 1998)* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval / Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2000), 79-86.

⁸ Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāri' wa al-Muṭārahāt* (a), in Idem, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 1, ed. and intro. Henry Corbin (Istanbul: Maarif Matbassi, 1945), 193-506, esp. 209, 487.1-5, hereafter, *Oeuvres*, I; cf. Roxanne D. Marcotte, "Philosophical Reason versus Mystical Intuition – Shihab al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191)," *Anaquel de estudios árabes*, 7 (1996): 109-26.

⁹ Avicenna, *al-Ta'liqāt*, 70.21; cf. *Ibid.*, 148.12.

¹⁰ Avicenna, *al-Ta'liqāt*, 79.27-80.3.

¹¹ Avicenna, *al-Ta'liqāt*, 148.15-16.

¹² Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (a), in Idem, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 2, ed. and intro. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Institut Franco-Iranien (Dépt. d'Iranologie); Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1952), 2-260, esp. 116, 112.2-5; cf. translation in Suhrawardī, *Suhrawardī's Metaphysics of Illumination [Kitāb Hikmat al-Ishrāq]*, trans. and ed. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai (Provo: Brigham Young University, 2000), 80, hereafter, "trans.,"; cf. Sohrawardi, *La Sagesse orientale. Kitāb Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (with) *Commentaires de Qoṭboddin Shīrāzī et Molla Ṣadrā*, trans. and notes Henry Corbin, ed. and intro. Christian Jambet (Paris: Verdier, 1986), 103, hereafter, *Sagesse* [(p) = Persian and (a) = Arabic].

¹³ Suhrawardī, *Hayākil-i Nūr* (p), in Idem, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 3, ed. and (Persian) intro. Seyyed Hossein Nasr; intro., analysis and commentary Henry Corbin (Tehran: Département d'Iranologie de l'Institut Français de Recherche; Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Adrien Maisonneuve, 1970), 84-108, esp. 5, 86.1-2, hereafter, *Oeuvres*, III. Corbin translated many of the Persian works (some only partially) edited by Nasr, cf. Sohrawardi, *L'Archange empourpré. Quinze traités et récits mystiques*, trans. (from Persian and Arabic) Henry Corbin (Paris: Fayard, 1976).

¹⁴ Suhrawardī, *Hayākil-i Nūr* (p), 4, 85.4-10; cf. Idem, *Alwāḥ-i 'Imādiyya* (p), in Idem, *Oeuvres*, III, 27, 129.9-12.

¹⁵ Suhrawardī, *Partū-nāma* (p), 27, 23.3-7.

¹⁶ Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt ma'a Sharḥ Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī*, 4 vols. (in 3), ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, vol. 1, 1960; vol. 2, 1957; vols. 3-4, 1958), vol. 2, III, 1, 320.4-7; cf. Idem, *Le livre des directives et des remarques*, trans. Amélie-Marie Goichon (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951), 75-526, esp. 311; cf. Avicenna, *al-Shifā', al-Nafs*, V, 7, 225.7-9; cf. Michael E. Marmurra, "Avicenna's 'Flying Man' in Context," *The Monist*, 69 (1986): 383-95, esp. 386-7; cf. Amélie-Marie Goichon, *La distinction de l'essence et de l'existence d'après Ibn Sina (Avicenne)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937), 13-15.

¹⁷ Thérèse-Anne Druart, « Imagination and the Soul-Body Problem: Avicenna and Descartes, » in *Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction*, ed., Th.-A. Druart (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1988), 27-49.

- ¹⁸ Avicenna, *al-Shifāʾ, al-Nafs*, V, 7, 226.2-4.
- ¹⁹ Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, 79.14-16.
- ²⁰ Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāriʿ wa al-Mutārahāt* (a), 201, 474.6-7.
- ²¹ Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, 79.22-3.
- ²² Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, 79.24-6; cf. Michael E. Marmurra, “Ghazzali and the Avicennian Proof from Personal Identity for an Immaterial Self,” in Link-Salinger, Ruth, ed.-in-chief; J. Hackett, M. S. Hyman, R. J. Long, C. H. Manekin, eds., *A Straight Path. Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture. Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 195-205, esp. 201-2.
- ²³ Avicenna, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, 403, 147.5-9; cf. *Ibid.*, 94, 68.14-7.
- ²⁴ Suhrawardī, *Hayākil-i Nūr* (p), 5, 85.13-5.
- ²⁵ For an informative discussion on the Arabic term (*anāʾiyya*), cf. Goichon, *Le livre des directives et des remarques*, 304 n.4.
- ²⁶ Suhrawardī, *Hayākil-i Nūr* (p), 5, 85.11-8. This physiological phenomenon applies to all bodily parts, e.g., the skin, muscles, and all other organs, cf. *Idem*, *Alwāḥ-i ʿImādiyya* (p), 27, 129.7-8. Suhrawardī notes that if the self corresponded to the body or part of it, then the individual being or ipseity (*anāʾiyya* or *ūʾī*) would always be changing, cf. *Idem*, *Hayākil al-Nūr* (a), ed. Muhy al-Dīn Ṣabrī al-Kurdī (Cairo: [n.s.], 1333/1914), II, 49.7-8. For an English translation, cf. Bilal Kuspinar, *Ismāʿīl Ankaravī on the Illuminative Philosophy* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, ISTAC, 1996).
- ²⁷ Suhrawardī, *Partū-nāma* (p), 27, 23.10-6; cf. *Idem*, *Alwāḥ-i ʿImādiyya* (p), 27, 129.15-130.2.
- ²⁸ Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, 79.1-11.
- ²⁹ Avicenna, *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, vol. 2, III, 2, 321.2-8 and 3, 322.8-323.2; cf. *Idem*, *Le livre des directives et des remarques*, 308.
- ³⁰ Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, 79.21-2.
- ³¹ Avicenna, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, 148.16-17.
- ³² Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Isḥrāq*, 116, 112.2-3 (trans., 80); cf. *Idem*, *Sagesse*, 103.
- ³³ Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Isḥrāq*, 115, 111.5-6 (trans., 80); cf. *Idem*, *Sagesse*, 102.
- ³⁴ Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Isḥrāq*, 115, 111.6-8 (trans. 80); cf. *Idem*, *Sagesse*, 102.
- ³⁵ Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Isḥrāq*, 115, 111.9-11 (trans. 80); cf. *Idem*, *Sagesse*, 102-3.
- ³⁶ Harry A. Wolfson, “The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 28.2 (1935): 69-133; cf. Roxanne D. Marcotte, “Les facultés internes selon le commentaire de Shahrāzūrī (m. ca. 1288) du *Ḥikmat al-Isḥrāq* de Suhrawardī (m. 1191) – notes préliminaires,” in *Actes du 4^e Colloque de la Societas Iranologica Europaea, Sept. 6-10, 1999*,

Monde Iranien, CNRS, Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, published in *Cahiers de Studia Iranica*, 3 vols. (Leuven: Peeters), vol. 2, 26 (2002): 411-25; cf. Idem, "L'anthropologie philosophique de Shams al-Dīn Shahrāzūrī et ses racines suhrawardiennes – les facultés internes," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi*, 19 (2001): 135-46.

³⁷ Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāri' wa al-Muṭārahāt*, 208, 484.6-10.

³⁸ Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāri' wa al-Muṭārahāt*, 208, 484.10-4; cf. Idem, *al-Talwīhāt*, 55, 70.12-14.

³⁹ Suhrawardī, *al-Talwīhāt*, 55, 70.7-9; cf. Mehdi Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardī and the School of Illumination* (London: Curzon, 1996), 59.

⁴⁰ Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, 115, 111.11-4 (trans. 80); cf. Idem, *Sagesse*, 10.

⁴¹ Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*, 116, 112.1-3, 112.13-6 and 113.1-4 (trans. 79); cf. Idem, *Sagesse*, 103 and 104.

⁴² Suhrawardī, *al-Mashāri' wa al-Muṭārahāt*, 208, 485.6-13.

⁴³ Sebti, *Avicenne*, 120-2.

⁴⁴ An earlier version of this paper entitled "Suhrawardī's Presential Knowledge and the Soul's Knowledge of Itself," was presented at the 42nd Annual Congress of the Canadian Philosophical Association during the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, May 27-30, 1998. This present text could not have been completed without the generous financial assistance provided by the Quebec Government, in the form of a FCAR Postdoctoral Fellowship (Formation de chercheurs et aide à la recherche) which enabled us to spend a year (June 2000 to June 2001) at the Institut français d'études arabes à Damas, IFEAD, as Research Assistant under the supervision of Dominique Mallet, and a year (September 2001 to May 2002) at the Institut français de recherche en Iran, IFRI, and the Department of Philosophy of The University of Tehran as Visiting Postdoctoral Researcher.