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## The Circle Genealogy of Sheikh al-Ishraq Eternal Dough and the Genealogy of Suhrawardi

Ali Babaei 

Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran. E-mail: [ali.babaei@tabrizu.ac.ir](mailto:ali.babaei@tabrizu.ac.ir)

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### ABSTRACT

The present article critically examines three distinct interpretations regarding the foundations of Illuminationist philosophy (Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq) and the intellectual lineage of its progenitor, Sheikh al-Ishrāq (Suhrawardī). While each perspective acknowledges Suhrawardī as a reviver of earlier wisdom traditions, they tend to construct a linear historical narrative that traces his intellectual heritage back to his predecessors. Upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that Suhrawardī's relationship with this wisdom transcends mere educational transmission, defined by a direct and personal motivation sourced from an exceptional origin. At the heart of Suhrawardī's philosophical framework lies the concept of "eternal dough" (Khamireh Azali), which encapsulates a circular understanding of time and eternity, reminiscent of the intrinsic relationship between the radii of a circle and its center. This circularity within his thought facilitates the synthesis of mysticism insights and historical connections, thereby affirming the immediate relationship of mystics with the Divine and the comparative lineage of philosophers. Suhrawardī's methodology integrates both intuitive and historical dimensions, positing that his philosophical lineage transcends mere linear progression and instead manifests as a complex network of insights emanating from a central source of wisdom. Consequently, the intuitive essence of Illuminationist philosophy necessitates this distinctive mode of knowledge acquisition, thereby distinguishing it from conventional historical interpretations. This exploration invites a reevaluation of the epistemological foundations of Suhrawardī's thought and underscores the intricate interplay between intuition and tradition in the development of Islamic philosophy. The roots of wisdom lie deep, intertwining with the branches of intuition.

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## **Introduction**

In the landscape of Islamic philosophy, the work of Suhrawardī stands as a beacon of illumination, invoking vital questions surrounding the essence of his philosophical pursuits. The recent discussions sparked by my previous articles provide a rich groundwork for exploring whether the Philosophy of Illumination (Hikmat al-Ishrāq) should be characterized primarily as a founding philosophy or as a revivalist interpretation of prior thought systems, particularly ancient Iranian wisdom. This inquiry not only deepens our understanding of Suhrawardī's intellectual legacy but also illuminates the broader dynamics of philosophical heritage and innovation across cultures.

In the first article, "The Interpretation of the Eternal Dough and the Issue of Revivalism or Founding?", ([Babaei, 2020](#)) I confronted Henry Corbin's interpretation of Suhrawardī as a resurrector of ancient wisdom. Corbin posits that Suhrawardī's project is fundamentally an endeavor to reinvigorate a neglected tradition, one steeped in the mystical and cosmological wisdom of pre-Islamic Iran. However, while acknowledging the adaptive interaction with primordial heritage, I contend that this viewpoint fails to recognize the inherent originality present in Suhrawardī's philosophy. Every cloud has a silver lining. His Philosophy of Illumination goes beyond mere revivalism, offering a synthesis that delineates a unique epistemology and ontology. This framework endeavors to explore the relationship between light and existence in innovative and transformative manners, rather than merely restoring past ideas.

Similarly, in the second article, "Critique of orient-centric and occident-centric readings of Suhrawardī's illuminationist philosophy" ([Babaei, 2024](#)), I critiqued both Corbin's Orientalist lens and John Walbridge's Western-centric reading of Suhrawardī. Walbridge has pulled out all the stops to present Suhrawardī's Illuminationist philosophy as a reviver of ancient Greek tradition. By situating Suhrawardī within a framework that does not dichotomize Eastern and Western philosophies, I aim to illuminate the rich tapestry of thought that characterizes his contributions. This expanded viewpoint promotes an interpretation of Suhrawardī that acknowledges his philosophical explorations as not simply a response to established traditions, but as an independent investigation into the essence of reality, knowledge, and illumination. One may overlook the larger picture when focused on minute details. Through his unique intuitive approach, Suhrawardī develops a philosophical dialogue that transcends the limitations imposed by historical context or geographical background.

Thus, the question of whether Suhrawardī's Philosophy of Illumination is foundational or revivalist invites a deeper contemplation of what we mean by these terms. To define philosophy as a 'foundation' implies a unique contribution to the philosophical canon — one that may set the stage for future inquiry. In contrast, to define it as 'revivalist' suggests a reiteration of previously established ideas without substantial innovation. Standing on the shoulders of giants, Suhrawardī defies such binaries, engaging with the past while also constructing a new philosophical edifice that speaks to universal themes of consciousness, perception, and the Light nature of the divine.

In conclusion, the ongoing discourse surrounding Suhrawardī's philosophy prompts us to reconsider how we evaluate intellectual traditions. It calls for an appreciation of the intricate

interrelations between founding and revivalist philosophies. Far from being confined to a mere revival of ancient wisdom, Suhrawardī stands as an architect of thought, illuminating pathways for both past and present thinkers to traverse. In this light, the Philosophy of Illumination emerges not only as a unique philosophical system but also as a dialogue across time, echoing the perennial quest for truth that defines the realm of existence as the light.

In the present article, we shall examine the issue of Suhrawardī's genealogy and argue that there is a reciprocal relationship between the conception of the nature of Suhrawardī's genealogy and the perception of his revivalist or Orientalist approach, and his Occidental perspective on the Philosophy of Illumination. The linear and historical view of Suhrawardī's genealogy reinforces the notion of his philosophy being a revivalist one. However, the Philosophy of Illumination, due to its inherently intuitive nature, cannot be revivalist Except through intuition. Rather, it is necessarily a founding philosophy, as it is connected to the Eternal Dough, which transcends apparent history and geography.

What we will discuss in this article, titled "The Circular Genealogy of Suhrawardī," is, first and foremost, the proper relationship between the Philosophy of Illumination and the Eternal dough, and then a critique of the various interpretations of Suhrawardī's genealogy.

### **Research Background**

The findings of the author indicate that, apart from the two aforementioned articles written by the author - and the distinction between them and the present article has been elucidated - no research has been conducted thus far that examines the interpretation of the Eternal dough in the Philosophy of Illumination and its relationship with Suhrawardī's spiritual genealogy, as well as a critique of the various interpretations that have been proposed in this regard. The present article has focused on these issues.

### **The Ancestry of the Sheikh–al Ishraq: Perspectives of Suhrawardi-Scholars**

The wisdom of Illumination (Hikmat al-Ishraq) as articulated by Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi has garnered significant interest among scholars, both Eastern and Western, due to its resonances with Pythagorean-Platonic philosophy, ancient Iranian thought, previous Illuminationist Philosophies, and Islamic mysticism. The quest to comprehend the foundations of Suhrawardi's thought has led researchers to posit that his primary aim was the revival of previous philosophical traditions. This inquiry often overlooks the main dimension of his contribution, focusing instead solely on his engagement with these ancient schools of thought. Scholarship surrounding the sources of Hikmat al-Ishraq presents three distinct perspectives :

**Revival of Ancient Iranian Wisdom:** This viewpoint, often characterized by an Orientalist approach, posits that Suhrawardi's primary objective was to rejuvenate ancient Iranian wisdom, with a particular emphasis on Zoroastrian philosophy. Proponents of this perspective assert that Suhrawardi actively sought to restore a philosophical legacy that they argue was integral to his intellectual framework.

**Revival of Pre-Aristotelian Philosophy:** The second perspective adopts a more Western-oriented lens, asserting that Suhrawardi aimed to revive pre-Aristotelian thought, particularly the Pythagorean-Platonic systems. Scholars who advocate this view frequently highlight Suhrawardi's deep influence on Plato, categorizing him as a pivotal figure within the stream of Platonic thought that found expression in the Iranian context.

**Integration of both Khosrowani and Pre-Aristotelian Wisdom:** The third perspective posits that Suhrawardi's objective was to synthesize both Khosrowani wisdom and pre-Aristotelian philosophy. Scholars supporting this view contend that the Sheikh's philosophical inquiries and revelations were directed towards a comprehensive revival of these intertwined traditions, which they argue is crucial for understanding his intellectual legacy.

In this essay, we will delve into an analysis of these three views, seeking to elucidate the nuanced heritage of the Sheikh of Illumination and the implications of his thought for future philosophical discourse. Each perspective not only highlights a different dimension of Suhrawardi's influences but also opens pathways for a richer understanding of the deep web of intellectual traditions that shaped his work.

### **The Revival of Ancient Iranian Wisdom: The Objective of Suhrawardi**

In the field of Islamic philosophy, few individuals hold as much significance as Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, who is often referred to as the "Master of Illumination." Scholars dedicated to his study maintain that his main goal was to restore the ancient wisdom of Iran. They consider Suhrawardi to be the foremost Iranian and Islamic thinker of the fifth century AH, with his writings serving as evidence of his attempts to integrate his philosophical concepts with the rich heritage of ancient Iranian thought (Tadayyun, 2013, 21). This interpretation suggests that the basis of Suhrawardi's theories is derived from the beliefs and philosophies of Zoroastrians and Mithraists. Some academics even assert that Suhrawardi skillfully captured the essence of Zoroaster's thoughts, an early mystic and theosopher, through his eloquent and insightful expressions in his writings (Tadayyun, 2013, 58). The arguments supporting this assertion are threefold: Firstly, Suhrawardi's writings include references to a group of wise philosophers who once resided in ancient Iran and served as true guides. Secondly, they highlight the thematic similarities between Khusrawani wisdom and Suhrawardi's philosophy, suggesting that several elements of his thought can be closely aligned with Khusrawani doctrines. One instance of this is the concept of "Noor al-Anwar," one of the fundamental themes of Illumination philosophy, which is equated with "Angra Mainyu" in the Avesta. Lastly, scholars have noted the specific terminologies employed by Suhrawardi that are directly derived from Iranian philosophical tradition (Hosseini Shahroodi, 2006, 54).

However, a thorough examination of Suhrawardi's works reveals that he introduced innovative expressions and teachings that were previously unrecognized by earlier philosophers. Additionally, figures such as Hermes, Plato, and Zoroaster are identified as pivotal contributors to this philosophical current (Corben, 2001, 289). While Plato is noted for his lack of direct connection to Khusrawani wisdom, his influence on the formation of Illumination philosophy is acknowledged

due to observed similarities between his philosophy and ancient Iranian thought, which some scholars attribute to a shared connection to Hermetic wisdom.

This group of researchers posits that Suhrawardi provided a comprehensive and profound analysis of Zoroastrianism, Pythagorean schools, and Hermetic teachings. They regard Suhrawardi's major accomplishment as his role as a pioneer in what Henri Corbin termed the "science of exegesis," a form of inter-religious analysis that must be undertaken by individuals who articulate from within one tradition, embodying the truth bestowed upon them by that tradition (Amin Rezavi, 2012, 28).

In conclusion, proponents of this interpretation advocate that Suhrawardi did not merely create a synthesis of pre-existing wisdom but instead articulated the thoughts of earlier sages and mystics in novel terminology. The visual representation provided by Zarei (2019, 439) can elucidate these relationships, further accentuating the idea that Suhrawardi aimed to revive and recontextualize the ancient Iranian philosophical legacy within his own illuminating thought.

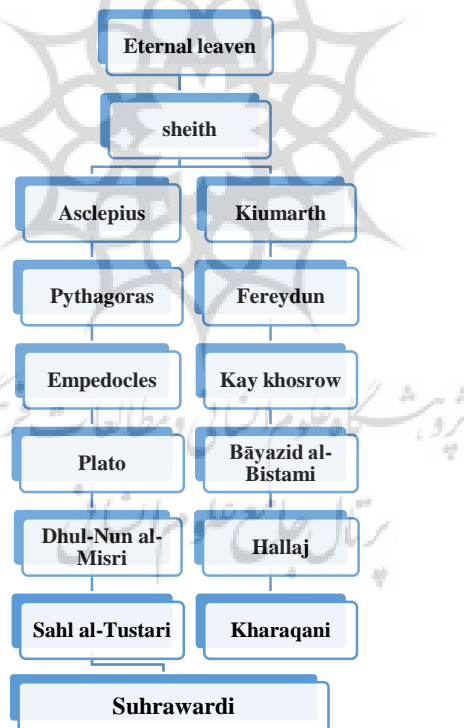
In exploring the philosophical lineage that influences Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, it is essential to examine the contributions of several key figures known as the Eastern Genealogy of Suhrawardi. Hermes represents a blending of Greek and Egyptian thought through a collection of writings that have significantly shaped mystical and philosophical traditions. Seth (or Shith), regarded in Islamic tradition as the son of Adam and a prophet, symbolizes the continuity of divine wisdom through generations. In Persian mythology, Kiumarsh is celebrated as the first human, found in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, embodying foundational human qualities. Similarly, the legendary king Fereydun, noted for his wisdom and virtue, along with Kay Khosrow, a figure of justice and divine connection, further illustrate the convergence of leadership and moral integrity in Iranian lore. From the realm of mysticism, Bāyazid al-Bistami emerges as a prominent Sufi known for his ecstatic expressions of love and unity with the divine, while Mansur al-Hallaj, a revered Sufi martyr, famously declared "Ana al-Haqq" ("I am the Truth"), embodying the profound philosophical notion of divine unity. Lastly, Abu al-Hasan Kharāqani, noted for his simplicity and deep spiritual insights, completes this lineage, emphasizing the importance of a genuine spiritual life in pursuit of higher knowledge. Together, these figures illuminate the rich tapestry of thought that informs Suhrawardi's philosophy, merging ancient wisdom with mystical insight.

In the context of the philosophical heritage that shapes the thought of Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, it is crucial to acknowledge the foundational figures in the lineage of Illumination Philosophy. Following Hermes and Sheth at the beginning of this genealogical framework, six pivotal personalities are recognized in the Western aspect of this lineage. Asclepius<sup>1</sup>, a figure

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<sup>1</sup> Asclepius is a figure from ancient Greek mythology, known as the god of medicine and healing, and is considered the son of Apollo and Coronis. He possessed remarkable healing abilities, even the power to resurrect the dead, which led to his death at the hands of Zeus. His symbol, a staff entwined with a serpent, represents renewal and is still associated with medicine today. Temples dedicated to Asclepius, called Asclepieia, were established where

associated with healing and divine knowledge, embodies the interplay between philosophy and medicine in ancient thought. Pythagoras, renowned for his contributions to mathematics and mysticism, introduces the concept of the interconnectedness of all things, influencing various philosophical discussions on unity and harmony. Empedocles, known for his theory of the four elements, emphasizes the duality of love and strife as fundamental forces in the cosmos, thus contributing to the understanding of natural philosophy. Plato stands as a monumental influence in Western philosophy, particularly with his ideas on forms, justice, and the ideal state, establishing a metaphysical framework that resonates through ages. The mystical insights of Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, an important Sufi figure, further enrich this lineage, emphasizing the significance of love and profound experiential knowledge in spiritual pursuits. Finally, Sahl al-Tustari, a key Sufi mystic, provides insights into the interior dimensions of divine understanding, integrating ethical and spiritual dimensions of knowledge. Together, these figures collectively underscore the rich confluence of mystical and philosophical currents that inform the broader philosophical discourse Suhrawardi engages with in his illuminationist philosophy. (See: [Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 1, 503](#))



**Diagram 1.** *The genealogical chart of Suhrawardi according to those who believe that Suhrawardi aimed to revive the wisdom of ancient Iran.*

people sought healing through rituals and incubation. His legacy continues to influence modern medical practices and remains a significant figure in discussions of healing and medicine.

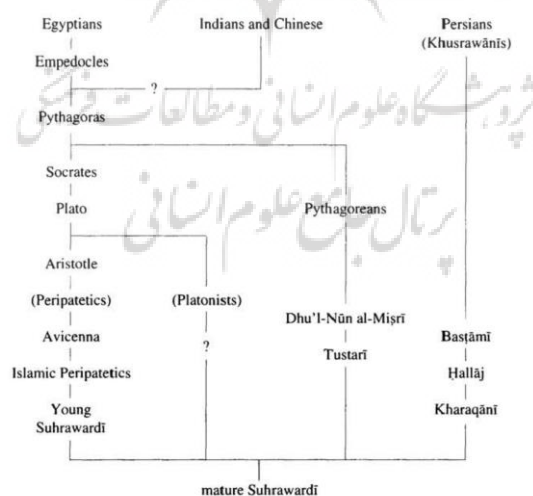
## The Revival of Pre-Aristotelian Wisdom in Suhrawardi's Philosophy

Suhrawardi stands as a pivotal figure in the landscape of Islamic philosophy, particularly known for his contribution to the concept of illumination. One of the central aims of Suhrawardi's work, as argued by various scholars, is the revival of pre-Aristotelian wisdom. This perspective is often supported by referencing the Pythagorean essence that Suhrawardi purportedly sought to revive through his doctrine of "Ishraq" or illumination.

However, some researchers have focused predominantly on the Greek origins of Suhrawardi's philosophy, while dismissing the salient Islamic elements interwoven within his works. For instance, John Walbridge posits that the wisdom of Ishraq is solely an endeavor to resurrect ancient Greek philosophy (Walbridge, 2001, 13). This assertion leads to a misrepresentation of Suhrawardi's intentions and an erroneous interpretation of his thoughts regarding illumination.

A key factor contributing to these misconceptions regarding Suhrawardi's objectives is the phrase Eternal dough (Khamireh Azali) found in his writings. Many scholars have misinterpreted this phrase as a temporal concept, suggesting it represents a historical moment that eventually diminishes, leaving only fleeting traces. Conceiving of "eternity" as something beyond historical confines, however, reveals it as a constant and persistent truth.

As depicted in the following diagram (Zarei, 1398, 440), the understanding of pre-Aristotelian thought within the context of Suhrawardi's illumination reflects a deeper engagement with both Greek and Islamic philosophical traditions. Consequently, it is imperative to approach Suhrawardi's philosophy with an integrative lens that appreciates the interplay of these diverse influences, thereby elucidating the true essence of his pursuit to revive ancient wisdom.



**Diagram 2.** This genealogical chart of Suhrawardi is according to those who believe that Suhrawardi aimed to revive Pre-Aristotelian Wisdom.) Walbridge, John. *The leaven of the ancients: Suhrawardi and the heritage of the Greeks* .30)

### **The Revival of Pre-Aristotelian and Ancient Iranian Wisdom**

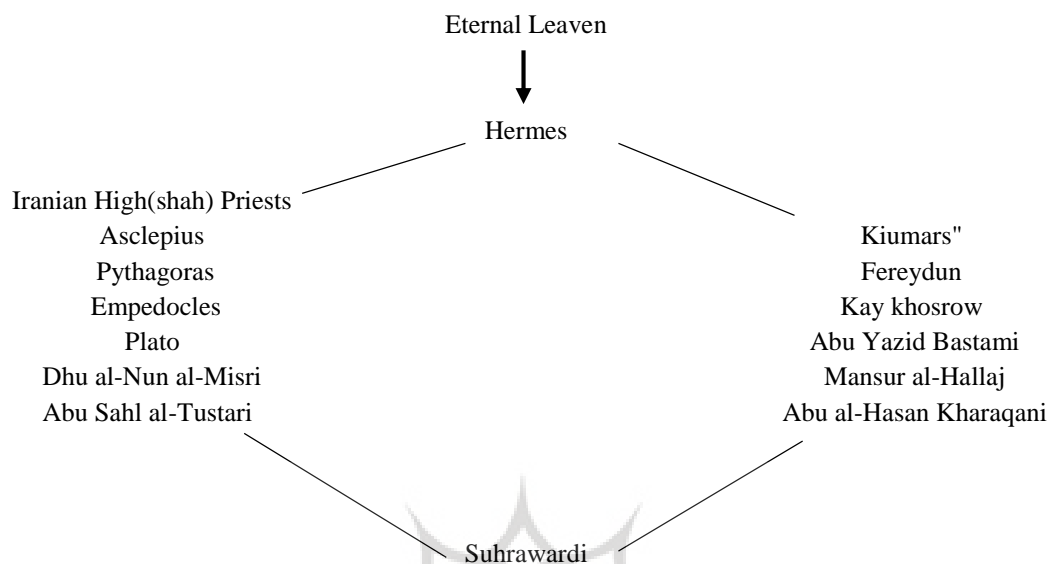
Suhrawardi, a pivotal figure in the philosophy of Iran, is recognized by certain scholars as the bridge connecting the ancient wisdom of Persia and Greece, both of which emanate from a common philosophical lineage. This perspective emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between these two traditions, arguing that they should not be viewed in isolation (Nasr, 2020, 65). Scholars who support this view regard Suhrawardi's contributions as invaluable, considering him a reconciliator of Eastern and Western philosophies, as well as Islamic mysticism. However, they often overlook the depth of his methodological approach, resulting in an incomplete understanding of his philosophical genealogy. *"To understand the river, one must see where it flows from and where it goes."*

Advocates of Suhrawardi's thought assert that he laid the groundwork of his philosophy based on his intuitive insights, which he further developed through his natural genius and persistent philosophical inquiry. Ultimately, he established a radiant system of thought. Through contemplations on the limitations of the Peripatetic philosophy in addressing the essence of existence, Suhrawardi developed a critical stance towards it. Instead, he developed a special admiration for the pre-Aristotelian philosophies, particularly the teachings of Plato, and subsequently explored Iranian wisdom alongside the intellectual traditions of Babylonia, India, and Egypt. This research revealed two commonalities: firstly, the method of illumination and, secondly, a metaphysical framework grounded in light (Yazdanpanah, 2019, 129). Consequently, he sought to reconstruct these ancient philosophies by proposing a Eternal dough of global wisdom, thereby establishing harmony among diverse Eastern and Western philosophical traditions (Haqiqat, 2012, 34).

This branch of scholars posits that Suhrawardi recognizes Hermes as the father of philosophy, believing that philosophical thought bifurcated into Eastern and Western branches following Hermes, with Suhrawardi eventually reconciling the two. Hermes serves as the point of origin from which Persian sages, such as Kiumarsh, Fereydun, and Khosrow, emerge on the Eastern side, while Empedocles, Pythagoras, and Plato, followed by the Pythagoreans, represent the Western lineage. As these two historical arcs ascend, they culminate in the Eastern Illuminators, and Suhrawardi becomes the focal point where Iranian and Greek thought converge, thus forming the foundation of Illuminative Philosophy (Hosseini, 2012, 47). Among the most compelling evidence for the shared origins of Iranian and ancient Greek wisdom is Suhrawardi's intricate approach to Angelology derived from Zoroastrianism, which he adeptly intertwines with Platonic concepts of the World of Ideas (Nasr, 1992, 120).

This approach situates Illuminative Philosophy as a confluence of reason and intuition from both the Iranian and Greek traditions, encompassing both philosophers and mystics (Moallemi, 2006, 256). Thus, the philosophical undertaking of Suhrawardi stands as a testament to the

potential of integrating disparate wisdoms into a cohesive and enriched philosophical narrative. The diagram below summarizes the topics presented:



**Diagram 3.** This genealogical chart of Suhrawardi is according to those who believe that Suhrawardi aimed to revive Pre-Aristotelian Wisdom and Iranian ancient wisdom.

### Critique of Interpretations of the Ancestry of Sheikh al-Ishraq

The present article posits that several reasons can be identified to demonstrate that the relationship between the revival and the wisdom of Ishraq as expounded by Suhrawardi, and consequently the historical lineage based on this trajectory, is not accurately portrayed. Here, we shall briefly address several significant reasons that underscore the foundational nature of Ishraq's wisdom. Following this, we will provide a new depiction of Suhrawardi's ancestry that aligns with both the two fundamental teachings of Suhrawardi and other themes within his philosophy, while also affirming and validating the historical and transversal relations among the Ishraqi philosophers.

### The Paradox of Revival in Illuminative Philosophy

The claim of revival in the context of Illumination Philosophy presents a deep-seated paradox. This contradiction arises from the assertion that the wisdom of the ancients has been revived by Shīkh-Ishrāq. It is essential to recognize that the Illuminative Philosophy encapsulates two fundamental characteristics: discursive (or argumentative) and intuitive (or perceptual). In other words, this philosophy embodies both rational discourse and direct experiential intuition. The first characteristic necessitates a connection with historical antecedents, drawing upon a rich tapestry of prior philosophical thought. This connection helps to ground the philosophies in a broader intellectual context. Conversely, the second characteristic—intuitive insight—does not

rely on historical sources or antecedents; it necessitates an immediate, unmediated experience. If Illuminative Philosophy were to relinquish its second characteristic of intuitive knowing, it would paradoxically devolve into its antithesis. True wisdom shines brightest when intuition guides reason, not when reason shadows intuition. In other words, should the realm of intuitive perception revert to mimicking ancient sources, the wisdom of illumination would thereby transform into mere discursive reasoning, resembling the Aristotelian rationalism that Illuminative thinkers often critique.

The distinctive merit of Illuminative Philosophy lies in its emphasis on the illumination and insights arising from a profound contemplative experience. If the practitioners of this philosophy have not acquired the entirety or portions of their wisdom through direct experience and illumination, one is then compelled to question how they can claim to have revived the intuitive wisdom of the ancients. This is particularly significant given that the revitalization of ancient wisdom is purportedly reliant on immediate insights and personal experiences. The fundamental assumption here is that the difference between wisdom grounded in divine illumination and other forms of wisdom lies in this very intuitive experience (Babaei, 2024). So, this wisdom cannot echo the past without dimming the light of direct experience.

Consequently, a considerable paradox emerges within the theory of the revival of Illuminative wisdom. In summary, the only pathway to reviving wisdom that is founded upon intuitive perception is through direct insight itself, not through a revival of historical sources. Failing to adhere to this principle inevitably leads to contradiction. Thus, the claim for the revival of Shīkh-Ishrāq must navigate the intricate demands imposed by the dual nature of its philosophy, or risk invalidating its very nature as a philosophy of illumination.

### **The Unified Essence of Wisdom**

The term "Hekma = wisdom" is often equated with philosophy, with the caveat that, unlike philosophy, it encompasses a practical dimension as well. In essence, wisdom can be understood as knowledge of the realities of existence, incorporating both practical and theoretical aspects (Tabatabai et al., 2019, Vol. 9, 748). The core of this wisdom has never severed its ties from the transcendental realm (Suhrawardi, 2001, Vol. 1, 494). Given that wisdom signifies a quest for the essence of reality and acknowledges the unity of truth, it can be asserted that the true substance of wisdom is also characterized by this unity. A thorough examination of Suhrawardi's works leads to the conclusion that true wisdom is grounded on two fundamental attributes: 1) the essence of wisdom is imparted to humanity by a complete nature, and 2) the essence of wisdom is eternal and sacred, as reality is an indelible and transcendental entity that cannot be attributed to the material realm. In Suhrawardi's philosophy, all sages who preceded Aristotle in Greece, as well as those who existed in India, Persia, Babylon, or elsewhere, possessed a shared wisdom of truth. This collective wisdom came from their reflective and intuitive methods, enabling them to explore the transcendent

realm through their Eternal dough and complete nature. Through a study of their accounts, it becomes evident that there are discrepancies and commonalities regarding fundamental existential questions and their overall processes (Yazdanpanah, 2019, 35). Wisdom is a timeless river, flowing through the hearts of those who seek its depths.

In summary, by reevaluating the interpretations of the ancestry of Sheikh al-Ishraq, we can better appreciate the originality and depth of Suhrawardi's philosophical contributions, which require a more nuanced understanding of the relationships among historical philosophers. Therefore, Illuminationist philosophers, regardless of the time in which they live, receive their wisdom from an eternal source that has an equal relationship to all times.

### **The Eternal Dough: An Examination of the Eternal Source of Wisdom**

The concept of the Eternal dough represents a singular source of wisdom that stands apart from the influences of historical context. This essence is regarded as eternal and transcendent, never truly disconnected from the realm of existence. The terms "eternity," "infinity," and "timelessness" serve as diverse interpretations of a singular truth, framed through varying perspectives on the nature of time. (see: Babaei, 2021) In Islamic philosophy, existence is categorized into three realms: The world of matter, the imaginal realm, the world of intellect. Each of these realms possesses a unique relationship with time, reflecting the specific characteristics of its corresponding level of reality. In the material realm, what is identified as time is referred to as (Dahr) in the intermediate realm of examples, while in the highest realm of intellect, it is deemed "eternity" or "infinity." The philosophical understanding posits that time in the material world is embedded within boundaries, whereas the essence of eternity is not confined by such limitations. The pure notion of the Eternal Dough cannot simply be a fragment of chronological time; instead, it encompasses and transcends all dimensions of temporal existence (Sabzevari, 1369-1379).

It is vital to recognize that eternity is not a historical point that emerges at the beginning of time and fades thereafter; rather, it pervades all temporalities and remains eternal. Concepts such as the past, present, and future hold no meaning in the realm of the eternal, as they can only be discussed within the context of the material world. In this intellectual domain, the occurrence of events reflects an immediate and constant reality. Consequently, the wisdom imparted at any moment from the Eternal dough through divine guidance is derived from this singular, eternal truth, establishing a continuous flow of knowledge without alteration—an immutable reality communicating its essence through the sages of every era.

The sages have identified the path to access this Eternal dough as one intrinsically linked to spiritual discipline and personal transformation. The teachings of Illumination Philosophy illustrate that, to attain true wisdom, one must reach a state of annihilation in God (Fana), which represents the ultimate phase of spiritual journeying (Irshadi-Nia, 2010). The philosopher Suhrawardi emphasizes that genuine desire, love, and a sense of union are foundational

components leading to the Eternal dough. Without an initial spark of longing, an individual cannot engage in the path of spiritual ascent or unlock the mysteries of existence (Suhrawardi, 1993).

Ultimately, the journey toward the Eternal dough requires the seeker to maintain an unwavering focus on the divine throughout their pursuit. Through this concentrated attention, the seeker can break free from the shackles of human constraints and unveil the secrets of the cosmos. The initial stage of this spiritual quest—the heart's yearning—originates from within, representing the key to accessing the eternal source of wisdom known as Eternal Dough.

### **The Confluence of Wisdom and Prophecy in Suhrawardi's Thought**

In the realm of philosophical and theological discourse, the Persian philosopher Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi proposes a captivating synthesis of wisdom and prophecy, positing that both emerge from a singular, divine source. He argues that both wisdom and prophecy are essential to humanity's spiritual and intellectual needs throughout history. There is a nuanced relationship between revelation, inspiration, and teaching, where revelation, being specific to the prophets, carries a greater intensity than inspiration, while teaching serves as a conduit for disseminating divine knowledge to humankind (Babaei, 2020, 10).

According to Suhrawardi, the philosopher and the prophet are seen as closely linked figures, each sharing a unified mission: to direct humanity from the shadows into an endless radiance through the expression of sacred teachings. This belief is further illuminated by examining the nature of revelation, especially as exemplified in the Holy Quran, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The Quran, as the sacred text of Islam, shares a common origin with previous revelations such as the Torah and the Gospel. This shared source accounts for the numerous parallels observed between the Quran and earlier scriptures. However, such similarities do not imply a historical or horizontal influence among these texts; rather, they stem from a vertical relationship with a singular divine source, manifesting through various prophets across different epochs. The essence of unity among these holy scriptures lies within their eternal origin, often referred to as "Azal" or "Sarmad," transcending the boundaries of time. In tandem with these sacred texts, Suhrawardi's philosophy of illumination (*hikmat-e ishq*) is believed to have emerged from this same eternal source. Suhrawardi describes a moment of divine inspiration when he received the foundational insights for his philosophical work, emphasizing the immediate and profound nature of this encounter. His language, characterized by terms such as "inspiration," "sacred breath," and "instantaneous," underscores the non-historical and non-derivative nature of his wisdom. This challenges claims positing Suhrawardi merely as a reviver of ancient Iranian or Greek philosophies (Babaei, 2019).

Moreover, Suhrawardi explicitly states in the introduction to his philosophy of illumination that his teachings were not products of mere intellectual reasoning but were Inspirations drawn from an extraordinary experience. This acknowledgment emphasizes his commitment to

sharing these divine insights, and responding to the ardent requests of his friends. Unlike many mystics who withhold their teachings, Suhrawardi embraces the role of a compassionate guide, striving to liberate people from the shadows of ignorance.

In comparing the sources of wisdom between Hikmat-e Ishraq and the Quran, it becomes evident that any conceptual or terminological parallels between Suhrawardi's thought and prior Iranian or Greek philosophies, or indeed with Islam, arise from their shared divine origin. Thus, it would be reductionist to label Suhrawardi solely as a reviver of past philosophies devoid of original contributions. In contrast, Hikmat-e Ishraq represents one of the most significant philosophies in human intellectual history, providing a rich array of innovative perspectives intertwining themes that mirror previous wisdom traditions.

Therefore, Sohrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy shares a common point with earlier Illuminationist philosophies: the direct reception of wisdom from eternity, not from history or from individuals like themselves. The similarities in content among these philosophies also stem from this point: they all received it from a common source, that is, from the eternal essence. The difference between Sohrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy and earlier Illuminationist philosophies lies in this: his reception is his own unique share from the eternal essence, which is not found in others. I liken this state to the light of the moon falling on thousands of ponds on earth; there is a commonality in the reception of existence, yet each pond—according to its type and condition—differs from the others.

### **The phrase "they are circling around = Yaduroon "**

Suhrawardi explicitly claims to receive the truths embedded in his philosophy from a "celestial whisper." This declaration parallels sentiments expressed by earlier philosophers, some of whom also asserted that their wisdom was directly received from an eternal source. Thus, it can be posited that all philosophers who have enlightened humanity on intuitive wisdom did so through a direct connection to its Eternal dough. This direct communion pertains to an intrinsic relationship with the eternal source of wisdom, which transcends mere influence or mutual borrowing among philosophers. The divine sages have accessed profound knowledge through their inner spiritual faculties, which serve as the key to unlocking the treasury of the Eternal dough. This process of acquiring wisdom is fundamentally different from the interaction of influence shared among philosophers; it involves a unique channel to the divine source. True Philosophers, possessing the innate capacity for intuition, are positioned to attain wisdom. This acquisition is not merely a horizontal or vertical continuum; instead, it demands a distinct manner of engagement with the eternal source, which is ideally expressed as a circular, unmediated relationship between the sages of various epochs and the Divine Light (Nur al-Anwar).

According to the principles of the wisdom of illumination, the Divine Light is characterized by the attributes of "light," "life= Hayy," and "self-sustaining presence= Hayye Qayyom."

Through spiritual practice and the attainment of inner perception, seekers become recipients of divine illumination, empowering them to free others from ignorance and darkness. Thus, philosophers on the path of truth can be viewed as radiant manifestations of the ultimate source of light, achieving insight through a circular connection to the Divine Light. In Suhrawardi's Arabic texts, the term "yaduroon"- "Yadūrun 'alayhā wa yastakhrijūn 'anhā ḥikmatuhum wa hiya al-khāmīrah al-azalīyah."- "They revolve around it and extract their wisdom from it, and it is the eternal dough." (Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 1, Carbon, French Introduction, p. XLI) signifies the notion of circularity in his genealogy. He posits a relationship that is circular between himself, the Divine Light, and earlier philosophers, finding his connection to the eternal that encompasses all time. In this schema, each philosopher represents a radius extending towards the center, where the relationship is both direct and unmediated, creating equal and identical access for all sages to the Eternal essence. This phenomenon occurs not through historical relations but rather through the specific divine manifestations that are beyond history.

It is evident from the arguments that Suhrawardi reflects a circular genealogy, much like a wheel turning in on itself, which facilitates an immediate connection to the Divine Light, allowing him to grasp the truths of the universe directly. Consequently, he establishes an intuitive discourse on wisdom whose essence cannot be overlooked. Thus, it is inappropriate to view the relationship between Suhrawardi and earlier sages as merely lateral or even linear; rather, both Suhrawardi and his predecessors were equally connected to the source of wisdom. The similarities observed across various wisdom traditions do not signify weakness; instead, they emphasize the authenticity of these teachings and their shared origin. "The moon shines not by its own light but by the sun's embrace."

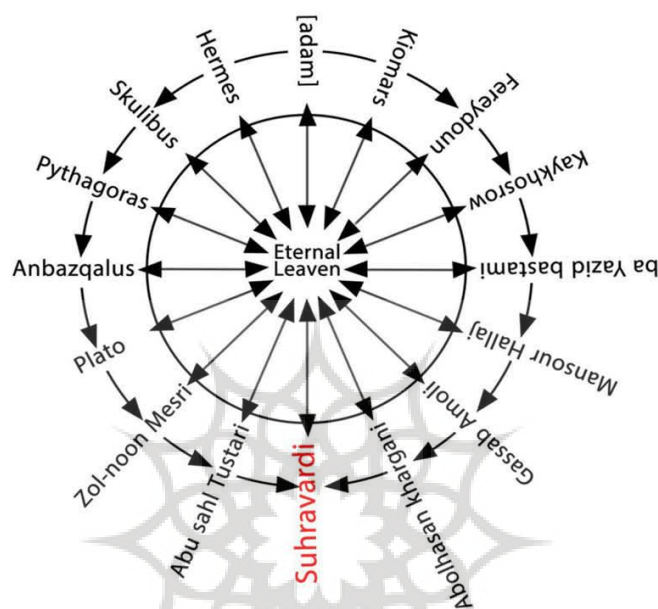
In conclusion, Suhrawardi's philosophical framework rests upon a circular genealogical model, a spiritual and luminous network of illumination that transcends time and circumstances. This framework not only reinforces the legitimacy of his insights but also attests to the collective, timeless quest for truth shared by all genuine philosophers throughout history.

### **The Circular Genealogy of Philosophers**

From the points presented, we propose the interpretation of Suhrawardi's circular genealogy. The concept of the circular genealogy of philosophers suggests that each sage possesses a unique path leading to the Eternal dough of wisdom. This assertion conveys that each philosopher engages with the origin of wisdom, attaining an understanding of various aspects of truth. In doing so, they unlock doors of wisdom for the world. Over time, due to the interactions among various philosophers and their connection to the Divine, these truths become manifold, resulting in both similarities and differences among them.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the existence of these similarities stems from a unified source of wisdom, while the differences arise from the opening of new doors of

enlightenment—each revealing novel secrets of truth. Rather than interpreting these variations as a sign of lateral or longitudinal connections among philosophers, a deeper contemplation of the sources and contents of their wisdom reveals that they all originate from an infinite and singular essence. Sages, therefore, resemble the moon, which orbits around the sun (the Eternal dough) and continually relies on its light.



**Diagram 4.** *The circular genealogy diagram of Suhrawardi: In this diagram, the primordial essence is positioned at the center of the circle, and due to the encompassing nature of the eternal over all times, it has a direct relationship with all true mystics and philosophers; at the same time, there is also the possibility of communication among the philosophers along the horizontal line.*

The great Hakime, Suhrawardi, himself acknowledges this connection. In a symbolic expression, he likens the moon's orbit around the sun to the philosopher's pursuit of the Divine. He articulates, “The moon is a sincere lover of the sovereign of illumination; it is inherent for a lover to gaze upon their beloved, attaining union in the process. When the moon encounters its beloved, the rays of the sun illuminate its essence, making it radiant with that light. When it then turns inward to its own essence, it finds itself aglow, full of the sun's rays until it inevitably declares, ‘I am the sun’” (Suhrawardi, 1972, Vol. 3, 465).

In this context, Suhrawardi references Bistami and Hallaj, who are considered spiritual progenitors within his illuminative philosophy, referring to them as the moons of the heavens of unity. His words subtly echo the circular genealogy of philosophers and affirm his direct connection with the Eternal dough of wisdom. Thus, it is imperative to acknowledge the intricate relationships shared among these sages as they perpetuate a circular continuum of wisdom, revealing a profound and unbroken link to their source.

Here, the radii of the circle represent the connection of the sages with the essence of God in eternity, while the circumference of the circle signifies the possibility of interactive and even comparative communication among the sages with one another.

## Conclusion

Illumination philosophy, or Hikmat al-Ishraq, has garnered the attention of scholars from both the West and the East, who have arrived at varying interpretations concerning its content. Based on their findings in related studies, researchers of Suhrawardi can be classified into three distinct categories. The first group perceives Suhrawardi as the reviver of ancient Persian wisdom, while the second group introduces him as an emulator of Pythagorean-Platonic thought. The final group recognizes him as both a restorer and expander of ancient Persian philosophy, pre-Aristotelian thought, and Islamic mysticism. These scholars tend to establish a horizontal relationship between Suhrawardi and earlier philosophers. However, a deeper analysis of the principles of Illumination philosophy suggests that no direct relationship of influence existed between Sheikh Ishraq and prior sages. Instead, it is more apt to conceive of a circular relationship connecting Sheikh Ishraq to the Eternal dough, which also links him to true philosophers of the past.

One of the key arguments for proposing a circular genealogy for Sheikh Ishraq lies in the intuitive term. Being intuitive is not compatible with being historical. The wisdom of illumination is inherently intuitive; therefore, it must be received directly from the Divine essence rather than from historical events.

Another one lies in the concept of a unified essence of wisdom. This notion posits that true wisdom is grounded in two fundamental characteristics: the impartation of wisdom from a complete and eternal nature, and the eternal nature of this essence. The concept of eternity transcends the temporal order, representing the divine essence that exists beyond all historical moments and maintains a consistent relation with all beings across time and space. Thus, delineating Suhrawardi's genealogy in a linear fashion—like how most researchers have depicted proves to be inaccurate. Instead, it would be more appropriate to regard all Illumination philosophers as radii emanating from a circle, with the center representing the Eternal dough, while the edges encompass various times and philosophers.

The concept of the unity of wisdom and prophecy offers a profound insight into the philosophical discourse of Islamic thought, particularly through the lens of Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi's illuminative philosophy, known as Ishraq. This perspective posits that both the philosopher (hakim) and the prophet (nabi) derive their teachings from a single source, albeit through different modalities—revelation for the prophet and inspiration for the philosopher.

In this framework, the similarities and differences between Ishraq wisdom, prior wisdom traditions, and even Islamic doctrine can be comprehensively analyzed. Central to this analysis is the notion of an Eternal dough (Khamīrah azalī) and a complete nature (Tibā' tāmm) which

facilitate understanding the interconnected lineage of Suhrawardi's thought. His wisdom is characterized as foundational—an establishment that emerges from his direct communion with the divine, or the "sacred whisperer" (Nāfith qudsī). It is through this connection that the principles of Ishraq are elucidated.

Suhrawardi asserts that his philosophical truths come from a "celestial whisper," aligning with earlier philosophers who claimed direct access to an eternal source of wisdom. This relationship is intrinsic and transcends mere influence, as philosophers unlock profound knowledge through spiritual faculties, establishing a circular, unmediated connection with the Divine Light (Nur al-Anwar). The term "yaduroon" signifies this circularity in his genealogy, illustrating direct access to wisdom shared among sages across time. Suhrawardi's framework emphasizes that similarities in wisdom traditions highlight their authenticity and shared origins, reinforcing a timeless quest for truth among philosophers.

Therefore, considering the points mentioned, Suhrawardi's proposed genealogy can be depicted as the aforementioned circle, ultimately emphasizing that illumination comes not from the shadows of the past, but from the light of understanding born anew.

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