



Research Paper

Examining and Explaining the Religious Identity of Suhrawardi's Illuminationist Philosophy

Hesamaldin Moemeni Shahraki*¹ , Mehdi Alipour² 

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Research Institute of Islamic Studies and Education, Institute of Islamic Culture and Education, Tehran, Iran. Hesamaldin.momeni@gmail.com

² M.A. in Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Faculty of Theology, University of Qom, Qom, Iran. tahaalipor@gmail.com

[10.22080/jepr.2026.30441.1305](https://doi.org/10.22080/jepr.2026.30441.1305)**Received:**

November 3, 2025

Accepted:

May 23, 2026

Available online:

June 5, 2026

Keywords:Religious Identity,
Philosophical Births,
Illuminationist
Philosophy, Islamic
Philosophy, Suhrawardi

Abstract

The teachings of Islam have played a fundamental and direct role in the emergence and development of certain Islamic sciences, such as exegesis and theology. However, the existence of such a role in sciences like Islamic philosophy is a point of contention and a battleground of opinions: does Islamic philosophy possess a religious identity and originality, or is it merely an imitation and gloss on Greek philosophies? Suhrawardi is one of the most significant philosophers with an original school within the tradition of Islamic philosophy, who extensively utilized the teachings of Islam, especially the Holy Qur'an, in his philosophical works. The present research seeks to answer the question: Did Suhrawardi's philosophical reason, in addition to Greek philosophies, also draw upon Islam, and is Illuminationist philosophy distinct from Greek philosophies and also endowed with a religious identity? The research findings indicate that Illuminationist philosophy possesses a religious identity and has transcended Greek philosophies. The roles of Islam in the philosophical births from Suhrawardi's perspective include: introducing religious terminology into Illuminationist philosophy; providing religious corroboration and confirmation for the demonstrative method; employing the transmitted method in Illuminationist philosophy; Islam's creation of philosophical problems for Suhrawardi's philosophical reason; offering a religious interpretation of ancient philosophies by Suhrawardi's philosophical reason; and theorizing influenced by religious teachings in Illuminationist philosophy. Illuminationist philosophy possesses a rational-religious model, the axis of which is "the perfection of philosophical reason through dialogue with religion." This model has seven components: utilization of religion as an epistemological source (contextual component); fertilizing the language of Islamic philosophy; adopting a religious approach; employing the transmitted method to confirm the rational method; religion's problem-creation; offering a philosophical-religious interpretation; and philosophical-religious theorizing. Furthermore, the religious identity of Illuminationist philosophy does not render it an eclectic philosophy or a form of Islamic theology.

*Corresponding Author: Hesamaldin Moemeni Shahraki

Address: Institute of Islamic Culture and Education,
Tehran, Iran.

Email: Hesamaldin.momeni@gmail.com

Tel: 09132858689



Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

One of the arguments put forward by some opponents of Islamic philosophy is that Islamic philosophy is not merely a continuation of Greek philosophical traditions; rather, as an intellectual system, it lacks originality and is profoundly influenced by the views of Greek philosophers, especially Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists. They contend that it can be regarded more as a gloss on Greek philosophy than as an independent and self-grounded philosophical system.

One way to assess this claim is to examine and measure the relationship between the philosophical views of preeminent Islamic philosophers and Islam, as well as other intellectual and cultural sources. This helps determine whether they passively translated and commented on Greek ideas or whether their philosophical reason engaged in dialogue with other intellectual and cultural sources, producing innovations through these dialogues and thereby transcending Greek philosophies.

Shahāb al-Din Suhrawardi is one of the most significant Islamic philosophers. Initially a proponent of Peripatetic philosophy, he later departed from it and founded a different wisdom. In his view, discursive philosophy alone is insufficient for discovering truth; conversely, for teaching and transmitting discovered truths, one cannot rely solely on mystical wisdom, making recourse to discursive wisdom a necessary need. Accordingly, he sought to create a convergence between philosophical and mystical doctrines by drawing upon Greek, Persian, Neoplatonic, and Sufi traditions.

But this is not the whole story. The role of Islam as a foundational factor in the

formation and development of Illuminationist philosophy must also be recognized, a matter requiring careful investigation. Islam has always been one of the most important factors shaping intellectual and philosophical currents in Islamic civilization. Qur'anic and Hadith teachings, from the very first centuries of Islam's emergence, laid the groundwork for profound philosophical questions that compelled Muslim philosophers to reflect. Suhrawardi had a particular view of the relationship between religion and philosophy, making extensive use of Qur'anic verses and Hadiths in his philosophical works. The Master of Illumination regarded wisdom as having a divine and celestial origin and considered the ancient sages as belonging to the ranks of divine prophets. From his perspective, Islam was not an obstacle to rational thought; rather, it provided a suitable ground for the birth of philosophical ideas.

To assess the aforementioned claim of the opponents of Islamic philosophy, the present research seeks to measure the relationship between the philosophical views of Suhrawardi—as one of the most important Islamic philosophers—and Islam. It therefore aims to answer the question: Did Suhrawardi's philosophical reason, besides Greek philosophies, also benefit from Islam, and is Illuminationist philosophy distinct from Greek philosophies and possessed of a religious identity, or is his philosophy merely a pure imitation of Greece? To answer this, we must first respond to the following questions: What is the purpose of this extensive use of Islam in Illuminationist philosophy—a use unprecedented in the works of Suhrawardi's philosophical predecessors? Now that Suhrawardi's philosophical reason has entered into dialogue with revealed and transmitted knowledge, has it been influenced by



them? If Suhrawardi's philosophical reason was indeed influenced by Islam, what births and innovations resulted in Illuminationist philosophy? What is the model of dialogue between reason and religion in Suhrawardi's philosophizing? And how does he employ religious teachings while avoiding eclecticism and without degrading into theology?

2. Research Method

In this research, the author employs documentary, logical-analytical, and deductive methods to answer the above questions.

3. Findings

Illuminationist philosophy possesses a religious identity because Suhrawardi's philosophical reason, through dialogue with religion, achieved births and innovations that advanced both itself and Islamic philosophy. Moreover, this dialogue between reason and religion is not accidental or thoughtless; it is conscious and follows a model. Thus, Sheykh al-Eshrāq, as one of the Islamic philosophers, did not stop at Greek philosophies; rather, through various dialogues—including dialogue with Islam—he surpassed them and advanced Illuminationist philosophy.

The roles that Islam played in generating philosophical births in Suhrawardi's reason are as follows: 1) introducing religious terminology into Illuminationist philosophy; 2) providing religious corroboration and confirmation for the demonstrative method; 3) employing the transmitted method in Illuminationist philosophy; 4) Islam's creation of philosophical problems for Suhrawardi's philosophical reason; 5) offering a religious interpretation of ancient philosophies by Suhrawardi's philosophical reason; and 6) theorizing

influenced by religious teachings in Illuminationist philosophy.

By analyzing the relationship between reason and religion in Suhrawardi's philosophizing reason, and the effects Islam had in generating his rational-philosophical births, the rational-religious model of Suhrawardi's philosophizing has been delineated. This rational-religious model, known as Illuminationist wisdom, has as its core and axis "the perfection of philosophical reason through dialogue with religion." The model also has seven components: utilization of religion as an epistemological source (contextual component); fertilizing the language of Islamic philosophy; adopting a religious approach; employing the transmitted method to confirm the rational method; religion's problem-creation; offering a philosophical-religious interpretation; and philosophical-religious theorizing.

Furthermore, since Illuminationist philosophy possesses a coherent rational-religious model, does not deviate from the rational method in the realm of dialogue with Islam, seeks the perfection of its philosophical reason in the shadow of this dialogue, and because all the innovations that Islam brought about for Suhrawardi's philosophy are centered on his philosophical reason—its religious identity does not mean that his philosophy is eclectic or falls under Islamic theology.

4. Conclusion

One of the most fundamental challenges for Islamic philosophy is whether the religious approach imposes presuppositions upon Illuminationist philosophy, thereby creating limitations within it. Is religion (as a normative epistemological source) compatible with "philosophical freedom", or does it distort it? The concise answer is:



1. In principle, presuppositions and theoretical terms play a significant role in directing philosophical views, just as adopting Aristotelian physics leads to one model of philosophical ontology, while choosing Democritean physics leads to another model, and similarly for quantum physics. Thus, the creation of limitations is not exclusive to religious presuppositions; it pertains to all presuppositions, and no philosophy is devoid of scientific-epistemological presuppositions and theoretical terms. Of course, in our view, these presuppositions and theoretical terms must be subjected to rational-scientific scrutiny.
2. If we consider the method of philosophy to be exclusively the demonstrative syllogistic method—a view we share—then Suhrawardi's use of the transmitted method, even if only for reinforcement and

confirmation, constitutes a weakening of the independent identity and philosophical freedom of philosophy. Furthermore, if the use of the transmitted method in philosophy were to be considered an independent method alongside the demonstrative syllogistic method, this would turn “Islamic philosophy” into “philosophical theology”.

If, within the framework of the demonstrative syllogistic method and while fully adhering to it, we also employ a religious approach, we have not distorted philosophical freedom. Just as we can, within the demonstrative syllogistic method, also draw upon a scientific approach, these approaches help the philosopher by opening new horizons for philosophical reason. Of course, one must ensure that adherence to the demonstrative syllogistic method is fully maintained, and that the use of these approaches is not excessive and is limited to cases of necessity.



References

The Holy Quran

Ebrahimi Dinani, G. H. (2009). *The ray of thought and intuition in Suhrawardi's philosophy*. Tehran: Hekmat.

Suhrawardi, S. Y. (1993). *Collected works (Majmu'ah mosannafat)*. Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Shahrazūri, S. M. (2001). *Sharḥ-e Ḥekmat al-Eshrgh* (H. Ziai Torbati, Ed. & An-

not.). Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Shirāzi, Q. (2004). *Sharḥ-e Ḥekmat al-Eshrāgh* (A. Norani & M. Mo-haghegh, Eds.). Tehran: Association of Cultural Works and Honors.

Yazdanpanah, S. Y. (2012). *Ḥekmat-e Eshrgh*. Qom: Research Institute of Hawzeh and University & SAMT.