



## The Philosophers Faith's Symbol

In this tractate, Suhrawardi purposes to retrieve the Truth contained in Spiritual Knowledge not by any ordinary knowledge attainment process but through direct experience instead. The possessor of this degree of spiritual development would be able to discern True Reality behind the phenomena. This would also indicate a personal and intimate contact with the Source of All Events\*, the Absolute Being. This is the reason these persons are counted among the ones who assert the existence of only one Creator and that Creation is a consequence of His.

Suhrawardi advises the people not to use the analytical approach to this kind of knowledge, analyzing it by its causes and not by trying to know the Raiser of Causes. These people demonstrate a shallow and a exaggerated intellectual bias and, if they have any success at all, it will give them access to a level of knowledge that is far removed from those who attain the experience of True Reality.

This experience implies a gradual growth in being's quality where one would attain higher spiritual degrees in order to get in touch with the summit of realities, leading to the realization of the Being which is the Raiser of Reality\*\*, called by Suhrawardi as the Necessary Being. This is quite different of the assumptive attitude commonly observed in those who approach spiritual knowledge only by use of the intellectual sphere, or without contemplating the inevitable transformations that occur on this kind of search and only trying to get a kind of status.

It is interesting to observe that this situation described by Suhrawardi, is very similar to one that we can observe nowadays, where a superficial perspective of spiritual knowledge results in a misinterpretation of the process of gaining it, as well as the instruments used. This superficiality characteristic of a human being in contact with ordinary reality.

In recent times Philosophy again does not call for a Knowledge's Search based upon experimentation and the attainment of higher levels of being and, once again, confined itself in crystallized models based on ideas and words but no more taking life experiences in account.

Suhrawardi defines Necessary Being as the unique reality. The Necessary Being is the only being who really IS, in sense that to Him the possibility of "not-being" doesn't exist. Because of this, all realities - whether known or not - have their existence based on Him. Everything that manifests in the universe exist through Him.

The Necessary Being doesn't own his existence to creation or anything else. It's existence is absolute; He precedes creation and does not depend on it and no form of preference or willing can be attributed to Him: "It is his essence that demands and brings fourth the act of existence" and it is his essence that confers existence and reality to all creation.

In this context, the creation may be considered as not-being, because as it has its cause in the Creator; it doesn't exist for itself. The only being extant by itself is the Necessary Being and, all the things that do not have existence can come to exist by Him - and only Him. Suhrawardi points to these categories: the Necessary Being, the being and the not-being, the last one indicating a being that has the potentiality to become a being, considering that the universe's act of being it is based on the Necessary Being.



Suhravardi defines creation as composed by bodies and accidents. The bodies are the substrates of accidents and they differ between each other by the nature of accidents. The bodies come to existence in order to ascertain the manifestation of the accidents. This demonstrates the prior need of a Creator that gives rise to both, because they both need one original principle that occurs before them to enable them to come to existence. In this manner, both of them have their origin in the Necessary Being. If the being of bodies or accidents were the necessary one, they couldn't be not-being and would depend on nothing else but themselves to be.

Things that can not-being and depend on their origins on another principle must necessarily return to it. This would be the real determination of the Creator. It does not matter what creation level is being analyzed, there will be always this "innate feeling present in its essence".

Suhravardi speaks of an intellectual, alive and wise entity, quoting the Prophet: "The first one who God created was the Intelligence". Suhravardi continues: "This Intelligence has three intellectual dimensions: 1) by the contemplation and intellection of its Creator; 2) by the contemplation and intellection of its own being that could be not-being; 3) by the contemplation and intellection of its own essence. As consequence of this contemplation and intellection of its Creator - that represents its higher dimension - a Second Intelligence issues from this entity. Due to its contemplation and intellection of its own being that can not-being - its lower dimension - it gives birth to a sky. Due to its contemplation and intellection of its essence, it gives birth to a Moving Soul (*anima caelestes*) of this sky".

It seems that the first Intelligence exists only to contemplate and to know its own Creator, the Necessary Being. From it are manifested the second Intelligence and the sky; this last one considering this Intelligence as its higher dimension that can direct it to the Creator. This last sky would be the Sphere of the Spheres, upon which rests the first Intelligence, 'face-to-face' with the Necessary Being. From the longing of the first Intelligence in order to be linked again with the Creator, a movement emerges that propels this sky and makes it whirl. And this longing inebriates the second Intelligence, which leads it to the contemplation of its Creator. After that, a third Intelligence, a second sky (when it contemplates its inferior and separated dimension) and the moving soul of this sky (when it contemplates what element in itself is able to approach it to his Creator, or in other words, its own essence) are generated.

In this manner, ten Intelligences and nine celestial spheres are generated. "From the tenth Intelligence", quoting Suhravardi, "proceeds the world of elements and human souls. It is called Shapes Donator. The Prophets call him Holy Spirit and Gabriel."

The creation in nothing reduces (or diminishes) the Creator who, in himself, is the One and Eternal. Due to this, it is said in the Koran that, "He didn't create neither was created". The very creation is part of Him or rather, happens inside Him. In this sense, in relation to His Essence that permeates the creative act there is no separation, spatial or temporal. There isn't a 'place' where He is not or a 'moment' when He doesn't manifest himself. But, concerning the apparent form of things and their existence, there must exist the concepts of time and space. If these forms were maintained as an end in themselves, without any correspondence with essence, their existence would end.



Suhravardi points out that creation is eternal due to its correspondence with the Creator. He advises that, truly, what is eternal is the creative act itself, through which the Creator allows the emanation of his own essence. Thus, one must take care not to restrict creation only to that which could be perceived of it, or to its apparent manifestation.

Besides, we cannot consider creation as a result of deliberate act of God's willing for fulfilling an interesting goal. Neither creation has the function to satisfy any necessity or will of the Creator, because He is the Self-Subsistence. Suhravardi says that it is His essence that demands the creative act and it brings forth this act. The creation is a complementary act and it is eternal because it occurs at each moment, eternally. God's willing is unique and independent of any event; it manifests itself due to its attributes and not by any kind of necessity. In this manner, each form that we can observe in creation is nothing more than the will manifestation of the Creator himself. And this will which brings the creative act is eternal and unique and completely independent of the observed forms' differentiation as well as of any kind of necessity that issues from them.

Suhravardi points that man is the noblest of terrestrial beings and that he has a Thinking Soul. By this term, he is indicating a monadic and intellective essence. This soul is intellective because it is in correspondence with the Intelligence. It is monadic because as essence, it is unique and indivisible. This entity, due to its resemblance with God, remains eternally linked with the Creator. It doesn't exist in the man's physical body because then it would be unable to realize the Creator unity. It is the Thinking Soul that allows man to return to unity and it is for this reason that it is also called Holy Spirit. However, it has a connection with the body that keeps man alive. This connection occurs through the 'pneuma vital' - a volatile and subtle body which exists in the interior of the material man's body.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, the celestial spheres maintain their circular movement; and man, participating in this movement, has the possibility to return to the Creator - that would be impossible if this movement were linear.

When the human being is able to come to existence, it is the Shapes Donator ( Gabriel or Angel-Holy-Spirit) that confers him the Thinking Soul, the structure that gives man the knowledge of his origin and the longing to return to it. Thus, the Shapes Donator has the determination of allowing man to be in alignment with the same intention of the spheres upon him. This determination offers him the capacity to accomplish in an adequate manner a creative act which was sent forth by the Creator.

In this manner, man's thought became equated with the superior spheres, due to the fact that this longing for return to the One is the same in these levels.

As stated, the Shapes Donator issues forth from the Tenth Sphere. The celestial spheres are perpetual, because their original reason also are. However, they present a beginning into the time determined by Creator himself. Thus, everything that is about to come to existence presents a beginning into the time. And the Shapes Donator is the responsible, not for determination, but for the materialization of this determination.

Suhravardi points to the three universes as the World of Intelligence (Angeli intellectualis) or the world of Jabarut; World of Souls (Angeli caelestis) or the world of



Malakut and the world of Molk ('alam al-shahada) or the world of sensible phenomena, the material realm. It is in the world of Molk that we will find life manifestations, the realms of Nature and matter. Matter is the substance that embodies the four elements' shape: Fire, Water, Air and Earth. The elements here seem to refer to the states that matter can present.

Suhravardi points "Fire stays at an extreme distance from center (or from Earth) while Earth stays at an extreme distance from periphery (or from the Sphere of Spheres)." It is from a mixture of these four elements that the three realms emerge: mineral, vegetal and animal, in crescent levels of complexity and perfection. Vegetal prevails over mineral due to its capacities basically related to nutrition and reproduction. Animal prevails over vegetal due to perceptual faculty.

There are five external senses and five internal. External senses refer to five basic senses and the internal, in man, will be discussed later.

As our body, celestial spheres have, each one, a Thinking Soul (anima celestis). Eternally nostalgic and fallen in love with the Intelligence from which it had been created, this Soul confers a circular movement to the sky, or celestial bodies, "inside the ecstasies of love and the delights that follow each other". This ecstasy is the same found on spiritual searchers and it is what impels them into their mystical journey. Suhravardi points that to each Soul there is a sky and due to the skies movements, Good remains existing in the universe. Good mustn't be understood as something opposed to evil, but as a basic emanation that issues directly from Creator and confers to every being the possibility of Return. Therefore, it doesn't absolutely relate to any kind of personal interpretation of events or egoic needs.

The soul of the man can survive after death only if he reaches the necessary states (levels of being) that enable him to recognize spiritual realities, and thus coming to know God and his angels. Also it is implied that this soul has been marked by this knowledge, that is, recovered by the perfection which is the limit and the goal of its development. In this case, soul "experiences kindness that no eye has ever saw, no ear has ever heard, and that have never been shown themselves to the human heart". If instead the Soul hasn't attained these lofty states, it will kept ignorant of the eternal and spiritual realities. Those things that during lifetime have kept the Soul isolated from the knowledge of God' search will strengthen after death, keeping it even more blinded to these realities. Greed and attachment will remain; they will be a source of pain and will act as veils that separate the Soul from Creator. Suhravardi mentions Koran to elucidate this concept: "what they have acquired took possession of their hearts".

Suhravardi writes that the existence of the Prophets is due to Divine Willing. They are always in accordance with the needs of reality or the necessities of this world of phenomena. But their main function is to remember humankind of the existence of the "other world" the true that will reveal itself to man when his existence comes to an end, also to remind man of potentialities that can be accomplished now and not only after this life, and of the real goal of humankind when it will be put in front of the Creator; things that men always forget and neglect in their attachment with this "world". With this purpose, prophets established rules and limits, explaining responsibilities and implications of our postures in front of these two dimensions, mundane and spiritual, trying to direct humankind to a higher level of consciousness.



To do this, they received knowledge, power and all the virtues from the Holy Spirit, the Thinking Soul with whom they are in communion, and as consequence they have power upon this world and are superior to their contemporaries. This developed level and quality of being is the also called the level of the Friends of God, those submissive and lovers only of His Will; but the Prophets has one more degree because "they were congregated in order to reform habits and to transmit the message", as Suhravardi concluded.

In their return journey, the true mystics practice many austerities in order to liberate themselves of the restrictive dominion of the imperfect nature of human being and to be able to reach higher spiritual realities. They elevate themselves in states that put them in conformity to subtle the realities that they aim to realize and understand. With this, they are able to receive the spiritual Lights. These Lights have a genuine affinity for the being states that are accomplished by the mystic and begin to make a permanent dwell in the Souls of these mystics, where they can establish and manifest themselves.

So the mystic's soul is transformed by this dwelling or temple, and it receives the name of Sakina. A privilege is conceded to these mystics, that is, to contemplate the wonders of spiritual realities and to extract a deep knowledge through uniting with them. Suhravardi refers to these mystics as following: "Blessed those who their souls did reach this degree that is the kindness of this ephemeral world and will be their joy in the eternal world".

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