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Al-Suhrawardī's *Philosophy of Illumination* and al-Ghazālī

Abstract: I argue that the thought of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191), the founder of the so-called “Illuminationist” (*ishrāqī*) current in Arabo-Persian philosophy, displays significant influences by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), known both for his sustained criticism of Arabic Peripateticism and his selective appropriation thereof. The first part of the article shows that the conceptual groundwork of al-Suhrawardī's ontology of light is in important respects derived from al-Ghazālī's treatise *The Niche of Lights*. The second part contends that al-Suhrawardī's handling of a crucial theological issue – namely, that of God's knowledge of particulars – can also be read as drawing on and engaging with al-Ghazālī. I conclude with a general characterisation of both thinkers.

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1 Introduction

Among students of the general history of philosophy, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) is best known for his *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifah*), a brilliant and relentless critique of the Neoplatonising Aristotelianism of al-Fārābī (d. 950) and, above all, Avicenna (d. 1037). Although al-Ghazālī rejects three doctrines of the Arabic Peripatetics (whom he summarily calls “the *falāsifah*”, “the philosophers”) as incompatible with Islam, the main thrust of his attack is not to refute the *falāsifah*'s beliefs as such but to show that their views do not rest on compelling arguments: his aim is to debunk the *falāsifah*'s claim to base their understanding of God, man, and the cosmos on incontrovertible demonstrative proof (*burhān = apodeixis*).¹ Philosophical rationalism having thus been decisively humbled, al-Ghazālī insists on the inferiority of discursive reasoning to an inspirational “unveiling” (*kashf, mukāshafah*) attainable by means of a Sufi-style purification of the human heart.² In fleshing out the content of such supra-philosophical inspirations, however, al-Ghazālī exhibits a marked propensity to surreptitiously “despoil” or “recycle” important elements of Avicenna's philosophical

¹ On the historical context, objective, and content of al-Ghazālī's *Incoherence* see Griffel 2009, 97–101, and Griffel 2013, 295–298.

² On the intuitive or non-discursive character of al-Ghazālī's highest mode of cognition and its Avicennian origin see Sinai 2003, 16–27, and Treiger 2012, 48–63, 79 f. (on the latter issue, see already Davidson 1992, 139 f.). For further remarks on al-Ghazālī's understanding of the relationship between discursive and supra-discursive knowledge see the conclusion.

system.³ While the ultimate consistency of al-Ghazālī's thought is debatable, his works undoubtedly had a profound impact on twelfth-century Islamic intellectual history.⁴ It is therefore not surprising that, as this article will argue, the thought of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (put to death 1191 in Aleppo), the founder of the so-called "Illuminationist" (*ishrāqī*) current in Arabo-Persian philosophy, is also marked by considerable Ghazālian influences.⁵

Some broad affinities between the two thinkers are readily apparent.⁶ Firstly, a significant part of al-Suhrawardī's most important work, the *Philosophy of Illumination* (*Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*), engages in a critical scrutiny of elements of Avicenna's philosophical system and thus places itself in a line of works inaugurated by al-Ghazālī's *Incoherence* and continuing with similar critiques authored by the Mu'tazilite theologian Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 1144),⁷ the Ash'arite al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153),⁸ and the Jewish convert to Islam Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. c. 1165).⁹ Secondly, al-Suhrawardī's interest in intuitive cognition and in incorporating ostensibly mystical motives into his philosophy also harks back to al-Ghazālī.¹⁰ I shall return to both issues in the conclusion of this article. Prior to that, I shall attempt to show that, quite apart from such broad resemblances, al-Suhrawardī also appropriates a number of very specific Ghazālian concepts and formulations and accords them a crucial function in his own philosophical project.¹¹

2 Light Ontology in al-Suhrawardī and al-Ghazālī

³ Treiger 2012, 6, 103 f.; Sinai 2003, 50. Al-Akiti 2009, 53 n. 6, and 62 n. 25, prefers to speak of al-Ghazālī's "appropriation" and "naturalization" of Avicennian philosophy. That al-Ghazālī's ethics and also his psychology are heavily indebted to the Arabic philosophical tradition is established in Madelung 1974 and Janssens 2008, while Frank 1992 (cf. Frank 1994 and the criticism in Dallal 2002) and Davidson 1992, 129–144, detect significant borrowings from Avicennian cosmology (see now also Griffel 2009). Al-Ghazālī's appropriation of Avicenna's understanding of prophecy is treated in al-Akiti 2004 and Griffel 2004. The suspicion that al-Ghazālī's thought is in fact much closer to the system of Avicenna than the *Incoherence* and al-Ghazālī's autobiography would lead one to believe is not novel: at the end of his life, al-Ghazālī himself was already accused of holding heterodox philosophical doctrines (Griffel 2009, 54 f.; Treiger 2012, 96–101) and Averroes understood al-Ghazālī's treatise *The Niche of Lights* (to be discussed in some detail below) to espouse emanationism, a signature tenet of al-Fārābī and Avicenna (Gardner 1914, 133 f.; Davidson 1992, 130).

⁴ Griffel 2009, 61–95.

⁵ For an overview of al-Suhrawardī's philosophy see Walbridge 2005a and Sinai 2011, 225–297.

⁶ For a preliminary assessment of the relationship between al-Ghazālī and al-Suhrawardī see Sinai 2011, 252–265.

⁷ Madelung 2007.

⁸ Madelung/Mayer 2001.

⁹ See Pines 1979 and now Griffel 2011a. On parallels between al-Suhrawardī and Abū l-Barakāt see Sinai 2011, 254 n. 80, with further references.

¹⁰ See Sinai 2011, 255–265.

¹¹ For my understanding of al-Suhrawardī as a genuine philosopher (albeit a philosopher who was highly interested in intuitive cognition and therefore felt able to invoke Sufi concepts and authorities), see Sinai 2011, 225–231 and 267–275, with references to the relevant scholarly literature.

Following the critical deconstruction of certain aspects of Avicennian logic, physics, and metaphysics in the first part of the *Philosophy of Illumination*, the book's second part begins by sketching an ontology whose lynchpin is the notion of light or luminosity.¹² Henry Corbin, convinced of a deep continuity between pre-Islamic Iranian culture and a specifically "Iranian Islam", has linked the fundamental role in which al-Suhrawardī casts the concept of light to the Zoroastrian notion of a royal radiance.¹³ However, a much more proximate predecessor for al-Suhrawardī's understanding of light consists in al-Ghazālī's treatise *The Niche of Lights* (*Mishkāt al-anwār*). Although Herbert Davidson, Roxanne Marcotte, and Rüdiger Arnzen have all made passing remarks that connect or contrast al-Suhrawardī's light ontology with this text, a detailed analytic comparison of the two has not yet been undertaken (but note that Arnzen has announced his intention to address the issue in a forthcoming publication).¹⁴

To be sure, light imagery also appears elsewhere in medieval Arabo-Persian literature prior to al-Suhrawardī. It features, for example, in the *Theology of Aristotle*, an Arabic adaptation of Plotin's *Enneads* with which the *Philosophy of Illumination* displays a number of specific overlaps.¹⁵ Light imagery is also present in the Islamic canon, e.g., in the Qur'an's famous 'Light Verse' (surah 24:35)¹⁶ and in an alleged utterance by the prophet Muhammad referring to God's seventy veils of light and darkness.¹⁷ The ninth-century mystic Sahl al-Tustarī reportedly described all creatures as having been fashioned from the primordial light of Muhammad, which God had brought forth from His own light.¹⁸ Another early Islamic mystic, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, also makes use of light motifs.¹⁹ Finally, al-Ghazālī himself employs light symbolism in other works than the *Niche*, such as his wide-ranging summa of Islamic piety, the *Revival of the Sciences of Religion* (*Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*).²⁰ Given this wider occurrence of light imagery in writings from the medieval Islamic world, my argument will obviously have to meet the

¹² I am using the term "ontology" in the general sense of a philosophical account of the ultimate constituents of reality. As we shall see below, al-Suhrawardī employs the concept of light, not that of being, as the conceptual foundation of this account, but I find it unnecessarily extravagant to speak of his "photology" rather than his "ontology".

¹³ Corbin 1971, 81–96.

¹⁴ Davidson 1992, 135, 164, 170; Marcotte 2007 (section 4.2); Arnzen 2011, 122; Sinai 2011, 284 f.

¹⁵ See Arnzen 2011, 119–150 and Sinai 2011, commentary on §§ 4, 94, 109, 129 and 171.

¹⁶ The passage – from which al-Ghazālī's *Niche of Lights* derives its title – runs as follows (translation in Jones 2007, slightly modified): "God is the light of the heavens and the earth. His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp – the lamp in a glass, and the glass like a brilliant star – lit from a blessed tree, an olive-tree neither from the East nor from the West, whose oil almost glows, even though no fire has touched it – light upon light. God guides to His light those whom He wishes; and God coins parables for the people. God is aware of everything."

¹⁷ "God has seventy veils of light and darkness. Were He to lift them, the glory of His face would burn up everyone whom His sight beheld (alternatively: whose sight beheld Him)" (MA, 39, ll. 12 f. = introduction, § 2; also cited, with a slight variation, in ḤI, § 171 = 162, l. 11 – 163, l. 1). See Sinai 2011, 397 f., for further references.

¹⁸ Karamustafa 2007, 42; Katz 2007, 12–15.

¹⁹ Karamustafa 2007, 45, 47; Lazarus-Yafeh 1975, 268–277.

²⁰ On al-Ghazālī's use of light motifs see Lazarus-Yafeh 1975, 264–348. On the *Revival* see now Garden 2014.

challenge of establishing fairly specific links between the *Philosophy of Illumination* and the *Niche of Lights*. I shall begin with a detailed presentation of al-Suhrawardī's ontology of light before juxtaposing it with the *Niche*. In order to avoid overburdening this article, I shall dispense myself from reviewing the relatively extensive secondary literature on this latter work; instead, it will be woven into the discussion where relevant.²¹ I should nevertheless highlight already at this point that I accept the now dominant view that the entire treatise can safely be attributed to al-Ghazālī.²²

2.1 Al-Suhrawardī on Light

Not unlike the beginning of Spinoza's *Ethics*, the second part of the *Philosophy of Illumination* opens with a series of definitions. Crucially, al-Suhrawardī does not equate "light" with visual light but employs the term as a general stand-in for what is maximally "manifest" (*zāhir*).²³ Any entity, he declares, is either "essentially light and brightness" (*nūrun wa-ḍaw'un fī ḥaqīqati nafsīhi*) or not.²⁴ Non-luminous or "dark" entities therefore do not form a positive contrary of light but are conceived in privative terms, as entities lacking in (or perhaps lying below a certain threshold of) luminosity: "darkness is simply an expression for the lack of light (*'adam al-nūr*)".²⁵ By combining this distinction between the luminous and the non-luminous – or the manifest and the non-manifest – with the Aristotelian-sounding distinction between that which is a "state" (*hay'ah*) of something else and that which is not,²⁶ § 109 of the *Philosophy of*

²¹ For a brief overview of previous scholarship see Griffel 2011b and David Buchman's remarks in al-Ghazālī 1998, xxvii–xxxii.

²² Against Watt 1949, who calls into doubt the authenticity of the third chapter of the *Niche*, see Davidson 1992, 134 f., 143; Treiger 2007, 23 n. 49; Griffel 2009, 246; Griffel 2011b, 19. Landolt 1991 likewise undermines Watt's view (see esp. Landolt 1991, 21–31) but concedes "that the authenticity-question is not entirely settled" (23, anticipating the detailed discussion of the work's early transmission history at 65–72). In any case, the controversial passage will play virtually no role in my argument.

²³ HI, § 107.

²⁴ HI, § 109 (107, l. 9).

²⁵ HI, § 109 (107, l. 17 – 108, l. 1). It is true that Suhrawardī does occasionally invoke a positive understanding of what constitutes non-luminous substances: bodies are substances that can be located by deixis, he says in HI, § 109, meaning that bodies are substances *located in space*; and bodies are also inherently possessors of quantitative determinations – e.g., they have a certain size, shape, and weight (§ 111); see Walbridge 2005b. Ultimately, however, al-Suhrawardī would probably hold these seemingly positive characteristics of material beings to derive from their fundamental lack of luminosity. – Al-Suhrawardī's privative understanding of material reality does raise problems, though: (i) How could an entity defined simply as lacking in luminosity nevertheless amount to a definite *something* rather than *nothing*? (The answer to this query will probably have to be historical: apparently al-Suhrawardī simply takes for granted the standard Neoplatonic understanding of material reality as a privation of true being.) (ii) As explained further on in the main text, al-Suhrawardī distinguishes between dark (or non-luminous) *substances* and dark (non-luminous) *states*, and he also hints that the distinction between *luminous* substance and states goes back to differences in perfection and intensity. It is far from clear how such a reduction of the distinction between substances and states to qualitative differences might be adapted so as to also yield a distinction between *non-luminous* substances and states: after all, a privation – in this case, the absence of light – does not come in different degrees of intensity.

²⁶ Cf. Aristotle's distinction between that which is "in a substrate" (*en hypokeimenô*) and that which is not (*Categories*, § 2). Al-Suhrawardī's distinction between states and substances is given in HI, § 52 (61, ll. 13–15): a state is something that "inheres in something else in which it is wholly spread out" (*ḥāllan fī*

Illumination derives a fourfold ontological inventory comprising luminous and non-luminous substances as well as luminous and non-luminous states.²⁷ A luminous substance can only possess states that are themselves luminous, while a non-luminous state (e. g., shapes and quantitative determinations such as weight) must have a non-luminous bearer (cf. § 111); however, luminous states – which include, but are not limited to, visual light – can be possessed both by luminous and non-luminous substances. As the second treatise of the second part of the *Philosophy of Illumination* (§§ 135ff.) elaborates in detail, all luminous substances (“pure lights”) and non-luminous substances (“barriers”) ultimately proceed from the uncaused “Light of Lights”, al-Suhrawardī’s official appellation for the deity. While the Neoplatonic notion of emanation was prominently deployed already by al-Suhrawardī’s philosophical predecessors al-Fārābī and Avicenna, these sections of the *Philosophy of Illumination* construct an emanationist hierarchy marked by a far higher – some would say, baroque – degree of complexity.²⁸

As we have seen, al-Suhrawardī’s basic ontological scheme posits that light can have not only accidental but also substantial being. This twofold occurrence of light as a state and as a substance is explicitly singled out for discussion in a passage from the second treatise of the *Philosophy of Illumination*’s second part, where the author has an anonymous opponent demur: “Here [in the material world] light is [invariably] a quality and an accident, so how could it be self-subsistent (*kayfa yaqūmu bi-nafsihi*)? And if some lights were to be not in need of a substrate (*maḥall*), then this would have to hold for all of them [since they all share the nature of luminosity].”²⁹ What underlies this objection is clearly the assumption that luminosity could only have a single ontological modality, as it were: either all luminosity is substantial or all luminosity is accidental; how could it occur sometimes in the one mode, sometimes in the other if all its occurrences share in the same essence of being light? Al-Suhrawardī responds by envisaging light in general as essentially self-subsistent, or as substantial by default, and accordingly conceives of accidental light as *deficient* light, as light whose immanent character has been impaired or weakened to such a degree that it becomes dependent

ghayrihi shā’i’an fihi bi-l-kulliyah), while a substance does not inhere in something else. The immediate philosophical background to al-Suhrawardī’s way of framing the distinction is Avicenna (see Avicenna 2005, 356 = *Shifā’: Ilāhiyyāt*, IX, ch. 7).

²⁷ In ҒI, § 109, al-Suhrawardī designates these four types of entities as (i) “immaterial” or “pure” lights (sg. *al-nūr al-mujarrad*, *al-nūr al-maḥd*), (ii) “accidental lights” (sg. *al-nūr al-‘arīḍ*), (iii) “dark substances” (sg. *al-jawhar al-ghāsiq*) or “barriers” (sg. *barzakh*) and (iv) “dark states” (sg. *al-hay’ah al-zulmāniyyah*). I prefer to speak of luminous and non-luminous states and substances in order to bring out the inherent symmetry of the scheme. As I argue in “Al-Suhrawardī on Mirror Vision and Suspended Images (*muthul mu’allaqa*)” (forthcoming in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*), this fourfold inventory should be expanded by a fifth class, self-subsistent images, which al-Suhrawardī also recognises as ontologically basic.

²⁸ This complexity is due both to the great number of luminous substances that al-Suhrawardī posits and to the fact that he countenances “horizontal” lights, i.e., lights of an equal rank of ontological perfection. For a summary overview of al-Suhrawardī’s cosmology with references see Sinai 2011, 288–292.

²⁹ ҒI, § 174 (167, ll. 14 f.).

on something else as its bearer.³⁰ By way of a heuristic approximation, we might think of a stunted plant that, due to some impairment, ceases to perform some of the processes and functions that would normally be characteristic for a being of its kind. The twofold occurrence of luminosity as a substance and as a state can thus be explained as rooted in differences of perfection (*kamāl*) and intensity (*shiddah*).³¹ To be sure, this does not yet provide a compelling answer to the question why, given that the material world is only populated by accidental light, one should at all suppose that there is also a self-subsistent variety of light. It is probable (although not supported by an explicit statement in the passage at hand) that al-Suhrawardī believed that accidental luminosity, due to its constituting an inherently deficient mode of luminosity, simply required the existence of a non-deficient mode of luminosity, namely, substantial luminosity.³²

What precisely does al-Suhrawardī mean to assert by saying that certain substances and states are “lights” or possess maximal manifestness? In view of his claim, at the very beginning of the *Philosophy of Illumination*’s second part, that “there is nothing that is less in need of a definition” than light (§ 107), an answer to this question could not take the form of a proper definition: for such a definition, if it were to be non-circular, would have to elucidate the concept of light by recourse to concepts that are intelligible independently of the notion of light and epistemologically more basic (“more manifest”) than it, the possibility of which § 107 flatly denies. Rather, al-Suhrawardī attributes to all conscious subjects an original grasp of the nature of light: “If there is anything in existence that does not require a definition or explanation it is that which is manifest, and nothing is more manifest than light.” (§ 107) Incidentally, al-Suhrawardī here characterises the notion of luminosity in much the same terms in which Avicenna speaks about the notions of existence, thingness, and necessity.³³ This illustrates that the *Philosophy of Illumination* proposes to employ luminosity, rather than existence, as its ontological lynchpin.

Despite the fact that light is not amenable to a proper definition, the question what light is does receive substantial clarification in the sequence of sections §§ 114–

³⁰ ḤI, § 174 (167, l. 15 – 168, l. 1): “the self-sufficiency (*istighnā*) of light is due to its perfection, and its perfection is due to its substance, whereas its utmost deficiency consists in being an accident (*al-‘arāḍiyyah*) and being related to a substrate.”

³¹ ḤI, § 174 (168, l. 3).

³² Such a reasoning could be viewed as an application of the “Principle of Nobler Contingency” (*qā‘idat al-‘imkān al-ashraf*), which ḤI, § 164 (154, ll. 5 f.) presents as one of the “principles of Illuminationism”: “if a baser contingent exists, a nobler contingent must already have existed”. Of course, any attempt to spell out an argument along the lines intimated above would have to avoid the obvious objection that one could similarly argue for the existence of, say, substantial redness: accidental redness being an inherently deficient mode of redness, must we therefore suppose that there is also substantial redness – i.e., substances that are red not by virtue of possessing some state or accident but are red (and only red) by virtue of their essence?

³³ Avicenna 2005, 22 (= *Shifā’*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, I, ch. 5): “We say that meanings of ‘existent’, ‘thing’, and ‘necessary’ are impressed in the soul in a primary way. Bringing about this impression does not require better known things.”

120. Al-Suhrawardī's first point, made in § 114, is that any entity that apprehends (*adraka*) its self cannot be a state, whether luminous or non-luminous, nor a body, but must be a pure light; like Avicenna, he thus espouses the Cartesian assumption that making philosophical sense of consciousness requires a substance dualism. The passage entails that luminous substances are more than just maximally transparent objects of apprehension, which is how al-Suhrawardī might well have been understood so far; rather, they are identical with the self-conscious subjects whose existence he presupposes as a given. Like Avicenna, al-Suhrawardī holds that their self-awareness is the basis for whatever awareness they may have of anything else: "that which does not have awareness of its self is not aware of another (*fa-innahu lā yash'uru bi-ghayrihi man lā shu'ūra lahu bi-dhātihī*)".³⁴ Al-Suhrawardī also agrees with Avicenna that self-awareness cannot be mediated by a mental representation of one's self (§ 115) and that it does not constitute an additional trait over and above, or something "superadded" (*zā'id*) to, the essential nature of the self in question (§§ 116–118).³⁵ To be self-manifest is just what manifest substances *are*.

We saw above that al-Suhrawardī virtually sets up the concept of luminosity as a substitute for Avicenna's notion of existence as the most primary human intelligible. The preceding paragraph has made it clear that luminous substances are, to all intents and purposes, immaterial intellects of the sort also posited by Avicenna. What al-Suhrawardī is trying to do, then, is to replace the two separate Avicennian concepts of existence and intelligence with a unitary concept of luminosity that would combine the inferential roles of both. While al-Suhrawardī does not hesitate to appeal to supra-rational inspiration as the ultimate source of his light ontology, this fusion of two originally distinct philosophical concepts is meant to deliver tangible theoretical benefits. For one, al-Suhrawardī's employment of luminosity as the conceptual groundwork of his ontology arguably coheres much better with his Neoplatonically inspired invocation of emanative causality – a type of causality often illustrated by the radiation of light from its source – than the Peripatetic characterisation of immaterial existents as intellects. In addition, al-Suhrawardī also complains that Avicenna has no means of satisfactorily explaining *why* the Necessary Existent (as Avicenna calls the First Cause) and the string of immaterial beings caused by it should be intellects at all. Avicenna's answer has recourse to their immateriality: an entity that is entirely form and possesses no underlying matter must perforce be an actual intellect, Avicenna maintains.³⁶ Al-Suhrawardī deems such an explanation by privation (i.e., lack of matter)

³⁴ HI, § 121 (117, l. 15). On Avicenna's understanding of self-awareness see Black 2008.

³⁵ Marcotte 2004; Eichner 2011; Sinai 2011, 261–265 and 287.

³⁶ "The Necessary Existent is pure intellect because it is an essence (*dhāt*) that is separated from matter in every respect. You know that the cause of a thing's not intellecting (*an lā ya'qila l-shay'u*) is matter and what pertains to it, not [the thing's] existence. As for formal existence [i.e., the existence of something that is purely form, without any material substratum], it is intellectual existence; and this is the existence through which, if it comes to reside in a thing, the thing comes to possess intellect. That which bears the possibility of attaining it [i.e., a purely formal mode of existence] is [merely] a potential intellect, and that which attains it after [having been in] potentiality is an actual intellect, by way of fulfilment. That for

to be insufficient (see §§ 119 f. and 161 f.),³⁷ and instead ascribes the fact that immaterial lights are self-conscious subjects to their essential manifestness, i.e., to what they are in and of themselves.

It is after having broached the self-consciousness of luminous substances that al-Suhrawardī puts forward, in § 117, a formulaic account of the nature of light in general that he calls a “rule” (*dābit*). In view of the indefinability of light that is asserted in § 107, this “rule” is best viewed as the conceptual explication of a reality that, according to al-Suhrawardī, is intuitively grasped by all conscious subjects. The formula states “that light is that which is essentially manifest and which through its self renders other things manifest” (*anna l-nūra huwa l-zāhiru fī ḥaqīqati nafsihi wa-l-muḥirū li-ghayrihi bi-dhātihī*).³⁸ Being light, whether a substantial or an accidental one, thus comprises the following pair of features:

(M1) Luminous entities are essentially manifest – i.e., they are in and of themselves fit to be objects of apprehension.

(M2) Luminous entities make other entities manifest – i.e., they render non-luminous entities, which in and of themselves are not fit to be apprehended, objects of apprehension.

I shall comment on these two principles in reverse order. (M2) is obviously meant to capture the intuition that light is a source of illumination. Merely equating light with what is maximally manifest, as § 107 might be taken to imply, would not yield a satisfactory explication of the notion of light: light is not only something that can itself be seen, but also an indispensable requirement for seeing anything at all. To be luminous is not just to be manifest, but also to make manifest. (M2) therefore underwrites the possibility of a cognition not only of luminous but also of non-luminous – i.e., material – entities, on condition that these are “rendered manifest” by luminous entities in the same way in which material bodies are rendered visible by visual light. Without (M2), al-Suhrawardī’s ontology, including as it does non-luminous substances

which it [namely, purely formal existence] constitutes its very essence (*alladhī huwa lahu dhātuhu*) is essentially intellect. Likewise, it [the Necessary Existent] is a pure object of intellection (*ma‘qūl*), because that which prevents a thing from being an object of intellection is its being in matter and what pertains to it.” (Avicenna 2005, 284 f. = *Shifā’*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, VIII, ch. 6; Marmura’s translation modified) For a parallel statement from Avicenna’s *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbihāt* see Avicenna 1957–1960, vol. 3, 53 = IV, ch. 28). – It is admittedly open to debate how *y-‘q-l* towards the beginning of the above quotation is to be vocalised. Pace Marmura, who reads *yu‘qala* in the passive instead of *ya‘qila*, I am fairly confident that the context suggests the active reading, since the claim that there is nothing to prevent the Necessary Existent from *being intellected* is explicitly treated at the end of the quotation.

³⁷ For example, ḤI, § 119 objects that if one were to posit a taste that is immaterial, it would merely be “taste in/to itself” (*li-nafsihi*); only immaterial light would be “manifest to itself” (*zāhir li-nafsihi*), i.e., would apprehend itself. Thus, contrary to the Peripatetics (viz., Avicenna), immateriality (*tajarrud*) is not sufficient for self-awareness (*fī kawn al-shay’ shā‘iran bi-nafsihi*); it is only in the case of light that immateriality entails self-awareness. The latter must therefore first and foremost be due to the nature of light rather than to the absence of matter.

³⁸ ḤI, § 117 (113, ll. 6 f.).

and states, would remain unhinged from his epistemology, anchored as it is in the concept of luminosity. How precisely do luminous substances and states manage to manifest non-luminous entities? As § 122 states, accidental lights make manifest their substrate or locus of inherence (*maḥall*): it is when a luminous state comes to inhere in a body with its various material determinations (size, shape, weight etc.) that the body, as determined by these non-luminous states, becomes manifest to cognising subjects. As for substantial lights, they manifest non-luminous entities insofar as all accidental lights, or luminous states, are ultimately emitted from substantial lights.³⁹ Consequently, (M2) is not to be understood in the sense that luminous substances and luminous accidents both operate directly on non-luminous beings; rather, luminous substances manifest non-luminous entities *by means* of luminous accidents.

In making sense of (M1), too, it will be necessary to take into account al-Suhrawardī's conscientious distinction between luminous substances and luminous accidents. For he has already shown, in § 114, that luminous substances, and only these, are self-apprehending subjects:

(M1a) Luminous substances are manifest not only to other entities but also self-manifest.

By contrast, luminous states are *not* self-apprehending subjects but only objects of apprehension:

(M1b) Luminous states are manifest only to other entities, not self-manifest.

The fact that al-Suhrawardī obviously understands the first half of his “rule” about the nature of light – namely, that light is “that which is essentially manifest” – to comprise both (M1a) and (M1b) does not imply that he thinks that one could somehow reason one's way from something's being a maximally transparent object of consciousness to its being a conscious subject. Nor does he supply an argument that would lead one from the fact that luminous substances and states are manifest, whether to themselves or to some other subject, to their ability to render manifest other entities – i.e., from (M1) to (M2). All three characteristics of luminous substances – that they are self-manifest both to themselves, manifest to other things, and render manifest non-luminous beings – are conceptually coeval in the sense that they articulate different aspects of a unitary notion

³⁹ It must be because accidental lights proceed from substantial lights that al-Suhrawardī considers them to be weaker than the latter; see HI, § 174: “Deficiency in luminosity reaches its utmost degree in that which is not self-subsistent but is merely a state in something else”, i.e., accidental light. – Al-Suhrawardī obviously models his understanding of sense perception in general on his analysis of vision (an approach also followed by Avicenna, see McGinnis 2010, 104). As a result, his analysis commits him to the position that non-visual perception – for example, hearing – also requires the presence of luminous states, without which the object of perception could not become manifest to the perceiver. Obviously, the luminous states involved in aural perception would have to be of a different kind than visual light: one can hear perfectly well in the dark. Al-Suhrawardī does not, as far as I can see, elaborate on the matter; it constitutes one of the many loose ends of the *Philosophy of Illumination*.

of manifestness in which al-Suhrawardī proposes to ground both the cognisability of objects of consciousness as well as the phenomenon of consciousness itself.

2.2 Al-Ghazālī on Light

I shall now go on to claim that the three characteristics that have just been found to constitute the backbone of al-Suhrawardī's understanding of luminosity are likely to have been inspired by the first chapter of al-Ghazālī's *Niche of Lights*. As its heading announces, the remit of the chapter consists in demonstrating that "the real light is God, may He be exalted, and that [applying] the expression 'light' to anything else is purely metaphorical and has no reality".⁴⁰ Al-Ghazālī here undertakes to provide an introductory delineation of the nature of light, which is then followed, in the second and third chapters, by interpretations of Qur'an 24:35 and of Muhammad's alleged statement about God's seventy veils of light and darkness.

Al-Ghazālī initially explains that light "points to manifestness (*zuhūr*)", which is said to be a relative concept (*amr idāfi*) since it implies a relation to acts of apprehension (*idrākāt*): to be manifest is to be manifest *to someone*. Al-Ghazālī then goes about unpacking this notion of manifestness by taking as his point of departure the sense of vision, commonly regarded as the strongest and most evident mode of apprehension.⁴¹ Objects of vision, he asserts, can be subdivided into three classes:

- (1) "that which cannot be seen by virtue of itself, such as dark bodies" (*mā lā yubṣaru bi-nafsihi ka-l-ajsāmi l-muzlimah*);
- (2) "that which can be seen by virtue of itself but by virtue of which nothing else can be seen" (*mā yubṣaru bi-nafsihi wa-lā yubṣaru bihi ghayruhu*), e. g. the stars or glowing coals; and
- (3) "that which can be seen by virtue of itself, and by virtue of which other things can be seen, too" (*mā yubṣaru bi-nafsihi wa-yubṣaru bihi ayḍan ghayruhu*).⁴²

It is this third category that is commonly called light. Hence, al-Ghazālī, like al-Suhrawardī, extracts two constitutive features from our prephilosophical understanding of light: light *is* visible and *makes* visible.⁴³

After having isolated these two core aspects, al-Ghazālī proceeds to successively emancipate the skeletal notion of light thus arrived at from its empirical point of departure. He first establishes that the "seeing light" (*al-nūr al-bāṣir*) – i.e., the eye – is more appropriately called "light" than the "seen light" (*al-nūr al-mubṣar*), since without

⁴⁰ MA, 41, ll. 2 f. (title of ch. 1).

⁴¹ MA, 41, ll. 9–12 (ch. 1, § 2).

⁴² MA, 41, l. 13 – 42, l. 2 (ch. 1, § 3).

⁴³ MA, 42, ll. 3–8 (ch. 1, §§ 4 f.).

the apprehending subject there would be no act of apprehension.⁴⁴ This is a crucial step, since it affirms that *apprehending* something manifest amounts to a higher mode of luminosity or manifestness than merely *being* manifest. Luminosity thus begins to be tied to consciousness. Al-Ghazālī’s next move consists in pointing out the various imperfections that beset the sense of sight, in order to argue that the intellect (*‘aql*) more completely measures up to the concept of light than even the eye.⁴⁵ In particular, al-Ghazālī highlights that the eye is not capable of seeing itself, whereas the intellect apprehends both other things and itself.⁴⁶ Self-apprehension thus turns out to constitute yet a higher mode of luminosity than merely apprehending some other object. Luminosity in its fullest sense therefore emerges as entailing self-consciousness.

On the basis of this equation of true light with intellect, the first chapter of the *Niche* then goes on to sketch a multi-tiered cosmology comprising a “dark” (*ẓulmānī*) and a “luminous” – or a material and an immaterial – “world”.⁴⁷ At the top of this cosmic hierarchy sits God, who is called the “Light of Lights” (*nūr al-anwār*)⁴⁸ and is described as constituting their “first source” (*al-manba‘ al-awwal*).⁴⁹ Although there is no scholarly consensus on the issue, I share Averroes’s (d. 1198) sense that the general picture presented by the *Niche* is patently an emanationist one.⁵⁰ For instance, when al-Ghazālī says that the cosmic hierarchy of lights “ascends to a first source [...], and from it all the lights shine forth (*tushriqu*) in their order”, it appears extremely difficult to me to construe this in any other sense than as asserting that all lights – and ultimately all dark entities as well – proceed or emanate from God,⁵¹ even though al-Ghazālī “avoids stating explicitly that God emanated the universe”.⁵² This cosmology then permits him to

⁴⁴ “The seeing spirit is the apprehending subject, and it is through it that the act of apprehension takes place” (*anna l-rūḥa l-bāṣirata hiya al-mudrikatu wa-bihā l-idrāku*) (MA, 42, l. 10–16, citing l. 14; ch. 1, § 6).

⁴⁵ See the summary in MA, 48, ll. 6–8 (ch. 1, § 22).

⁴⁶ MA, 43, ll. 8 f. (ch. 1, § 9): it is an imperfection of the eye that it sees other things while not seeing itself; MA, 44, ll. 2ff. (ch. 1, § 11): the intellect apprehends not only other things but itself as well, in the form of a potentially infinite iteration of propositional attitudes: when I know that I know that p, I know that I know that I know that p, etc.

⁴⁷ MA, 50, ll. 7 f. (ch. 1, § 28).

⁴⁸ MA, 60, l. 6 (ch. 1, § 52).

⁴⁹ MA, 53, l. 3 (ch. 1, § 35); MA, 53, l. 15 (ch. 1, § 36); MA, 54, l. 2 (ch. 1, § 37); MA, 60, l. 6 (ch. 1, § 52).

⁵⁰ For Averroes’s statement see Gairdner 1914, 133 f.

⁵¹ Already Gairdner 1914, 138–141, observes that the *Niche* occasionally describes the diffusion of light with the verb *fāḍa*, commonly used by the Arabic Peripatetics to express the Plotinian notion of emanation (see MA, 42, l. 3; 51, ultimate line; 60, ll. 2 f.; 67, l. 16 = ch. 1, §§ 4, 32, 52, and ch. 2, § 11; these occurrences are overlooked in Sinai 2003, 46). Both Gairdner and Lazarus-Yafeh 1975, 307–312, deny that al-Ghazālī’s use of *fāḍa* is sufficient to warrant the ascription of emanationist ideas to him. Yet it is doubtful whether their efforts to neutralise the technical meaning of the verb *fāḍa* are compelling (cf. the sceptical assessment in Griffel 2009, 286; I am particularly sceptical that Gairdner’s construal is tenable for MA, 60, ll. 2 f. = ch. 1, § 52, although this passage does not explicitly involve God). More importantly, one should note that the occasional occurrence of *fāḍa* is not the only support for an emanationist reading of the *Niche* (see, for instance, the designation of the deity as the “first source” of all lights). Davidson 1992, 135 f., likewise concludes that the *Niche* affirms emanationism at least for all beings below the deity.

⁵² Davidson 1992, 135. As also noted by Davidson (see also Lazarus-Yafeh 1975, 307), the *Niche* nevertheless insists that God “created” (*faṭara*) the heavens (MA, 92 = ch. 3, § 31). To be sure, this could simply be an attempt to couch emanationism in traditional language; yet based on a more wide-ranging

conclude, as anticipated by the first chapter's title, that God is more worthy to be called light than anything else that derives its existence from Him.⁵³

The foregoing paraphrase of the first chapter of al-Ghazālī's *Niche* throws into relief multiple parallels to al-Suhrawardī. Both authors conceive of light in terms of manifestness and both characterise the concept of light as implying the double feature of *being* manifest and *making* manifest. It is true that al-Ghazālī, unlike al-Suhrawardī, initially develops his understanding of luminosity with reference to visual light and therefore frequently speaks of light as being "seen" rather than as being "manifest" (although we also saw that the notion of manifestness figures prominently at the beginning of the first chapter of the *Niche*). Whereas al-Suhrawardī from the outset deploys an abstract account of light that transcends the vision of material bodies, al-Ghazālī only develops the latter by means of a gradual didactic stretching of our pre-philosophical notion of light. Nevertheless, al-Ghazālī, too, can concisely refer to light as "that which is manifest and makes manifest" (*al-zāhir al-muḥhir*).⁵⁴ Furthermore, a passage from al-Ghazālī's *Revival of the Sciences of Religion* likewise characterises light as "that which is manifest by itself and renders manifest other things" (*mā huwa ḡāhirun fī nafsihi wa-huwa yuḡhiru [sic] li-ghayrihi*).⁵⁵ Conversely, al-Ghazālī's juxtaposition of "the seeing light" (*al-nūr al-bāṣir*), i.e., the eye, and "the seen light" (*al-nūr al-muḡṣar*) also appears in the *Philosophy of Illumination*.⁵⁶

Al-Suhrawardī and al-Ghazālī thus concur in understanding light as that which is manifest and makes manifest. In addition, both hold that luminosity is most fully exhibited not by maximally transparent *objects* of apprehension but by self-apprehending *subjects*, something that is not immediately obvious from the *ḡāhir-*

study of al-Ghazālī's cosmology, Griffel, too, concludes that "God is *not* the cause of the world but its creator. God is a personal agent who freely chooses and who precedes His creation" (Griffel 2009, 280). Whether and how the *Niche*'s description of God as the "first source" can be reconciled with al-Ghazālī's use of creationist language remains to be seen. It is not impossible that al-Ghazālī viewed God's emanation of the world as in some sense a volitional act, perhaps even as a non-eternal act. It seems that Griffel 2009, 253 inclines in this direction: "the real God does little more than create the one who is obeyed [*al-muṭāʿ*, the highest being below the deity] and continuously emanating being into him."

⁵³ MA, 54 (ch. 1, §§ 37 f.).

⁵⁴ MA, 42, ll. 11 f. (ch. 1, § 6). See also MA, 55, l. 2 (ch. 1, § 40), where the nature of light is summarised as consisting in "being manifest" (*al-zuhūr*) and "making manifest" (*al-iḡhār*).

⁵⁵ Al-Ghazālī 1937–1939, vol. 4, 2617, l. 3 (book 36: *kitāb al-maḡabbah, bayān al-sabab fī quṣūr afhām al-khalq*). The passage discusses two possible reasons for why our intellect might be incapable of apprehending some object: either the object is obscure in itself, or it is of perfect clarity and therefore transcends our weak cognitive faculties – cf. the Aristotelian distinction between that which is "more knowable (*gnōrimoteron*) by us" and that which is "more knowable absolutely (*haplōs*)" (see *Posterior Analytics*, I, § 2, 71b–72a). By way of an example, al-Ghazālī refers to the light of the sun, which he – like al-Suhrawardī – considers to be an accident (*ʿaraḍ*). Since we never perceive the light of the sun in isolation from particular colours, we only become aware of its existence by means of the setting of the sun, which causes the accident of light to depart from the objects of the world. Thus, we only discover light by its absence, "in spite of the fact that light is the most manifest of all perceptible things, for by means of it all other perceptible things are apprehended". Immediately afterwards al-Ghazālī describes the nature of light by the formula "that which is evident in itself and which renders evident other things" and calls God "the most manifest of all things, through whom everything becomes manifest".

⁵⁶ Cf. MA, 42, ll. 15 f. (ch. 1, § 6) and HI, § 145.

muzhir formula as such. As we saw above, al-Suhrawardī understands a luminous substance to be a substance that is manifest to other things and to itself, in addition to rendering other things manifest. My digest of the first chapter of the *Niche* should have made it sufficiently clear that al-Ghazālī shares this view. This becomes particularly evident in the following statement, which can be neatly mapped onto the two features that, according to al-Suhrawardī, define substantial luminosity: “We say: If that which sees (*yubṣiru*) itself and other things [= (M1a)] is more worthy to be called ‘light’, then that which additionally (*ayḍan*) belongs to the class of things through which other things are seen (*mā yubṣaru bihi ghayruhu*) [= (M2)] is even more worthy to be called ‘light’ than something that does not have any effect on others.”⁵⁷

In addition to these specific conceptual convergences further parallels between the *Philosophy of Illumination* and the *Niche of Lights* can be detected. As we have seen, both al-Suhrawardī and al-Ghazālī survey a cosmos populated by a hierarchy of entities that are either “dark” or luminous and gradually ascend to the “Light of Lights” (an expression that, it must be admitted, al-Suhrawardī could also have encountered elsewhere than in the *Niche*⁵⁸). Al-Suhrawardī’s affirmation that the number of the immaterial lights by far surpasses the limited number of immaterial intellects posited by “the Peripatetics” (i.e., al-Fārābī and Avicenna)⁵⁹ echoes al-Ghazālī’s statement that there may be “innumerable levels” of beings between the highest and the lowest one of the “lights of dominion”.⁶⁰ A supplementary link between the *Niche of Lights* and the *Philosophy of Illumination* consists in the fact that al-Suhrawardī quotes not only the Qur’anic Light Verse, treated in the second chapter of the *Niche*, but in its immediate vicinity also cites the prophetic tradition about God’s seventy veils of light and darkness that is exegeted in the *Niche*’s third chapter.⁶¹

Cumulatively, these parallels make it highly probable that al-Suhrawardī knew and used the *Niche of Lights* and that the latter work exerted a formative influence on his signature light ontology. This is not to deny that he harnessed the material provided by al-Ghazālī to his own interests and objectives. Two salient differences spring to mind. Firstly, despite the loose ends and generally somewhat unfinished feel of the *Philosophy*

⁵⁷ MA, 51, ll. 15–17 (ch. 1, § 32). I accept the editor’s addition of *bihi* to the text here in virtue of the clear analogy to MA, 42, l. 1. Buchman’s text implies the reading “that which is seen by something else” (*mā yubṣiruhu ghayruhu*), which strikes me as non-sensical (12, ultimate line) and does not correspond to his own translation (“something that also allows other things to see”).

⁵⁸ It occurs, for instance, in the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (Landolt 2008, 245) and in the *Theology of Aristotle* (Davidson 1992, 132; see Badawī 1955, 119, l. 17).

⁵⁹ According to ҒI, § 151 (139, l. 11 – 140, l. 1), the immaterial lights are more numerous than a hundred thousand (thus Walbridge and Ziai’s edition), or at least more numerous than two hundred (Corbin’s edition). Although Avicenna probably believed that there were more than just al-Fārābī’s ten immaterial intellects (Janos 2011), al-Suhrawardī may not have been aware of this, since ҒI, §165 (155, ll. 4 f.) sweepingly states that “the adherents of the Peripatetics [...] limit the number of intellects to ten”.

⁶⁰ MA, 53, l. 16 (ch. 1, § 36): “so many degrees that they cannot be counted”; but as MA, 54, l. 2 (ch. 1, § 37) notes, the number of lights is finite. Cf. Davidson 1992, 135.

⁶¹ Cf. ҒI, §171 (162, l. 11 – 163, l. 1), and MA, 39, 84ff. (introduction, § 2, and ch. 3, *passim*). The tradition also occurs in al-Ghazālī’s *Revival of the Sciences of Religion*, see Sinai 2011, 397 f.

of Illumination – Arnzen goes so far as to call the work a “torso”⁶² – al-Suhrawardī emerges as the more systematic thinker of the two: for instance, his meticulous distinction between substantial and accidental lights provides him with resources for a much clearer understanding of the second component of the *zāhir-muẓhir* formula: luminous entities make manifest non-luminous entities because *substantial* lights emit *accidental* lights that come to reside in, and thus to illuminate, bodies. Secondly, there is an important difference of emphasis: while both authors would seem to espouse the idea of emanation (al-Suhrawardī more explicitly so than his precursor), al-Suhrawardī does not stress, as al-Ghazālī does, the monistic implications of the emergence of the various rungs of cosmic lights from the “Light of Lights”. For al-Ghazālī, the highest level of human cognition of God consists in an experiential awareness that “there is nothing in existence except for God” (*laysa fī l-wujūdi illā llāh*).⁶³ By contrast, al-Suhrawardī consistently assumes that the Light of Lights emanates an irreducible plurality of individual *lights*, rather than a unitary continuum of *light*.⁶⁴ Al-Suhrawardī’s more granular, non-monistic vision of the cosmos may also be the reason why he differentiates throughout between accidental and substantial light and why he nowhere subscribes to the basic thesis of the first chapter of the *Niche*, to wit, that “[applying] the expression ‘light’ to anything else is purely metaphorical and has no reality”: although al-Suhrawardī does stress the Light of Light’s absolute ontological non-indigence (*ghinā*) and the fact that nothing could be more splendidous than it,⁶⁵ all the other lights are genuinely, and not simply metaphorically, *lights*.

3 God’s Knowledge of Particulars

Al-Ghazālī’s *Incoherence of the Philosophers* singles out three philosophical doctrines as fundamentally contradicting the Islamic creed: the denial that the world was created a finite period of time ago, the denial of God’s knowledge of concrete particulars, and the denial of a bodily resurrection (as opposed to a posthumous existence only of the intellect).⁶⁶ In this second part of the article, I shall examine al-Suhrawardī’s account of the second of these issues, viz., of God’s knowledge of particulars. As I have argued in the first part, the conceptual foundation of al-Suhrawardī’s ontology is in crucial respects informed by Ghazālīan ideas; now we shall explore to what extent al-Suhrawardī’s treatment of a specific theological issue can likewise be related to statements by al-Ghazālī.

⁶² Arnzen 2011, 152.

⁶³ MA, 55, l. 15 (ch. 1, § 42), on which see Treiger 2007, 4–10 (where “monotheism” in the subheading should obviously be emended to “monism”), esp. 19 n. 12.

⁶⁴ Walbridge 1992, 49; Walbridge 2005a, 213.

⁶⁵ See, for example, HI, §§ 129 and 134.

⁶⁶ TF, 226 f.

In keeping with Greek intuitions about the divine, al-Fārābī and Avicenna presuppose that the ultimate perfection of the First Cause requires its utter simplicity and immutability. This gives rise to a worry about God’s ability to cognitively keep track of changing material particulars: would this not entail that God’s knowledge must change in parallel with its objects?⁶⁷ Indeed, even the claim that God has knowledge of immaterial particulars becomes deeply problematic: for while this would not require that God’s knowledge be conceived as mutable, it would at least entail that there is a plurality of things known to God, thus threatening to undermine His utter simplicity. Aristotle, of course, denies that divine thought is directed at any external object at all.⁶⁸ Avicenna avoids such a radical conclusion by maintaining that insofar as the Necessary Existent is the cause of everything else that exists, and grasps itself as such, it can also be said to grasp its particular effects “in a universal manner”.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, even for Avicenna God’s knowledge would seem to remain, in the final analysis, a universal and immutable act of self-knowledge – a position by which the philosophers, according to al-Ghazālī, “uprooted all religious laws, since it entails that if Zayd, for example, obeys or disobeys God, God would have no knowledge of those of his states that have newly come about, because he does not know Zayd as such”.⁷⁰

Al-Suhrawardī’s *Philosophy of Illumination* solves the problem in the following manner.⁷¹ Based on his rejection both of an extramission and intromission analysis of vision in the first part of the work (§§ 101–103),⁷² al-Suhrawardī insists that “vision does not occur by the imprinting of the form of the object of vision in the eye, nor by something emerging from the eye”, but rather “by an illuminated object being opposite a sound eye”.⁷³ Hence, visual perception – a conscious subject’s percipient grasp of an empirical particular – simply consists in a cognitive tie between mind and world rather than in the occurrence of a representation of some empirical object in our internal mental space, as a Cartesian account of perception might run. (As we saw above, al-Suhrawardī considers self-consciousness to be similarly immediate and non-representational.) Against this background, § 162 explains that the Necessary Existent’s knowledge of things other than itself conforms to the same general pattern: “its knowledge of the things consists in the fact that these are manifest to it”,⁷⁴ which does not require the Necessary Existent to possess a mental representation of the things

⁶⁷ See Avicenna 2005, 287 (= *Shifāʾ: Ilāhiyyāt*, VIII, ch. 6).

⁶⁸ See Aristotle’s characterisation of the First Mover as “thought thinking itself” (*noēsis noēseōs*) in *Metaphysics*, XII, § 9 (1074b15–1075a10).

⁶⁹ Avicenna 2005, 288 (= *Shifāʾ: Ilāhiyyāt*, VIII, ch. 6). On Avicenna’s understanding of God’s knowledge of particulars, which I have only superficially sketched, see Marmura 1962 and Adamson 2005.

⁷⁰ TF, 136, ll. 18–20.

⁷¹ Some related passages from other works of al-Suhrawardī are quoted and discussed in Eichner 2011, 137–139. See in particular her citation from the *Kitāb al-talwīḥāt*, which also describes God’s knowledge of all things as consisting in a “relation” (*iḍāfah*).

⁷² See Sinai, “Al-Suhrawardī on Mirror Vision and Suspended Images (*muthul muʿallaqa*)” (forthcoming in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*).

⁷³ HI, § 145 (134, ll. 11–13).

⁷⁴ HI, § 162 (152, l. 8).

known by it. Rather, its knowledge of any object merely consists in the existence of a “relation” (*iḍāfah*) between it and whatever is known to it. But “a plurality of intellectual relations does not necessitate multiplicity in its essence (*dhāt*)”: given the purely relational character of knowledge as construed by al-Suhrawardī, the plurality and mutability of the entities known by the Necessary Existent does not require that the latter be itself marked by plurality and mutability. By contrast with Avicenna, al-Suhrawardī is therefore able to affirm without qualification that the Light of Lights knows material particulars.⁷⁵

The gist of this analysis is foreshadowed in the thirteenth discussion of al-Ghazālī’s *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, which takes issue with the philosophers’ assumption that “change in the object known necessitates change in [a particular subject’s act of] knowledge” (*taghayyuru l-ma’lūmi yūjibu taghayyura l-‘ilm*).⁷⁶ Al-Ghazālī considers the case of an eclipse.⁷⁷ The occurrence of an eclipse involves three successive states: at first the sun is visible, then it is invisible, and finally it is visible again. Al-Ghazālī denies that these three states of the sun necessarily correspond to three different acts of cognition, namely, that “we know, first of all, that the eclipse is non-existent but will be; secondly, that it is; and, thirdly, that it was but is not presently existing”.⁷⁸ Against such an analysis, al-Ghazālī adduces the following objection: “With what [argument] do you [philosophers] deny one who says: ‘God, exalted be He, has *one* knowledge of the existence of the eclipse, for example, at a specific time. Before its existence, this knowledge is a knowledge that the eclipse will occur; during its existence, the same knowledge is a knowledge that the eclipse is currently occurring; and after the sun is revealed again it is a knowledge that the eclipse has passed. These differences boil down to relations (*iḍāfāt*) that do not necessitate change in the essence of knowledge and therefore do not necessitate change in the essence of the knower.”⁷⁹ Al-Ghazālī thus anticipates al-Suhrawardī’s thesis that God’s knowledge can be conceptualised as a unitary and immutable cognitive state that is relationally tied to multiple objects (or, in al-Ghazālī’s case, events).

The virtual opponent whom al-Ghazālī marshals against the philosophers thus assumes that God “knows the things by one act of knowledge in the eternal past and

⁷⁵ This summary of al-Suhrawardī’s position omits an additional flourish. His full analysis of how the Light of Lights knows particulars runs as follows: “Its knowledge of the things consists in the fact that these are manifest to it, either through themselves *or through things connected to them, which are the loci of the higher managing lights’ continuous awareness.*” As al-Shīrāzī 2005, 350, plausibly remarks regarding the italicised segment, it serves to account for God’s knowledge not only of presently existing particulars but also of past and future events: knowledge of these is lodged in the souls (= “managing lights”) of the heavenly bodies, whence past and future events are also manifest to the Light of Lights.

⁷⁶ TF, 138, l. 5.

⁷⁷ Already Avicenna uses the example of an eclipse in the context of God’s knowledge of particular temporal events (Avicenna 2005, 288–290 = *Shifā’*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, VIII, ch. 6). Eclipses figure as a frequent example in Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* (see I, §§ 8, 31; II, §§ 1 f., 8, 12 and 16).

⁷⁸ TF, 134, l. 11 – 135, l. 1.

⁷⁹ TF, 138, ll. 14–18.

future”.⁸⁰ Al-Ghazālī adds a further example: “If God creates in us an act of knowledge that Zayd will arrive tomorrow at sunrise and causes this act of knowledge to persist, neither creating in us a different act of knowledge nor heedlessness of this knowledge, then we will, at the time of sunrise, know merely on account of the preceding act of knowledge that Zayd is now arriving; and afterwards [we will know] that he has arrived earlier. This one perduring act of knowledge is sufficient to encompass these three states.”⁸¹ As Afifi al-Akiti has observed, the act of knowledge at the centre of this example cannot, strictly speaking, correspond to the tensed sentence “Zayd will arrive tomorrow at sunrise”, for “tomorrow” is a deictic expression whose reference would change depending on the time at which the above proposition is uttered, thus undermining al-Ghazālī’s point that a single propositional attitude is sufficient to cover all three states.⁸² Rather, the act of knowledge intended by al-Ghazālī should be understood as corresponding to a tenseless sentence containing a non-indexical date, such as “Zayd will arrive on 31 August 1957 at sunrise”.

It must be conceded that the construal of divine knowledge put forward in the *Incoherence* is not original to al-Ghazālī. His insistence on God’s knowledge as a unitary and immutable cognitive state is indebted to his teacher, the Ash‘arite theologian al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), who similarly ascribed to God a single, immutable, and all-encompassing act of knowledge of all past and future events.⁸³ Furthermore, an explicitly *relational* construal of God’s knowledge was put forward by the Mu‘tazilite theologian Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044), who according to his follower Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 1141) described God’s knowledge as consisting in a “connection” (*ta‘alluq*) between God and the objects of his knowledge.⁸⁴ What unites al-Ghazālī’s and al-Suhrawardī’s presentation of the idea against this Mu‘tazilite parallel, though, is the conspicuous use of the term *idāfah* (“relation”) instead of *ta‘alluq* (“connection”).⁸⁵ This terminological convergence creates a default likelihood that al-Suhrawardī’s treatment

⁸⁰ TF, 139, ll. 1 f.

⁸¹ TF, 139, ll. 4–8.

⁸² Al-Akiti 2009, 68 f. with n. 43.

⁸³ See Griffel 2009, 187–194, which establishes that al-Ghazālī follows al-Juwaynī’s assertion that God “is qualified as having only one single knowledge that extends to eternity in the past and in the future. This knowledge necessitates for Him an awareness that encompasses all objects of knowledge with all their details.” While Griffel’s discussion makes no mention of al-Juwaynī having explicitly described God’s knowledge as consisting in a “relation” or “connection”, I have not gone back to al-Juwaynī’s original works to check this.

⁸⁴ Ibn al-Malāḥimī 1991, 200–206. For some context see Schmidtke 1991, 191–197. – In support of the hypothesis that al-Ghazālī is here confronting his philosophical opponent with an analysis of God’s knowledge that is Mu‘tazilite in origin one might point to TF, 7 f., where al-Ghazālī explicitly announces that he will, in pursuit of his objective of displaying the insufficiency of the philosophers’ arguments, draw on the doctrines of the Mu‘tazilah and other “sects”.

⁸⁵ The same substitution can also be observed among later Twelver-Shi‘ite adherents of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Schmidtke 1991, 192; Schmidtke 2000, 97). It may be suspected that the relevant passage from the *Incoherence* is the ultimate source of this substitution. As Schmidtke observes, the term *idāfah* has a distinct philosophical resonance; in particular, Avicenna uses the word in his general discussion of the divine attributes (e.g., Avicenna 2005, 273 f. = *Shifā’: Ilāhiyyāt*, VIII, ch. 4; cf. Adamson 2013).

of the question of divine knowledge is primarily in conversation with al-Ghazālī's *Incoherence*. Furthermore, that al-Suhrawardī was familiar with the *Incoherence* is an eminently plausible assumption not only because of that work's general prominence in twelfth-century thought (evinced, for example, by Averroes' refutation of it) but also because elsewhere in the *Philosophy of Illumination* (§ 150), al-Suhrawardī employs an objection to Avicenna's cosmology that is recognisably borrowed from the *Incoherence*.⁸⁶ Furthermore, as I have argued above, al-Suhrawardī derives basic components of his light ontology from another work of al-Ghazālī. The evidence linking al-Suhrawardī to al-Ghazālī is therefore considerable, although it would be unwise to rule out that al-Suhrawardī may also have been acquainted with the treatment of the divine attribute of knowledge by other Islamic theologians.

As noted above, the *Incoherence's* avowed intention is not to establish positive truths but to show that the doctrines of the philosophers do not possess the demonstrative certainty attributed to them. Nonetheless, the reconciliation of divine omniscience with divine immutability and simplicity that is intimated in the thirteenth discussion of the *Incoherence* is doubtlessly theologically attractive – which is why it is also adopted, for instance, by al-Suhrawardī's contemporary Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210).⁸⁷ It is therefore not surprising that al-Suhrawardī's analysis of divine knowledge draws on the solution sketched by al-Ghazālī – namely, that change and plurality in the objects of God's knowledge only imply change and plurality in the epistemic relations obtaining between God and these objects, rather than in God Himself. Such continuity, however, should not obscure significant differences. Unlike al-Ghazālī, al-Suhrawardī provides his relational construal of God's knowledge with a solid epistemological anchoring by modelling it on the non-representational understanding of visual perception and self-awareness that is put forward elsewhere in the *Philosophy of Illumination*. In doing so, al-Suhrawardī effectively undergirds the relational account of divine knowledge sketched in the *Incoherence* with the *Niche's* assertion that manifestness (*zuhūr*) is a "relative" concept (*amr idāfī*).⁸⁸ The *Incoherence* invites the reader to envisage God's knowledge of particulars as consisting in a "relation" (*idāfah*), yet leaves open what sort of relation is at stake and why God's being cognitively related to a plurality of changing objects does not in fact require Him to possess a plurality of

⁸⁶ Davidson 1992, 172 f.; Sinai 2011, 384–386.

⁸⁷ Schmidtke 1991, 192. Despite its inherent attractiveness, not every contemporary philosopher would have found a relational construal of divine knowledge unproblematic. For example, Moses Maimonides (d. 1204), a radical proponent of negative theology, denies that any relational predicates are applicable to God (Maimonides 1929, 60–61 = Part One, ch. 52; English translation, 116–118). Maimonides argues that in order for two things to enter into a relation with each other, it must be possible to subsume them under one and the same concept; yet God and anything else cannot even be subsumed under a shared concept of existence. Somewhat predictably, Averroes, in his critical commentary on the *Incoherence*, also rejects the relational account of God's knowledge proposed by al-Ghazālī, "for this is something that cannot be understood from the nature of human knowledge" (Averroes 1930, 461, ll. 1–4). Al-Suhrawardī can be viewed as pre-empting this objection insofar as he maintains that human knowledge is just as relational as God's knowledge.

⁸⁸ Thus MA, 41, ll. 9–12 (ch. 1, § 2).

changing mental representations. Al-Suhrawardī, drawing on the *Niche*, fills in these gaps: the relation in question is specifically one of manifestness, and God’s being thus related to an object does not entail a plurality of changing mental representations because *no* act of apprehending an individual entity, whether on the part of a human subject or of God, requires the occurrence of a mental representation of the perceived object. Al-Suhrawardī treatment of God’s knowledge may therefore be said to crossbreed two Ghazālīan ideas: God’s knowledge of particulars is a purely relational matter (thus the *Incoherence*) because (as al-Suhrawardī says partly on the basis of the *Niche*) any apprehension of a particular entity by a conscious subject amounts to nothing more than that particular being “manifest” to the subject in question.⁸⁹ In sum, al-Suhrawardī transforms what in the *Incoherence* is primarily a clever disputational move into a systematic piece of philosophical analysis by placing it on a foundation that is partially constructed from Ghazālīan bricks.

4 Conclusion

Although some basic elements of al-Suhrawardī’s light ontology are directly inspired by al-Ghazālī,⁹⁰ both authors ultimately exhibit very different intellectual temperaments. I shall therefore conclude this article by tentatively offering some comparative remarks.

As noted in my introduction, recent scholarship has amply demonstrated that al-Ghazālī “recycled” or “naturalised” numerous Avicennian motifs, thereby transforming them from discursively justified philosophical positions into arcane “unveilings”.⁹¹ This almost systematic procedure of discursive transposition – namely, from the register of philosophical argument to that of inspirational intimations – goes hand in hand with a keen sense of the limited reach of discursive reason.⁹² In the *Revival* and elsewhere, al-Ghazālī explicitly juxtaposes what he calls “the Path of the Theoreticians” (*nuzḡār*) – viz., the study of philosophy and the rational sciences⁹³ – with “the Path of the Sufis”, and he

⁸⁹ Very likely, it is al-Suhrawardī’s combination of a relational account of God’s knowledge with a relational understanding of manifestness that accounts for the fact that he thinks of God’s knowledge as a cognitive tie between particular things (X perceives or apprehends Y), whereas al-Ghazālī’s *Incoherence* appears to primarily construe God’s knowledge in terms of propositional attitudes (X knows that p).

⁹⁰ According to Griffel 2009, 83 f., the light imagery of the *Niche* is also adopted by ‘Ayn al-Quḡāh al-Hamadhānī (d. 1131). While the possibility that the latter might have exerted an influence on al-Suhrawardī cannot be dismissed (see Izutsu 1972, 124), the specificity of the parallels catalogued in the present article makes me fairly confident that al-Suhrawardī worked primarily with al-Ghazālī’s own writings.

⁹¹ See above, n. 3.

⁹² Heck 2014, 108–151; see also Sinai 2003, 12–16. For a specific example drawn from al-Ghazālī’s last work see Griffel 2009, 266, 273 f.

⁹³ Sinai 2003, 18–23; Treiger 2012, 66–68; Garden 2014, 44–52, 74 f. On the identity of the “Theoreticians” see Treiger 2012, 144 n. 16 and Garden 2014, 49–52, who reminds us that the “Theoreticians”, while “rooted in the philosophical method”, nevertheless “recognise the acquisition of knowledge by the Sufi method as well” (see al-Ghazālī 1937–1939, vol. 2, 1372, ll. 16 f. = book 21, *bayān al-farq bayn al-ilhām wa-l-ta’allum*). The “Theoreticians” thus seem to represent a domesticated or

implies that the intuitive and non-discursive mode of cognition that is associated with the latter is at least in some respects superior to that arising from empirically-based discursive thought.⁹⁴ To be sure, al-Ghazālī did not deny that scientific research and philosophical reflection could yield genuine knowledge,⁹⁵ nor did he think that the study of philosophy was without value for those capable of mastering it, even where it merely led to recognition of the boundaries of what could be rationally known.⁹⁶ It is therefore plausible that, as Treiger and Garden have argued, al-Ghazālī ultimately envisaged “the sequential pursuit first of the path of the Theoreticians, then of the Sufis” as an ideal curriculum.⁹⁷ Still, he does make it fairly clear that the highest kind of human

sanitised kind of philosophy that is not guilty of the “hubris” (thus Griffel 2009, 121 f.) of which the *Incoherence* accuses the *falāsifah*.

⁹⁴ The *Niche* certainly suggests a superiority of intuitive “tasting” (*dhawq*) over scientific knowledge (Davidson 1992, 130 f.). In the twenty-first book of the *Revival*, al-Ghazālī articulates the relationship between the two paths by means of two consecutive parables (al-Ghazālī 1937–1939, vol. 2, 1373–1379 = book 21, *bayān al-farq bayn al-maqāmayn bi-mithāl maḥsūs*). The first one (see Sinai 2003, 19; Treiger 2012, 70–74) represents the human heart (= the soul) as a pond that is watered by two openings, namely, by streams flowing into it from outside (= sense perception and rational reflection thereon) and by water welling up from below (= inspiration). Al-Ghazālī insists that the water welling up from below “is purer and more permanent, and may be more abundant and copious” (al-Ghazālī 1937–1939, vol. 2, 1373, ll. 21 f.). This indicates that the inspirational knowledge attainable via the Sufi path is not only marked by superior clarity (presumably, because it is intuitive and supra-discursive – see above, n. 2), but also that it gives access to a wider range of truths. The first of these two aspects (but not the second) is also emphasised in al-Ghazālī’s second parable, which describes a competition between Byzantine and Chinese artists, representing the “Theoreticians” and the Sufis. Each group was instructed to paint one half of a chamber separated by a curtain. When the curtain was lifted, the Byzantine artists had created a magnificent painting, whereas the Chinese had merely polished their wall so that it mirrored the painting of the Byzantine painters “with even higher illumination and lustre” (*ma‘a ziyādati ishrāqin wa-bariqin*), and “the beauty of their side was multiplied on account of the high degree of polishing” (*fa-zdāda ḥusnu jānibihim bi-mazīdi l-taṣqīli*). Pace Griffel 2009, 264, al-Ghazālī’s diction here (*ziyādah, izdāda, mazīd*) does unequivocally imply a superiority of the Chinese painters (Sinai 2003, 19 f.; Moosa 2005, 254 f.; Treiger 2012, 68). This comes out even more clearly in the version from al-Ghazālī’s earlier work *The Scale of Action* (*Mizān al-‘amal*; see al-Ghazālī 1964, 226): “In it [i.e., the work of the Chinese artists] appeared what the others merely strove for” (*wa-zahara fīhi mā sa‘ā fī taḥṣīlihi ghayruhum*). By contrast with the pond parable, though, the story of the painters does suggest that both approaches give access to the same cognitive content, although the Sufi path makes this content available with superior clarity. In my opinion, al-Ghazālī’s insistence on the finitude of human rational knowledge (see above, n. 92) makes it probable that he considered the inspirational “unveiling” attained by means of the Sufi path to be not only clearer but also more extensive than the knowledge of the Theoreticians. In this sense, I would tend to privilege the pond parable over the painters parable.

⁹⁵ Heck 2014, 110 f.

⁹⁶ For example, al-Ghazālī relates, without explicitly disagreeing, that according to the “Theoreticians” the study of the sciences guards against erroneous ideas to which scientifically untrained Sufis sometimes fall prey (al-Ghazālī 1937–1939, vol. 2, 1372, ll. 16 f.; Treiger 2012, 67). On al-Ghazālī’s view that recognition of the boundaries of rational understanding is itself an advance in understanding see Heck 2014, 111 and 118 f., citing the maxim that “the inability to comprehend is itself a kind of comprehension” (*al-‘ajz ‘an al-idrāk idrāk*).

⁹⁷ Garden 2014, 74 f. (referring to Treiger’s PhD dissertation). Sinai 2003, 18–27, suffers from failing to consider the possibility that al-Ghazālī’s ideal educational trajectory might have combined both paths rather than unequivocally opting for one of them. Nevertheless, it remains true that the type of cognition in which al-Ghazālī’s ideal curriculum ultimately climaxes is the inspirational knowledge associated with the “Path of the Sufis”. – It would seem that this crossbreeding of the “Path of the Theoreticians” and the “Path of the Sufis” crucially relies on al-Ghazālī’s subtle domestication of the “Theoreticians” as

knowledge – the intuitive, quasi-experiential “tasting” (*dhawq*)⁹⁸ of the fact that “there is nothing in existence except for God” – requires that one embark upon the “path of the Sufis”. Al-Ghazālī also seems to allow that this stage of knowledge could in principle be attained without prior philosophical training (although foregoing philosophical study does involve the risk of seriously misunderstanding one’s quasi-mystical inspirations⁹⁹). Ultimately, the role of philosophy is therefore preparatory and not indispensable. In keeping with all of this, al-Ghazālī does not seem to have constructed, or even intended to construct, a systematic theology and cosmology.¹⁰⁰

Al-Suhrawardī, like al-Ghazālī, holds intuitive knowledge in high esteem. He opens the *Philosophy of Illumination* by emphasising that its contents “did not at first come into my possession by means of cogitation (*fīkr*); rather, it came into my possession through something else. Only subsequently did I seek proof for it so that, should I cease contemplating the proof, nothing would make me fall into doubt.”¹⁰¹ Al-Suhrawardī thus shares al-Ghazālī’s fascination with an intuitive mode of cognition superior to all philosophical reasoning, a mode of cognition that he likewise describes as “tasting”.¹⁰² At the same time, al-Suhrawardī claims to have found genuine “proof” (*ḥujjah*) for his intuitive insights. Hence, what is learnt through supra-rational

recognising the general possibility of Sufi-style intuitive cognition (see above, n. 93) as well as his general conviction of the finitude of discursive reason (see above, n. 92).

⁹⁸ On al-Ghazālī’s use of the term see Treiger 2012, 48–55.

⁹⁹ See above, n. 96.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Griffel 2009, 286. Al-Akita 2009 portrays al-Ghazālī in starkly different terms, arguing that a corpus of writings circulating under the title *al-Maḍnūn bihi ‘alā ghayr ahlihi* and attributed to al-Ghazālī is not only authentic but “sits at the top of al-Ghazālī’s theological curriculum and represents the most sophisticated expression of his theological project. It is in this corpus that al-Ghazālī reveals the extent to which his theologizing has developed: by relying on the scientific and philosophical community, he has constructed a unified theological system giving a reasoned explanation of the world” (al-Akita 2009, 55). A proper evaluation of this hypothesis will have to await the publication of al-Akita’s multi-volume doctoral dissertation. For the time being, I am not yet convinced that the passage about God’s knowledge of particulars from the *Maḍnūn* that is discussed in al-Akita’s article, even if authentic, is a fundamentally different kind of text than al-Ghazālī’s non-committal paraphrase of Avicennian philosophy in the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifah* or in the manuscript British Library Or. 3126 (see Griffel 2006), both of which clearly do not amount to “the most sophisticated expression of his theological project”. Minor variants aside, both the *Maqāṣid* and the *Maḍnūn* confine themselves to reiterating the Avicennian formula that God knows particulars “in a universal way” (*bi-naw‘in kullīyyin*); and even if, as al-Akita maintains, the wording of the *Maḍnūn* passage is meant to allow that God might also know particulars *as such* (rather than just “in a universal way”), it is striking that the *Maḍnūn* text, unlike the *Incoherence*, does not seem to attempt any philosophically adequate solution of the problem of how one might ascribe to God knowledge of a plurality of changeable particulars without thereby tarnishing Him with multiplicity and change. – In any case, one would need to distinguish very clearly between the claim that al-Ghazālī had highly specific ideas about an ideal intellectual curriculum (in which the *Maḍnūn* corpus, if authentic, might have played an important role) and the claim that he formulated a coherent system of theological and cosmological doctrines; the latter clearly does not follow from the former.

¹⁰¹ ҲI, §§ 2 f.

¹⁰² The term *dhawq* is used in ҲI, § 2 (2, l. 11). Al-Suhrawardī’s insistence that we apprehend particulars – whether our own selves or other objects, both material and non-material – in a non-representational manner, simply based on their unmediated manifestness, can be understood as endowing the notion of intuitive cognition, which al-Ghazālī viewed merely as the rarefied achievement of those who had travelled “the path of the Sufis”, with a much more general epistemological role (see Sinai 2011, 259–265).

inspiration is capable of, and perhaps even calls for, retrospective conceptual ordering, clarification and justification.¹⁰³ Unlike al-Ghazālī, al-Suhrawardī thus insists that the content of one’s quasi-mystical “tasting” be presented, *ex post*, in rigorous philosophical language. As a result, al-Suhrawardī is much more of a philosophical system-builder (although his early death meant that the system was never fully worked out, with the *Philosophy of Illumination* providing a grand blueprint rather than the complete edifice). His more systematic approach is well illustrated by the way in which he links the idea of a purely relational analysis of God’s knowledge that is sketched in the *Incoherence* to other regions of his philosophy, namely, to his non-representational epistemology and to his deployment of manifestness as the fundamental term of his ontology.

Al-Suhrawardī’s attempt to work out a philosophical system anchored in the notion of luminosity or manifestness is certainly a response to the state of philosophy at his time. Griffel has argued that the critical deconstruction of the Avicennian system that commenced with al-Ghazālī’s *Incoherence* and was continued by Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī engendered a sense of “disillusionment with the Aristotelian, Farabian, and Avicennan ideal of philosophy as an apodictic tradition, and a turn towards philosophy as a dialectical field where the best available explanations are compared with one another.”¹⁰⁴ Al-Suhrawardī did not content himself with such a view of philosophy: for him, philosophical discourse would appear to have consisted in the attempt to map out the whole of reality in a conceptually organised and argumentatively justified manner and thus to have possessed an indispensable holistic dimension. While the first part of the *Philosophy of Illumination* participates in the critical review and dismantling of Avicennian Peripateticism that was initiated by the *Incoherence*, the work’s second part therefore sets out to erect a new philosophical system, crucial building material for which al-Suhrawardī derived from al-Ghazālī. Both the deconstructive and the reconstructive dimension of the *Philosophy of Illumination* thus attest to the singular impact of al-Ghazālī’s works.¹⁰⁵

HI Sohravardi, Shihaboddin Yahya. 1993. *Kitāb ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. In *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 3 vols. Vol. 2. Ed. H. Corbin. Tehran. 1–260.
 Note: The *Philosophy of Illumination* is quoted by sections in order to permit consultation of the bilingual (Arabic-English) edition and translation by J. Walbridge and H. Ziai (Suhrawardī 1999). In the case of long sections, I

¹⁰³ Cf. the remarks in Walbridge 1992, 42.

¹⁰⁴ Griffel 2011a, 47 f.

¹⁰⁵ This article was submitted in August 2014, after which no more changes were made. A preliminary German version of it was presented under the title “Al-Ġazālī und as-Suhrawardīs *Philosophie der Erleuchtung*” at the conference *900 Jahre al-Ġazālī im Spiegel der islamischen Wissenschaften: Perspektiven für eine Islamische Theologie in Deutschland*, held at the University of Osnabrück, 28–30 October 2011. I am grateful to the *Archiv*’s anonymous readers and to Frank Griffel for their valuable advice and criticism.

occasionally provide page and line numbers in brackets; these always refer to the edition of H. Corbin.

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