Principality reflected in the Illuminative System of Philosophy[1]

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1. Statement of problem

Of the most important issues in the development of philosophical and scientific ideas is a look at in their historical aspects and their emergence in the various periods of history and their evolution and promotion. Therefore, explaining the theoretical aspects of philosophical problems and various sciences such as logic and mathematics, literature, jurisprudence etc. without taking in consideration the historical aspects, has neglected the beginning and the end of scientific and philosophical discussions and their evolutionary process and the identification of the theorists and the tradition of the ideas and the thoughts. So one of these problems is that of principality. The question is which is principal, fundamentally real and made by itself: the existence and the quiddity, and which of them has been realized by the other? Although the main question of this research is whether the illuminative essence of Suhrawardi's philosophy is the same as the usual concept of quiddity in other philosophical schools?

What is important about the existence and the quiddity is the principality of one of them. The point is that we always recognize two meanings in objects, and we know both of them as true. The two things are being and being what. For example, we know that the man is, the tree is, the number is, the quantity is etc. But the number has one nature, and the man has another nature. If we say what the number is, it has one answer, and if we say what the man is, then it has another answer. There are many things that have a clear existence, that is, we know that they are but we do not know what they are. For example, we know that there is life, there is electricity, but we do not know what life means, what is electricity. So it becomes clear that the being is one thing and the being what is another thing. On the other hand, we know that this plurality, that is, the duality of quiddity and existence is merely mental, that is, in the external world, everything is not two things, so one of these two is objective and principal, and the other is mentally posited and non-principal.

What we should know here is that the question of the principality of existence and the quiddity is no of a long historical background. This question has been initiated in the Islamic world. Farabi, Ibn-e Sina

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[1] Illuminationist philosophy started in twelfth-century Persia, and has been an important force in Islamic, especially Persian, philosophy right up to the present day. It presents a critique of some of the leading ideas of Aristotelianism, as represented by the philosophy of Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and argues that many of the distinctions which are crucial to the character of that form of philosophy are misguided. Illuminationists develop a view of reality in accordance with which essence is more important than existence, and intuitive knowledge is more significant than scientific knowledge. They use the notion of light, as the name suggests, as a way of exploring the links between God, the Light of Lights, and his creation. The result is a view of the whole of reality as a continuum, with the physical world being an aspect of the divine. This sort of language proved to be very suggestive for mystical philosophers, and Illuminationism quickly became identified with Islamic mysticism.

and Khaje Nasir al-Din Tusi, and even Suhrawardi have not argued for the principality of the quiddity and the principality of existence (although the argument of principality has not been raised, but some questions that have been considered by them have been proposed from the past, such as effectuality, effect, distinction, individuation etc.). This debate has entered philosophy through Mirdamad (early 11th century AH). Mirdamad believed in the principality of quiddity, but his student named "Sadr al-Motahalalin" proved the principality of existence, and from that date all philosophers who have had a significant thought have believed in that (Motahari, 2008, 203). In order to clarify the discussion, it is necessary first to present the main questions.

2. Existence

"Existence" and "quiddity" are two key words in philosophy that have been established since the time of Abu Nasr al-Farabi in the philosophical language of the East; more precisely, the word "existence" is established, and the word "quiddity" is born. Following him in Avicenna's system of philosophy and others, the application of this term flows and their position is established in the philosophical thinking as two basic terms.

Before Farabi, the word "existence" was used by philosophers and in philosophical language, but it was not current and dominated, and along with other words that had implied the meaning of "existence," also was used. Like Jaber Ibn Hayyan (al-'a'sam, 1413, 41), and Kendi (Alkendi, 4), the word "existence" was present. Another word, which had the meaning of "existence" and "objective realization", commonly used in the language of philosophy, is the word "entity", which Kendi has applied in the treatise of *definitions* (Hekmat, 2010, 223-224). Kendi says elsewhere:

> The cause of the existence of the thing and its perseverance is the reality; because everything that has entity has reality, so the reality is necessarily existed because the entities are existed" (al-Kendi, p. 30).

Most of the great Islamic thinkers, including theologians, Sufis and philosophers, have used the term *existence* in their works, but when they are discussing the existence, they have chosen a certain meaning; perhaps this causes some contradictory views expressed on the existence. Farabi means the existence as finding, and says that the existing has been used in the Arabic language in two absolute and limited meanings. Elsewhere, the existence has three meanings for him: 1 - Categories 2 – what is correspondent with the real 3 – Every independent thing that has a quiddity (Farabi, 1971, 112-125).

3. Quiddity

The word "quiddity" was also created first by Abu Nasr Farabi. After him, by Avicenna, this term has been widely used and in the philosophical language. Before Farabi, instead of this, the word "what-is" has been used (Hekmat, 2010, 241).

The quiddity of everything is a definition given to the question "What is this?" For example, in the answer to the question of the truth of a tree, we say: "It is a tree" (Sadr al-Mutalehin, 2004, p. 2, 3).

The actual presence of the things is the very existence, but on the other hand, these things are not pure existences, but there are differences between the things, what we have given them the names of: man, horse, stone, tree etc. This latter aspect, which distinguishes things from one another, is the same as "quiddity."

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4. Principality

In the philosophy, the concept of principality is understood in comparison with its opposite, i.e. what is mentally posited; it is a=said that principal is something that is not mentally posited (Mesbah Yazdi, 1988, 296).

Allameh Tabatabai interprets *principal* as having objective truth, effective, reality, being by itself and realization (Tabatabai, 2004, 40, 48, 53).

So it can be said that the principal is that which it is true to say it is objective and existent. That is, when we say that a meaning or a concept is principal, we do not mean that the meaning itself or the concept itself is real, but that the concept under question is primarily and fundamentally is correspondent with the real in the external world. The phrase *primarily and fundamentally* is important, because even a concept that is mentally posited implies a secondary and accident reality. Thus, when we talk about a concrete stone in our presence, we say "that is a stone" indicates the quiddity, and that *it exists*, indicates its existence. The problem is to know precisely the fact that the external real, the stone, is primarily and fundamentally and not secondarily and accidentally correspondent with one of these concepts (Isutzu, 2000, 73).

5. Consideration

When the meaning of principality is understood, the mentally posited means having not objectivity, non-effective, being not by itself, not real. Consequently, if we count a thing as mentally posited, it means that it does not really exist, that is, neither it is effective nor constitutive real, but the human mind assumed for that an existence, and as the perceptual system distinguishes the realities from the actual fact, assumes the nothings to be real. So being mentally posted means being real in the mind, not in the external world (Mesbah-Yazidi, 1978, p. 1, 296). Opposed to the principality, which means the principle and the origin, being mentally posited means being non-effective.

6. Short history of principality and consideration

It is evident that the question of the principality of quiddity and existence has no long history and is one of the innovations of Islamic philosophers. According to Professor Motahari, in his commentary on *the principles of philosophy*, it was never common in the philosophical books to discuss the historical aspects of questions, and the history of questions means the beginning of the emergence of theories and developments that have been found in different periods in theories. Especially in the East, this aspect was completely neglected and abandoned. In the new European developments, one of the most useful subjects that attracted the attention of scientists was the study of the history of science and technology. In the modern age, in addition to independent books and essays that are usually written on these subjects, in the academic books and even textbooks, the assignment of questions to their authors is clarified.

Not paying attention to the historical aspects of the questions has caused the experts also remain unaware of these debates, and maybe they will commit a lot of mistakes. For example, if one refers to the philosophical books such as Sabzevari's commentary on poems, and considers the questions of existence, he/she would think that from the two thousand four hundred years ago, when the Peripatetic and illuminationist schools were established, the question of the principality of existence and the principality of the quiddity was raised, and the Peripatetic adhered the one and the illuminationist the other; yet, when we refer to the philosophical books from four centuries ago, we do not see even a name of the principality of the quiddity or the principality of existence in the usual sense of the word. If possibly in some books that have been compiled since the Avicenna era, some question is discussed about the

considerations of existence and that the existence is secondary intelligible along with giving some reasons for it, they do not occur in the sense that we are discussing recently in these subjects. In Aristotle's metaphysics has been only discussed the conceptual participation of existence, and in the third and fourth centuries, gradually the distinction between existence and quiddity was raised; then, the subject of the objectivity and otherness of existence and quiddity was proposed, and then it was spoken about the abstractness of existence; without any attention to the implication of knowing the existence or the quiddity as principal. Later, in the period of Mirdamad, the principality of the quiddity and the principality of the existence was officially discussed, and by Mulla Sadra, the principality of existence became definitive (Tabatabai, 1992, 522).

7. Explaining the debate of principality of existence and quiddity

Detecting the dispute is one of the most important issues in discussing the principality of existence or the quiddity. Because some considered as dispute to be a verbal conflict as a verbal conflict so that they assume that everyone accepts that that which is outside of the mind is principal; one has named it the quiddity the other the existence; some also thought that the quiddity whose principality and non-principality is controversial is the abstract concept, interpreted to be the natural universal; it is by itself neither universal, nor particular, neither being nor nothing; it is in various contexts, and mentally posited, is universal, particular, being and nothing. However, how is it possible an abstract concept, be principal and of effect in the external world?

In a nutshell, the dispute can be stated as follows: if, after being attributed the quiddity to the cause and obtaining its concrete mode, and in the light of it, it deserves the attribute of being, then it becomes effective in the external world so that all its properties are of it, or that the principal is the same mode occurring on the quiddity, and the quiddity is realized in its shadow (Sobhani, 2010, 47-49).

8. Problem of making

Other subject that helps us understand the problem is the question of making and being made, because it becomes clear that those who believe in the principality of existence tend to know the existence being made and in contrast those who believe in the principality of quiddity tend to know it as being made.

The possible being in its realization requires a cause, the "making" is the creation and the agent. The maker is the same as the efficient cause and the made is the very effect as the effect of maker. The question that is posed here is that the maker's effect, that is, the made by itself, what a truth is that. Is it the quiddity or the existence? What is that which is the object of the cause and, in other words, what is made or created by the cause? Is it the possible being realized by the cause or its quiddity?

The illuminative philosophers, who seemingly believe in the principality of quiddity, accept the first. According to them the quiddity is made by itself; that is, the agent creates, for example, the truth of humanity, and since humanity, after creation and making, is an external fact, the mind abstracts from it the concept of being and attributes it to the existence and thus decides that the man exists (Oboudiyat, 2006, 104).

Although one cannot conceive of Suhrawardi to be among those illuminative philosophers who view quiddity as being made. Henceforth, Sabzevari knows this belief attributed to Sheikh Ishraq. If this theory was to be explicitly attributed to Suhrawardi, it would not be reported by others. There are several views about being made of the existence or the quiddity or the becoming. The quiddity's being made is a theory that is attributed to the Illuminative philosophers (Sabzevari, pp. 57-58).

In the opinion of the Peripatetic philosophers and the followers of the transcendent philosophy, the existence is made by itself. But some peripatetic philosophers have interpreted existence as entity. For these philosophers, the work of the agent is to bring to existence the quiddity; therefore, the effect of the agent and the made by itself is the entity of the quiddity. In other words, the reality that makes the agent is the thing which can be analyzed in the mind into three things: the attributed which is the very quiddity of the reality, and qualifying an attribute to the attributed; for example, regarding the man the effect of the agent and the made by-itself is a reality that is an instance of the proposition of "the man exists"; that is, not the quiddity of the man alone, not the existence alone (Oboudiyat, 2006, 104).

9. Evidence for Suhrawardi's belief in the principality of quiddity

Some philosophers believe that these are some reasons for Suhrawardi's believing in the principality of the quiddity, to some of which are referred below:

A. According to the philosophical principle of *non-distinction of the existence and the quiddity in the external world*, described in the works of Suhrawardi, it can be interpreted as his believing in the principality of quiddity. That is, the existence and quiddity of are not externally two things. He has assumed that the quiddity is of objectivity, then he does not believe in the existence an objectivity distinct from that for existence (Motahari, 1981, p. 61).

B. When we imagine some of the existences, we find that their existence is suspect or rejected (as in the case of the Simorgh), while there is no doubt about their quiddity; on the other hand, if the existence was the same as the quiddity, then if we imagined its quiddity, on its existence there should not have been any doubt (as with the imagination of the man, no doubt there has been about his being in animal); so the existence is other than quiddity. With these two premises having in mind, we conclude that what is principal is quiddity because the real thing is not suspicious or neglected (Suhrawardi, 1996, p. 22 and 23).

C. Another evidence that Suhrawardi's philosophy seems to be based on the principality of quiddity is his belief in the existence being mentally posited. Shahab-e-Al-Din Suhrawardi says that if the existence is principal (or, in his sense of being realized in the external world), it must exist, and since the existent, that is, "that which has existence", then the "existence is existent", means that the existence exists. Now if the second existence (predicate) is true and principal, it must be existent and this series continues infinitely, then it is necessary to be the existence mentally posited (Suhrawardi, 2001, vol. 2, p. 64; Qotb al-Din Shirazi, 2004, p. 182). On this basis, that is, this intellectual principle that "everything whose assumption of realization implies infinite regression is mentally posited" (Suhrawardi, 2001, vol. 1, p. 168). He knows the concepts such as unity, multiplicity and thingness to be mentally posited.

10. Reason for Suhrawardi's non-belief in the principality of quiddity

As there was evidence for Suhrawardi's belief in the principality of quiddity, there is also evidence that he did not believe in it. Although this may be a paradoxical look, these ambiguities can be resolved by addressing the illuminative insights of Suhrawardi.

For Suhrawardi, being mentally posited of the existence does not mean that he believes in the principality of quiddity, as traditionally said. Suhrawardi did not rely on the question of the principality of quiddity and did not mention any arguments for it. Of course, he has spoken of the being made of quiddity, and in some of his works he has put it, but it does not mean that he necessarily believes in the "principality of quiddity" or "principality of existence". Before that, he must believe in the distinction

between existence and nature, while Suhrawardi does not accept this separation, and disputes to assume the quiddity without existence (Ebrahimi-e Dinani, 2014, pp. 24-25). The same expression of Suhrawardi is as follows:

> If one argues – in being the existence distinct in the realm of things - that if there is not a cause added to the quiddity, it will not have any existence, he is wrong. He first assumes quiddity then adds the existence to it and says: the very quiddity is dependent on the agent, that the agent creates the very existence distinct from the quiddity; thus the immaterial light is one rich, the light of lights, and the other beings are in need for Him, their beings are from Him. (Suhrawardi, 1993, p. 2, 66).

With this in mind, it can be concluded that what the all-emanating cause gives is the thing's entity; this cannot be a reason for his believing in the principality of the quiddity, because it is possible and the possible is in need of a determinant to exist, and that determinant emanates the existence of the possible.

11. Rule of cognation of the cause and effect

The principle of cognation of the cause and the effect is an evidence that we cannot regard Suhrawardi to believe in the principality of the quiddity; since from the real unit qua the real unit one effect is emanated and it is not permissible which is not emanated from the light the light and the non-light, then the light requires that which does not require the darkness. Also the light qua light, if it requires anything, it does not require the non-light (Suhrawardi, 1993, pp. 2, 122).

Since the quiddities require multiplicity and there is cognation between different quiddities, then there should be no relation between the system of the lights, while this is not so; so if we say that the Sheikh Ishraq believes in the principality of quiddity and the agent makes the quiddity of the things, while there is no cognation between different types of quiddities, it follows that there is no cognation between the light of lights and the first light, and the first and second intellect or they are not of one truth; the light of lights and the first light that is created is the same in their luminosity. So Suhrawardi does not believe in the principality of quiddity.

It is quite obvious that although Suhrawardi considered the existence to be mentally posited, but never considered the quiddity to be principal; the more important point is that Suhrawardi, when discussing the existence mentally posited, has not applied that meaning of the existence of which speak the peripatetic philosophers and later the transcendent ones. In his discussions, he considers the existence in a special sense, which first of all associates the predicative existence and the concept of existence, rather than the reality of existence (Shahidi, Hekmat, 2008, 127).

12. Mentally-posited concepts by Suhrawardi

As stated, it is by no means possible to imagine that Suhrawardi has a belief in the principality of the quiddity that is expressed today in relation to the principality of existence, because he, given the following discussion, knows not only the existence to be mentally posited, but also recognizes the quiddity as mentally posited and secondary intelligible.

The philosophers believe in three kinds of the intelligible: 1. Primary intelligible; 2. Logical secondary intelligible; 3. Philosophical secondary intelligible. Primary intelligible like the quiddities; logical secondary intelligible such as the particular and universal; philosophical Secondary intelligible such as being and unity.

The difference between them is that Primary intelligible is both in the mind and in the external world, their occurrence and their attribution is externally. For example, we say this body is white. The whiteness

and the body are two essential concepts; both the attribution of the whiteness to the body and its occurrence is externally. Consequently, they are different externally.

But the Logical secondary intelligible are both externally their attribution and their occurrence in the mind. For example, in the "man is universal", the external man is not universal, but the mental man is general. This judgment and this attribution are related to the mind. Universality is other, the man is other, and this otherness is only in the mind, because in the external world we do not have a man plus the universal.

But the philosophical secondary intelligible, their attribution is externally, but their occurrence is in the mind (Yazdan Panah, 2013, p. 1, 226). For Suhrawardi all philosophical concepts are of this type such as existence, unity, possibility, etc. whose identity is the same as the identity of the secondary intelligible; that is, their homeland of their realization is mind.

He believes that one should not consider a concept like the possible externally, because it is a philosophical concept, and the philosophical concepts, such as the universal and the particular, and so forth, are their identity in the mind (Suhrawardi, 1993, p. 2, p. 64).

13. Suhrawardi's reasons for being mentally-posited of existence

Suhrawardi expresses several meanings for the existence, from which he derives the existence being mentally posited.

The first meaning of the existence is the spatial or temporal "relations" expressed in such propositions: «That thing exists at home, in mind, in reality, in time, etc.». Here, the word "existence" is meant what is always meant by the word "in"; in other words, it implies the relation of an external objective quiddity with time and place. This relation which refers to the word "existence", is a product of our intellect.

The second meaning is the logical relation between the subject and the predicate. In a proposition such as: John exists as a scribe (that is, John is a scribe), the existence only means the relation of a predicate to an external quiddity which the subject implies.

Third concept is "essence" (truth). People often use the expression of existence in the sense of the essence or the very thing. "Essence" or "self" in this sense is just a mental abstraction, an abstract concept that the activity of the intellect derives from the actually existing thing (that is, the external quiddity).

In all of these three cases, the word "existence" implies the rational aspects (rational considerations) which are raised in relation to the quiddities only at the conceptualization level. The quiddities are the real and realized things in the world outside the mind, but the existence refers to aspects that are only implied in our intellect, and then they are interpreted as the objective construction of the things.

Thus, Suhrawardī regards existence as the intellectual modes or intellectual aspects like possibility and unity, and so on. The concept of "existence" does not have a correspondent objective form in the external world. "Existence" is at the conceptualization level other than "quiddity". But in the non-conceptual universe of reality, there is no real substance that exists (Izutzu, 2000, 85).

Suhrawardi mentions a number of other arguments for the being mentally posited of existence:

1. If existence is realized in the external world it will be inevitably existent. On the other hand, it is certain that what exists is of existence, and that existence exists and has another existence, and this will lead to a regression that will continue endlessly and this is absurd (Suhrawardi, 1993, 23).

2. If existence is beyond quiddity, it has a relation with quiddity, but that relation must exist, and so there is a re-relation between the relation and the existence, and thus the regression occurs, because each relation in its turn should have a relation with the existence.

The reasons for the existence being mentally posited are based on the necessity of regression. If the existence exists, it has another existence, and that existence requires another, and this sequence will never end. The regression is absurd, and therefore the existence of existence will also be impossible (*ibid*., 26).

Therefore, Suhrawardi's purpose of proving the being-mentally of existence is to state that the existence is an intellectual mentally posited concept or more familiarly a secondary intelligible. He essentially does not want to prove the principality of quiddity opposed to the being mentally-posited of the existence, because he states that the quiddity itself is like existence mentally posited.

Therefore, from the perspective of Suhrawardi, both the existence and the quiddity are the abstract concepts that our intellect derives them from the analysis of the external identity of things.

14. Suhrawardi's final view on the principality

Principality of light

Light as an evident phenomenon is central to the philosophy of Suhrawardi. In fact, nor the peripatetic believes in the principality of existence, nor the Illuminationist believes in the principality of quiddity. Mulla Sadra himself confesses in Asfar that he has not found any argument for any of the two sides of the dispute. Is the light or darkness the foundation of realization of the beings? Do light or darkness have the main role?

Suhrawardi claims merely that the existence is mentally posited and secondary intelligible. But he does not speak of whether the existence is principal or the quiddity. Suhrawardi identifies the quiddity with the identity, does not differentiate between the existence of the thing and the identity of the thing in the external world, and sees existence and quiddity as a general concept mentally posited. Therefore, it is better to examine the existence and the nature of phenomena by their external identity, and not to consider them as two separate truths. The existence and quiddity of any phenomenon is the same external identity, the source of the abstraction of the two mentally posited concepts of existence and quiddity and the dozens of the other general mentally posited concepts (Yasrebi, 2011, 95).

Since Surawardi's ontological system is based on the light and the light constitutes the basis of his illuminative philosophy, it seems that what is principal for him is the light, presence, awareness and manifestation. Therefore, what matter in his philosophy is only light opposed to darkness, what is principal is the light.

For Suhrawardi, since the light is the perfection and actuality, and in contrast, darkness is the same defect and lack, so the light is the regulating origin of throughout the universe, and this light is the source of existence (Abūrīān, 1993, 126). Therefore, the existence is directly or indirectly dependent on light and luminosity.

15. Conclusion

But according to what was mentioned, we can say that Suhrawardi believes in "principality of light" instead of speaking of "principality of existence" or "principality of quiddity", and considers light as an equivocal and hierarchical truth. In order to realize this, he first considers the existence and quiddity as secondary intelligible and mentally posited, and bases his philosophy on the luminous system, and furthermore, that which becomes principal in his illuminative system of philosophy, is the light. Accordingly, Suhrawardi's illuminative philosophy is discursive-mystical and light-oriented. Suhrawardi has used the term "light" in his illuminative philosophy and based his philosophical system on it. He also explains the levels of the universe by light. For Suhrawardi, the light is a unique truth which is manifested in various levels, but these levels do not differentiate in their luminosity, in other words, the light is

equivocal. Truth of being is the truth of light, and the reality of multiple things is nothing but the truth of light, their multiplicity is due to the intensity and weakness of their luminosity. The main source of this luminosity is the eternal nature of the light of lights that is the absolute being, and the universe is nothing but degrees of light and darkness. The highest level of this truth is the essence of the necessary being which is the source of manifestations. In the end, it's better to say that he has a luminous and intuitive look, and these are principal in the philosophical system of illumination; we can consider him as a light philosopher.

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