

JEWISH STUDIES

犹太研究

第22辑

On Suhrawardī's Illuminist Project and the Nature of Illuminism

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Abstract: Modern scholars hold very different views about how to interpret Suhrawardī's Illuminism; some read it as oriental theosophy, some as Illuminist Avicennism, and others as a novel philosophical construction that is neither mysticism nor Avicennism. This article aims to establish the third position by analyzing and reconstructing Suhrawardī's Illuminist project. By examining Suhrawardī's four Peripatetic-style works and *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (*The Philosophy of Illumination*), this article argues that these works together form one single Illuminist project. The four Peripatetic-style works criticize, correct, and reconstruct Avicennism by merely using the rational "investigation" (*baḥth*) approach, of which the result is entry-level Illuminism, differing fundamentally from Avicennism on many significant philosophical issues. *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* presents the full-blown Illuminism based on the supra-rational "deification" (*ta'alluh*) approach, namely, "presential knowledge" (*'ilm ḥudūrī*), and also by resorting to the rational "investigation" approach. Thus, the resulting Illuminism is a perfect fusion of "deification" and "investigation" (rather than mysticism or Avicennism). Therefore, the Illuminist project itself is sufficient to establish the third position, showing that Illuminism is a rigorous and original philosophy. Suhrawardī's Illuminism is highly impactful in the history of Arabic philosophy.

Key Words: Suhrawardī, Illuminism, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, Ibn Sinā (Avicenna)