

Evidences for the Generalization of Suhrawardī's Theory of Visual Perceptions to Other Sense Perceptions and Some of Its Functions

Hossein Khordoustan¹  | Mohammad Entezam² 

1. Corresponding Author, PhD Student, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran. Email: hosseinkhordoustan@gmail.com

2. Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology, University of Mofid, Qom, Iran. Email: entezam@mofidu.ac.ir

Abstract

The process of sense perception has been a subject of discussion in Islamic philosophy, and four theories have been proposed to explain the sense perception process. Before Sheikh Ishraq, mystics focused on impressions in sense perceptions, and mathematicians considered the emergence of rays in visual perception. Suhrawardī, through criticizing the theories before him regarding visual perception, emphasizes the relation of illuminational relation (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) and the direct connection of the human soul with external agents. Although he extensively discusses the quality of visual perception, he has not explicitly addressed the quality of perception in other sense faculties. This has led some to doubt the generalization of his theory to other sense perceptions. In this paper, we attempt to provide evidence for the generalization of Suhrawardī's theory to other sense faculties. To demonstrate the effectiveness of this theory in his philosophical system, we study some of its functions within his philosophical system. In this article, we present three pieces of evidence for the generalization of his theory to other sense faculties, and among these three pieces of evidence, two are considered innovations in this paper. Finally, we will examine the functions of this theory in Suhrawardī's theological-philosophical system.

Keywords: Sense perception, Visual Perception, Illuminational Relation (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*), Suhrawardī, Presence Knowledge.

Introduction

The nature of perception and how it actualizes have always been challenges and concerns for Muslim philosophers throughout the history of Islamic philosophy. Muslim philosophers have addressed these questions by first identifying the types of perception. According to them, perception is hierarchical, starting with sense perception and culminating in intellectual perception. Sense perception involves awareness through the five external senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. Four theories have been proposed regarding sense perception: the theory of impressions (Ibn Sina, 1999), the theory of radiating rays (Qutb Shirazi, 2001), the theory of presence perception and the Illuminational addition (*al-idāfa al-ishrāqiyya*) (Suhrawardī, 1992), and the theory of form origination (Sadra, 1988).

While Suhrawardī explicitly discusses the luminous and presence nature of visual perception, his focus is primarily on visual perception (Suhrawardī, 1992). However, sense perception is not exclusive to visual perception; it also includes auditory, olfactory, and

similar perceptions. This approach raises the question of whether Suhrawardī believes in the luminous and presence nature only in visual perception or also in other sense perceptions. Another question worthy of attention is in which philosophical issues Sheikh Ishraq has endeavored to delve into through contemplation and reflection based on the theory of visual perceptions? The significant impact of the theory of visual perception on Sheikh Ishraq's philosophical system, coupled with the skepticism of some researchers regarding the generalization of Suhrawardī's theory to other sense perceptions and a comprehensive examination thereof (Yazdanpanah, 2000), underscores the need for careful consideration in this regard.

This paper aims to provide a detailed response to these two questions. Initially, we will discuss some theoretical foundations of the research problem, crucial for resolving the research, and then present three pieces of evidence supporting the generalization of Suhrawardī's theory to other sense perceptions. Among these pieces of evidence, the first has garnered more attention from other researchers, while the remaining two are considered innovations in this paper. Finally, we will thoroughly examine the impact of the theory of visual perception on two theological issues within Sheikh Ishraq's philosophical system.

Research Findings

Three pieces of evidence and arguments support the generalization of Suhrawardī's theory of visual perception to other sense perceptions. These three pieces of evidence are as follows:

1. Textual evidence: A detailed analysis of Suhrawardī's works demonstrates that he has effectively extended his theory of visual perception to various instances.
2. Observing the Ascetics of Spiritual Ascension: Individuals experienced in mystical journeys maintain sense perceptions during the separation of the soul from the body, even though the body and its faculties have no involvement in perception.
3. Consistency with the definition theory: Sheikh Ishraq's theory, which includes the belief in luminous perception along with the illuminating nature of the soul, applies to all sense perceptions.

Analyzing Suhrawardī's works reveals his efforts to use the theory of visual perception to address significant philosophical issues. The problem of necessary Being's knowledge of possibilities and the return of the quality of knowledge to the quality of vision are examples of this.

Conclusion

Careful examination of Suhrawardī's works demonstrates that, while he focused on visual perception, there is evidence supporting the extension of his theory of perceptions to other sense perceptions. Thus, he not only believes in the luminous and presence nature of visual perception but also emphasizes the illuminating nature in other sense perceptions. Suhrawardī has sought to resolve significant theological issues through his extensive emphasis on this theory, indicating its impact on his overall philosophical system.

References

Ibn Sina, Hussein ibn Abdullah. (1999). *The Book of Pointers and Reminders (Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat)*. Qom: Boustan-e Ketab. (in Arabic)

Khordoustan, Hossein (2022), *The Sense Perception and its Place in Suhrawardī's Epistemological System*, Master's thesis, Supervised by Seyed Mohammad Entezam. Qom: Mofid University, Faculty of Philosophy. (in Arabic)

Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Sadra al-Muta'allihin. (1988). *Transcendental Wisdom in the The Four Journeys of the Intellect (Al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-Aqliyyah)*, 9 Volumes. Qom: Maktabat al-Mostafawi. (in Arabic)

Muhammad ibn Muhammad Tousi. (2024). *Explanation of The Book Pointers and Reminders with the Discourses (Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat ma'a al-Muhakamat)*, 3 Volumes. Qom: Dafater Nashr al-Ketab. (in Arabic)

Qutb al-Din Shirazi. (2001). *The Illumination Wisdom of Suhrawardī with the Commentary of Qutb al-Din Shirazi and the Annotations of Sadra al-Muta'allihin (Hekmat al-Ishraq Suhrawardī ba Sharh-e Qutb al-Din Shirazi va Taliqat-e Sadra al-Muta'allihin)*, 4 Volumes. Edited and annotated by Dr. Najafgholi Habibi, supervised by Ayatollah Seyed Mohammad Khamenei, Tehran: Sadr Islamic Foundation. (in Arabic)

Suhrawardī, Yahya ibn Habash (1992), *The Collected Works of Sheikh of Ishraq*, 4 Volumes. Edited and Annotated by Najafgholi Habibi, Tehran: Research Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. (in Persian)

Yazdanpanah, Seyed Yadalah. (2000). *Illumination Philosophy: Report, Commentary, and Evaluation of Sheikh Shahab al-Din Suhrawardī's Philosophical System (Hekmat-e Eshraq: Gozaresh, Sharh va Sanjesh-e Dastgah-e Falsafi-ye Sheikh Shahab al-Din Suhrawardī)*, Research and Written by Dr. Mehdi Alipour. 2 Volumes. Qom: Research Institute of Hawzah and University. (in Persian)

Cite this article: Khordoustan, H., & Entezam, M. (2024). Evidences for the Generalization of Suhrawardī's Theory of Visual Perceptions to Other Sense Perceptions and Some of Its Functions. *Philosophy and Kalam*, 56 (2), 515-531. (in Persian)

Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

© The Author(s).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jftp.2024.368878.523453>



Article Type: Research Paper

Received: 29-Nov-2023

Received in revised form: 14-Jan-2024

Accepted: 5-Feb-2024

Published online: 10-Mar-2024