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Iranian Utopia: Suhrawardī and the Concept of 'No-Where' in "The Chant of Gabriel's Wings" and "The Crimson Intellect"

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Abstract
It is accepted that for the first time in 1516, Thomas More introduced the concepts of an ideal place in his *Utopia*; however, centuries before him in 1154 Shahāb al-Din al-Suhrawardī, a Persian philosopher, introduced the term *Nā-kujā-ābād,* which literally means utopia. This word was initially used in literature for defining an ideal society, which simultaneously bears the meaning of a non-existing or probably never-existed society. Accordingly, this article analyses the perennial Idealism in Suhrawardī's *Nā-kujā-ābād* (*no-where*) by which he amalgamates the discourse of idealism with the perfect nature of human beings during the twelfth century. *Nā-kujā-ābād* is a prototypical term that illustrates the transcending world and portrays the ultimate perception of the living soul in utopia. The twofold essence of this term has always been at the center of the argument; a self-contradictory word, holding two opposite meanings at the same time: the spiritual world (*Ālam-i Mesāl*) and the material world (*Ālam-i Nāsūt*). This article aims to reconstruct Suhrawardī's treatises through the textual analysis illuminating the interpretation of *no-where* through the utopian angle in treatises of *The Chant of Gabriel's Wings* (*Āwāz-i Par-i Jabraʾīl*) and *The Crimson Intellect* (*Aql-i Surkh*) and finally concludes that Suhrawardī's utopia is the true self of human beings apart from political and social issues.

Keywords: The Chant of Gabriel's Wings, The Crimson Intellect, Nā-kujā-ābād, Suhrawardī, Iranian Utopia.

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İran Ütopyası: Sühreverdî ve "Cebrail'in Kanat Sesi" ve "Kızıl Akıl"da 'Hiçbir Yer' Kavramı

Faezeh Mohajeri*

Öz

İdeal mekânın ilk kez Thomas More tarafından 1516 yılında Ütopya adlı kitabında tanıtıldığı kabul edilir; ancak İranlı filozof Şahâbüddin es-Sühreverdî, More'dan yüzyıllar önce, 1154'te, kelimenin tam anlamıyla ütopya anlamına gelen *Nā-kujā-ābād* (*hiçbir yer*) kavramını ortaya atmıştır. Erken literatürde bu terim, var olmayan ve muhtemelen hiç var olmamış ideal bir toplumu tasvir etmekteydi. Buna göre, bu makale daimi İdealizm okulunun yorumcularını ve Sühreverdî'nin *Nā-kujā-ābād*'ını (*hiçbir yer*) kavramını incelemektedir. *Nā-kujā-ābād (hiçbir yer)*, aşkın dünyayı tasvir etmek ve ütopyada yaşayan ruhun uzak algısını tasvir etmek için onun tarafından tanıtılan prototipik bir terimdir. Bu terimin iki yönlü özü her zaman tartışmanın merkezi olmuştur; aynı anda iki zıt anlamı taşıyan kendi içinde çelişkili bir kelimedir: Manevi dünya *(Alem-i misâl)* ve maddi dünya (*Alem-i nâsût*). Bu makale metin analizine dayalıdır ve Sühreverdî'nin risalelerini yeniden inşa ederek, *Cebrail'in Kanat Sesi* (*Āwāz-i Par-i Jabrāīl*) ve *Kızıl Akıl* (*Aql-i Surkh*) risalelerinde ütopik bir bakış açısıyla *hiçbir yer*in yorumunu aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Son olarak araştırmacı, Sühreverdî'nin ütopyasının, insan hayatındaki siyasi ve sosyal meselelerden uzak, herkesin ulaşabileceği gerçek benlik olduğu sonucuna varır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cebrail'in Kanat Sesi, Kızıl Akıl, Hiçbir yer, Sühreverdî, İran Ütopyası.

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1. Introduction

In September 2020, the present researcher encountered the ideas of an ideal man in the shadow of mysticism in different works of Suhrawardī, a philosopher who is well known for being slain at an early age. Due to the fact that most of Suhrawardī's treatises have not been translated into Latin, he remains an understudied sage among his contemporary philosophers for most Western cultures. On the authority of Seyyed Hussein Nasr (1964), even though Suhrawardī was introduced to the Occident by Henry Corbin (p. 1), his ideologies are still unknown to the present arena of research; *Āwāz-i Par-i Jabra'īl* and *Aql-i Surkh* are among those works that have oddly slipped from the grasp of literary scholars. Although there are infinite sources on Suhrawardī's philosophy of *Nā-kujā-ābād*, almost in none of them is there a reference to his ideas on perfect human in the ideal place. From the twentieth century onward, numerous philosophers including Bernard Carra de Vaux (1902), Maximilian Joseph Heinrich Horten (1912), Ghulāmḥusin Ebrāḥīmī Dīnānī (1985), Dimitri Gutas (2003), and John Walbridge (2017) have mainly analyzed Suhrawardī's works within the scope of Islamic philosophy and scrutinized his treatises from Eastern and ontological perspectives. Additionally, Henry Corbin (1903-1978), in particular, undertook a prolonged project of *Ishrāqī* doctrine probing Suhrawardī's works within the theosophical discourse.

Islam's Golden Age, as Seyyed Hussein Nasr (1964) asserts, dates back to the epoch of Prophet Muḥammad in Madina (p. 1). For Nasr (1964), this age appears as if a seed germinates in the soil, which later grows into a tree and over time bears fruit (p. 1). At this age, scientific, historical, and metaphysical assumptions flourished and penetrated various countries, especially Persia, and subsequently, a significant number of scientific books were translated into Arabic during the realm of al-Maʾmūn Abbāsī. At this point, Christianity and Judaism were introduced to decent people, so that "Jews in the Islamic Middle Ages—taking *al-Andalus*, or Muslim Spain, as the model— lived in a 'Golden Age' of Jewish-Muslim harmony, an interfaith utopia of tolerance and convivencia [coexistence]" (Cohen, 2018, p. 28). In this realm, Jews willingly fraternized with Arabic and Islamic cultures and stressed the different angles of science, language, literature, and philosophy in multicultural cities. As Arab Muslims came to know Greek and Persian science, the Sun of Islam gradually dawned

from the horizon; so that, Sufism and metaphysical ideas reached their peak through Avicenna's arguments about the soul of the *'Flying man.'* Intellectual philosophies, as time passed by, were introduced by significant sages, including Suhrawardī, whose school of Illumination was established in this era among the dialecticians. At a very early age, Suhrawardī went on an excursion and made contact with various and significant philosophers and relentlessly continued his journey through different Islamic countries to meet the masters of Sufism and detect individuals with coequal perspectives. In one of his journeys to Isfahan, he became acquainted with Avicenna's thoughts and fascinated by his mystic and spiritual conduct. By piecemeal development, Suhrawardī's school of thought was established in Anatolia and Syria as his beliefs were "in the focal point in which the Zoroastrian, Platonic, peripatetic metaphysics, and Islamic mysticism as well as the revelation and religious tradition have met together and have found new combination in one coherent system by his own innovations" (Nīksīrat, 2016, p. 686). Yūsūf ibn Taghrī Birdī al-Atabikī in his book *al-Nūjum al-żāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qahirah* (1909) describes a meeting between himself and Suhrawardī in which he [Suhrawardī] compares himself to other Muslim philosophers, especially Avicenna, and ranks himself as equal and then states: "In discursive sciences, I am equal, if not superior, but in intellectual intuition, I am Superior" (p. 30). Through intellectual intuition, Suhrawardī presents a kind of heretical sagacity that was opposed to the Orthodox legacy.

According to Aminrażavī (2014), "Avicenna's school of thought is Aristotelian in nature, which was thoroughly opposed to Sufism, his aspect toward the mystical theories and its relation to *Taṣawwūf* [mysticism in Islam] received less attention than Suhrawardī's ideas toward Illumination and Sufism" (p.7). Through Suhrawardī's perspective of Sufism, this research improves the utopian study on Sufism providing a new intellectual horizon on Oriental-Persian perfectionism by highlighting the concept of *Nā-kujā-ābād.* This concept is conspicuous in this study as it helps individuals achieve their utopia and investigate the logic behind the so-called *no-where.* The method used in this research is descriptive and prescriptive analysis through the close reading of the primary texts. The significance of this study is dedicated to those who develop an interest in achieving the intrinsic utopia as an ideal man. Hence, the findings of this study directly benefit literature, history, and culture, intending to reveal

the remaining unpublished discoveries concerning the term '*No-where*.' The researcher hopes this study would be an introductory guide for those with a utopian mindset to build up their ideal world and regain their own Neverland.

2. School of Illumination

As Suhrawardī was influenced by a specific philosophical trend, it is crucial to deeply examine the social and political conditions of his time to perceive his school of Illumination and his philosophy, which led him to construct his school of thought. Suhrawardī should be considered as an Iranian philosopher, as scholars asserted, who restrictedly sticks to the Zoroastrian culture in Persia and demonstrates the pure divinity in the world of imagination to gain wisdom and reach the universal truth as he was hostile to the wars between different religions, especially Islam and Christianity. During his meetings with different philosophers, he created a great circle of friends and educated numerous students whose demands were to compose a book of the philosophy of illumination. Suhrawardī's eagerness towards the profound knowledge of philosophy made him a conspicuous Shaykh among other contemporary philosophers. Therefore, the foundation of Suhrawardī's political theory should be considered at the beginning of his book, *The Wisdom of Illumination* (*Hikmat al-ishrāq*). RajabAlī Esfandīyār (2014) asserted that Suhrawardī in this book implicitly divides worldly affairs into two parts: "First affairs which do not belong to human deeds such as heaven and earth; and the second, matters that relate to them. He interprets the first type as the theoretical wisdom, and then, the second type as the practical wisdom" (p. 122); finally, he asserts that knowing the second affairs "is necessary for the survival of worldly life" (p. 122). In this work, "Suhrawardī believes that the worst eras are those in which there is no personal effort, movement of thought is interrupted, and the inspiration is blocked" (p. 122). According to him, the world never lacks a person who is in charge of wisdom. Further, Esfandīyār claims that according to Suhrawardī:

> Man has only one real duty and that is to overcome the insoluble spell of man. According to him, it is through the passing of this spell that the treasure of existence is revealed and the man

> reaches his Truth. In this way, the man finds the possibility of his being promoted to the abode of spirits (p. 124).

According to the above mentioned quote, Suhrawardī constructs a competent replica of insight for human's life to portray a glimpse of the vision of himself, whose eternal life in another utopian world was more significant than the worldly affairs. According to Nasr (1964), even though Suhrawardī has never written an independent treatise about the prevailing political situation in Iran, he seeks a transcendent political approach based on perfect governance and provides material development with both spiritual excellences (p. 15). Hence, Suhrawardī's method is settled on the ground of Illuminationistic wisdom that brought transcendent political issues to a new perspective on the politics of Muslims; undoubtedly, addressing Suhrawardī from a political perspective requires independent research and other opportunities that are beyond the scope of this article.

John Walbridge (2001), about Illuminationism, claims that "Suhrawardī abandoned the Avicennian Peripatetic philosophy that he had learned from his teacher and became a Platonist. It was, he tells us, his mystical exercises and a dream of Aristotle that led to his conversion" (p. 202). In *The Philosophy of Illumination*, there is a considerable strain in interpreting Suhrawardī's thoughts about Illumination and *Ishrāqī* doctrine because the concept of *Light* as a signifier can refer to various signifieds. However, as the word "*Ishrāq*" both in Arabic and Persian language means 'light,' the researcher analyzes God and Light as the centerpiece frameworks. The Qur'anic Surah named *An-Nūr* means "the Light" vividly refers to Allāh:

> Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is as (if there were) a niche and within it a lamp: The lamp is in a glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east (i.e., neither it gets sun-rays only in the morning) nor of the west (i.e., nor it gets sun-rays only in the afternoon, but it is exposed to the sun all day long), whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself), though no fire touched it. Light upon Light! Allāh guides to His Light whom He wills. And Allāh is All-Knower of everything (24:35).

In Islamic contexts, Light is the prototype of God concerning metaphysics. "Light imagery recurs throughout Qur'an with light symbolizing God's

guidance and darkness— the darkness, for example, of the waves and clouds overshadowing a storm-tossed ship— God's misleading of the unbelievers" (Walbridge, 2001, p. 52). Further, Walbridge (2001) claims that Suhrawardī indicates *Light* to implicitly illustrate the philosophers, mystics, and even sages that have faith in God. The second meaning of light is related to the old tradition of thought in Bible about "light and the divine, a tradition Judaic, Greek, and Christian" (p. 51) that Christ is the light of Him. However, "Suhrawardī himself and, even more, his medieval and modern commentators link his doctrine of light and darkness with the teachings of the archaic Persian" (p. 51) and Greek philosophical ideas regarding the perspective of Plato to the Light. For Plato, Light is respected as "the intelligible realm [that] is not mixed with dark" (p. 53). To have this in mind, Suhrawardī also in *Philosophy of Illumination* constantly cites Hermes and the concept of Light. This image "has the property that by reason of it the body becomes visible, manifest, and revealed…" (p. 53). Obviously, as with any other personal structure, one might identify the elements of Neo-Platonism, Sufism of Islam, Hermetism, and Zoroastrianism— but the form "of these materials into a new structure is directed by a central intuition, as original as it is consistent" (Corbin, 1978, p. 13), and Suhrawardī's philosophy is entirely necessitating the conviction of the human of light that appoints the utopian human being with Perfect Nature. It is suggested that there is a strong relationship between Perfect Nature and soul (*rūḥ)*; accordingly, Kiesel (2002) has referred to Perfect Nature:

> Socrates had also his own opinion about this matter [Perfect Nature] when he said that the perfect nature is called the Sun of the Wise. Some asked Hermes what he thinks about how to supply wisdom? He answered, "by perfect nature." Then he was asked "what is the source of wisdom?" he answered, "it is the perfect nature." Then they asked "well, what is the key of wisdom?" he answered "it is the perfect nature." Then they asked, "what is the perfect nature?" So he answered, saying "it is the philosophers' spirit that is connected to his star and manages and opens for him all the locks of wisdom and teaches him and answers flat which is troubling him and instructs him in his sleep and while he is awake with keys to the closed door (p. 61).

Suhrawardī believes that there is a strong correlation between the Perfect Nature, the Holy Spirit, the human of light (a wise human with perfect nature), and the Angel of Humanity. He depicts this image by Gabriel's wings, intending to portray the divine-human whose aim is to transcend the dimensions of the body and reach the ultimate spirituality. Concerning this, Corbin believes that "the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Iran offers us the homologue or rather the perfect, classic exemplification of what the Hermetic figure of Perfect Nature [is]" (1978, p. 28). After "the Arab conquest of Iran, the position of Zoroastrianism changed considerably: The state religion of the [Sassanid Empire] was forced into minority status after centuries of Islamic domination" (Dehghani et al., 2020, p. 4) and consequently, "[the] Persian language was spread in the East, beyond the borders of the Sassanid Empire, by the conquering armies of Islam, and Persian became the *lingua franca* of the eastern caliphate" (Frye, 1968, p. xiii). While the new Persian language due to the Arab invasion was full of Arabic words, it became a spectacular means of writing poetry and literature for philosophers and poets.

To gain an in-depth understanding of Suhrawardī's conditions, it is necessary to delve into the prevailing religious and philosophical situation in Persia. This idea can also be applied to Suhrawardī's works, for as much as Persia abstained from its religion called Zoroastrianism, and merged with a newly established religion, Islam. Therefore, "almost all the Persians became Muslims within a few centuries without significant outside coercion on the part of their conquerors" (Spuler, 2015, p. 125). It is of importance to note that "Persia did not wholly lose itself by adopting Islam; to a great extent, it molded Islam into a religion suitable for its own needs" (p. 125). Hence, what Suhrawardī achieves in *The Chant of Gabriel's Wings* and *The Crimson Intellect* is genuinely his own unique style. Still, intentionally or not, it is based on the combination of Zoroastrian and Islamic ideas. Indeed, Persia "as a Muslim country retained its language and managed to preserve it through years of Arab supremacy, with the result that finally, it was able to usher in, with Ferdowsī" (p. 125). By concentrating on the enlargement of Islam's presence in Iran, Persians had no justifiable motivation to relinquish their ancestral culture, so that the Persian culture and language endured within the Islamic era.

3. The Chant of Gabriel's Wings

This classical treatise in Persian literature was influenced by Avicenna's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, *Salāmān va Absāl,* and *Resāleh al-Ṭeyr*. Suhrawardī composed this treatise through the significant resemblance with *Aql-i Surkh* by Persianization of the ideal human being in utopian place, *Nā-kujā-ābād*. By including the introduction*, Āwāz-i Par-i Jabraʿl is divided into four parts:* The introduction is a glorious sermon in praise of Allāh; the first part tackles the philosophical mystery with a symbolic language authorized in the first-person narration in which Suhrawardī guides his readers to reach out the true-self and become an *Insān-i Kāmel. In the second part, Suhrawardī asks Gabriel* about his original home, "the land of *nowhere*," a place which does not belong to anywhere—utopia. Suhrawardī's utopia refers to the metaphysical world, a spiritual or non-physical sphere beyond the ordinary experience. In other words, *Nā-kujā-ābād* outstrips the regular dimensions of time and place; afterwards, he explains the mysterious ideas of *al-Jafr*, the science of hidden or unrevealed words based on numerical symbolism. He clarifies that human beings are commandments of *Kalām al-Allāh*, and they are one of the precedents of the chant of Gabriel's wings. Eventually, the third part is about Gabriel and the chant of his wings. In this part, the chant of Gabriel's wings does not belong to the discussion of *Sharīʿat* but to the debate of *Ṭarīqat*; *Sharīʿat* is to know the truth and distinguish between good and evil. However, *Ṭarīqat* is to seek the truth.

The most hidden and mysterious issue *in Āwāz-i Par-i Jabrål* is dedicated to the seeker of the truth who tries to find his way to go to "*Khāneqāh*" (Aminrazavi, 2014, p. 20) with two distinct gates, one of which is opening to the desert, and the other to the city. When the Sufi chooses the desert, he encounters almost ten "spiritual masters" (p. 20) and asks them about the mystery of "the creation, the stations of the path, and the dangers therein" (p. 20). In this book, Suhrawardī uses the unique traditional symbolic images in Persian Sufi-literature "to convey several key ideas which punctuate his philosophy… [and] add[s] a dimension of depth… in his strictly-speaking philosophical works, given the latter's reliance upon [the] abstract language" (Rustom, 2020, p. 1). When Suhrawardī goes to the Sufi-house or *Khāneqāh,* he padlocks the gate of the city and heads for the desert. In the following, the salient issues of this treatise are addressed by a close reading of the symbols to investigate how one

can live in an ideal place as the perfect human being by culminating the function of Gabriel's wings. Critics and contemporary philosophers, who analyzed this treatise, particularly translated the locution '*Āwāz'* under different terms like "sound," "chant," and Rustom (2020), specifically, used the term "reverberation." This article, however, employs the word, "resonance," which emanates additional subtle different shades of meanings comprehending the significance of Suhrawardī's symbolic language in the case of Perfect humankind in an ideal and utopian place. In the initial lines of *Āwāz-i Par-i Jabràl*, Suhrawardī (1946) declares that:

> During the days when I had first emerged from the women's chamber, and some of the restrictions of infants had been lifted from me, one night as a jet-black gloom settled over the concave of the cobalt sphere and darkness that was the right hand of non-existence's brother spread over the lower world, I was overcome by a sense of despair resulting from the impact of a dream. Distressed, I took a candle and headed for the men's part of our house… Afterwards, I had a desire to enter my father's *khanaqah*. The *khanaqah* had two doors, one onto the city and one onto the field and orchard. I went and shut tightly the door to the city. After closing it, I went to open the door to the field (p. 9).

The initial lines are embedded with philosophical codes of Persian symbols that need to be decoded thoroughly. To gain an insight into that, one should transcend the material world— "women's chambers" to free his soul from worldly sensations. Further, since children only use their feelings and have not yet interacted with Intellect or *Aql*, Suhrawardī uses "restrictions of infants" for implying the five senses. At this stage, the ideal man should overcome his sense of despair resulting from the impact of a dream to observe everything with a candle— the light of heart or human's Intellect. At this level, the human soul transcends from the physical world and reaches out the intuition and revelation. In philosophical context, "*khanaqah*" is the limbo between the material world (*Ālam-i Nāsūt*) and the world of Intellect (*Ālam-i Maʿqūl*) where Gabriel ("father") guides humans to reach the ideal place. Suhrawardī, in "*khanaqah*," closes the door of the tangible world ("city") and opens the door onto the sensible world— "field and orchard." In such a way, Suhrawardī (1946) as an ideal human (*Ādam-i Rūhanī)* shuns the abstraction of worldly affairs and steps into the rational world of Intellect and enters the conversation with Gabriel:

> … "Please, sir," I said, "from which direction have my lords honored us with their presence?" The old man who was on the end of the bench answered me, saying, "We are a group of abstracted ones, come from the direction of *Nā-kujā-ābād*." This meant nothing to me. "In which clime is that?" I asked. "In the clime to which your index finger cannot point," he said. And I realized that this old man was very knowledgeable (p. 10).

Through employing angelical symbolism, Suhrawardī angelizes this masterpiece to portray the tenth Intellect and reveal that Gabriel and other angels from *Lā-makān,* a clime that the index finger cannot point at— in the final destination of human life. By introducing the word *Lā-makān* (*Nā-kujā-ābād*) Bībīzohreh Hashemī (2012), in her article, asserts that what Suhrawardī tries to inform is that *Nā-kujā-ābād* is a city, it is *Khāneqāh* or a house, and finally, it is *No-where* (p. 248). Many critics hold that *No-where* or utopia is *Ālam-i Mesāl*— the world of imagination that interfaces between the features of both the body (*Ālam-i Nāsūt*) and the world of soul (*Ālam-i Maʿqūl*). In the closing lines of *Āwāz-i Par-i Jabrål*, Suhrawardī (1946) asks about Gabriel's wings:

> … "Tell me of Gabriel's wing," I said. "Gabriel has two wings," he replied. "The right wing is light, the totality of which is an abstraction of the relation between his being and God. The left wing has traces of darkness, like the dark spots on the surface of the moon that resemble peacock's feet. That is a sign that his being has one side toward not-being. If you look at the relation of his being to God's being, it has the attribute of His being. When you look at the realization of his essence, it is the realization of non-existence and a concomitant to possible existence. These two intrinsic meanings stand on the level of two wings: [T] he relation to God on the right and the mental positing of the realization in the soul on the left…The two are mentioned first because two is the closest of all numbers to one, then three, then four. Thus having two wings is nobler than having three or four. The harmonics of this in the science of realities and apocalypses is more than most can understand (p. 17).

Gabriel's left-wing, "Occident," and his right-wing, "Orient," can be stretched in a way that covers the whole world from heaven to the Earth.

By taking these issues as a fact, we can conclude that the name of the man is originally holy and has roots in divinity. Moreover, in this context, Gabriel's wings do not have a literal meaning but a figurative and metaphorical one. Suhrawardī uses the ideas of Gabriel's wings from Holy Qur'an:

> All the praises and thanks be to Allâh, the originator of the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels messenger with wings, two or three or four. He increases in creation what He wills. Verily, Allâh can do all things (35:1).

He considers Gabriel with two wings to be superior to angels with three or four wings due to the symbolic issues of number two. He also refers to the lightness of the right-wing and the darkness of the left-wing. From Suhrawardī's point of view, light is a sign of existence, and darkness is a sign of non-existence, which from his left wing, the material world emerges, and is related to violence and crimes. However, Truth and sainthood are attributed to his right-wing. Numerous researches about the characteristics of colors have been taken into consideration in theosophy and Islamic philosophy of Sufism. Henry Corbin, for instance, declares that "[t]here is, moreover, a long Hermetic tradition in Islam, whose testimony makes one ask what perception of color and color phenomena it was that enabled alchemists to interpret them in the way they did" (Scholem, 2005, p. 60). Muḥammad Karīmkhān Kermānī (1810-1871), famous for being an Iranian Goethe—has a theory about paramount divergent colors. That theory concerns the visions of light, which evokes the 'physiological colors' of Goethe's *Farbenlehre*" (2005, p. 61). Goethe's *Farbenlehre*, Scholem asserts, is the differentiation between *wujūd* and *ẓuhūr*— color may 'exist' *(wujūd),* but cannot be 'manifested' *(ẓuhūr).* On this account, the connection of light, particularly in this context, is the concept of illumination. Sustained from the combination of Shi'a and Zoroastrian theosophy, Suhrawardī's perspective appears to be Neo-Platonic. For him, the concept of "light" and "darkness" denotes the archetypes of good and evil. Various phenomena, including the phenomenon of colors, are modified by archetypes from superior worlds, specifically *Ālam-i Mesāl*. Therefore, "the phenomenon of color extends equally to the totality of these universes; so that, a hermeneutic of color would employ not an abstract symbolism, but a symbolic founded on an integral spiritual realism" (p. 63). John Walbridge (2001) also argued that Persian use of light and darkness on Gabriel's wings is obviously crucial in the exposition of Suhrawardī's philosophy.

Further, he clarifies that "[l]ight and darkness are the key symbols in the Illumination system, but they are still [secret] symbols and can be decoded into more abstract and philosophical language" (p. 62). In terms of philosophy and Sufism, it is the "interior meaning which is hidden behind the exterior meaning of it" (p. 4). Since *Nā-kujā-ābād* cannot be explained in the humane and straightforward language, Suhrawardī uses a set of creative symbols in his works. In the holy Qur'an, Allāh talks in such symbolic language with Prophet Muḥammad through Gabriel that even until today, most of the secrets have not been revealed to the sages and philosophers. Countless books like *Romūz-i Asrār-āmīz-i Aʿdād* (2006), have prescribed and scrutinized the meaning of different numbers in philosophy. In most of them, number two is holy, as it is the nearest number to number one, a representation of Allāh. Symbolically speaking, white on Gabriel's wings represents Light and truthfulness; yet, "black represents Satan and whatever related to appearance or outward of concepts" (p. 9). By regarding these two issues as a fact, a current result can be extracted that black is the symbol of the body or *Ālam-i Mesāl*.

Ālam-i Mesāl is *no-where*, *Nā-kujā-ābād,* or Suhrawardī's Utopia, which was discussed in the initial paragraphs. From Suhrawardī's point of view, "in the philosophy of illumination, Gabriel, or the Holy Spirit helps human beings to bring their potentials into action, connect with him and appreciate the treasure of his knowledge and virtues" (Poornāmdārīyan, 1985, p. 2). Gabriel is the mediator of the existence and source of understanding of the human population and his wing has a metaphysical meaning, which Suhrawardī attempts to convey the *Being* or existence of the creatures in the universe through divine grace. It is crystal clear that all these delineations are hidden secrets, which cannot be acknowledged by focusing on the form. As Sufi explained about the number of Gabriel's wings and two gates in *Khāneqāh,* it can be argued that Suhrawardī uses not only mysterious numbers but also mysterious colors by employing binary oppositions in describing Gabriel's wings of black and white, city and desert. In the world of abstractions, wing means *ṣūrat*. Gabriel's right-wing is light, which is related to the unity of the Word (*Kalām*). However, his left wing is related to the darkness, through which, by God's will, he creates the material form (*ṣūrat*) of objects.

Ālam-i Nāsūt and everything therein is the resonance of Gabriel's wings. As a result, *kalām* or soul is the essence of human existence. With these

signs, Suhrawardī intends to point out that all the beings in *Ālam-i Nāsūt* (i.e., *Ālam-i Mahsūs*) are the resonance of Gabriel's wings. Accordingly, the disbelievers are also considered as the resonance of his wings. In this case, all beings are the words of God (*kalām Allāh*), and every word (beings) has a spiritual soul that can return to his utopia. Suhrawardī's goal is that all human beings should look forward to the unity of the word to be an ideal human being; thus, this unity of the word is beyond religions because all human beings have souls; so that they are the resonance of Gabriel's wings. Gabriel's right-wing, identified by an angelic and virtuous fluorescence, pure Light, or in other words, *Ālam-i Maʿqūl*. The left-wing has both darkness and light on it, which the radiation of light stems from *Ālam-i Maʿqūl* and the darkness represents the material world.

4. The Crimson Intellect

This book is also regarded as one of Suhrawardī's outstanding treatises, representing the Persian Utopia and portrays his vision of mystical dimension and philosophical discourse of an ideal man both in a physical and spiritual sense through the presence of light and self, engaging with the luminous world of lights, worlds of angels, and ancient Persian archetypes that illustrates the interrelated web of ideas that Suhrawardī puts forward. In this treatise, since the intellect stands at the borderline of the spiritual and the material world, the archangel or the intellect is presented in color crimson, a symbol that connects the amalgamation of the night (black) and day (light) that is found in the evening (crimson).

The Crimson Intellect begins with the inquiry that whether birds can understand each other's language, an eagle answers the question instantaneously by confirming this idea. However, meanwhile, it is captured by a hunter. In the desert, the eagle meets a red-faced spiritual that claims to be the first archangel who was created in the world. The archangel is the Sufi's intellect, which is the tenth *Aql* in the hierarchy of the winged angels who are epitomized as attending on God, a human face celestial body demonstrated with eagle's wings called the Holy Spirit—Gabriel; an angel of wisdom and angel of inspiration. In this point, it can be assumed that Suhrawardī refers to the archetype of human, a person who was young since he was ontologically removed from Allāh, being regarded as the eternal and the oldest of being:

> And Sulaimân (Solomon) inherited (the knowledge of) Dâwūd (David). He said: "O mankind! We have been taught the language of birds, and on us have been bestowed all things. This, verily, is an evident grace (from Allâh) (27:16).

By proceeding *The Crimson Intellect* (*Aql-i Surkh*), Suhrawardī applies the Zoroastrian symbolism of Qāf Mountain and refers to Ferdowsī's epic, *Shāh-nāmeh*. Qāf is where Phoenix (*Sīmurq*)— symbol of divinity and purity, was born. Since the soul is free just like a bird, in Persian literature, birds are the symbol of humanity's soul; it can travel from its current situation, *Ālam-i Nāsūt*, to the desired situation, *Ālam-i maʿqūl*. Furthermore, Suhrawardī continues the story by employing Zāl, who was born albino at Qāf and raised by Sīmurq and married to Tahmīneh, a character who is "well-known for being the soul of Persia" (Aminrazavi, 2014, p. 21). Tahmīneh gives birth to a boy named Rustam, who is the hero of *Shāh-nāmeh* and "well-known for overcoming his ego" (p. 21). Aminrażavī declares that "whereas Ferdowsī emphasizes the epic and historical aspects of Persian mythology; Suhrawardī focuses on its mystical and esoteric connotations" (p. 21). Symbolic wise, Suhrawardī, in this treatise, uses the same language and style that is used in *The Chant of Gabriel's Wings*. Aminrażavī also holds that Suhrawardī brings "both classical issues of Islamic philosophy and mysticism, such as the distinction between the rational faculties, which is called the peculiar intellect, (*Aql-i Juzʾi*) and the intellect which he calls universal intellect, (*Aql-i Kulli*)" (p. 23). A striking certitude about Suhrawardī's (1997) writing style is that he tries to put veil on the very essence of his writings to hide his theory of knowledge behind the set of creative symbols. The eagle soliloquizes:

> … I said to myself that the wardens were not paying attention to me. I said to myself that I would never find a better opportunity, so I crept into a corner and, fettered as I was, escaped limping into the wilderness. There I saw someone approaching. I went forward and greeted him. He replied as politely as possible. As I looked at that person I saw that his countenance and color were red. Thinking him young, I said, "Young man, where do you come from?" "My son," he replied, "you have addressed me mistakenly. I am the first child of creation. You call me young?!" "Why are your features not white?" I asked. "My features are

> white," he said. "I am a luminous elder. But that person who captured you in the snare, and placed these disagreeable fetters on you and appointed the wardens over you through me long ago into a black pit. This color of mine, which appears red to you, is because of that. Otherwise, I am white and luminous. Every white thing that is connected to light appear red when admixed with black… (p. 21-22).

The eagle's condition in this treatise is similar to Suhrawardī's situation in *Khāneqāh* in *The Chant of Gabriel's Wings*. The bird also prefers the desert rather than the city, same as the Sufi in the previous treatise. The eagle also encounters a person who can be compared to the ten sages of *The Chant of Gabriel's Wings*. When the sage says that "I am the first child of creation," it is apparent that the first child of creation is *Aql*. Prophet Muḥammad—peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him— declares:

> The first thing that God created was the Intellect ...

In Mysticism, Intellect is inherently abstract and concrete; that is, neither material nor physical, nor does it need to be related to the body to function properly. What is noteworthy in this context is that this intellect has nothing to do with human intellect that one can think with it. The general perception, the human soul connects with the world of intellect through acquiring the world from the proportion of its existential capacity. In the system of existence, there is a world called the "world of Intellect" or *Ālam-i Maʿqūl*; this world is a mediator of the lower world that is called *Ālam-i Nāsūt*. Accordingly, the supreme intellectual being is the "first Intellect," and its existence does not depend on the material world and does not need anything other than the divine essence. So, all the perfections of the Almighty can appear in the world of Intellect. Although the first Intellect is the most perfect of beings and the most honorable one in the universe of possibility, at the same time, its existence depends on the Almighty.

The similarity between Suhrawardī and the sage that meets the eagle in the desert is comprehendible when the old man declares his "features" are white but in the "black pit" returned into crimson. Similarly, Gabriel's wings are also acquainted with white and black, sequentially representing the soul and the body. The mixture of black and white in the "features" of the old man is converted into crimson. If we consider Light as the color of Sun or daylight and black as the sign of moonlight at night, it would be

evident that crimson should be regarded as the aurora or twilight. The fire also has the same connotation. Suhrawardī (1997) himself applies this idea to Light of fire:

> A flame has the same quality. Below it is white and above is black smoke. Between the fire and smoke, it appears red. There are many such examples. Then I said, "Elder, where do you come from?" He replied, "From beyond Mount Qāf, where my residence is. Your nest too was there, but you have forgotten it." "What are you doing here?" I asked. "I am a traveler," he said. "I continually wander about the world and look at the marvelous things." "What wonders have you seen in the world?" I asked. "Seven things," he replied. "First, Mount Qāf, which is our realm; second, the Pearl-that-glows-by-night [*Guhar-i Shab Afrūz*]; third, Tuba tree [*Sidrat al-Muntaha*]; fourth, Twelve workshops; fifth, David's chain mail; sixth, Sword *Balarak*; seventh, the spring of life (p. 22).

Gabriel, or rather archangel, guides its disciple about the different stages he will face in ascending the psycho-cosmic situation of mount Qāf. Seven wonders will have to be conquered; finally, if the visionary is capable of identifying himself with Kheżr, he will easily cross Qāf, the mountain separating him from the spiritual world. However, the first step of reaching utopia, for Suhrawardī, is Qāf, the symbol of *Ālam-i Mesāl* or *Malakūt*. In Persian literature, the highest mountain, Damāvand, resembles Qāf. In the Qur'an is there a reference to Qāf as the boundary between the *Ālam-i Mesāl* and *Ālam-i Nāsūt*. In different interpretations of this Verse, Qāf is referred to the vast mountain range that stretches around the earth:

> Qâf. [These letters (Qâf, etc.) are one of the miracles of the Qur'ân, and none but Allâh (Alone) knows their meanings]. By the Glorious Qur'ân (50:1).

He, by the Pearl-that-glows-by-night, signifies the moon and by mentioning "David's chain mail," attributes that:

> And We taught him [Dâwûd] the making of metal coats of mail (for battles), to protect you in your fighting. Are you then grateful? (21:80).

This chain mail is made to protect the soul in the confrontation between the soul and body. To understand Suhrawardī's (1997) expression about seven steps to reach *no-where* or utopia, it is imperative to investigate the last step, which is the fountain of life:

> "Where is the Spring of Life?" I asked. "In the Darkness," he said. "If you would seek it, lace your shoes like Kheżr and take the road of trust that you may reach the Darkness." "In which direction is the way?" I asked. "In any direction you go, you will arrive." "What is the sign of Darkness?" I asked. "Blackness," he said. And you yourself are in the Darkness, but you don't know it. He, who goes, when he sees himself in the Darkness, knows that he has been in the Darkness prior to that and that he has never seen the light. So the first step of those who would go is this, and from here, one can progress. Now, if anyone reaches this stage, he will be able to go on from there. A claimant to the Spring of Life must wander much in the Darkness. If he is worthy of the spring, in the end, he will see the light after darkness. Then it will not be necessary for him to follow the Light, for it is from heaven and rests over the Spring of Life. If he travels and bathes in the spring, he will be safe from the blow of the sword *Balarak* (p. 31).

Diving into the "fountain of life" helps to survey the peculiarities of reaching Allāh. To reach Utopia, Suhrawardī maintains that human beings should put the material world aside because the body acts like a shield and a stumbling block that would not let the soul step into the path of utopia. It is worthy of mentioning that the means of reaching *no-where* is suffering in the darkness until the Light or *Hūrqalyā* (the eighth stage) appears amidst the darkness and gloominess.

Suhrawardī's *Ālam-i Mesāl* or his Utopia has different cities, which the final step of reaching Allāh is the eighth one, named *Hūrqalyā*. Based on Muʿīn's dictionary *Hūrqalyā* means "brightness and brilliance." Henry Corbin (2014) clearly elaborates on this terminology:

> This world [the eighth stage] contains all the richness and variety of the world of sense in a subtle state; it is a world of subsistent and autonomous Forms and Images, the threshold of the Malakūt. In it, are to be found the mystical cities of *Jābulqā, Jābursā*, and *Hūrqalyā* (p. 214).

Prophet Muḥammad has described the cities of *Jābulqā* and *Jābursā*. He asserts that in the darkness and adjacent of mount Qāf*, Jābulqā* is located in

the eastern-most and *Jābursā* on the western-most side of it. Henry Corbin asserts that "*Tabarī* has preserved for us some of the earliest information available about a mysterious region [*Hūrqalyā*] whose description enables us to identify as the *Earth of the Emerald Cities*" (Corbin, 1989, p. 73). For Suhrawardī, the two climes of *Jābulqā* and *Jābursā* are added to the third city, *Hūrqalyā*, a mystic clime. The first two climes are "*Emerald Cities*" lay directly beyond the Qāf Mountain. As the "mountain of Qāf only lends its name to the ancient Elburz, its primordial Image has also been projected on spaces of empirical geography which then become the theater of mythical events" (p. 74-75). This terminology is compared to the Greek Utopia like those of Plato and More's and is regarded as the Persian utopia. Several theories about the word *Hūrqalyā* have been written: Some philosophers have considered it as the Sun, [as the word '*Hūr*' in the Persian language means sunshine and daylight]; and others have called it the astral body" (p. 74-75). It can also be interpreted in a way that *Hūrqalyā* has the same connotation as *Ālam-i Mesāl* and can be attained by human beings in the imagination. Nevertheless, imagination does not signify human's hallucination as a fabricated utopia; however, these images can occur beyond the limitation of *Ālam-i Maḥūs*. Accordingly, Zahabī and Moḥarramī (2010) hold that the exclusive way of understanding this world is imagination, the world, that is not perceived by the [five] senses. This world is placed in the eighth climate [*Eqlīm-i Hashtum*], which is a super-sensory climate (p. 94). To put it into better words, *Hūrqalyā* is a world that is evacuated from wickedness, but is full of purity and truthfulness. As a result, by using *no-where* or Utopia, Suhrawardī refers to *Ālam-i Mesāl*, a surrealistic world that refers to the world of symbols. At this level, the soul of true self takes a discernible but intangible shape of *Rūh-e Nūrānī* and the soul of celestial light got exposed and revealed and eventually achieves Utopia.

5. Conclusion

Suhrawardī is one of the conspicuous figures who introduced the ideal city of Divine Sages in the world. The primary attitude of *Nā-kujā-ābād*, in the Persian language, might have a detrimental connotation with complicated lineage; nonetheless, Suhrawardī, in *Āwāz-I Par-i Jabråīl* and *Aql-i Surkh* moderately implies his utopia. The principal goal of Suhrawardī's ideal

place is to edify and instruct his readers to regain their personalized utopia. In different sections of the article, the researcher explained to what extent Suhrawardī's works overlap with the utopian doctrine and how it modifies the original basis of Neverland. The divergence between the western utopias of Thomas More or Francis Bacon, and *No-where* of Shaykh-al Ishrāq is that *Ishrāqī* utopia is the land of Divine Sages. To understand the concept of utopia from Suhrawardī's thought, one must consider the relationship between incarnation and spirit— an empirical interconnection.

Suhrawardī's utopia takes place in the world of abstemious and ascetics. By decontaminating the body from the soul, humankind purifies his nature and the soul of the whole universe and this research employed utopian theory to describe *No-where's* intricacies. Like a Perennial flower that comes up again year after year, the utopian vision of Suhrawardī— Perennialism, illustrates the idea of one ultimate truth with different versions that springs up again year after year. Generalizing this to human life, each individual is born into a particular religion with a unique development path and discovery for unfolding a sacred and utopian mystery. Every religion has various perspectives about this mystery; it may be experienced or described as God, Ahūrā Mazdā, or Allāh. Thus, every person is walking towards the same ultimate reality and what Suhrawardī attempts to achieve is that each religion is just one possible expression of the journey toward what ultimately is Real. To be an ideal human being, one should journey toward the center. Suhrawardī's diction is a non-spatial and non-temporal world that transcends time and space. If we take reciprocal externality as the status of beings in the world of sense, the mutual interfusion of two ideas— soul/body, white/black, orchard/desert, and good/evil— is the feature of the spiritual world. Suhrawardī, in his works, provides ample evidence for the perennial nature of Neoplatonic tradition, which he may have drawn inspiration from Neoplatonists for his vision of the scientific Garden of Eden where humankind will be restored to its original state of grace through the advancement of learning. Contrary to what has often been assumed, the rise of utopianism and idealism can be fulfilled through Suhrawardī's ideas. These treatises were produced through the basis of utopia, the city of no-where, and discloses a practical sense of utopianism, which is obscured by a set of symbolism. As a result, the focus of Oriental Utopianism is on the sincerity and authenticity of humans. By looking at the universe through the lens of the Persian and Oriental utopia, it can

be estimated that what makes a person superior to another is considering the inner light of humanity; therefore, this kind of utopia is not ethnic-specific and is not only related to Persians or Muslims. Yet, every single person from each sphere can apply Suhrawardī's methodology to achieve a personalized utopia. To cut the long story short, Suhrawardī's ideal land lies at the heart of purifying the soul, where the true self of human beings is apart from political and social issues.

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