



THE SHAPE OF LIGHT

Suhrawardi: The Shape of Light

Hayakal Al-Nur

Interpreted by Shaykh Tosun Bayrak

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The twelfth-century Sufi **Shihabuddin Yahya Al-Suhrawardi** (1155-11 91 A.D., 549-587 A.H.) was the founder of the Illuminationist or Ishraqi school, a philosophy of "light" or intellectual intuition, influenced by Platonism, Hermeticism, and, especially, the teachings of Persian Sufi masters. Born in Azerbaijan, Suhrawardi spent most of his adult life in Persia, where he died at the age of 38, after being imprisoned by the authorities for his beliefs. He is the author of over 50 works in Arabic and Persian, including the treatise presented here and the work that is considered his masterpiece, *Hikmat al-ishraq* (The Theosophy of Illumination).

"How do souls differ from one another in the eternal realm?" This and other related matters are addressed in Suhrawardi's treatise, *Hayakal al-Nur*, which is arranged in seven categories called "Forms of Light." Points considered in this volume include the limitations of man's senses and his true or theomorphic essence; the nature and levels of the human soul and the various realms or Centers, the *Nur al Muhammadi* or Absolute Mind, as well as Ordinary Mind and Divine Mind, the nature of the firmaments; and the meaning of pleasure and pain.

Also included here: a preface drawn from the words of the twelfth-century saint and master *Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani* on the inner nature of the human heart, explicating the mystical Quranic verse on Light; an introduction by Shaikh Tosun Bayrak differentiating between mystical philosophy and the philosophy of Sufism; ten pieces of calligraphy of the Beautiful Names of Allah from the Grand Mosque (Ulu Cami) in Bursa, Turkey; and a Sufi fable in which a mysterious city becomes a metaphor for the layers of the human soul and for the created world, simultaneously.

In this last marvelous section, a Wayfarer journeys inward to the castle at the Center and encounters the Principles, Virtues, and Vices clothed as administrators and members of the population. After passing through the outer domains of the *nafs*, Ammara, the Imperious City of Freedom and Pleasure, and Lawwama, the City of Self Reproach, he at last reaches Mulhima, the four districts of the inner City of Love and Inspiration. Here a guide appears who will lead him on to Self-Annihilation: "Be nought, be

nought, be nought, so that you will be forever." Like one of the birds who traveled with the Hoopoe toward God in *The Conference of the Birds*, he reaches *faqr*, the total emptiness required for the soul's Return.

Shaikh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi is the author of interpretations from the Turkish of Ibn 'Arabi's *Divine Governance of the Human Kingdom* and al-Jilani's *The Secret of Secrets*. He has also translated as-Sulami's *Way of Sufi Chivalry* and has written a meditation on *The Most Beautiful Names*.



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