



## The epistemic validity of religious propositions: An analysis based on Suhrawardi's logic

### *A validade epistêmica das proposições religiosas: uma análise baseada na lógica de Suhrawardi*

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#### Abstract

This article examines the logical admissibility of religious propositions through the framework of Suhrawardi's logic. It does not seek to confirm or refute religious claims, but to assess whether such propositions satisfy the minimal conditions required for epistemic evaluation. Four criteria derived from Suhrawardi's logic structure the analysis: definability of the subject, self-evidence as the starting point of cognition, the capacity to generate genuine knowledge, and the preservation of the distinction between existence and essence. The study suggests that many widely employed religious propositions encounter significant difficulties in meeting these logical requirements. They often lack clearly determinate conceptual content, may not provide a legitimate epistemic starting point, and do not readily culminate in analyzable knowledge. Moreover, by loosening or suspending the relation between essence and existence, they tend to resist rational assessment. Consequently, within this strictly logical framework, such propositions can be understood as tending to remain outside, or at best at the margins of, epistemic validity.

**Keywords:** Suhrawardi's logic; epistemic validity; religious propositions; self-evidence; illusion of knowing; existence and essence.

#### Resumo

Este artigo examina a admissibilidade lógica das proposições religiosas a partir do quadro da lógica de Suhrawardi. Não pretende confirmar nem refutar afirmações religiosas, mas avaliar se tais proposições satisfazem as condições mínimas exigidas para a avaliação epistêmica. A análise é estruturada com base em quatro critérios derivados da lógica de Suhrawardi: a definibilidade do sujeito, a autoevidência como ponto de partida do conhecimento, a capacidade de gerar conhecimento genuíno e a preservação da distinção entre existência e essência. O estudo sugere que muitas proposições religiosas amplamente utilizadas encontram dificuldades significativas em satisfazer esses requisitos lógicos. Frequentemente carecem de conteúdo conceitual claramente determinado, podem não fornecer um ponto de partida epistêmico legítimo e não culminam facilmente em conhecimento analisável. Além disso, ao flexibilizar ou suspender a relação entre essência e existência, tendem a resistir à avaliação racional. Conseqüentemente, dentro deste quadro estritamente lógico, tais proposições podem ser compreendidas como tendendo a permanecer fora, ou na melhor das hipóteses, nas margens da validade epistêmica.

**Palavras-chave:** lógica de Suhrawardi; validade epistêmica; proposições religiosas; autoevidência; ilusão de conhecimento; existência e essência.

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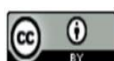
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## Introduction

Religious propositions play a pervasive and influential role in everyday life, public discourse, and ethical and political decision-making within societies. Propositions such as “God exists,” “God has said that...,” “This is God’s will or wisdom,” or “This act is sinful” are not confined to the sphere of personal belief; they are also employed to justify norms, laws, and structures of authority. Despite their widespread use, however, questions concerning their logical and epistemic validity are often either ignored or resolved within non-logical frameworks—such as faith, tradition, or religious authority.

Most existing studies on religious propositions fall either within the domain of theology and religious doctrine, where such propositions are defended or interpreted, or within sociology and the psychology of religion, where attention is directed toward their social and psychological functions. By contrast, a purely logical analysis of religious propositions—one that proceeds without theological or anti-theological presuppositions—has received comparatively little attention. In particular, the fundamental question of whether religious propositions satisfy the minimal conditions required for logical evaluation and epistemic judgment has largely remained unaddressed.

Contemporary philosophy of religion has addressed the epistemic status of religious belief through appeals to properly basic belief, religious experience, and debates over falsifiability and meaning. These discussions, however, typically presuppose that religious propositions already qualify as candidates for logical assessment, and focus instead on their justification or warrant (Plantinga, 2000, p. 175-184, Flew, 1950, p. 96–99). The present study takes a prior step by asking whether such propositions satisfy the minimal logical conditions required for admission into the domain of epistemic evaluation at all.

This article seeks to address this gap by employing Suhrawardi’s logic as its analytical framework. Suhrawardi’s logic is not treated here as a component of a theological or illuminationist system, but rather as a critical standard for assessing the validity of propositions as such. Contrary to prevailing interpretations that subsume Suhrawardi’s logic under Peripatetic logic or regard it merely as a preliminary stage for intuitive or illuminative knowledge, this study argues that Suhrawardi’s logic possesses an independent capacity to evaluate the possibility of knowledge, the meaningfulness of propositions, and the distinction between genuine knowledge and the illusion of knowing. This analysis remains entirely internal to the logical framework employed and does not presuppose any evaluative stance

toward religion as a social or existential phenomenon. Accordingly, the conclusions advanced in this study are to be understood as framework-dependent, reflecting the constraints of Suhrawardi's logic rather than constituting general claims about religious discourse as such.

A central claim of this article is that the examination of religious propositions does not require engagement in theological, metaphysical, or doctrinal disputes. More precisely, this paper does not seek to refute theological claims, but to clarify the logical conditions under which propositions may count as epistemically valid within Suhrawardi's framework. The primary question is not whether the content of these propositions is true or false, but whether they satisfy the minimal requirements of logic. From this perspective, Suhrawardi's logic makes it possible to assess the logical validity of religious propositions independently of any attempt to prove or disprove religious claims themselves.

Accordingly, this article analyzes commonly used religious propositions on the basis of four fundamental criteria derived from Suhrawardi's logic: definability, self-evidence as the starting point of cognition, the possibility of attaining genuine knowledge, and the preservation of the logical distinction between existence and essence. It will be shown that religious propositions, regardless of their theological content, raise systematic logical difficulties at each of these levels and, within this framework, do not straightforwardly meet the conditions required for epistemic validity.

The structure of the article is as follows. The first section articulates Suhrawardi's logic as a criterion for the validity of propositions. The subsequent sections examine, respectively, the failure of definition, the absence of self-evidence, the production of the illusion of knowledge, and the collapse of the relation between existence and essence in religious propositions. The concluding section summarizes the results of this analysis and considers their implications for the critique of religious language and the defense of the possibility of free thought.

## **1. Logic and the Validity of Propositions**

Contrary to prevalent interpretations that regard Suhrawardi's logic either as a mere modification within the framework of Peripatetic logic or as a preliminary propaedeutic to illuminative discussions, this article argues that Suhrawardi's logic possesses a critical and negative capacity that can be directly employed to assess the epistemic validity of propositions commonly used in religious discourse (Corbin, 1971, p. 211–214). On this

reading, Suhrawardi's logic is not situated within a theological project, but is understood as an independent criterion for evaluating the possibility or impossibility of knowledge.

In his logical and philosophical works, Suhrawardi explicitly maintains that logic is not merely a collection of formal rules governing syllogisms and inferences, but a discipline directly concerned with the possibility or impossibility of cognition itself. From this perspective, logic functions not primarily as an instrument of proof, but as a criterion governing the admission of propositions into the domain of knowledge. A proposition that fails to satisfy the minimal conditions of cognition lacks logical validity, even if it is expressed in a grammatically correct declarative form (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 64–66). This conception elevates logic beyond a purely instrumental role and transforms it into a standard for distinguishing meaningful propositions from those devoid of epistemic value.

According to Suhrawardi's logic, the validity of any proposition depends on at least four fundamental conditions. The first is definability: the subject of a proposition must possess a valid definition and clearly delineated conceptual boundaries. Suhrawardi explicitly distinguishes real definitions from merely verbal or nominal ones, emphasizing that definitions which amount only to naming or superficial description lack epistemic value and cannot serve as a basis for knowledge (Suhrawardi, 1990, p. 23–25).

The second condition is self-evidence as the starting point of cognition. From Suhrawardi's perspective, no proposition can enter the process of reasoning without relying on what is self-evident or without an ultimate reference to self-evidence. A proposition that is neither self-evident in itself nor reducible to something self-evident lacks a legitimate epistemic starting point, and any reasoning based upon it necessarily falls into circularity or infinite regress (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 71–73).

The third condition is the possibility of attaining genuine knowledge. Suhrawardi draws a clear distinction between true knowledge (*ma'rifa*) and mere mental representations, inherited beliefs, or forms of psychological persuasion. He repeatedly emphasizes that much of what is presented as "knowledge" is in fact nothing more than an illusion of knowing (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 109–111). This distinction, which has been emphasized in contemporary interpretations, plays a central role in understanding the critical dimension of Suhrawardi's logic (Ha'iri Yazdi, 1992, p. 47).

The fourth condition is the preservation of the logical distinction between existence and essence. Suhrawardi insists that any logical analysis presupposes that existence is always understood as the existence of something with a determinate essence. Attributing existence without specifying an essence not only fails to generate knowledge, but also eliminates the very possibility of logical judgment (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 84–87).

These four principles are neither isolated nor independent; rather, they form interrelated components of a single criterion for assessing the meaningfulness and validity of propositions. A proposition that lacks a valid definition cannot properly enter the domain of logic; a proposition without self-evidence lacks an epistemic starting point; a proposition that does not lead to genuine knowledge produces only an illusion of knowing; and a proposition that collapses the distinction between existence and essence forfeits its logical analyzability. Consequently, Suhrawardi's logic functions less as an instrument for proving metaphysical claims than as a standard for purifying the domain of knowledge and excluding, within its own criteria, propositions that do not meet its conditions of admissibility (Corbin, 1971, p. 239–243).

The significance of this approach becomes especially clear when it is applied to religious propositions commonly encountered in everyday life—such as “God exists,” “God has said that...,” “This is God's will or wisdom,” or “This act is sinful.” These propositions are typically accepted not on the basis of definition, self-evidence, or logical reasoning, but rather through tradition, religious authority, or subjective experience. The central question addressed in this article is whether such propositions, regardless of their theological content, satisfy the conditions required for admission into logic at all.

In twentieth-century analytic discussions, similar concerns emerged in debates over the meaningfulness and falsifiability of theological language, where propositions immune to empirical or logical testing were argued to risk cognitive vacuity (Flew, 1950, p. 96–99; Hare, 1955, p. 100–103). The present analysis differs in method, yet converges on the preliminary issue of logical admissibility rather than theological truth.

Accordingly, Suhrawardi's logic is employed in this study not as a logic that confirms faith or theology, but as a critical criterion for evaluating religious language. This approach makes it possible to assess the validity or invalidity of religious propositions solely on logical grounds, without recourse to theological controversies or metaphysical presuppositions. In the following sections, each of the four principles outlined above will be examined

independently, and it will be shown how commonly used religious propositions encounter logical impasses at each of these levels.

## 2. The Failure of Definition

The first and most fundamental criterion for the validity of propositions in Suhrawardi's logic is definability. From his perspective, no proposition can enter the domain of logic and knowledge unless its subject possesses clear conceptual boundaries. Definition here is not a merely linguistic or conventional tool, but a condition for the possibility of understanding, differentiation, and logical judgment. Suhrawardi explicitly distinguishes between real definitions—which refer to the essence of a thing—and merely verbal or nominal definitions, emphasizing that only the former possess epistemic value (Suhrawardi, 1990, p. 23–26).

Suhrawardi further maintains that definitions which rely solely on naming, superficial description, or negative reference (such as “that which is not such-and-such”) not only fail to produce knowledge but actively generate an illusion of understanding. Accordingly, if the subject of a proposition lacks an essential definition, the proposition itself—even if syntactically well-formed—does not yield a clearly determinate logical meaning within this framework (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 61–63). This claim constitutes the critical foundation of Suhrawardi's logic and demonstrates that logic is concerned, prior to anything else, with the possibility of meaning rather than with linguistic form alone.

Within this framework, the proposition “God exists” encounters a fundamental problem. The proposition asserts existence without providing a valid definition of its subject—namely, “God.” A real definition, which requires the determination of genus and differentia, is here regarded as entirely impossible; yet even a formal or descriptive definition is insufficient from the standpoint of Suhrawardi's logic, since description cannot substitute for the determination of essence. As a result, what is presupposed in this proposition is not an analyzable concept but a name devoid of logical boundaries (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 64–66).

Suhrawardi explicitly states that attributing existence to something whose essence has not been clarified does not function as an epistemically meaningful attribution within this framework. Existence is always the existence of something with a determinate essence, and in the absence of definition, the attribution of existence to a subject amounts to nothing more than a linguistic maneuver (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 84–86). From this perspective, the

proposition “God exists” is neither provable nor disprovable, because it fails to refer to anything that can be situated within the horizon of logical analysis.

The same difficulty reappears in the proposition “God has said that...”. This statement not only presupposes the existence of an indefinable agent, but also attributes to it the act of speaking without clarifying the conditions under which such an attribution is possible. What we encounter here is the transmission of a declarative proposition from a source that itself lacks a valid definition. From the standpoint of Suhrawardi’s logic, the validity of a reported proposition depends on the validity of its source; and a source whose essence is indefinable cannot perform an epistemic function (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 67–69).

Other propositions such as “This ruling is divine” or “This law accords with God’s will” suffer from the same structural deficiency. In these cases, a normative or obligatory relation is attributed to a subject whose conceptual boundaries have been suspended. As a result, not only is the subject left undefined, but the predicate relation itself remains conceptually indeterminate. From the perspective of Suhrawardi’s logic, this situation exemplifies a reduction of logic to the language of authority rather than the language of knowledge (Walbridge, 2001, p. 78–81).

Moreover, propositions grounded in claims such as “God has said” or “the divine ruling is such-and-such” often function as terminators of inquiry and analysis. In this role, definition is replaced by reference to text, tradition, or institutional authority, and logic is effectively excluded from the process of judgment. Suhrawardi regards this condition as a substitution of knowledge with imitation—a situation in which language serves not to clarify concepts, but to block questioning (Corbin, 1971, p. 214–217).

Therefore, Suhrawardi’s emphasis on definition is not a merely formal concern, but part of a broader project aimed at distinguishing genuine knowledge from authority-driven structures of cognition. In Suhrawardi’s logic, wherever definition is suspended, the possibility of rational judgment is likewise eliminated, and language is transformed into an instrument for stabilizing belief (Ziai, 1990, p. 112–115).

From the standpoint of Suhrawardi’s logic, a proposition that lacks a valid definition is not only incapable of proof, but does not even qualify as a proper object of logic. This point is of particular importance for the analysis of religious propositions, since many such propositions operate precisely at the point where definition is suspended and existence or

obligation is presupposed without the determination of essence. The result is the production of propositions that appear declarative or normative, but in fact contain no analyzable epistemic content.

Accordingly, the failure of definition in propositions such as “God exists,” “God has said that...,” or “This is a divine ruling” is not a minor or remediable defect, but a structural one. These propositions lose the conditions for admission into logic from the outset; for this reason, they cannot be adequately examined within the framework of logical reasoning and, consequently, face serious obstacles in achieving epistemic validity. In the following section, this analysis will be extended through an examination of the criterion of self-evidence, showing that even if the problem of definition were set aside, religious propositions would still lack a legitimate starting point for cognition.

### **3. The Absence of Self-Evidence**

Following the failure of definition, the second fundamental criterion for the validity of propositions in Suhrawardi’s logic is self-evidence. For Suhrawardi, self-evidence does not in any sense mean psychological acceptance, cultural habit, or an inner feeling of certainty. Rather, it refers to a proposition that is immediately clear to the intellect without mediation or the need for argument, and that can therefore serve as the starting point of any epistemic process. From this perspective, self-evidence is not the result of reasoning, but its condition of possibility; any argument that begins from a non-self-evident proposition is, from the outset, devoid of logical validity (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 15).

Suhrawardi explicitly emphasizes that a proposition which is neither self-evident nor referable to something self-evident lacks an epistemic point of departure. Such a proposition, even if it produces psychological assurance or subjective certainty, cannot function as a foundation for knowledge within logic, since subjective certainty cannot replace logical self-evidence (Suhrawardi, 1990, p. 67–69). In contemporary epistemology of religion, it has been argued that certain religious beliefs may function as properly basic without inferential support, grounded in immediate experiential awareness (Plantinga, 2000, p. 244–248). Yet even within that framework, the question remains whether such immediacy suffices to meet strict logical criteria of intersubjective self-evidence and conceptual determinacy. This distinction is crucial for the analysis of religious propositions, many of which are presented

precisely through claims of self-evidence or personal certainty without satisfying the logical conditions of self-evidence.

Statements such as “I am certain that God exists,” “This truth is self-evident to believers,” “If you have faith, you will understand,” or “This is one of the self-evident truths of religion” clearly exemplify this situation. In such cases, self-evidence is treated not as a property of the proposition itself, but as a mental state of the believing subject. In Suhrawardi’s logic, however, self-evidence is an attribute of propositions, not of inner experience or the psychological condition of the subject. What arises from faith, habit, or collective belonging may generate personal certainty, but such certainty has no epistemic function within logic (Walbridge, 2001, p. 78–80).

Appeals to religious experience have likewise been advanced as epistemic grounds for belief, understood as doxastic practices comparable to perceptual experience (Alston, 1991, p. 9–15). However, insofar as such experiences lack publicly accessible criteria of conceptual articulation, their logical status remains indeterminate within a strictly formal framework.

Suhrawardi draws a fundamental distinction between genuine knowledge and mental forms produced by habit, suggestion, or imagination, and he warns that conflating the two leads to the production of an illusion of knowledge. In his view, much of what people take to be self-evident is in fact the result of mental familiarity, social conditioning, or linguistic repetition rather than immediate rational insight (Suhrawardi, 1990, p. 72–74). From this standpoint, propositions whose alleged self-evidence is conditioned upon faith or inner experience are not only non-self-evident, but also lose any capacity for intersubjective evaluation. A self-evidence that holds only for “the believer” is not logical self-evidence, but a privatization of truth (Ziai, 1990, p. 112–114).

Moreover, claims of self-evidence in religious propositions are often accompanied by a form of immunity from critique. When it is asserted that “this truth is self-evident,” questioning or doubt is no longer treated as a rational activity, but as a sign of lack of faith, moral deficiency, or existential failure. In such circumstances, self-evidence is transformed from an epistemic criterion into an instrument for blocking inquiry. This is precisely the condition that Suhrawardi’s logic rejects, since self-evidence in logic is the beginning of rational discourse, not its termination (Corbin, 1971, p. 103–105).

From the perspective of Suhrawardi's logic, a proposition that derives its alleged self-evidence from subjective experience, personal certainty, or religious affiliation can neither serve as the starting point of reasoning nor enter the process of knowledge. Such a proposition is neither independently clear nor referable to something self-evident. Consequently, even if the problem of definition in religious propositions were set aside, the absence of self-evidence would still deprive them of logical validity (Ha'iri Yazdi, 1992, p. 41–43).

Accordingly, religious propositions grounded in personal certainty, faith-based self-evidence, or claims of being “obvious to believers” suffer from a structural deficiency from the standpoint of Suhrawardi's logic. These propositions tend to fall outside, or at least remain problematic for, the domain of logic, not because they are necessarily false, but because they lack a valid point of departure for knowledge. In the following section, it will be shown that this deficiency leads, at a deeper level, to the inability of religious propositions to culminate in genuine knowledge, reducing them instead to the production of mere mental forms and an illusion of knowing.

#### **4. Knowledge and the Illusion of Knowing**

Following the failure of definition and the absence of self-evidence, the third fundamental criterion for the validity of propositions in Suhrawardi's logic is the capacity to generate genuine knowledge. From his perspective, a proposition possesses epistemic validity only insofar as it leads to a form of knowledge that transcends mere mental representations, belief, or psychological persuasion. Genuine knowledge here is not to be understood as merely true belief or a psychological state of certainty, but rather as a mode of disclosure and presence of meaning to the intellect, accompanied by conceptual clarity and distinction. In Suhrawardi's logic and epistemology, knowledge is not reducible to mental representations, faith-based beliefs, or psychological persuasion; rather, it is realized only insofar as the object of knowledge is present to the intellect and capable of being discriminated as such (Kaukau, 2015, p. 52–56).

Suhrawardi repeatedly emphasizes that not every assent constitutes knowledge, nor does every form that arises in the mind possess epistemic value. Knowledge, for him, requires a real disclosure (*inkishāf*) with respect to its object, not the mere presence of content within the mind (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 109–111).

Within this framework, Suhrawardi draws a fundamental distinction between genuine knowledge and mental forms. Mental forms may arise from language, habit, education, indoctrination, or imagination, without bearing any necessary correspondence to reality. Genuine knowledge, by contrast, presupposes a valid relation between the intellect and its object—a relation that cannot arise without definition, self-evidence, and the possibility of logical analysis (Suhrawardi, 1990, p. 81–84).

From this standpoint, common religious propositions—such as “This is God’s will,” “God has so decreed,” “This is a divine command,” or “This act leads to salvation or damnation”—face a fundamental problem. Although these propositions appear to be informative, in practice they do not culminate in any form of analyzable knowledge. What they produce is not a disclosure of a determinate reality, but rather the stabilization of a pre-accepted interpretive framework—one that neither opens the horizon of understanding for the intellect nor allows for further questioning or rational evaluation (Walbridge, 2001, p. 92–95).

Suhrawardi explicitly warns against one of the most common epistemological errors: identifying knowledge with what is merely taken to be true belief. From his perspective, even if a proposition produces reassurance or psychological comfort, this alone does not indicate that it generates knowledge. Genuine knowledge requires the possibility of distinguishing knowing from not-knowing, as well as the possibility of error and correction. A proposition that admits no rational revision cannot function as a bearer of knowledge; it merely produces a stable mental state (Ha’iri Yazdi, 1992, p. 47–49).

It is precisely at this point that religious propositions occupy the position that Suhrawardi characterizes as an “illusion of knowing.”<sup>1</sup> Such propositions are typically formulated in ways that render them neither testable, nor analyzable, nor corrigible. Philosophical reflections on religious language have noted a comparable structural insulation from criteria of verification or refutation, whereby certain utterances function less as descriptive claims and more as expressions embedded in particular forms of life (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 53–57). Although

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<sup>1</sup> “Illusion of knowing” refers to a condition in which the mind attains a feeling of knowing without having achieved genuine knowledge of its object. From the perspective of Suhrawardi’s logic and epistemology, this condition arises when a proposition lacks definition, self-evidence, or the possibility of logical analysis, yet nonetheless functions—through language, habit, or authority—as if it were epistemically informative. In such cases, what is produced is not knowledge but a stabilized mental form that eliminates the possibility of questioning, correction, and rational discrimination. Suhrawardi regards this condition as a fundamental threat to knowledge, insofar as it effaces the boundary between knowing and mere supposition and leads the intellect toward a false satisfaction with understanding.

Wittgenstein's aim was not to deny their cognitive significance, his observations illuminate the phenomenon of insulation that is relevant here. Within a strictly logical analysis, however, if a proposition cannot in principle be subjected to rational reassessment, such insulation undermines its epistemic status. The result is a state in which the mind arrives at a feeling of knowing without the presence of genuine knowledge. This condition becomes especially evident in propositions such as "God's wisdom is beyond understanding" or "Human reason is incapable of grasping these matters"—statements that simultaneously claim meaning while denying the possibility of knowledge, thereby immunizing themselves against any form of logical evaluation (Ziai, 1990, p. 118–120).

From the perspective of Suhrawardi's logic, a proposition that does not lead to knowledge faces serious limitations with respect to epistemic validity, even if it is linguistically coherent or socially accepted. Such a proposition neither expands the horizon of understanding nor enables rational distinction; it merely contributes to the consolidation of belief structures. For this reason, Suhrawardi conceives logic not as an instrument for stabilizing faith or inherited beliefs, but as a criterion for distinguishing knowing from mere supposition (Corbin, 1971, p. 121–123).

Accordingly, even if the problems of definition and self-evidence in religious propositions were set aside, their inability to generate genuine knowledge would remain a decisive obstacle to their logical validity. These propositions neither lead to a knowable reality nor allow for rational judgment; instead, they typically confine themselves to the production and reproduction of mental forms. In the following section, it will be shown that this failure has a more fundamental source: the conflation of existence and essence in religious propositions—a conflation that renders their logical analysis fundamentally impossible.

## **5. The Collapse of the Relation between Existence and Essence**

The fourth and most fundamental criterion for the validity of propositions in Suhrawardi's logic is the preservation of the logical distinction between existence (*wujūd*) and essence (*māhiyya*). If the failure of definition concerns a proposition's inability to determine the conceptual boundaries of its subject, the problem of existence and essence pertains to a more basic level, at which even the attribution of existence collapses in the absence of a determinate conceptual foundation.

In the pre-Suhrawardian philosophical tradition—especially in Avicennian interpretations—essence is understood as what a thing is in definition, while existence is taken as the external instantiation of that essence. In classical metaphysical discussions, the distinction between essence and existence was elaborated as a means of safeguarding conceptual clarity and preventing the hypostatization of indeterminate being (Wisnovsky, 2003, p. 145–152). When existence is detached from determinate essence, discourse risks transforming into the assertion of a purely verbal abstraction rather than a cognitively accessible object.

In Suhrawardi's logic, however, this distinction acquires a foundational logical and epistemological significance: existence is intelligible and assessable only insofar as it is the existence of something with a determinate essence. From this perspective, attributing existence without determining essence leads to a suspension of meaning and to the blockage of rational analysis. As Adamson has shown, Suhrawardi's insistence on the conceptual priority of essence in logical inquiry excludes any discourse on “pure existence” from the domain of logic (Adamson, 2016, p. 118–121). Strobino likewise emphasizes that, in Suhrawardi's logic and epistemology, existence is not an independently definable concept but remains subordinate to the conceptual structure of essence; wherever this relation is inverted, language loses its cognitive function and degenerates into a merely verbal medium (Strobino, 2020, p. 87–90). For this reason, the distinction between existence and essence is employed here not as an ontological thesis, but as a condition for the meaningfulness of propositions and the very possibility of logical judgment.

In his critique of approaches that regard existence as prior to or independent of essence, Suhrawardi explicitly maintains that “existence” as such is not an object of knowledge; it is always the existence of something with a determinate essence. Accordingly, attributing existence to something whose essence is indeterminate or fundamentally undefinable not only fails to generate knowledge, but also eliminates the very possibility of logical analysis (Suhrawardi, 1990, p. 95; Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 132–134). This point plays a decisive role in the logical analysis of religious propositions.

The proposition “God exists” once again provides a clear example of this logical collapse. In this proposition, existence is attributed to a subject whose essence is not merely undefined, but is often said to transcend all definition. The result is that existence, lacking any conceptual anchor, becomes an absolute yet cognitively empty notion. From the standpoint of Suhrawardi's logic, such an attribution risks becoming epistemically indeterminate, since

existence without essence is neither clearly conceivable nor readily susceptible to logical analysis (Suhrawardi, 1990, p. 95).

This problem is intensified in propositions such as “God is the cause of the existence of the world,” “God’s existence is more evident than His essence,” or “God is pure existence.” In these cases, existence is not only presupposed without the determination of essence, but is also employed as an explanatory ground for other beings. Consequently, that which is itself logically unanalyzable is elevated to the status of the explanatory principle of the world. Suhrawardi regards this form of explanation as a paradigmatic case of epistemic inversion—an inversion in which what is obscure assumes the role of principle, while what is intelligible is relegated to a derivative position (Suhrawardi, 1952, p. 136–138).

From the perspective of Suhrawardi’s logic, such a structure can be interpreted, within this framework, as lacking epistemic status, and as tending to produce a form of language that appears internally empty. Propositions in which existence is posited without essence may be rhetorically or religiously persuasive, yet from a logical standpoint, they do not readily present content that can be subjected to logical evaluation within this framework. In this condition, religious language does not clarify conceptual relations; rather, it preserves them within a halo of ambiguity immune to critique (Walbridge, 2001, p. 143–145).

The final consequence of this collapse is the complete elimination of the possibility of proof and refutation. A proposition whose subject lacks a determinate essence can neither be proven nor refuted, because no logical criterion exists by which it could be judged. Such a proposition may therefore be understood, within this framework, not as “false,” but as resistant to logical classification—not in the sense that it contradicts logic, but insofar as it does not readily enter the domain of logical analysis.

Accordingly, from the standpoint of Suhrawardi’s logic, religious propositions that posit existence without the determination of essence suffer from a logical structural defect. These propositions not only fail to satisfy the criteria of definition, self-evidence, and knowledge, but collapse at the most fundamental level—that of the relation between existence and essence. As a result, they can be understood, within this framework, as facing significant limitations in attaining epistemic validity and in being treated as fully analyzable propositions.

## Conclusion

The aim of this article was neither to prove nor to refute religious claims, but to assess the logical validity of religious propositions on the basis of the principles of Suhrawardi's logic. Within this framework, Suhrawardi's logic was employed not as part of a theological or mystical system, but as a critical criterion for evaluating the meaningfulness and epistemic value of propositions. What the analysis has shown is that many religious propositions commonly encountered in everyday life—such as “God exists,” “God has said that...,” “This is God's will or wisdom,” and “This truth is self-evident to believers”—do not fully satisfy the fundamental requirements of this logic across these levels and therefore face significant challenges in attaining epistemic validity within this framework.

First, at the level of definition, it was shown that the central subject of these propositions does not exhibit clearly determinate conceptual boundaries within this framework. Attributing existence, will, or speech to a concept whose essence is either undefinable or deliberately suspended from definition can be seen as placing such propositions at the margins of the domain of logic from the outset. In such cases, the conditions for conceptual analysis and logical judgment are not readily met. This deficiency can be understood as structural within this framework and is not easily resolved by appeal to tradition, sacred texts, or religious authority.

Second, at the level of self-evidence, it was demonstrated that personal certainty, faith, or inner experience do not, within this framework, suffice as substitutes for logical self-evidence. In logic, self-evidence is a property of propositions, not a psychological state of the knowing subject. A proposition that appears self-evident only to a particular group—for example, believers—does not readily allow for intersubjective evaluation and therefore cannot straightforwardly function as a starting point for rational knowledge. Consequently, claims of faith-based self-evidence tend, within this framework, to fall short of generating logical validity and may function as mechanisms that limit critical assessment.

Third, at the level of knowledge, the analysis showed that many religious propositions possess an apparently explanatory function without leading to genuine knowledge. Propositions such as “This is God's will” or “Everything has a divine wisdom” tend, within this framework, not to resolve ignorance but rather to stabilize it. They do not readily open new horizons of understanding or enable sustained rational questioning; instead, they may function as terminative responses that bring inquiry to a close. What is produced in such

cases can thus be interpreted not as knowledge in the strict sense, but as an instance of what Suhrawardi characterizes as an illusion of knowing.

Fourth, and at the most fundamental level, it was shown that religious propositions can be seen as placing significant pressure on the possibility of logical analysis within this framework, by collapsing the logical relation between existence and essence. Attributing existence to something that lacks a determinate essence does not readily lend itself to clear conceptualization or logical assessment within this framework, nor can it easily function as an explanatory ground for other phenomena. Propositions of this kind do not straightforwardly fall within a domain in which truth and falsity are clearly applicable. They are not so much incorrect as resistant to logical classification within this framework—that is, they can be understood as falling outside the sphere of logic and knowledge as defined here, prior to any attempt at proof or refutation.

The cumulative result of these four levels of analysis is that, within the framework of Suhrawardi's logic, such propositions do not readily attain epistemic validity. This conclusion does not amount to adopting a theological, ideological, or anti-religious stance; rather, it follows from the consistent application of logical criteria. In this article, Suhrawardi's logic has functioned neither as an instrument for defending faith nor as a means of negating it, but as a tool for purifying language and excluding, within its own criteria, propositions that do not meet the minimal conditions of meaningfulness and knowledge.

From this perspective, religious propositions are neither objects of proof nor objects of denial. From this logical standpoint, they cannot be straightforwardly admitted into the domain of logical evaluation as defined by this framework at the level of epistemic validity. This insight carries significant implications for philosophy of religion, epistemology, and the critique of religious and political discourses, insofar as it shows that many claims presented as truth, meaning, or moral obligation do not, within this analytical framework, satisfy the conditions required for entry into the domain of logic. Ultimately, Suhrawardi's logic can serve as a powerful instrument for criticizing authority-based languages and for defending the possibility of free thought, without becoming entangled in simplistic oppositions between faith and atheism.

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