PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION OF ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

HAPPINESS AS SELF-REALIZATION: TWO ISLAMIC APPROACHES

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Al-Suhrawardī, the founder of Ishrāqī school of Illumination, understands happiness as ultimate self-realization. According to al-Suhrawardī, the human self, or ego (*'anā*), is light embedded and immured in material body, and to attain ultimate happiness means to knock off the shackles of dark matter and, breaking free, to merge with the Absolute Light. This goal is attained after a painstaking vertical ascend and is reached only by a few. Ibn 'Arabī, on the contrary, holds that happiness is not only attainable, but actually attained by everyone, placing it not above, but within the horizon of human existence. This view is backed by Akbarian ontology of God-to-world relation and his understanding of human being and his universal significance. The universally attainable happiness in Akbarian perspective is human self-realization as well, though with the different understanding of the human self.

Key words: al-Suhrawardī, Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq, self, 'anā, illumination, happiness, sa'āda, Ibn 'Arabī.

Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that the quest for *sa'āda* "happiness" was a general concern of Islamic culture in its classical period. With the advent of Islam, when human aspirations were universally shaped and posited in religious perspective, the word *sa'āda* started to signify the ultimate goal to be attained by human being, the absolute bliss which humanity might hope to gain.

This very general meaning presupposed plurality of interpretations. Let me mention some dividing lines which differentiated understanding of happiness and ways leading to it.

The first of them is drawn by an answer to the question whether happiness can be attained only in the hereafter (*'ākhira*), or it is attainable in the worldly life (*dunyā*) as well. Generally, there was no doubt that life in the hereafter will be life of happiness and bliss, provided we follow the right path; the disagreement concerned the question whether *sa'āda* may be attained *exclusively* in the hereafter, or the worldly life can be happy too. Once again, there was no doubt that the worldly happiness and happiness of the other life are incomparable. Yet the question was not about their "equating" in any way, as this was out of question; the question was whether worldly life may be happy at all, in principle.

Generally speaking, Islamic doctrine (*ʻaqīda*), Muʻtazila and (at least some of) the Ṣūfī thinkers answered positively. The reasoning behind that positive answer was very different in the three cases, but what is important for the moment is the point of agreement, and not disagreement.

Falāsifa and Ismāʻīlī thinkers answered negatively, and the founder of Ishrāqī school Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī should be classified as the same type. Here as well the explanation of why the answer was negative differ substantially for the three groups of thinkers, but this does not affect the basic commonality of answer.

It is true that al-Suhrawardī and some of the falāsifa recognized the possibility of happiness during life and before death, but they understood it as "death before death," that is, as leaving this material world by the soul, so it was happiness outside this world anyway.

The positive and the negative answers may be expressed metaphorically as horizontal and vertical orientations, or orientations of balance and hierarchy. In the first case, the thinkers tend to find a sort of coordination between the two lives and the two types of happiness, while in the second all the hopes are placed exclusively above the worldly horizon.

The second question is the following: does the human being possess all the prerequisites for attaining happiness? To put it in an ontological language: is human nature basically sufficient for gaining it, or, on the contrary, it is basically deficient and, therefore, needs to be completed before one can hope to catch the glimpse of happiness? This is the question of whether perfection (*kamāl*, *tamām*) is crucial for happiness.

The dividing line that runs through the domain of Islamic thinking as the result of answering the second question more or less coincides with the first one. This is interesting enough, for it suggests that the two questions *may* be interconnected. Whether this is the case and there is a sort of affinity between the two answers, remains to be explored. But it seems to me rather obvious that Islamic doctrine and Muʻtazilite ethics do not presuppose necessity of any, so to say, additional ontological perfection to be added to initial human nature (*fiṭra*). An ethical effort is needed, this is true, and the Muʻtazila require perhaps an ultimate ethical energy from the human being rising those requirements to the highest possible degree, where they almost cease to be feasible for the mass of believers. But this does not deny the fact that human nature is initially sufficient for attaining happiness, both in this life and in the hereafter, and does not need to be ontologically perfected. Nothing needs to be added to it, and no additional completeness is required. The Ṣūfī thinkers, with their theories of the "Perfect man" (*insān kāmil*) and the "Way" (*ṭarīqa*) to God, are generally regarded as advocates of the need for perfecting human nature. I will argue that though this may be true in some cases, in others it is not, and as long as the Akbarian view of happiness is considered, "perfection" (*kamāl*) as a process of developing human nature is *not* a condition for happiness.

As for the falāsifa who followed Neoplatonic models of understanding happiness, perfection is unconditionally needed to transform human nature and make it fit for eternal bliss. The Ismāʻīlī philosophy, which culminated in Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī's *Rāḥat al-ʻaql*, also stresses the need for perfection and, despite some very important

points of difference with falāsifa, understands happiness as eternal bliss of the soul freed from the body.

As for al-Suhrawardī, with whom we are concerned in this paper, his answer is not so easy to classify. On the one hand, happiness, according to al-Suhrawardī, is unattainable unless the human being breaks free from the shackles of material world. Happiness is impossible as long as we remain inside this world, and only by transcending its bounds do we attain it. This seems to be very much alike what Neoplatonic thinkers hold. However, the way leading to it can hardly be called "perfection" of the soul in the Neoplatonic sense, because for al-Suhrawardī human soul is not a substance. And this is more than just a scholastic argument over philosophical terms, as we will see.

Finally, the third question needs to be asked. Those who posit happiness exclusively outside this world, — how do they understand the way that leads to happiness? What is, so to say, technology of transition from the state of being captured in this world of suffer — to the world of bliss?

I think that the two basically different answers to that question are the following. The first emphasizes the need for perfecting the soul. This understanding relies upon Greek legacy and interprets the soul as a substance which needs to be completed and perfected in order to become self-subsistent and independent of the body. The soul of an ordinary human being is bodily dependant because it is deficient and imperfect. Perfection as completeness of all the soul's attributes brings the soul independence and, finally, eternal bliss. This logic of reasoning is apparent in the writings of falāsifa when they follow the Neoplatonic line, as well as in al-Kirmānī's Ismā'īlī reading of Qur'ānic eschatology.

The other answer to that question is both similar and strikingly different. It is similar in its stress of the need of self-subsistence. The difference is that the quest for self-subsistence is *not* backed by the theory of human soul as a perfect substance. Rather, the way to happiness, eternal bliss and self-subsistence is self-disclosure. To disclose the self, we do not need add anything to what we have (by adding I mean ontological gain and augmentation). We have to do something different. We have to make appear what is darkened and veiled. If we manage to get rid of those obstacles that blur and dim our self, we reach the goal of self-disclosure.

This understanding of the way to happiness is proposed by the greatest Ṣūfī philosopher Ibn 'Arabī, and by the founder of the Ishrāqiyya school al-Suhrawardī. To my mind, those two thinkers provide a very clear-cut understanding of happiness as disclosure of human self (1). But they differ much in their understanding of what the human self is, and in what follows I will outline al-Suhrawardī's understanding of the way to happiness and compare it to Ibn 'Arabī's treatment of the same topic. Though the two great thinkers follow basically the same line of self-disclosure, their theories explaining the self and how it can be disclosed differ drastically.

In the very beginning of his *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* al-Suhrawardī speaks about "ranks" (*marātib*) of the universal hierarchy of human beings. This is, firstly, the hierarchy of "sage" (*ḥakīm*) and "seeker" (2) (*ṭālib*); those who do not belong to those two groups, are not mentioned by al-Suhrawardī at all. Perhaps it is not unjustified to say

that al-Suhrawardī is concerned here with *khāṣṣa* "special" people, and not with *ʿāmma* "ordinary" people. Secondly, each of those two layers is further classified through combination of two features. Those are *ta'alluh* "divineness" (3) and *baḥth* "investigation" (4). The first is a sort of intuition that grasps the truth without mediator, that is to say, immediately. The second is the logical way of cognition, which is a well-known path of falāsifa.

When al-Suhrawardī starts constructing his hierarchy, it may seem that he seeks a sort of balance between *ta'alluh* and *baḥth*. He first marks the extreme opposites as he says that the first two ranks are occupied by

> divine sage proficient in divineness and devoid of investigation; sage active in investigation and devoid of divineness (5).

After that he mentions the most perfect rank:

> divine sage proficient both in divineness and investigation (6),

and this means that *ta'alluh* alone, though it leads to ultimate truth, is not the highest rank; more perfect is the one who combines *ta'alluh* and *baḥth*.

Another example. When al-Suhrawardī introduces his book to the reader, he says that

> [it] is for those who seek both divineness and investigation (7).

Among the "seekers" the first to be mentioned is the seeker of "both divineness and investigation," to be followed by the seeker of divineness alone, and at last — the seeker of investigation **[1. {5}]**.

And, finally, he says about the "leader" of humankind and God's viceroy (*khalīfa*) on earth:

> If it happens some day that there exists someone proficient both in divineness and investigation, then to him belongs leadership (*ri'āsa*), and he is God's viceroy (8).

However, this first impression of al-Suhrawardī's balancing the opposites and following classification based on two poles and two scales, very quickly gives way to strict hierarchy with *ta'alluh* as its only pole. Yes, it is fine to have ability of investigation added to *ta'alluh*; and yet it is *ta'alluh*, and not *baḥth*, which is crucial for *ri'āsa* and condition *sine qua non* for it. The essence of *ri'āsa*, i. e., universal leadership of humankind, is the ability of *ta'alluh*, and it cannot do without it. *Baḥth*, on the contrary, is something inessential, though praiseworthy:

> The earth does not ever remain without one who is proficient in divineness, and the leadership of the God's earth does not belong to investigator proficient in investigation but devoid of divineness (9).

Why is it so? I think the answer can be found in a short phrase of al-Suhrawardī:

> Receiving (*talaqqī*) is indispensable for being [God's] viceroy (10).

This means that *ri'āsa* can be handed down to man from God and received by him only directly, without mediator. As Shahrazūrī explains, in the same way and without mediator the monarch handles down to his wazir authority needed to execute wazir's

duties. As for logical knowledge, it is always mediated by premises, figures of syllogisms, etc. In other words, it cannon be immediate by its very nature, as Islamic philosophers always noted.

Though *Ḥikmat al-iṯhrāq* was written for seekers of both *ta'alluh* and *baḥṯh*, it is *ta'alluh*, and not *baḥṯh*, which is crucial for reading the book and grasping its content:

> The Illuminationists cannot set things going without luminous inspiration (11).

Now, what is *ta'alluh*? The most evident and simple answer would be that *ta'alluh* is ability of human self to get access to world of divinity. This access is granted to a trained soul (al-Suhrawardī uses *nafs* "soul" and *ḏhāt* "self" as interchangeable in this context) even during its life and before death; moreover, this training is necessary for the soul to remain in celestial world after death and not be dragged down to the material world through its attraction to the material "fortresses" (*ṣayāṣī*). Thus the training diminishes the soul's dependence on the material "barriers" (*barāziḵh*). This dependence, however, is not essential; it is not caused by any deficiency of human soul which in such a case would need a remedy and a sort of substantial perfection. No, the only cause of being "tied" to dark substances is soul's "weakness" (*ḍu'f*): it only needs to gain "intensity" (*šhidda*) in order to escape from material world to the world of divinity.

Intensifying the soul as the result of its training is not the same as gaining perfection (*kamāl*). Intensity (*šhidda*) and weakness (*ḍu'f*) are characteristics of something absolutely simple, while perfection in its initial sense presupposes fullness of attributes (12). Human soul is light, weakened and therefore captured by material fortress which has become its abode. However, it is still a light, and nothing but light; and, regarded as light, it does not differ from the Light of lights in any respect except intensity. Since happiness is closeness to the Light of lights, it is, so to say, guaranteed to human being ontologically, for there is *no* ontological deficiency that hinders human soul's access to happiness. Al-Suhrawardī's view of the topic is very optimistic: there is a basic affinity between human soul and the Light of lights, as well as other celestial lights, which guarantees its ascend to the world of light provided it breaks free from the ties of material "fortresses."

Now, let us remember that the material (*barzaḵh* "barrier," *ṣīṣiya* "fortress," etc.) has no, so to say, ontological power: it is only "darkness" (*ẓulma*), that is to say, absence of light, which takes its beginning in the notion of a "shadow" (*ẓill*). This is a very important point in al-Suhrawardī's system of thought, since at this step he tries to reduce the apparent duality of light and darkness to the actual unity of light, where darkness is nothing but absence of light. So, initially shadow is the result of a "need" (*faqr*) which the Proximate Light (*al-nūr al-aqrab*) notices in itself when it contemplates the Light of lights: this realization of its need is the shadow itself. Eventually it becomes darkness and is found in the material world as fortresses for light and barriers hindering its movement and expansion. Now, what is this realization of need and dependence? — It is nothing but a result of relative weakness of the Proximate Light in comparison with the Light of lights.

It means that in the final analysis the "barriers" which block soul's ascend towards its ultimate goal, to the abode of closeness to the Light of lights, are nothing substantial:

they are just the soul's own weakness, and nothing else. To overcome those barriers means to intensify the soul. After acquiring intensity enough to do without its "fortress", the soul immediately finds itself witnessing the world of lights. This self-strengthening of an absolutely simple light which is the human soul is what can be called self-realization in the case of al-Suhrawardī.

Let me cast a glance at Ibn 'Arabī's view of happiness. He says in *Fuṣūṣ* that

> the Creation is drawn towards happiness in all its variety (13).

The Greatest Shaykh holds that no one is unhappy; moreover, no one *can* be unhappy. It means that there is *no* ontological ground for unhappiness; on the contrary, Ibn 'Arabī's ontology presupposes absolute and unlimited happiness of every and each creature.

There is one important reservation, though. If happiness is universal ontologically, it does not mean that it is universal psychologically. On the contrary, most of the people *are* unhappy — because they do not *realize* that they are in fact happy. Ibn 'Arabī says about "ascend" (*taraqqī*) of any human being to God:

> One of the most amazing things is that he is in constant ascend and does not feel it (14).

It means that most of the people are ignorant about the basic truth of the "new creation" (*khalq jadīd*): each and every moment of time the world loses its existence to dive into the Divine Self and at the same instant reemerges anew as existent. This back-and-forth movement between Divine Self and the world is repeated incessantly. This is why the human being is incessantly close to God. For al-Suhrawardī, ascend towards the Light of lights is something to be gained, something which a human being does not possess; for Ibn 'Arabī, man has only to realize, that is, to disclose in his own self (*dhāt*), this basic truth of his constant closeness to God. Such *taḥaqquq* "(self-)realization" is not granted to everyone, but those who have it, i.e., *muḥaqqiqūn* "those-who-realized" their own selves as the basic truth of the universe, are ultimately happy not only ontologically, but psychologically as well, already in this life, and not only in the hereafter.

FOOTNOTES

(1) To some extent we can trace this view in Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt* and Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* too, though it is not always expressed consistently and is followed by understanding of the soul as a substance which needs perfection to become self-subsistent.

(2) Or "philosopher" and "student," according to J. Walbridge and H. Ziai's translation.

(3) J. Walbridge and H. Ziai render *ta'alluh* as "intuitive philosophy" saying that "mysticism" might also do and that the word literally means "deification".

(4) "Discursive philosophy," according to J. Walbridge and H. Ziai.

(5) حكيم الهي متوغل في التأله عديم البحث؛ حكيم بحاث عديم التأله **[1. {5}]**.

(6) حكيم الهي متوغل في التأله والبحث **[1. {5}]**.

(7) كتابنا هذا لطالبي التأله والبحث **[1. {6}]**.

(8) فأن اتفق في الوقت متوغل في التأله والبحث فله الرئاسة **[1. {5}]**.

(9) ولا تخلو الارض من متوغل في التأله ابدا ولا رئاسة في ارض الله للباحث المتوغل في البحث الذي لم يتوغل في التأله **[1. {5}]**.

(10) لا بد للخلافة من التلقي **[1. {5}].**
(11) الاشراقيون لا ينتظم امرهم دون سوانح نورانية **[1. {6}].**
(12) "The quiddity of luminosity does not necessitate perfection," al-Suhrawardī says **[2. {137}]**.
(13) مآل الخلق الى السعادة على اختلاف انواعها **[3. P. 166]**.
(14) ومن اعجب الامور انه في الترقي دائما ولا يشعر بذلك **[3. P. 124]**.

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СЧАСТЬЕ КАК САМО-ОСУЩЕСТВЛЕНИЕ У АС-СУХРАВАРДИ И ИБН ʻАРАБИ

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Для ас-Сухраварди, основателя философии ишракизма, «счастье» (*саада*) — это достижение полного осуществления человеческого «я». Заключенное в оковы темной материи и представляющее собой полностью противоположный ей свет, человеческое «я» достигает счастья, сбросив оковы материи и слившись с Абсолютным Светом — началом всего. Этот путь вертикального восхождения, прорывающий рамку земного мира и обычного существования, могут преодолеть лишь немногие. Ибн ʻАраби, напротив, считает, что счастье не только достижимо, но и фактически достигается всеми, полагая его, в отличие от ас-Сухраварди, в пределах горизонта человеческого существования. В основе этого лежит онтология отношения между Богом и миром, а также представление о человеке как центральном звене универсума, скрепляющем все его многообразие. Для Ибн ʻАраби счастье — также полное самоосуществление человеческого «я», но при ином понимании человека.

Ключевые слова: ас-Сухраварди, Хикмат ал-ишрак, я, озарение, счастье, Ибн ʻАраби.