as though a wall is hidden in darkness, which at the rising of the sun manifests its shadow. Thus, the epiphany of being reveals non-being. This is not to say that non-being comes to be—anti-being cannot receive being. But negativity—the void—exists and is the antagonist of being, that is to say of Light.

Thus the metaphysical epic of the Intelligence is confronted by the counter-epic of its antagonist. Two universes descend and ascend to meet each other, effecting their intermixtures on the level of the world of man, in the encounter between the 'sons of Light' and the 'sons of Darkness'. What is remarkable is that the tone of this metaphysic is determined by the same preoccupation that lies at the very origins of Iranian thought: the confrontation of Light and Darkness which is resolved by eschatology, the 'separation' which will be the task of the Twelfth Imam at the time of his coming, just as in Zoroastrianism it will be the task of the Saoshyant. The times of the conversion and the reversion of the Intelligence constitute the Ages of the world. The time of the wâljah which succeeds the time of the nabâwah leads Ja'far Kashfi to construct a paradoxic historiosophy whose periods can be brought into correspondence with each other, as we have already seen to be the case with the three reigns of historiosophy instituted by Iqshim of Fars. This is one of the high-points of Shiite metaphysics. The work of the Iranian thinker, be it noted, is contemporary with the great metaphysical 'systems' which came into existence in the West during the first half of the nineteenth century.

15. THE SCHOOLS OF KHURÂSÂN

(a) Hâdi Sabzavârî and the School of Sabzavâr

The eminent figure of the 'Sage of Sabzavâr' dominates the period which corresponds in Iran to the middle of our nineteenth century. He has been called 'the Plato of his time', and for good measure he is also said to be its Aristotle. In any case, he was for philosophy in the reign of Nasîr al-Dîn Shâh Qâjar (1848–1896) what Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî had been in the reign of Shâh 'Abbâs the Great. He was also the faithful interpreter of Mullâ Sadrâ and played a part in making him the 'master thinker' of the Iranian philosophers. It could even be said that circumstances permitted him, to a greater extent than Mullâ Sadrâ, to give free rein to his genius as a mystical theologian, because there was greater freedom of self-expression during the Safavid epoch.

Mullâ Hâdi Sabzavârî was born in 1212/1797–1798 at Sabzavâr, a small town in Khurâsân between Shîhrûd and Nishâpûr in northeastern Iran, where his father, Muhammad Mahdi Sabzavârî, was a person of consequence. It was there that he received his first education, which he completed in Mashhad at the age of twenty. In 1232/1816–1817, wishing to go deeper into the study of philosophy, he went to Iṣfâhân, which was still, in spite of its decline, the centre where the greatest teachers of the philosophical sciences and theology congregated. His teachers were Mullâ Īsmâ'îl Iṣfâhânî and Mullâ 'Alî ibn Jamshîd Nûrî (see above). After ten years he returned to Khurâsân, where he taught for five years. He then went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. He was absent for three years, after which he returned to Iran. He stayed for some time at Kûrmân, where he taught and where he married. Finally he settled once and for all in Sabzavâr, which then became in its turn a centre for philosophical teaching and spirituality, visited by disciples from all over the world: from the Arabic countries, from the Caucasus and Azerbaijan, and from India. After a life of teaching and writing his many works, Mullâ Hâdi Sabzavârî died in 1295/1878 (or according to some sources, in 1289–1290/1872–1873).

The originality of this thinker may be perceived above all in the personal tone of his writings, based principally on the work of Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî, on al-Suhrawardî's Oriental Theosophy, and on the work of Ibn al-'Arîf and the baḍûtâh and traditions of the Shiite Imâms. Hâdi Sabzavârî is par excellence representative of the category of sages that al-Suhrawardî, in his prologue to the Oriental Theosophy, situates on the highest level: those who are masters both in speculative philosophy and in spiritual experience, who possess both extorexier knowledge and the highest esoteric knowledge. He is an 'istârâghî' theologian par excellence. This enables us to understand from the beginning the emotive impact of his teachings on certain of his followers. Hâdi Sabzavârî was equally at ease when dealing with the most difficult problems of the metaphysics of being in Mullâ Sadrâ as when commenting the Masha'ir of Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî. It was in this direction that the school of Sabzavâr developed the teaching of Mullâ Sadrâ. Hâdi Sabzavârî accepts the original priority of being, of 'existence', over quiddity, as he also accepts the transcendent unity of being, whose degrees of intensity or weakness determine the mode of being of the quiddities in the world of the pure Intelligences, in the mundus.
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imaginalis ('alam al-mithāl), and in the physical world. He accepts
the principle of intrasubstantial motion, which accounts for the meta-
morphoses of being and for the posthumous existence of the human
being.

The master of Sabzavār left about thirty works. One of the most
widely-read is the Shahr-i manzūmah. Originally this is a piece in verse
(manzūmah) concerned with logic and philosophy. The author himself
provides a commentary (shahr) which he packs with notes and observa-
tions. In the end, the work amounts to seven books: general meta-
physics, a treatise on substance and accident, special metaphysics or
philosophical theology (tābīyāt), physics, the philosophy of prophecy
and Imānology, eschatology, morals and the science of custom. His
pupils and their pupils mediated and studied this personal commentary
extensively: Aḥmad Hidājī, Shāhī Muhammad Taqī Amuli, ʿAṣārī
Mīrāzī Mahdī Ashtiyānī (d. 1372/1952–1953) worked on it to such a
degree that it has now become a textbook for all students of traditional
philosophy.

We will mention four great works which take the form of commen-
taries on the works of Mūlā Ṣadrā, but which in fact bring together the
personal doctrines and teaching of Hādī Sabzavārī. There is the com-
mentary on the Asfār (the four spiritual journeys) which alone amounts
to a concentrated work. There is the commentary on the Shaykhābād-
al-rūḥūbāyīn (The Witnesses of the divine Epiphanies), on the Kīdāb
al-maḥābīra wa al-maʿād (On the Origin and Return of Being), and on
the Mafāṭīb al-ghayb (The Keys of the Supra-sensible World). These
four commentaries form the Sabzavārīan corpus, in which we may
study the fruits of Mūlā Ṣadrā’s thought, as well as the way in which
the difficulties which it continues to raise are faced. Mūlā Hādī also
wrote a commentary on the most obscure or difficult sections in the
six books of ʿAlā al-Dīn Rūqūṭ’s Mathnawī (this entire work amounts
to five hundred folio pages, in the lithographic edition which came
out in Tehran in 1285/1868–1869). It would be utterly misleading to
see in this a philosophical attempt to rationalize the paradoxes of
the mystics. Here again, in order to avoid any ambiguity with regard
to the word ‘philosophy’, we should call it the work of an ʿārūfī meta-
physician who is in the same position with respect to the rationalist
philosophers as the metaphysicist of Sufism with respect to the rationalist
theologians of the kalām.

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Another long work, ʿĀsrā al-hikām (Secrets of Philosophy) is de-
voted to the manifold questions concerned with the origins of being
and eschatology, and explains the esoteric meaning of the liturgical
practices. The author produced a summary of this work, entitled
Hidayat al-tālīhib (The Orientation of the Seekers), at the request of
Naṣīr al-Dīn Shah Qājār, who went to visit him at Sabzavār. Like Mūlā
Ṣadrā, Muhīn Fāyḍ and Qāfī Saʿīd Qummi, the master of Sabzavār
excelled at bringing out the theosophical teaching implicit in the Imāmī
texts. The great study on the divine Names (Shahr-i Asma’ī) is in fact
a commentary on a Shi’ite prayer. The divine Names (see Ibn al-ʿArabi)
possess both a cosmogenic and a liturgical function; by means of the
latter they serve as instruments whereby a being can return to the
malakāt and to the Principle. Finally, mention must be made of a very
important collection of sixteen treatises in Persian and Arabic, which
was inspired by the questions of pupils or correspondents. We can
only indicate here, together with the depth of these answers, the
extent of the questions, whose diversity enables us to understand the
day-by-day preoccupations of Mūlā Ṣadrā’s contemporaries.

In order to depict the fervour that then existed in the philosophical
centre of Sabzavār, we must mention the names of some of the students
who, as we have said, came from all quarters of Iran and elsewhere.
Three of them have already been mentioned. They are to be found
in their turn in the main teaching centres of traditional philosophy in
Iran: Tehran, Tabriz, Qum, Isfahān, Shirāz, Mashhad. Unfortunately,
the present state of research enables us to cite only the best-known
of the names in question, for the collection of their works is far from
complete. There was Mūlā ʿabād al-Karīm Qūšānī, who himself taught
at Mashhad and wrote annotations on the Shahr-i manzūmah. Shāykh
Allī Fādī Tabbāṭ (Tibet), whose name reveals his Tibetan origin, was
highly esteemed by Hādī Sabzavārī; one of the treatises in the ‘collection
of sixteen’ mentioned above is a reply to a question put by him, and
is a fine and subtle apologia for philosophical meditation in response
to the alarms and doubts raised by the exotericists, Mīrāzī Abū Āḥām
Dādābī Shirāzī (d. 1300/1882–1883) also taught philosophy at Shirāz
and had many followers. Mūlā ʿAlī Khwāsī (d. 1329/1911) was a
perfect Shi’ite theosopher, professing that whoever does not possess
sufficient knowledge of philosophy and metaphysics cannot under-
stand
the hadith and the traditions of the holy Imams. Āghā Mirza Muhammad Yazdi (Fālī Yazdī), after writing a reply to the criticisms addressed to Muḥsin Fāyḍ Khashārī by Shaykh Ḥabīb Aḥṣāf (see above) with regard to his Treatise on Knowledge, asked his teacher to take part in the matter; Ḥādī Sabzavārī’s reply is also to be found in the ‘collection of sixteen treatises’. Mirzā Sayyid Ābā Talkh Zinjānī left among other things a book on the qualification of Muhājahids (Jīzhād o taqīd), the great question which divided the ṭalābīs and the akhbarīs in the controversy mentioned above. Mullā Ibrāhīm ‘Arif Bujjīrūdī attended the lectures of Ḥādī Sabzavārī when the latter was teaching at Mashhad. Mirzā Husayn Sabzavārī was a teacher at Tehran, where he was the colleague of the masters of the school of Tehran whom we spoke of above. His pupils were Mirzā Ibrāhīm Zinjānī, Akhūn Hīdājī (see above), and Mirzā ‘Ali Yazdī, who taught at the theological university of Qum.

(b) The school of Mashhad

Mashhad, the holy town of Khurāsān where the sanctuary of the Eighth Imam ‘Alī Riddā (203/818) is preserved, a place of pilgrimage for all Shiites, possessed, from century to century, madrasas in which the teaching of the akhbarīs, jāhāyīs was represented. Here, however, we are concerned with it only as an extension of the impetus given to the intellectual and spiritual life of Khurāsān by Ḥādī Sabzavārī and his school. Two personalities in particular are worthy of mention: Āghā Mirzā Muhammad Šaḥīqī, who had studied philosophy at Sabzavārī, and Mullā Ghiyās Husayn (d. 1318/1900–1901), who was a pupil of Mullā Ḥādī Sabzavārī for six years and then became the Shāykh al-Islām at Mashhad. These two masters were succeeded by two other masters who bestowed its character on what we here call the school of Mashhad. One of them was Hājjī Fādī Khorāsānī (d. 1342/1923–1924), who taught for a long time at Mashhad and was a master of repute both in philosophy and in religious sciences (šaykh al-mujahid). The other was Āghā Buzurg Ḥādīn (d. 1355/1936–1937), also a teacher of philosophy at Mashhad in the tradition of Mullā Sadra. Unfortunately, the critiques of the exotericists, reawakening the perpetual inner drama of Shiism, forced him to renounce his teaching. His death left a void in the teaching of philosophy in Khurāsān. These two eminent men had their followers.

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among whom Āghā Mirzā Hasan Bujjīrūdī distinguished himself by his ability to bring together the canonical sciences and the philosophical sciences.

Here we arrive at an event of major importance for the intellectual life of Iran: the multiplication of Iranian universities with the encouragement of the reigning sovereign, Ḥādīd Šāh Pahlavī. Two of the State universities, Tehran and Mashhad, include faculties of theology whose role is not simply the creation of mulallas, but the wider dissemination of the Islamic sciences, including everything related to traditional philosophy. We will conclude this all too brief allusion to the school of Mashhad by mentioning the work of a young master of philosophy, a professor at the Faculty of Theology at the university of Mashhad, Sayyid Ṣulṭān al-Dīn Aḥshīanī, whose orientation, activity and productivity we can indicate only by describing him as a Mullā Sadra redivivus. His work, which arises out of the traditional teaching of the masters cited above, is already considerable, comprising a long treatise on being from the metaphysical and mystical points of view; an extensive study on the prelogomena of Dāwūd al-Qasṣāfī to the latter’s commentary on Ibn al-ʿArabi’s Futūḥ, of which the first volume of seven hundred pages is a renewed and deeper representation of the related problems; several editions of texts, furnished with notes and observations of exceptional density, such as the edition of Langā-ridī’s commentary on Mullā Sadra’s Kitāb al-Mashīr, of Sadra’s Shawārdī with Sabzavārī’s commentary, of the ‘sixteen treatises’ mentioned above, and so on. Finally, there is the great and unprecedented undertaking, with which the present writer is associated with regard to the French section: an Anthology of Iranian Philosophers from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day. One volume has already appeared. In all there are to be five volumes, bringing to life the work of around forty Iranian thinkers. It is intended not as an assessment, but as a starting-point.
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Henry Corbin

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