

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 intermixture 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 Imām 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 *walāyah* which succeeds the time of the *nubūwah* leads Ja'far Kashfī to construct a paracletic 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 Joachim of Fiore. 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 KHURĀSĀN

(a) *Hādī Sabzavārī and the school of Sabzavār*

The eminent figure of the 'Sage of Sabzavār' 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 Naṣīr al-Dīn Shāh Qājār (1848–1896) what Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī had been in the reign of Shāh 'Abbās the Great. He was also the faithful interpreter of Mullā Ṣadrā 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 Mullā Ṣadrā, to give free rein to his genius as a mystical theosopher, because there was greater freedom of self-expression during the Ṣafavid epoch.

Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī was born in 1212/1797–1798 at Sabzavār, a small town in Khurāsān between Shāhrūd and Nīshāpūr in north-eastern Iran, where his father, Muḥammad Mahdī Sabzavārī, 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 Iṣfahān, which was still, in spite of its decline, the centre where the greatest teachers of the philosophical sciences and theology congregated. His teachers were Mullā Ismā'īl Iṣfahānī and Mullā 'Alī ibn Jamshīd Nūrī (see above). After ten years he returned to Khurāsān, 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 Kirmān, where he taught and where he married. Finally he settled once and for all in Sabzavār, 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, Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī 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 Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, on al-Suhrawardī's *Oriental Theosophy*, and on the work of Ibn al-'Arabī and the *ḥadīth* and traditions of the Shiite Imāms. Hādī Sabzavārī is *par excellence* representative of the category of sages that al-Suhrawardī, 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 exoteric knowledge and the highest esoteric knowledge. He is an *ishrāqī* theosopher *par excellence*. This enables us to understand from the beginning the emotive impact of his teachings on certain of his followers. Hādī Sabzavārī was equally at ease when dealing with the most difficult problems of the metaphysics of being in Mullā Ṣadrā as when commenting the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. It was in this direction that the school of Sabzavār developed the teaching of Mullā Ṣadrā. Hādī Sabzavārī 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*

imaginalis ('*alam al-mithāl*), and in the physical world. He accepts the principle of intrasubstantial motion, which accounts for the metamorphoses 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 *Sharh-i manzūmah*. Originally this is a piece in verse (*manzūmah*) concerned with logic and philosophy. The author himself provides a commentary (*sharh*) which he packs with notes and observations. In the end, the work amounts to seven books: general metaphysics, a treatise on substance and accident, special metaphysics or philosophical theology (*ilāhīyāt*), physics, the philosophy of prophecy and Imāmology, eschatology, morals and the science of custom. His pupils and their pupils meditated and studied this personal commentary extensively: Akhūnd Hidajī, Shaykh Muḥammad-Taqī Āmulī, Āghā Mīrzā 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 commentaries on the works of Mullā Ṣadrā, but which in fact bring together the personal doctrines and teaching of Hādī Sabzavārī. There is the commentary on the *Asfār* (the four spiritual journeys) which alone amounts to a concentrated work. There is the commentary on the *Shawāhid al-rubūbiyah* (*The Witnesses of the divine Epiphanies*), on the *Kitāb al-mabda' wa al-ma'ād* (*On the Origin and Return of Being*), and on the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* (*The Keys of the Supra-sensible World*). These four commentaries form the Sabzavarian corpus, in which we may study the fruition of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought, as well as the way in which the difficulties which it continues to raise are faced. Mullā Hādī also wrote a commentary on the most obscure or difficult sections in the six books of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī'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 parables 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 *ishrāqī* metaphysician who is in the same position with respect to the rationalist philosophers as the metaphysic of Sufism with respect to the rationalist theologians of the *kalām*.

Another long work, *Asrār al-ḥikam* (*Secrets of Philosophy*) is devoted 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 *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn* (*The Orientation of the Seekers*), at the request of Naṣīr al-Dīn Shāh Qājār, who went to visit him at Sabzavār. Like Mullā Ṣadrā, Muḥsin Fayḍ and Qāḍī Sa'id Qummī, the master of Sabzavār excelled at bringing out the theosophical teaching implicit in the Imāmic texts. The great study on the divine Names (*Sharh-i Asmā'*) is in fact a commentary on a Shiite prayer. The divine Names (see Ibn al-'Arabi) possess both a cosmogonic and a liturgical function; by means of the latter they serve as instruments whereby a being can return to the *malakūt* 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 extreme interest of the questions, whose diversity enables us to understand the day-by-day preoccupations of Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī'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, Iṣfahān, Shiraz, 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 Mullā 'abd al-Karīm Qūtshānī, who himself taught at Mashhad and wrote annotations on the *Sharh-i manzūmah*. Shaykh 'Alī Fāḍl Tabbatī (Tibetī), 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. Mīrzā 'Abbās Ḥakīm Dārābī Shīrāzī (d. 1300/1882–1883) also taught philosophy at Shiraz and had many followers. Mullā Kāzīm Khurāsānī (d. 1329/1911) was a perfect Shiite theologian, professing that whoever does not possess sufficient knowledge of philosophy and metaphysics cannot understand

the *ḥadīth* and the traditions of the holy Imāms. Āghā Mīrza Muḥammad Yazdī (Fādl Yazdī), after writing a reply to the criticisms addressed to Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī by Shaykh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī (see above) with regard to his *Treatise on Knowledge*, asked his teacher to take part in the matter; Hādī Sabzavārī's reply is also to be found in the 'collection of sixteen treatises'. Mīrza Sayyid Abū Ṭalīb Zinjānī left among other things a book on the qualification of *Mujtahids (Ijtihād o taqlīd)*, the great question which divided the *uṣūlīs* and the *akhbārīs* in the controversy mentioned above. Mullā Ismā'īl 'Arif Bujnūrdī attended the lectures of Hādī Sabzavārī when the latter was teaching at Mashhad. Mīrza Ḥusayn 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 Mīrza Ibrāhīm Zinjānī, Akhūnd Hīdajī (see above), and Mīrza 'Alī 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 Imām 'Alī Ridā (203/818) is preserved, a place of pilgrimage for all Shiites, possessed, from century to century, *madrasas* in which the teaching of the *ḥikmat ilāhīyah* 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 Hādī Sabzavārī and his school. Two personalities in particular are worthy of mention: Āghā Mīrza Muḥammad Ṣarūqadī, who had studied philosophy at Sabzavār, and Mullā Ghulām Ḥusayn (d. 1318/1900–1901), who was a pupil of Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī for six years and then became the *Shaykh 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 Faḍl Khurāsānī (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 (he was acknowledged as a *mujtahid*). The other was Āghā Buzurg Ḥakīm (d. 1355/1936–1937), also a teacher of philosophy at Mashhad in the tradition of Mullā Ṣadrā. 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,

among whom Āghā Mīrza Ḥasan Bujnūrdī 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, Muḥammad Ridā Shāh Pahlavī. Two of the State universities, Tehran and Mashhad, include faculties of theology whose role is not simply the creation of mullahs, 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 Jalāl al-Dīn Ashtiyānī, whose orientation, activity and productivity we can indicate only by describing him as a Mullā Ṣadrā *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 prolegomena of Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī to the latter's commentary on Ibn al-'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ*, 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 Langa-rūdī's commentary on Mullā Ṣadrā's *Kitāb al-Mashā'ir*, of Ṣadrā's *Shawāhid* 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.

History of Islamic Philosophy

Henry Corbin

Translated by Liadain Sherrard
with the assistance of
Philip Sherrard

KEGAN PAUL INTERNATIONAL
London and New York
in association with
ISLAMIC PUBLICATIONS
for
THE INSTITUTE OF ISMAILI STUDIES
London

The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London

The Institute of Ismaili Studies was established in 1977 with the object of promoting scholarship and learning on Islam, in the historical as well as contemporary context, and a better understanding of its relationship with other societies and faiths.

The Institute's programmes encourage a perspective which is not confined to the theological and religious heritage of Islam, but seek to explore the relationship of religious ideas to broader dimensions of society and culture. They thus encourage an inter-disciplinary approach to the materials of Islamic history and thought. Particular attention is also given to issues of modernity that arise as Muslims seek to relate their heritage to the contemporary situation.

Within the Islamic tradition, the Institute's programmes seek to promote research on those areas which have had relatively lesser attention devoted to them in secondary scholarship to date. These include the intellectual and literary expressions of Shi'ism in general, and Ismailism in particular.

In the context of Islamic societies, the Institute's programmes are informed by the full range and diversity of cultures in which Islam is practised today, from the Middle East, Southern and Central Asia and Africa to the industrialized societies of the West, thus taking into consideration the variety of contexts which shape the ideals, beliefs and practices of the faith.

The publications facilitated by the Institute will fall into several distinct categories:

- 1 Occasional papers or essays addressing broad themes of the relationship between religion and society in the historical as well as modern context, with special reference to Islam, but encompassing, where appropriate, other faiths and cultures.
- 2 Proceedings of conferences or symposia.
- 3 Works exploring a specific theme or aspect of Islamic faith or culture, or the contribution of an individual figure or writer.
- 4 Translations of literary texts.
- 5 Editions or translations of significant texts of a primary or secondary nature.

In facilitating these or other publications, the Institute's sole aim is to encourage original, interesting and responsible thought, scholarship, and analysis of the relevant issues. There will naturally be a resulting diversity of views, ideas and interpretations. The opinions expressed in all such works are solely those of the authors.

The present publication falls into the category 5 listed above.

First published in French as
Histoire de la Philosophie Islamique in 1964
This translation published in 1993 by Kegan Paul International Ltd
PO Box 256, London WC1B 3SW, England

Distributed by
John Wiley & Sons Ltd
Southern Cross Trading Estate
1 Oldlands Way, Bognor Regis,
West Sussex, PO22 9SA, England
Routledge Chapman & Hall Inc
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001, USA

© Islamic Publications Limited 1993

Printed in Great Britain by TJ Press, Padstow, Cornwall
No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except for the quotation of brief passages in criticism.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Corbin, Henry d. 1978
History of Islamic Philosophy
1. Islamic Philosophy

I. Title
181.07

ISBN 0-7103-0416-1

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Corbin, Henry,
[*Histoire de la philosophie islamique*. English]
History of Islamic philosophy / Henry Corbin : translated from the French by
Liadain Sherrard with the assistance of Philip Sherrard.
Translation of : *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7103-0416-1

1. Philosophy, Islamic—History. 2. Islam—Doctrines—History.
I. Title.

B741 .C613 1991

181'.5—dc20

90-3018

CIP