

naissance in the sixteenth century produced an extraordinary flowering of thought and thinkers in Iran"<sup>102</sup> and "one can no longer entertain any doubt about the [Ikbwan al-Safa's] links with Ismailism..."<sup>103</sup>

The Bibliography furnished to the 1993 English translation of Corbin's *Histoire* has been updated from the original French edition but there are still many major lacunae. No attempt has been made in the body of the text to incorporate any of the insights to be derived from the more modern texts cited in this Bibliography. As in the French editions, there are no footnotes. In sum, Corbin's *Histoire*, together with its English translation, is a work of interesting, but somewhat limited, historical value which is not likely to supersede the magisterial modern standard introduction to the field by Majid Fakhry, now in its second edition, entitled *A History of Islamic Philosophy*.

A full evaluation of this latter work will be provided shortly, but before that is undertaken, it is worth surveying briefly, by way of concluding our analysis of Corbin's contribution, the extent to which the latter was interested in our twin *leitmotifs* — to deploy a Wagnerian musicological term — of ontology and epistemology. The question is of particular interest in view of Corbin's mystical orientation as espoused in volumes such as *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*<sup>104</sup> and *Temple and Contemplation*.<sup>105</sup>

The simple answer is that, however much Corbin allowed a mystical impulse to rule his other writings, in his *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* he makes the traditional genuflection towards the need to focus on ontology and epistemology. For example, talking of Abu Yazid Tayfur ibn 'Isa ibn Surushan al-Bastami (died 234/848 or 261/874), Corbin suggests that "an essential aspect of the doctrine of this great Iranian Sufi, as it is revealed in his stories and maxims, is a profound

<sup>102</sup> *History*, p. XVII (my italics); *Histoire* [1986], p. 17.

<sup>103</sup> *History*, p. 136; *Histoire* [1986], p. 196.

<sup>104</sup> Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shī'ite Iran*, trans. Nancy Pearson, Bollingen Series XCI:2, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977): for the original French see idem., *Terre céleste et corps de résurrection: de l'Iran mazdéen à l'Iran shī'ite*, Collection "La Barque du Soleil", (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1960).

<sup>105</sup> Henry Corbin, *Temple and Contemplation*, trans. Philip Sherrard & Liadain Sherrard, Islamic Texts and Contexts, (London & New York: KPI in association with Islamic Publications, London, 1986): for the original French see *Temple et contemplation*, (Paris: Flammarion et cie, 1980).

awareness of the triple condition of being: in the form of I (*ana'iyah*), the form of You (*antiyah*), and the form of He (*huwiyah*, the ipseity or Self). In this ordering of the awareness of being the divine and the human aspects are united and reciprocate in a transcendent act of adoration and love."<sup>106</sup> And epistemology, especially of the gnostic variety, is at the heart of much of what Corbin writes. Talking of the great Mulla Sadra (1572-1631), for example, he notes that "the doctrine that [Mulla Sadra] develops in the margin of the Imamic texts presents all true knowledge as an epiphany or a theophany."<sup>107</sup>

(4) I propose now to move to an immediate evaluation of Majid Fakhry's seminal text, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*<sup>108</sup> (first edn. 1970). In so doing, I shall pass over, more or less chronologically speaking, the well-known Islamic philosophy textbooks of W.M. Watt (1962; 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edn. 1985), M.M. Sharif (1963) and A. Badawi (1972).<sup>109</sup> I imply here no disparagement of such works which have been of service to several generations of students and scholars. I merely wish to focus on a restricted and clean 'line of development', with its sustained epistemological and ontological "continuities" from De Boer to Nasr and Leaman.

In the Preface to the first (1970) edition of his *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Majid Fakhry criticises his predecessors as follows:

"T.J. de Boer's *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam* (1901), which was translated into English in 1903...continues to be the best comprehensive account of Islamic philosophy in German and English."<sup>110</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *History*, p. 193; *Histoire* [1986], p. 271.

<sup>107</sup> *History*, p. 54; *Histoire* [1986], p. 89.

<sup>108</sup> Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970); *ibid.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., (London: Longman, 1983/New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). All page references in this article will be to this second edn. unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>109</sup> See W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology, Islamic Surveys I*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962; idem., *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: An Extended Survey*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985); M.M. Sharif (ed.), *A History of Muslim Philosophy, with Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*, (2 vols., Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, Vol. 1: 1963, Vol. 2: 1966); 'Abdurrahmān Badawi, *Histoire de la philosophie en Islam, Vol. 1: Les philosophes théologiens, Vol. 2: Les philosophes purs, Études de Philosophie Médiévale LX* (2 vols., Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1972

<sup>110</sup> Fakhry, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (1<sup>st</sup>, 1970 edn.), p. VIII.