"In many ways, the monumental opus of Corbin which summarizes his life-time work is En Islam Iraniën, in which over forty years of research and meditation upon Shi’ism, Sufism, Islamic philosophy and the relation between Islamic esoteric tradition and esotericism in the West as manifested in such forms as the legend of the Holy Grail and many other concerns are brought together. Without doubt this work is one of the most outstanding achievements of Western scholarship concerning the Islamic and particularly Persian worlds, a study which has already exercised a rich influence and is bound to remain as one of Corbin’s most enduring achievements. Many of the themes discussed in his numerous earlier works, have found their most mature orchestration in this four volume opus of monumental dimensions". (Hossein Nasr, in Henry Corbin: The Life and Works of the Occidental Exile in Quest of the Orient of Light, in Sophia Perennis 3, 1977, p. 102.)
In Iranian Islam - II
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## 7 The Oriental Tradition

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Summary of Books I and II

The Islamic world is not monolithic. Its concept of religion is not identifiable with any Arab concept of politics. There is an Iranian Islam, just as there is a Turkish, Indian, Indonesian, or a Malaysian Islam.

While curious readers have plenty of literature at their disposal to delve into Iranian archaeology or art, both from before and since the birth of Islam, there are unfortunately but a few books that answer questions about the "motivations" of the formation of such an Iranian consciousness.

Since its very beginning inside the Islamic community, the Iranian world has formed a structure whose characteristic traits and talents only become obvious if one considers the spiritual Iranian universe as a complete entity, both from before and since the coming of Islam. Islamic Iran has been the primary place for Islam's greatest philosophers and mystics; for them speculative thought was never isolated from its fruition and its practical consequences, never from what we nowadays call a social perspective, it was always concerned with the concrete totality that feeds man from its very own substance, beyond the limits of this present life, what is his spiritual world.

Keeping to this position, the author has constructed a monument that he here presents in seven books and four volumes, the result of twenty years of research, carried out in Iran itself, in its libraries as well as privately with Iranian friends, and combined with a teaching experience, both in Paris and Teheran. Its method is essentially phenomenological, without attaching itself to any one particular phenomenological school. This all has to do with the encounter of the religious fact, while showing its object, as it shows itself to those who are aware of it. Hence this work has an important subtitle: spiritual and philosophical aspects. By saying aspects, this presupposes a spectator, but here the spectator, the phenomenologist himself, must become the spiritual host of those to whom this object shows itself and assume their care. Every historical consideration will thus remain immanent to this object without imposing some strange external category, like a dialectic or something. Under this condition the paths suggested by the author in the text are synchronously possible, because they concern variations on the same object.

The first two volumes contain books 1 and 2 of this work.

Book 1 seeks to show some of the basic tenets of Twelver Shi'ism, or Imâmism, firmly rooted in Iran from its very beginning, and the official religion since the 16th century. These traits are isolated and analyzed, starting with what the author has already proposed that it be called the "phenomenon of the Book," as it occurred among those whom the Koran calls the Ahl al-Kitâb, the "community of the Book," encompassing Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Interpretations of the Bible and the Koran face similar problems and tasks in each of these branches of the Abrahamic tradition: the discovery of the true meaning of the Book. In one way or another, the search for the real meaning, the spiritual meaning hidden underneath a literal appearance, developed similar ways for the discovery of the esoteric, i.e., interior meaning of divine Revelation. The "phenomenon of the Book" is at the root of a hermeneutics, that is, an "understanding." It is very likely that the esoteric hermeneutists of the Bible and the Koran have still much to show philosophers, who nowadays appear to be so occupied precisely with hermeneutics itself.

The technical term that refers to the esoteric hermeneutics of the Koran is the word ta'wil, meaning "to lead something back" to its origin, to its archetype. Shi'ite metaphysics is dominated by the idea of an unknowable and unaccessible God, unnamable in his essence, and by the idea of his epiphany in the pleroma of the Fourteen entities of Light, manifested on earth in the persons of the "Fourteen Immaculate Ones" (the Prophet, his daughter Fatima and the twelve Holy Imâms). The esoteric meaning that Shi'ite ta'wil extracts from

Notes by the translator are marked with [trans.].
the literal data of the Koran is mostly concerned with this pleroma of the Fourteen. By this same token it also illustrates the Shi‘ite idea of prophetology, which comes down to the fact that Shi‘ism refuses to have already resolved its future. In contrast to the Sunni majority of Islam, for whom humanity has nothing else to learn since the mission of the last prophet, Shi‘ism keeps the future open by professing that even after the coming of the "Seal of the Prophets" something must still be learned, be extracted from, the manifestation of the spiritual sense of the revelations of the great prophets. Such is the hermeneutic task that the Holy Imâms have taken upon themselves, and their teaching fills volumes. However, this spiritual intelligence will not be complete until the end of this Aion, with the parousia of the 12th Imâm, the Imâm presently hidden and the mystical pole of this world.

Thus this hermeneutics has it own perception of the temporal order, which it expresses in a division of history into periods: into the time of the mission of the prophets, followed by the time of spiritual initiation. In similar fashion, Shi‘ite prophetology intersects anew with the aspirations of the Joachimite movement in the West and its proclamation of the reign of the Spirit. In fact, this periodization is now a metahistory, because its essentially eschatological dimension deconstructs history.

As with hermeneutics, so also Imâmology has placed Shi‘ite thinkers before the same problems that Christology has posed to its own, but Shi‘ites have tended to resolve these in ways always rejected by official Christology. Perhaps this is why Shi‘ite prophetology was safely kept from every form of laicization that leads to social Messianism.

Shi‘ite metaphysics and spirituality are each other's substance. Facts exclusively limited to those of the Sunni majority have had it for too long that Sufism is Islam’s spirituality. In fact, Shi‘ite spirituality goes well beyond Sufism. Certainly, there are Shi‘ite congregations that are Sûfi, just as the genealogical branch of many tariqat, or congregations, does lead back to one of the Imâms. However, Shi‘ite esotericism presently does exist, in a state of being the Way (the tariqat), without the need for the practitioner to belong to any Sûfi congregation, at the summit of mystical Sinai, with the knowledge of the Imâm as a personal guide to self-knowledge.

Book 2\textsuperscript{2} is entirely dedicated to another equally fundamental and characteristic aspect of Iranian Islamic philosophy and spirituality, one that immediately joins forces with the Shi‘ism of many Iranian thinkers. This is an aspect that is pre-eminently typified by the term \textit{ishrâq}, meaning the rising of the Sun (\textit{aurora consurgens}), its "orient." Likewise, the philosophy of \textit{Ishrâq}, as the theosophy of the Light, is the "oriental" theosophy and \textit{ishrâqîyûn} philosophers are the "oriental" philosophers, in the metaphysical sense of the word "orient." These are often designated as "Platonists," in opposition to Islamic Peripatetics. The origins of these Islamic "Platonists of Persia" were the heroic efforts of a young philosophical genius, Shihâbuddîn Yâhûyâ Suhrawardî, born in northwestern Iran, who died a martyr to his cause (1191) in Aleppo, Syria, when he was only 36 years old. His works themselves clearly state his intent: to revive the Wisdom of ancient Persia, the philosophy of Light and Darkness; to repatriate the Hellenized Magi into Islamic Persia based on a hermeneutics (\textit{ta‘wil}) that Islamic spirituality made available to him.

Some three centuries before the great Byzantine philosopher George Gemistus Plethon, the work of an Iranian philosopher brought about a conjunction of the names of Plato and Zoroaster/Zarathustra as heralds of the same "oriental" tradition, going all the way back to Hermes, the father of all Sages. The Platonic Ideas are now reinterpreted in terms of a Zoroastrian angelology. This hermeneutics of existence laid claim to a third world, for which the philosophers of the concept were incapable of creating an ontology: between the world of the intellect and that of the senses there is a \textit{mundus imaginialis}, a world perfectly real and not at all "imaginary," to which our own exoteric philosophies are reduced, a world that

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Aspects spirituels et philosophiques; Sohravardî et les Platoniciens de Perse}, Paris, Gallimard, 1971. The English translation contains the index entries for vol. 2, which Prof. Corbin placed in vol. 4.[trans.].

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must be designated by its own term: the *imaginal*. Suhrawardi was well aware that through his ontology of a "third world" he was laying the foundation for an objective reality of the revelations of the prophets, of the visions of the mystics, and of the events of revelation, a theme that will remain current during the long centuries of Iranian thought.

It is characteristic of this metaphysics of Light that it identifies the primordial Source of this Light with what Zoroastrian theosophy designates as *Xvarnah*, or the "Light of Glory." The angelic hierarchies proceed from this same source. They have a structure that corresponds to a synthesis of Zoroastrian angelology and the celestial hierarchies of Proclus's Neoplatonism. This same motif of *Xvarnah* offers an inexhaustible well-spring of resources and extensions. Earlier research has homologated the forms of its manifestation with that of the Holy Grail in our own Western traditions. In any case, the theme of the Grail, of the mystical chalice, the mirror-of-the-world, is prefigured in the heroic epics of ancient Iran, and it is present in Suhrawardi's own works, where it typifies the passage from the heroic to the mystical epic, a fact of capital importance in the cultural history of Iran. This same passage is proclaimed in a series of short initiatory tales, nearly all written in Persian, and whose wealth of symbols allows Suhrawardi to lead his reader to the object of all of their desires, even better than his great systematic works. The author is especially emphatic about two of these spiritual tales, one of which is placed in the context of a gesture of Iranian mysticism and the other in that of general Gnosticism.

Suhrawardi's "oriental" tradition has remained alive in Iran until the present; it had a great influence in India on the epoch of the religious reforms of Shah Akbar.

These first two books of this work therefore present a dual aspect that is essential to Islamic Gnosis as it structured the spirit of Iranian Islam. At this time, when recent discoveries have given new impetus to Gnostic studies, especially in the area of ancient Gnosticism and also of Jewish Gnosis, this indeed represents timely research.

Volume 3 will contain book 3 of this work (*The Devotees of Love*) and book 4 (*Shi'ism and Sufism*). 3

Volume 4 will contain book 5 (*The School of Isfahan*); book 6 (*The Shaikist School*) and book 7 (*The Twelfth Imam and Spiritual Chivalry*), as well as a general index. 4

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3 *Aspects spirituels et philosophiques; Les fidèles d'amour*, Paris, Gallimard, 1973 [trans.].

4 *Aspects spirituels et philosophiques; Shi'isme et Soufisme; Œuvres en Prose; Poèmes retrouvés*, Paris, Gallimard, 1973 [trans.].
Book II

Suhrâwardî and the Persian Platonists
Chapter 1

A Life’s Grandiose Plan

Life and Martyrdom

Suhrawardi is traditionally designated in Iran as the Shaykh al-Ishraq, the Shaykh or Doctor of Ishraq. This last word has since become inseparable from the name of the Master of Ishraq, the designation and the emblem of this doctrine. Literally it means the Rising Sun, aurora consurgens, the Morning Light. The adjective ishraqi qualifies the light as auroral, an "oriental" light, that what the morning splendor reveals, the Rising Star. Ishraqi-namaz is the morning prayer, the "Hour of Prime" of the canonical hours. The ishraqi doctrine is a theosophia matutina. The Ishraqiyun are the philosophers and mystics who profess this doctrine. We will soon see how Suhrawardi unveiled the different aspects of this orient to make it the emblem of Iranian spirituality. We will also see how and why this doctrine goes hand in hand, covertly at first and then openly, with Shi’ite theosophy.1 A number of Shi’ite thinkers were Ishraqiyun.

This case preeminently typifies philosophical meditation in Iran. After Avicenna (d. 428/1037), there was on the one hand a critique of its philosophy by Ghażâlî (d. 505/1111). More than one western historian, waylaid by apparent analogies, compared this critique with that of Kant. This was in the understanding that since then no more metaphysics was possible, as if the abdication of one or more philosophers was enough to persuade the others to renounce their reason for it, so man could henceforth do without metaphysics.

Unfortunately, the way in which what has been called "the adventure of philosophy" was understood remained somewhat limited from the western perspective. The consequences of Ghażâlî’s criticism were seen in the unparalleled efforts by Averroës (d. 595/1198) in Andalusia. Since Averroës, what was for a long time called "Arab philosophy", got lost in the sands through a regrettable optical illusion, while in the West Latin Averroism prospered. What instead got lost from view was everything that happened since Avicenna, even while Averroës was still alive, especially the ascent of the immense work of Ibn ‘Arabi,2 which even today nourishes the spirituality of the Islamic Orient and is in such strong contrast with the works of Averroës. In Iran the metamorphosis of Avicennism into this "oriental philosophy" became the work of Suhrawardi.

What Suhrawardi had in mind, his life’s grandiose plan as he saw it and as it was seen

1Note that the word theosophy is meant here in the etymological sense of the Greek word theosophia, of which the Arabic hikmat ilâhiyya is the literal equivalent. Suhrawardi means it in the sense of the word ‘irfan (a knowledge that is a Gnosis). This never puts into effect a conceptual and abstract representation of things, but rather a direct perception (kashf), a real presence (hudur, hazur) of spiritual worlds.

2See in our book, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi..., the moving account of the meeting between the young Ibn ‘Arabi and Averroës, as well as what happened at the funeral of the great philosopher from Cordova [1198].
by generations of disciples, was much less a "beginning" than a "revival". His grand design was to revive the spiritual vision of ancient Persia and it is with this plan in mind that he will declare to have had no predecessors. Let there be no mistake here. At that time Zoroastrianism still existed in Iran, as it does today. There was no need to "revive" that and Suhrawardi never professed himself to be a Zoroastrian, not as a "convert" and not as a reformer of Mazdaism. Born in Iran, he remained a Muslim and a mu'min, because that is how his plan appeared to him, in the very heart of Islam and in the very same place.

His vocation and function was primarily that of a philosopher in the way he shows himself to us. In Isfahan he was part of a philosophical milieu where the memory of Avicenna was still alive. He does not tell us at what exact moment he got to know Sufism, with its traits that attest to personal experience, or when he became familiar with theosophy and Shi'ite prophetology of which traces are discernible in his work and that ultimately explain the reasons for the process upon he was intent in Aleppo. What gave him the confidence during his work, was a sudden illumination that showed him the meaning and the sources of the wisdom of ancient Persia. This vision gave birth to the plan that henceforth mobilized all his forces and made him join the names of Plato and Zarathustra/Zoroaster, some three centuries before the great philosopher George Gemistus Plethon (d. between 1450 and 1464) undertook a similar task himself.

However, Suhrawardi never saw this project, which indeed was inconceivable within the boundaries of a literal and purely exoteric religion, as a dispute with Islam. Far from it, these are very much the energies of a mystical faith, of an Islam that is spiritually alive in him, that allowed him to carry on with these efforts and lead them to their conclusion. Carried by a prophetic inspiration and an Islamic spirituality Suhrawardi foresaw that the hermeneutics of the hidden meaning of divine revelation, the ta'wil, had the power to embrace the meaning of Zoroastrian prophecy. A meaning that it was exactly the duty of this ta'wil alone to discover. Shi'ite theosophy penetrates into the meaning of the mission of the prophets before the "Seal of the Prophets" through the idea of walâyat and includes the mission of the Biblical prophets in prophetology. Suhrawardi discerns in similar fashion that the prophets and heroes of ancient Persia also participate in the destiny denoted in hierohistory as that of the "people of the Book". They share the luster of the Light of Glory (Xvarnah), foreseen in the "Lotus of the Limit". This discernment assumes a mediating role for Salmân the Pure (Salmân Pâk, or Salmân the Persian, Salmân Pârsî) between the Iranian community and the family of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt) regarding the wisdom of ancient Zoroastrian Persia. This accounts for the words spoken by the Prophet: "Salmân is one of ours, he is a member of our family". In their turn the Ishráqîyun acted as if Shi'ite theosophy also adopted the Suhrawardian themes. This is why the appearance of Suhrawardi in the philosophical and spiritual life of Islamic Persia was so important that its traces could not be eradicated. Far from his native Iran, in Aleppo, he was himself sealed in martyrdom in the flower of his youth as a symbol to his cause: that of an ʻoraifa, a mystical theosopher, always exposed to the vindictiveness of the doctors of the Law, whenever they happen to be a little too close to the seat of power.

We already have had occasion to sketch his life elsewhere, after youthful admiration lead us to edit a corpus of his treatises. However, his books are rare or escape the attention of non-orientalist readers. It is therefore necessary for us to sketch the essentials again. 

\footnote{Let us list here for reference purposes the publication status of Suhrawardi’s works, until the present (1970)\footnote{We ourselves have published two volumes, both with extensive introductions in French, namely: Opera metaphysica et mystica I (B.I., 36), Istanbul 1945. [This volume contains the metaphysical parts of three works in Arabic, forming a trilogy: al-Taklifî, al-Muqâwamî, and al-Mashâri’ wa’l-Mutârahûtî, that is respectively, the Intimations, the Apposites, and the Paths and Havens], Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques I (=Opera metaphysica et mystica II) (B.I., 2), Tehran-Paris 1952 (This contains the Hikmat al-Ishráq, the Rîsâla fj l’ihtijâl al-hukmând and the Qissat al-ghurbat al-gharbîya [Arabic and Persian], respectively, the Oriental Theosophy, Symbol of Faith of Philosophers and the Recital of Occidental Exile]. A third volume, Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques II (=Opera metaphysica et mystica III) (B.I., 17),}.

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Shihābuddīn Yahyā Suhrawardi, who must especially not be confused with his Sūfī namesakes,4 was born, as his name indicates, in Suhraward around 549/1155. The city of Suhraward, south of Zanjān and east of Soltānīyeh, in the province of Jabal in northwestern Iran, the ancient Media, was still populated and flourishing at this time (before the Mongol invasions). In his works, in the part dealing with the Physics, the author makes express reference to his native city, regarding petrifaction phenomena observed by him: "As we have observed in our homeland..., near the city of Suhraward..." 5

As a very young man he went to study in Marāgheh, Azerbaijan, with Shaykh Majdūdīn Gūlī. The latter also had Fakhrūddīn Rāżī, another famous name in Islamic philosophy, as a student. Later there were remarkable exchanges between Suhrawardi and Fakhrūddīn Rāżī, of which traces remain, 6 but the contrast between the two masters is as wide as can be. Fakhrūddīn Rāżī remains an eminent representative of Islamic scholasticism (the Kalām) and rationally placed his trust in the resources of the dialectics inherited from Greek philosophers. In turn, Sadrā Shīrāzī will bring this contrast into relief, in as much as he was also an iṣṭaṣāqi. As reported by Shahrāzūrī, Suhrawardi’s faithful disciple and biographer, it seems that our Shaykh had reservations about the philosophical worth of Fakhrūddīn Rāżī.

On the other hand, the latter’s judgment of Suhrawardi was entirely one of admiration. There is a story that after Suhrawardi’s death a copy of his Talwîhah came into Fakhrūddīn Rāżī’s hands and that he piously bowed down before it.

After his studies at Marāgheh, Suhrawardi went to Isfahan where, as we have seen, Avicenna had worked for several years, and it was also at Isfahan that he met the Avicennan tradition. There he did a thorough study of a work by ’Omar ibn Sahlān Sāwājī, which he discusses in depth many times in one of his own works. Ibn Sahlān himself had commented on one of Avicenna’s mystical treatises, the Epistle of the Bird, which Suhrawardi in turn translates into Persian.7 At Isfahan he also wrote one of his first treatises in Persian for the benefit of a number of his friends.8 After this an itinerant life style began for him and he was busy with visiting the various Sūfī communities, a life also full of solitude that allowed him to meditate on the ascent of the steps of the Mystical Way. He traveled to Diyār Bakr in southeastern Anatolia, where he received a great welcome at the Seljukid court in Rum.

4Do not confuse Shihābuddīn Yahyā Suhrawardi, our Shaykh al-Ishrāq, with Abū’l-Nājīb Suhrawardi (d. 563/1167-8), pupil of Ahmad Ghazālī, or with Shīhābuddīn Abū Hafs ’Omar Suhrawardi (d. 632/1234-5), celebrated Sūfī of Baghdad.


6The relations between Fakhrūddīn Rāżī and Suhrawardi were emphasized by the late Paul Kraus in his Les “Controverses” de Fakhrūddīn al-Rāżī (Bulletin de l’Institut d’Egypte XIX, 1937), p. 194, note 4. The note by Qazwīnī (op. cit.), p. 261) is also quite eloquent: he says there were conversations (muddâḥāthāt) between the two contemporaries, but it is only after Suhrawardi’s death that a copy of the book with the Tablehāt falls into Fakhrūddīn’s hands; the latter then cries and bows down before the book. As we noted above, if Fakhrūddīn’s feelings towards Suhrawardi were entirely ones of admiration, then, according to Shahrāzūrī [cf. Nuzhat, p. 100], it would seem that Suhrawardi’s judgment about the philosophical worth of his contemporary was a little reserved.


8This is the treatise Bustân al-Quṭûb [The Garden of the Interior Man], in Persian; cf. Op.Met.III.
even dedicated a book to one of the princes, 'Imâduddîn Qârâ Arslân, emir of Kharpût, that he named "The Book of Tablets dedicated to 'Imâduddîn" (Alwâh Imâdiyâ). We gather what he searched for in his long travels from one of the final pages of one of his great works, where he confides the secret to us.

Thus he set out towards a destiny of which one of his close friends, Fakhruddîn Mardînî, had a presentiment. When he talked about him with his friends, Fakhru Mardînî told them: "What fire! What light of the bright sun that shows in this young man! I have never in my life met anyone like him! But I fear for him with his impetuosity and the lack of prudence in his speech. I fear that this may become his downfall." Alas! A prediction that was completely justified. When the news of Suhrawardi's death reached the Shaykh, he said to his disciples: "Didn't I predict that I was afraid for him?"

It was after one of these long visits in Diyar Bakr with his friend Fakhruddîn Mardînî, that Suhrawardi left for Aleppo, from where he would never return. Then Aleppo had as governor al-Malik al-Zâhir, one of the sons of Salâh uddîn, the Saladin of the crusades. Certain of our chivalric tales have adorned this Saladin with an aura that unfortunately vanishes as soon as he is seen from the oriental side. His fanaticism brought him into violent conflict with his own son about our Shaykh al-Ishrâq. A deep and intimate friendship had quickly developed between the two young men, al-Malik al-Zâhir and Suhrawardi, just as a few years later the great mystical theologian Muhîyiddîn Ibn 'Arabî was to become a close friend of this son of Saladin. In the meantime, the biographer Shahrazûrî reports to us echoes of the violent disputes in which Suhrawardi and the jurists, or doctors of the Law, the fuqahâ, became embroiled. Our young Shaykh seems to have renounced all prudence as well as the salutary practice of ketmân; he seems to have delivered the depths of his thoughts without ever having bothered with his teaching skills.

The accusation leveled against him by the doctors of the law is very telling, if we refer to what was said in the previous volume about the prophetology of Shi’ism (above, volume I chapter 6). A fragment of this dialogue of barbed replies, as told by a historian who cannot be very suspect of harboring sympathy for our Shaykh, causes the accusation of the doctors of the Law to stand out. "You have said in your books that God has the power to create a prophet any time he wishes? - Certainly, God has power over all things. - But not over the creation of a prophet. - Is this impossibility absolute, or not? - You are a kâr.

The takfîr, the sentence condemning impiety and infidelity regarding Islam, is thus brutally imposed. True, the effect of a takfîr is limited, just as the authority that gives itself the right to impose it is limited; it is inappropriate to compare it with excommunication, which presupposes the phenomenon of a Church and pontifical authority. If Suhrawardi had discreetly moved somewhere else the consequences probably would not have been so tragic. However, the sincerity of his convictions, his sense of loyalty and defiance, the care for a cause going well beyond concerns for personal safety, completely opposed such an escape.

The accusation is leveled without mitigating circumstances. How can we expect these from the accusers? Truthfully, I know of no place where Suhrawardi has stated, in so many words, that God can create a prophet, a nabi, every time he wishes, even after the coming of him who was "the Seal of the Prophets". On the contrary, when the introduction of his great work on "Oriental Theosophy" refers to the secret succession in the sacred kinship of the theosophist sages (the silsilat al-'irfân) having its principle in the qutb, he who is their mystical pole, it presupposes the original Shi’ite idea of the cycle of walâyât. This

9A work in Arabic that the author himself has translated into Persian, Alwâh-e "Imâdî; this version is included by S.H. Nasr in Op. Met. III.
Suhrawardian idea of a secret kinship spontaneously brings to mind a passage that is typical on this point, namely the conversation of the 1st Imâm with his disciple Kumayl ibn Ziyâd (above, volume 1, chapter 3). Suhrawardi's commentators never mistook it and all along cited this discussion in their own commentaries on the prologue.

It did not mislead the 'olamâ either. Certainly, they did not see, could not see, that the kinship of the walyât cycle presupposes exactly that legislative prophecy as such is closed and that since then there will be no more prophet messengers. Nevertheless, something continues afterwards and stays open for the future despite this; something on which an entire spirituality feeds itself, which precisely refuses a religion of law practiced independently from its esoteric veracity (haqîqat). This something is the "divine sap", which ensures that the phenomenon of the sacred Book" is not dead, that the perpetual ascent of the hidden meaning (bâtin), underneath the bark of the exoteric (zâhir), prepares ever new foliage. So, to the point, there are the following considerations. If the cycle of revelation (wahy) given to the legislative prophets is closed, then the cycle of inspiration (ilhâm) remains open. There is something esoteric hidden underneath everything exoteric and ta'wîl, or the hermeneutics of symbols is a vital function. Underneath the succession of the waliyat hides the continuation of a secret prophecy (unbawaat bâtinîya), no longer the mission of envoy and legislator prophets, but identical to this waliyat, namely the esotericism of the entire prophetic mission since the beginning, since Adam. This esotericism does not end in what has flipantly called the "relativity of all religions", but in the integration of everyone in their ranks into the hexaemeron, the "six days of creation" of the religious cosmos, as Nâsir-i Khusrâw, one of the greatest Ismailian philosophers in Iran describes it. The 'olamâ of Aleppo could not have explicitly realized all this, but they surely had a foreboding of it, justifying their alarm. The accusation leveled against Suhrawardi eo ipso denounced in him a representation of Shi’ism or of crypto-Shi’ism, thereby forcing it into hiding.

However, this was exactly the very moment that Saladin came to blows with the Franks; Sunni power had triumphed in the Fatimid dynasty of Cairo, which had for the last two centuries represented the hopes of an esoteric Islam of the Ismailians. Elsewhere (above, volume 1, chapter 2) we have described the paradox of such aspirations and showed why the Twelver Shi’ite conception corresponded much better to the metaphysical and spiritual essence of the Imâmate, implying a return of the 12th, hidden Imâm (ghaybât) on the Last Day. It is also certain that the sacred lineage of the theosophist sages and their Imâm, or mystical pole, are no dynasty from this world, but are devoid of any competitive political power. They are rather like the dynasty of the guardians of the Grail compared to the official succession of the Apostolic See. Very possibly the idea of such a succession, entirely incognito and spiritual, does not appear as much as offensive, but even more dangerous and alarming in the eyes of powers whose only perspective is one where the derisive ambitions of power in this world square off against each other.

This is why someone like Saladin could only lend an attentive ear to the accounts of his 'olamâ.12 "If you let him live," they write, speaking of our young Shaykh, "he will corrupt the faith of al-Malik al-Zâhir. And if we let this go on, the entire country will be corrupted." Saladin then sent an order to his son to execute Suhrawardi. Al-Malik al-Zâhir started a pathetic fight. Refusing the order, he hid his friend from the vindictiveness of the fanatics. Renewed insistence of the 'olamâ to Saladin and another letter to his son threatened to remove him as governor of Aleppo if he refused. So it came about that these tenacious people tried three times to separate the Shaykh from the friendship of al-Malik al-Zâhir. The final circumstances were never made clear by his biographers. We don’t know exactly how the young Shaykh died. May be he voluntarily starved himself to death "until his Lord wanted to call him to Himself." The date most often given for his death is the 5 Rajab

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12Shahrazûrî, op. cit., pp. 97-111, has described the pathetic opposition of al-Malik al-Zâhir to his father in order to save his friend.
587 (July 29, 1191) in the citadel of Aleppo. He must have been 36 years old (or 38 lunar years). To indifferent historians he was the maqátil shaykh (put to death, executed, killed). To his disciples he was the shahid shaykh, the martyr, the "true witness on God's path." To philosophers, to the Ishráqîyûn and others, he traditionally remains the Shaykh al-Ishráq.\textsuperscript{13}

Suhrawardi managed to produce a considerable number of writings, despite his short life and incessant travels. His biographer Shahrazûrî has composed a complete list of them: some 50 titles of greater and lesser works, in Arabic as well as in Persian, most of which have now appeared in print. We are unable to produce the list here in its entirety.\textsuperscript{14} Let us only note in passing that from the point of view of their structure and intent we have elsewhere divided these treatises into four groups:

1) A trilogy formed by the three great systematic works that are of a propedeutical nature according to the author's intentions. This trilogy prepares the reader to start the study of and put into practice a fourth work comprising the Shaykh's principal thought, the "Book of Oriental Theosophy" (\textit{K. Hikmat al-Ishráq}).\textsuperscript{15} The first three have similar formats; they are composed of Logic, Physics and Metaphysics. They discuss in detail the theses necessary for the basis of Peripatetic philosophy as it was then taught in Islam. Suhrawardi always thought that the basis and the point of departure for a philosopher's formation was the knowledge of this philosophy, although the spiritual had the obligation to pass beyond it. The three works maintain the austere tone of technical reasoning, but more than once it happens that the text explodes from a pressure of lyrical inspiration, denouncing the misery of the blind of spirit, or anticipating the secret laid down in the "Book of Oriental Theosophy". Of the latter we will have to speak here at length.

2) A group of \textit{Opera Minora}, in Arabic as well as in Persian, some eight works in all, each of which generally begins with an exposition of theoretical problems in order to arrive at the threshold of mystical experience, like the ones in the Trilogy.

3) Some 10 smaller works in Persian, treatises that are in the form of a dialogue in parables or initiatory recitals that form a cycle. These are the most characteristic of Suhrawardîan spirituality, together with the principal work of the Shaykh. They are non-didactic works, but properly 'irfâni. With limited theoretical considerations they are meant to win over their readers in the momentum of their "history" to have it become their own

\textsuperscript{13}Certain historians have shown doubt about the date of the Shaykh al-Ishráq's death. The generally accepted date is indeed 587 H. While Shahrazûrî hesitates between the end of 586 H. and 588 H., Imâd al-Dîn \textsuperscript{11} (above note 11 on page 12) instead places it before the year 588 H. Abû'l-Fedâ confirms the date of 587 H. \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Orientaux,} Vol. I, Paris 1865, p. 65.

Let us also note here two works from our younger years:

1) \textit{Sohravardi d'Alep, fondateur de la doctrine illuminatique (ishráqî)} [\textit{Publications de la Société des études Iraniennes,} 16], Paris 1939.

2) \textit{Les motifs Zoroastriens dans la Philosophie de Sohravardi} \textsuperscript{14} [\textit{Publications de la Société d'Iranologie,} 3], Teheran 1946.

The first of these books contains two inaccuracies, which have youth and the example of one's elders as their excuse. The expression "Sohravardi d'Alep" is misleading; someone who comes from Suhraward cannot also come from Aleppo. The \textit{nîshâq al-Halâbî} that is found with some historians does not mean here "coming from Aleppo", but "died at Aleppo". Secondly, we used the term "illuminative" to translate \textit{ishráqî}. Sufficient to refer to articles published since then, to our Prolegomena (cf. above, note 3, page 10) and to instances that will be cited here to convince that it was indeed Suhrawardi's intention to found an "oriental" (\textit{ishráqî}) theosophy, contrasting with the word "oriental" a meaning that originated with him. It is therefore indeed to be understood that the Shaykh al-Ishráq or the Sîhâb al-Ishráq is the "master of oriental theosophy", and that he came from Suhraward, in Iran (in the province of Jabal, the ancient Media). Shahrazûrî also has preserved some graphic details for us about the way he looked; he cut a perfectly proportioned figure; he had a beard and hair that were reddish blond; he loved the \textit{samâ}, music sessions; he disdained external trappings of authorit y or worldly vanity; sometimes he would wear an ample and long robe, with a colorful headcloth; sometimes, on the other hand, he wore clothes that were patched and worn; sometimes he wore the simple garments that Sûfis wore, etc.

\textsuperscript{14}A complete inventory can be found in \textit{Prop. I}, p. 15 ff.

\textsuperscript{15}These are the three treatises of which we have published the metaphysical parts, the \textit{Râdîyât} (the \textit{philosophia divinatis}), cf. above, page 10, note 3.
history and so have them enter upon the Way. To show this we provide the translation of two of them.

4) Finally there is a type of "Book of Hours", forming a separate group, a free improvisation of hymns that are a liturgical expression of Ishrāq. These are invocations to archangelic powers and sermons or inspirational eschatological psalms. Sometimes a resonance of Manichean piety is heard, like in the following invocation: "Make the Litany of Light ascend, let the people of the Light triumph, guide the Light towards the Light."¹⁶

The Ascendance of the Ishrāqīyūn or Oriental Theosophers

To have a more complete idea of what Suhrawardī had in mind and what he saw, it is necessary to read his great work entitled K. Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq. We have already dedicated many years of work to this book and we do intend to publish a complete translation (fr) of it someday.¹⁷ We also want to identify the works of his commentators that have amplified the ishrāqi doctrine in Iran throughout the centuries. This is why such a comprehensive translation eventually reaches vast proportions.¹⁸ We can only allude to it here and note why we have elsewhere translated the title of the work as "The Theosophy of the Orient of Lights", or simply "The Book of Oriental Theosophy".

A few of the author's remarks will suffice to give a sense of the book's "climate" and to give an insight into what was our Shaykh's idea of the great family of Ishrāqīyūn "oriental" theosophers, for whom he composed this work that encompasses his young life's great project. He ends it with this declaration: "Brothers, I entrust you with the safeguarding of this book. Watch over it, preserve it from the profane, which is unworthy of it. May it take my place (my "caliph") among you before God! I have finished writing it at the end of the month of Jumādâ II, in the year 582 of the Hegira, the day when the seven planets were in conjunction in the sign of the Balance." One of his commentators, Qutbuddîn Shīrāzī (d. 710/1310-1 or 716/1316-7), observes that this is on Tuesday, the 29th of that month (corresponding to September 16, 1186 for us), and that the appearance of this magnificent book on the same day was one of the remarkable effects of the conjunction. The author adds: "This book was inspired in my heart by the Holy Spirit in a single instant, at the time of a marvelous journey, although I could only carry out the task of writing it during many months because of the difficulties caused by my traveling."¹⁹

We are therefore not dealing here with a book written in the comfortable silence of a study. It was the fruit of a long incubation period: the product of lectures, meditations and conversations, while making the slow trips on Iran's and Anatolia's long dusty roads, prone to sudden encounters and discoveries. Then, suddenly, the "marvelous journey", when this book stands fully completed before his mind, before that only an idea. With this book the entire project of the theosophical foundation takes on a definite form, "under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit", that is to say, the Angel Gabriel, who for the philosophers of Islam is

¹⁶Cf. Prol. I, p. 45. It remains our intention to publish an edition of this "Book of Hours", but the task presents serious difficulties.


¹⁸We have dedicated many years of teaching at the école des Hautes-études de Suhrawardi's "Book of Oriental Theosophy", as well as to his commentators; see our reports in the yearly Annales of the Department of Religious Studies, for the years 1957-8 and 1961-2. One will find translated further down, in book 5, chapter 2 of the present work, a number of the glosses of Mullâ Sadrâ Shīrāzî on Suhrawardi's work. We hope to publish the translation (fr) of Suhrawardi's text and the greater part of Mullâ Sadrâ's glosses in a little while, because these are the two pre-eminent monuments of Iranian philosophy. (Cf. previous note)"

at once the Angel of Revelation and the Angel of Knowledge.

There are pages where the author mentions this book by name and we are inclined to believe that its composition was carried out in one step. Many allusions make one understand the object of his feverish quest, the reasons for those long journeys mentioned in the story of his life, notwithstanding the difficulties that those moves created for the labor on his books. Suhrawardi says the following in the third book of the Trilogy, at the end of a long discussion of the problem of being, directed primarily at the Avicennan school of Ibn Sahlân, already alluded to previously:

These people have nothing to overcome this difficulty with, for the things that we have come to reveal in full cannot be fooled. Experimental investigators experience certainty while the things that these philosophers deal with are in vain and their subject matter is nothing but a waste of time. Theosophical wisdom (hikmat) is interrupted by the appearance of these philosophical theses that eradicate the High Sciences of the spiritual itinerary and close off the road towards Malakût. Ultimately these are but scraps of paper and people who only act like philosophers, letting themselves be overcome by this, thinking that someone can belong to the family of theosophical wisdom by reading books, without really entering upon the way of the spiritual world and personally experiencing the vision of the spiritual Light-beings. As for us, we have recorded in a book what God has revealed to us, especially about the High Sciences, of which our predecessors were certainly given an overview, but which was given to us to unfold in detail. One finds it in our book called Oriental Theosophy. We even invented a special code for it, so no one can gather its knowledge except for those who have been admitted by the Keeper of the Book (Qayyûm al-Kitâb), after he ensures that they satisfy the necessary requirements. What light is there be for those to whom God does not grant the Light? (24:40) Just as mystics are incomplete when they are wanting in philosophical capacity, so philosophers are wanting when they have no personal vision of the Signs and of malakût, then they are people for whom there is no reason to have a high opinion, people who were never meant to understand the spiritual world.20

Already the principal thoughts of the fundamental work and the doctrine of Ishrâqi spirituality are formulated on a page like this. Another page at the end of this work confirms it:

If in our days the road to God had not become blocked we would not have experienced such sadness or the irritation of such suffering. Here I am now about thirty years old. Most of my life I have spent in travels and the search for a companion who is the perfect initiate, but I have never found anyone who knew the High Sciences or who had faith in them. Brothers! This is the testament that I leave you: may all care other than for the divine world or perseverance in the work of mystical disengagement (tajrîd) dry up in you. The key to all this is left in my work, Oriental Theosophy. There we have not dealt with anything like before. We even developed a special cipher for it to avoid its disclosure. We believe that, although beginners cannot recognize its importance, experienced investigators will understand that there was no one before me with a similar book and that there are secrets contained in it.21

We have found a trace of the secret code twice mentioned by the author in at least one manuscript. It strangely resembles a certain secret alphabet used by the Ismailians. Is there really danger here? The Shaykh hints at his years of solitude and his search for an initiatory companion. In vain, he says, because the field of the High Sciences lies in ruins. Hadn't the "Great Resurrection" been proclaimed at the fortress of Alamût on August 8, 1164, in the mountains southwest of the Caspian Sea, instituting a pure and spiritual Islam, with which Suhrawardi must have been familiar? Would not some companion have been possible? We also should note the expression "Keeper of the Book". Without any doubt, here Suhrawardi was looking far into the future, at something like an "Order of Ishrâqîyûn" surviving him, at the head of which an "Imâm" would be the depository of its doctrine and the initiator of the secret to his "Oriental Theosophy". There was an even stranger coincidence here, because this expression "Keeper of the Book" is exactly the one that Shi'ite hadîth use in pointing to the Holy Imâms as depositories of the hermeneutic secret of the Sacred Scriptures ("the Book is the mute Imâm and the Imâm is the speaking Book"). As they read this expression in Suhrawardi’s text Shi'ite readers simply relate it directly to the Imâm and the contemporary Shi'ite reader participates in his suffering before the devastation of the High Sciences.

It is impossible to ignore these signs that are corroborated by other ones. It seems that there are passages that do allude to an ultimate secret; for the one must have recourse to the person who is the keeper and the guardian of the Book, as if the audacity of what the Book states hides an idea of even greater significance. Either passage shows us a migratory Suhrawardi, searching for his spiritual family, aware of the kinship to which he belongs of which he claims several times to revive the supreme wisdom, no less aware of the lack of precedence for such a project.

Who did he have in mind exactly when speaking of the Ishrâqîyûn, the "oriental" philosophers and theologians? Certainly this question can be answered satisfactorily only by Suhrawardi’s work itself and the way he formulates his mystical concept of "the Orient". It is first appropriate to inquire whether this expression was known before him. This is not so, although we do find traces of it. A short and strange sign is found in a context that explains the devotion with which Suhrawardi associates the names of Hermes and Zarathustra (Zoroaster). There is a long hermetic tradition in Islam; the Suhrawardian project takes place in this tradition to "revive the wisdom of the ancient Persians". There are also traces found of "oriental" philosophers in his illustrious predecessor Avicenna and Suhrawardi himself has given explanations about this that are important to remember, because then the spiritual ancestry that he himself claims and leaves for his Ishrâqîyûn, as the disciples of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq are called, will be understood.

A famous polygraph of a more or less hermetical nature (291/903) that describes the types of Egyptian prayers says the following: "The third type of prayers are called Ishrâqîyûn, or children of the sister of Hermes, called Hermes Trismegistus in Greek. Their parables and allegories have survived until today". Yet it is exactly this hermetical ancestry that

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22I have recovered the key to this secret code in a ms. of the Tuhâthât, Berlin 5062 (cf. Pr. L, p. 70, note 116, and Pr. II, p. 27, note 58), but never the manuscript of a work by Suhrawardi completely composed in such a code.


24We have previously cited the designation of the Imâm as Qâqîm al-Qârîn, "the Keeper of the Book", in whom the integral science of the Book resides, cf. above, volume 1, chapter 4, § 1; cf. Korkmaz, Orûû: K. al-Brîjû, chap. 1, 3rd hadîth, Arabic-Persian edition, Teheran 1381, pp. 314-315; Mullâ Sadrâ Shirazî, Sharh, p. 140.

25Cf. Ibn Washiyya, Ancient alphabet and hieroglyphic characters, ed. V. Hammer, London 1806, p. 100 of the Arabic text. We do not discern sources of information elsewhere, as specified by Ibn Washiyya, that the Ishrâqîyûn are a "form of Egyptian prayer". Meanwhile, our colleague, Prof. Toufic Fâhî, has graciously made a very valuable suggestion on this point, in drawing our attention to a migration of Egyptian prayers to Yemen, relative to the K. rumûz al-aqlâm, attributed to Ibn Washiyya, which could bring to light significant
Suhrawardi himself lays claim to. He sees Hermes not only as the ancestor of all wisdom, but also as the archetypal hero of all mystical ecstasy (below, chapter 6). Islamic hermetic tradition in turn identifies Hermes with Isdrîs and the latter with the prophet Enoch.  

We also find important information in a commentary written by 'Abdurrazzâq Kâshânî (d. around 730/1330), on a famous manual of mystical theosophy, the *Fusûs al-Hikam* ("The Songs of the Wisdom of the Prophet") by Muhîyîddîn Ibîn 'Arabî, where each prophet is meditated upon not as chronologically belonging to a period in history but as typifying a degree in the hierarchy of being and wisdom. The commentator determines that Seth the son of Adam is the prophet and initiator of the *Ishrâqîyûn*.  

However, among the latter and traditionally so, Seth is identified with Agathodaimon and in Suhrawardi this name is most often used together with that of Hermes. Yet another very interesting sign is that certain ancient Gnostics, those who were called *Sethians* because of their cult of Seth, saw in Christ the epiphany of Seth, while on the other hand Seth was assimilated with Zoroaster, who identified himself with the Savior to come ("I am Him and He is I") in a famous prophecy that the *Saoshyant* was an issue from his race and was the future renovator of the world.

All these signs are charged with meaning to a religious phenomenology that is intent on a discovery of the intentions that "appear" this way before a thorough awareness of such figures and that make connections like this between themselves.

Finally we refer to a classical manual in the Islamic world, the "Book of Definitions" of Sharîf Gurgânî (d. around 818/1415-6), where we read: "The Peripatetic philosophers (*mashsha'im*) are those whose master is Aristotle and the *ishrâqîyûn* philosophers are those whose master is Plato." In addition, Suhrawardi speaks of the "Imâm of Wisdom, our master Plato," in the prologue of his great book.

Hermes, Zoroaster and Plato, three great figures that dominate the horizon of the *Ishrâqîyûn*, the "Platonists of Persia," who originated with Suhrawardi. Still other figures from Iran's past or even chosen from other Greek sages will join them because these too borrowed their Light from the "lamp niche of prophecy" and they all form the "Holy Kinship of Gnosis". The spiritual perceptions or the visionary ecstasies of the heroes of this kinship are as many precedents of the celestial assumption (*Mîrâj*) lived by the Prophet of Islam, whose recital shows itself during the centuries as an archetype for the meditations of the mystical theosophers of Islam, with its many variants and amplifications. Finally, don't these Islamic Platonists of Persia intuitively recover a situation by interpreting the Platonic Ideas in terms of a Zoroastrian angelology that we know from the recitals of Eudoxos of Knidos, who holds such interest for us, is looked upon with such infatuation and reigned as Zarathustra in the midst of Plato's academy? We even know, thanks to a papyrus found at Heraculum with a student roster of Plato's academy, that the latter counted a "Chaldean," an Achaemenid subject from Mesapotamia, among its members in Plato's final years. This could be the origin of the mention of Eudoxos and the edifying parallels drawn between Zaraster and Plato.  

Whatever the case, Suhrawardi's grand plan cannot be explained away by a simple reca-

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pitulation of precedents. Let us rather say to the contrary that he himself is the explanation, who in every instance is the reason for the conjunction of such antecedents. An accumulation of antecedents will never explain the appearance of a project as this and it is clear to everyone that this creative intuition is not itself the object to be explained but that it is the source and the principle of such an explanation. It is based on this creative intuition that antecedents are created.

The way in which Suhrawardi intends to situate himself is already quite evident from his vocabulary. He uses the terms ishrâq (the Orient as moment of the rising sun, the dawn’s illumination) and mashriq (the Orient as a place, the country that lies in the East), the terms Ishrâqiyûn and Mashriqiyûn (Orientals), Hikmat ishrâqiyya and Hikmat mashriqiyya (oriental theosophy) as equivalents. His disciples and commentators do the same from generation to generation. Up to now Suhrawardi has remained fairly unknown in the West. Avicenna, his illustrious predecessor, has been known to Westerners for centuries thanks to medieval Latin translations of his works. For this reason he has the reputation of also having formed a project of "oriental" (mashriqiyya) philosophy. We must therefore ask Suhrawardi himself his feelings about this to discover how he compared himself with Avicenna, because such a question concerns things that matter greatly in the present study.

We have treated of these matters at length elsewhere, both on the occasion of the publication of the Shaykh’s works, as well as in our own work on Avicenna and we have no intention to start the debate all over again, for which we prefer to seek answers from Suhrawardi himself, since these seem to be infinitely closer to the truth than the hypotheses offered nowadays by the various researchers. Let us recall, without going into details, the controversy that had developed, because of a reading mistake in the West itself a century or so earlier through erroneous information about the philosophical situation in Iran until this very day. Why was one prone to read mashriqiyya instead of mashriqiyya (oriental) in order to give the sense of "illuminative" philosophy to the word? For all sorts of reasons it was impossible for the former to designate any school of philosophers, even hypothetically so.

This is what the well-known Italian orientalist C. Nallino demonstrated in an article published in 1925 and for a long time afterwards everyone was content just to repeat its arguments and conclusion. The first misfortune is that such a triumphalist demonstration only opened a door further that was already ajar. No matter what Iranian shaikh taught the hikmat ilâhîya and no matter who his pupils were, if one had consulted either the one or the other it would have been evident that since long ago no one in Iran read anything else for this than mashriqiyya, "oriental" philosophy. The second misfortune is that the famous orientalist wanted to go much farther and artificially separate the Ishrâqiyûn from the Mashriqiyûn, ignoring the context of a gloss of Mullâ Sadrâ which pointed the way. To believe this, the former, whom he characterizes as "illuminationists", only minded Suhrawardi, while the latter, the "Orientals", only cared about Avicenna. Now, it was indeed correct to view the "oriental" philosophy of Avicenna (announced by himself in his great work K. al-shifâ as containing his personal philosophy), if indeed we did receive it in one piece, as something other than the Ishrâq philosophy of Suhrawardi. Besides, without such a difference there would not have been a Shaykh al-Ishrâq nor a "Suhrawardanism". However, to hold that the Ishrâqiyûn were not the Mashriqiyûn was wrong. One wonders how someone with the old Iranian lithograph of Suhrawardi’s "Oriental Theosophy" in hand could say such a thing while one could so easily gather from it that in Suhrawardi and in his commentators Ishrâqiyûn and Mashriqiyûn were used interchangeably. I can only explain the direction that was taken as an extreme phobia regarding Neoplatonists, especially Iamblichus and the great Proclus. The extreme rationalism of C. Nallino only allowed him to see "extravagances" (sic)

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31 See for the entire question, Pr. I, pp. 37-40; Pr. II, pp. 5-19; Avicenna and the visionary recital...; subject index s.v. Orient; our translation of Mullâ Sadrâ Shirâzî, Les Livres des Penetrations metaphysiques (B.I., 10), Tehran-Paris 1964, subject index s.v. Orient, orientale, etc.; our Trilogie ismaélienne, subject index s.v. Orient; our Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth, subject index s.v. Orient.
in Neoplatonists. He had to include Avicenna under this compromising umbrella at any price, God only knows why. To say that the few "notebooks" of Avicenna that have been preserved and handed down his "oriental logic" have nothing to do with the *ishrāq* in Suhrawardi’s sense, is certainly true. However, to say that Avicenna’s "notes" in the margins of the so-called *Theology* of Aristotle\(^{32}\) (a "theology" that is a reordering of Plotinus’ *Enneads*), or even a mystical recital like the *Recital of the Birds*, has nothing to do with Suhrawardi’s project, is completely false.

Briefly, the situation as seen from Suhrawardi’s point of view and according to his own statements can be summed up as follows: there is a great work of Avicenna, entitled *K. al-insâf wa’l-intisâf*, something like "the Book where one makes the division with fairness". This was a work of considerable size in which the author decides between the "Orientals" and the others. Unfortunately the manuscript of this still unfinished work, containing Avicenna’s "oriental philosophy", disappeared during the sack of Isfahan in 1034,\(^{33}\) except for a few fragments, and circumstances did not allow Avicenna to rewrite it.

Suhrawardi refers on the one hand to these fragments of the *K. al-insâf* and on the other hand to "unstitched" notebooks, completely mutilated and incomplete pieces, containing a Logic that Avicenna associated with the "Orientals". He correctly observes that despite this association these "notebooks" contain nothing but Peripatetic theses and pertain to ordinary philosophy. The authenticity of their affiliation with the "oriental source" is therefore in no way established. However, and this is the big issue for Suhrawardi: when he speaks of "oriental philosophy" he means the philosophy that has as its origin the "oriental" doctrine professed by the sages of ancient Persia, to which he gives the name *Khusrawānīyûn*, and we will soon see why. His position is as follows: without any doubt Avicenna wanted to found an "oriental" doctrine, different from the philosophy of the Peripatetics, with himself as its leader. For want of access to the "oriental source" (asli mashriqi) he could not bring this project to fruition. Whoever henceforth wishes to be initiated into the philosophy and theosophy of the "Orientals" must now turn to him, Suhrawardi.

This is not the place to restate the problems of Avicenna’s "oriental" philosophy. It is entirely Suhrawardi’s own position that holds our attention. Instead of a very detailed analysis, we recapitulate the following three points:

1) As Suhrawardi wanted it and brought it to realization, the philosophy of Ishrāq considers itself to be the oriental philosophy. According to this name it is also at the same time the philosophy of illumination, preparing the soul for the reception of the "oriental flashes", i.e., the archangelic Lights, "rising over and illuminating" the soul. It ascertains the ontological and phenomenological basis for this "oriental" experience. As we will note again further down, it is "illuminative because it is "oriental" and it is "oriental" because it is "illuminative". With Suhrawardi this is the authentic relationship of the meanings connoted by the terms *Ishrāq* and *Mashriq*.

2) The concepts of Orient in Suhrawardi and Avicenna have something in common, when Orient is understood in the true sense, in a metaphysical and not a geographical sense. In Avicenna this Orient is announced in the "Recital of Hayy Ibn Yaqzân", in his commentary on the verse of the Light (24:35), in the "Recital of the Bird" and in the references in the "notes" in the margins of the so-called *Theology* of Aristotle. In Suhrawardi this is the concept of the Orient as the universe of archangelic Lights, originating in the "Light of Glory" (*Xvarnah*), forming a cloud of Light with the Light of Lights and all Orient, which are its degrees. However:

3) There is a profound difference in its personal spiritual realization. This is pointed out by Suhrawardi in the Prologue of his "Recital of Oriental Exile" (below, chapter 4). The Shaykh al-Ishrāq was perfectly well aware of the reasons for this difference. The revival of

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\(^{33}\)See our *Avicenna and the visionary Recital...*, above, note 29.
the "oriental source" from the doctrines and symbols of the sages of ancient Persia was his very own work, a work without precedence, since Avicenna had been unable to bring his project to completion, because he did not know of this source.

This awareness is expressed many times, for example during a special treatise dedicated to Sufism:

There was among the ancient Persians (تیْل-فَرْس) a community of men who were guided by God (الْحَق) and who thus walked on the right Path, eminent sages-theosophists, without any resemblance to the Magi (مجَاس). It is their precious theosophy of Light, the very same one to which the mystical experience of Plato and his predecessors gives witness, that we have revived in our book entitled Oriental Theosophy and I have no predecessor in carrying out a project such as this.\footnote{Kalimat al-tasawwuf (ms. Râgib 1480, fol. 207b); see the Arabic text cited in Prol. I, p. 41 and Mots zoroastriens, p. 24, note 20. The first words of the text cited are a ta'wil of verse 7:159, where Suhrawardi transposes to an ancient Persian elite the idea of a chosen community from among Moses' people.}

Such a passage enlarges the domain of our inquiry again, because it has the value and the weight of a manifesto, brief as it may be. It explicitly affirms the author’s design to resurrect the wisdom or theosophy that was professed in ancient Persia by a group of sages whose doctrine and spirituality agreed with that of Plato and the ancient Greek sages.

Two traits form the physiognomy of this group of sages of ancient Persia. About the first one the Shaykh al-Ishrâq puts in place a ta'wil, a synchronizing hermeneutic operation. A Koranic verse says: "There was among the people of Moses a community of men who were guided by God and walked on the right Path" (7:159). The anaphora worked by the ta'wil transposes to the sages of ancient Persia what the Koranic verse says about an elite group among Moses’ people.

The second trait completes the first one. Since he was thus divinely guided, Suhrawardi wants to avoid every chance of confusing this elite of Iranian sages with those whom current speech designated as majūs. This word means "magi", adepts of the ancient Iranian religion, in Arabic as well as in Persian. How does all this fit together? At the moment that Suhrawardi claims the spiritual ascendancy of the sages of ancient Persia he expressly rejects the impiety of the "magi", whereas for us this name historically refers to the representatives of the ancient Mazdean wisdom of Iran, that ancient wisdom that Suhrawardi now wants to "resurrect". What is going on here? This is an important question because it sets the tone for Suhrawardi’s entire project.

Succinctly stated, the magi who Suhrawardi rejects here are the ones who profess a radical dualism, the coeternity of the two principles of light and darkness, because what he was not resurrecting was such a radical dualism. We will see him express at greater length the metaphysical significance of the opposition, symbolized in the antagonism of the two principles of light and darkness. He does so in terms that agree with the facts provided elsewhere by Shahhrastânî (d. 1153), that preeminent predecessor in the history of religions, and that can be summarized in three points:

1) The magi (مجَاس) are radical dualists.
2) Yet the primitive magi (الْمَجَاس الْأَصْلِيْا) do not profess this dualism that poses the existence of two ontological coeternal principles. However, there was a difference of opinion about the way in which the genesis of Darkness and the safeguarding of the primacy of Light was to be explained.
3) Zoroaster was related to these primitive magi, who posited the existence of one unique principle for light and darkness, but "explained" evil as resulting from the mixture of Darkness with Light. The person of Zoroaster also appeared as having been one of the prophets
of the One, who is not together with, or opposed to, or like anything else. Zoroaster’s doctrinal outline, which can be read in Shahristānī, in Suhravardi and later also in Qutbuddin Ashkevârî, Mir Dâmâd’s disciple in the 17th century, is consistent with this.\textsuperscript{35}

The image drawn this way of ancient Persia’s prophet Zoroaster and his magi presumes a structure of religious facts that is shaped by the continual progress of Zoroastrian magianism towards the west. Coming out of Bactria in the extreme east of the Iranian world, the Zoroastrianism of the Sasanid and post-Sasanid traditions finds itself transplanted into the western parts of Iran. In this case Zoroaster is represented as coming from Azerbaijan; the facts of the sacred geography of the Avesta are reversed and pivot around a rather ideal axis.\textsuperscript{36} However, this is only a single step "towards the west", one step in a whole series of them whose coherence we will one day show in a phenomenological study; this series was established through the palingenesis of Zoroaster and his magi into consciousness; the conditions of consciousness in which these figures appear will have to be determined every time, from the great Byzantine reformer George Gemistus Plethon in the 15th century to finally Friedrich Nietzsche.

Although we have to proceed here in very large steps, we have to point out a few things that are of capital importance to the religious destiny of humanity. Towards the West there was a two pronged extension of this Zoroastrian magianism, which had established itself in the western part of the Iranian world.

One the one hand magianism extended itself in a southwesterly direction, towards Chaldea. Hadn’t Babylon been the winter residence of the Great King for a long time? From this encounter with Chaldean wisdom was born what could be called Mago-Chaldaism and it took hold of Alexandria across Syria, the former now the intellectual center of Hellenism and a center of Neoplatonism, which is of greater importance to us here. The religious and philosophical fervor of minds in contact with one another made possible this encounter of Platonism, Orphism, Hermetism and Mago-Chaldaism. From this encounter the work of Suhravardi sent reverberations into Islam. The famous text known as the \textit{Oracula chaldaica} was also born from this spiritual milieu. Gemistus Plethon attributed it to Zoroaster and without a doubt others did so before him, but these \textit{Oracula} or \textit{Logia} were written (in the latter half of the 2nd century) by two pious theosophists: Julian "the Chaldean" and his son, Julian "the Theurgist."\textsuperscript{37} Composed in a symbolically obscure format, the Chaldean Oracles (the term "Chaldean" has only a vague ethnic significance here) have as theme the knowledge of noetic beings, beings from the intelligible world who govern this world and the means to communicate with them is equally noetic, that is, spiritual. This text had considerable influence upon the Neoplatonic philosophers: Iamblicus, Proclus, Syrianus, and still others, who comment on it at length, like on obscure phrases from the Bible. These \textit{Oracula} and \textit{Logia} offered something like a "Hellenic magianism" as they were meditated upon by these Neoplatonists, as they did on the Suhrawardian lexicon, to which we will return in a few moments. However, this magianism, the work of "orientalist" Neoplatonists, did not represent the radical dualism of the \textit{Majûs}, or the magi who Suhravardi condemns. It agrees with the representation of Zoroaster as one of the prophets of the One, and with Shahristání’s idea of the doctrine of the "primitive Magi", who Suhravardi preferred to call the \textit{Khusravânîyûn}, and we will see why.

On the other hand, magianism extended in a northwesterly direction across Asia Minor into Armenia, Pontus, and Cappadocia. These are the Magi of Asia Minor, who are com-


\textsuperscript{36}Cf. a summary of this situation, carefully analyzed by H. S. Nyberg, in our book \textit{Celestial Earth...}, p. 44, ff.

\textsuperscript{37}See the excellent work by Hans Lewy, \textit{Chaldæan Oracles and Theurgy} (published by the Institute Français d’Archæologie Orientale), Cairo 1956.

\textsuperscript{22} 1 A Life’s Grandiose Plan
monly designated as the magicians.  

These certainly recognized Zoroaster as the founder of their rites and mysteries, but with them the Zervanian doctrine predominates, as the figure of Mithra and its mysteries occupy an important place (in the Avesta, Mithra is only one of the Yazatas or divinities, created by Ahura Mazda, the "Lord of Wisdom"). As we know, the mysteries of Mithra spread over the entire Roman Empire, into Great Britain, Gaul and Spain.

Unfortunately, we only have parts of monuments and fragments of destroyed literary works that point to this prodigious expansion of Iranian magianism. Hermippus, a famous librarian of the great library at Alexandria not only wrote on his own a work of several volumes "On the Magi," but also drew up a catalog of the works that had their origin in Zoroaster (or rather, in the Magi of his school, written under his patronage, because they were composed under inspiration of his doctrine) under the tutelage of Pliny. The whole comprised some two million lines, already quite a library. Only fragments or widely dispersed references to it remain. The Oracula chaldaica were also a part of it; it is due to the strenuous labor of patient researchers that we have recovered what it consisted of (some four hundred verses) from references in Neoplatonic philosophical works, at least from the considerable amount that has reached us. We owe part of our knowledge of the Magi of Mithra and the magicians of Asia Minor to an extract from their psalter and a hymn that "Zoroaster and the children of the Magi sing who learned it from him," according to Dionysius Chrysostom (2nd century). In this hymn, where Zoroastrian doctrine and Stoic theories are fused, the symbolic history of the cosmic chariot and its four steeds is developed, representing the four Elements (the analogy is found again in the symbolism of the four columns of the Throne among Islamic Gnostics, themselves informed in one way or another about the tetramorphology of Ezekiel's vision). Regarding the text known as the "Liturgy of Mithra", there will be occasion to be reminded of it again at greater length. Researchers in religious studies remain inconsolable today before such a loss. In his own time Suhrawardi's reaction was typical. He was not content with being inconsolable, to merely "revive". We see him begin immediately, sure of his way, with discarding all error concerning those magi who with their radical dualism were unfaithful to the true doctrine of the sages of ancient Persia. His own spiritual experience will call to witness the visions of Zoroaster, the visions of the blazing Light of Glory, the Lights of the Divine Heptad, etc. However, in the description of the "hieratic ascension" in the Chaldean Oracles it is this symbolism of the light and the Fire that predominates (hymn of Fire, flower of Fire, roads of Fire, living sacrosanct Fire, adored in the silence of the sanctuary of the soul, etc.). In the psalms that Suhrawardi addresses to the Angel of the Sun and to "the Perfect Nature" one is equally able to find a certain resonance with the Psalter of the Magi of Mithra. In summary, we find scattered among his writings traits of the same genre as those that are found among certain Neoplatonists and much later in Gemistus Plethon, which identifies an affinity between the Chaldean Oracles and the theosophy of the Magi of Zoroaster.

In any case, it is a similar divination that causes Byzantine philosophy to join the names of Plato and Zoroaster. It is even tempting to inquire whether his teacher, the mysterious Jew Eliseus, who taught in the name of Zoroaster and who was reputed to be a disciple of Averroës, wasn't also a displaced ishrâqi in Anatolia. Three centuries before Gemistus Plethon, Suhrawardi put into place in Islam the conjunction of the names of Zoroaster and Plato.

38 Cf. Bidez and Cumont, Les Mages Hellenises, subject index s.v. magiæensis.
39 Ibid., I, p. 91 ff.; II, p. 142 ff.
40 Ibid., I, p. 158 ff.; II, p. 251 ff. The determination of this affinity seems to go back to Aristotle. See ibid., I, 248 (ad p. 94 note 1), W. Jaeger's citation (in the Journal of Religion, XVIII, 1938, p. 129) is as follows: "In the dialogue On Philosophy... Aristotle associates Greek philosophy and oriental religious systems, such as those of the Zoroastrians and the Magi, under the general heading of wisdom [sophia], which in Aristotle sometimes means metaphysical knowledge of supreme principles and theology."
Only the efforts of the Byzantine philosopher and the Iranian one follow their course in different contexts. For Gemistus Plethon the "Hellenized Magi" will be further linked with the West, as far away as his friends in the Platonic Academy in Florence. For him this concerns placing a great philosophical and religious reformation under the patronage of Zoroaster, a religion of the future that will overcome and forget the antagonism between the religion of Christ and that of Muhammad. For our Shaykh al-Ishrâq there are no such sentiments of overcoming an antinomy, because the spiritual resources of Islamic Gnosis itself (hikmat and 'irfan) allow him to accomplish a palingenesis of the sages of ancient Persia.

From then on Suhrawardi’s work rises before our mind’s vision as the completion of a grandiose circuit, begun with the double migration of magianism towards the south- and northwest. Everything happens as if the Magi of Zoroaster during this westerly migration assumed the Chaldean wisdom and the Platonism of the "orientalist" Neoplatonists and it is then incumbent upon Suhrawardi to repatriate these Magi into Persia, but into the Persia of the 12th century, with all the treasures of a mystical theosophy that they could impart on their disciples. To repatriate them it was essential to renew the contact of platonizing magianism with the Avestic tradition of which Suhrawardi certainly knew some authentic fragments (those concerning Xvarnah, the Light of Glory, angelology) and with the tradition of the heroes of ancient Iran, such as Ferdâwî’s Shâh-Nâmeh perpetuated it in Islamic Persia. It is beginning with this palingenesis that the heroic epic of ancient Iran is drawn into developing itself into a mystical epic. This will be one of the important aspects of the grandiose and complex work of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq (below, chapter 5).

To sustain this there is the sentiment of a belonging to a spiritual family dispersed across the terrestrial spaces, but also of invisible and unbreakable bonds that give it a solidarity like the branches of a giant tree. It is the great tree of Wisdom, whose branches never cease to grow and spread themselves out, under the power of a mysterious sap that Suhrawardi characterized as an "eternal leaven", rising mysteriously from spirit to spirit, without any "sufficient reason" to explain it historically, when one only looks at it as a mechanism of causes and deductive reasons. Fortified by the certitude of his spiritual ascendance, through the recognition of his rights and the obligations these impose upon him, he is able to dedicate himself to the work of a "reviver". He can then write:

We have confided the science of True Reality in trust to our book entitled Oriental Theosophy in which we have resurrected the ancient wisdom that has never ceased taking the Imâms of India, of Persia (Fârs), of Chaldea, of Egypt and of the ancient Greeks up to Plato as a pivot, from which they also drew their own theosophy. This wisdom is the Eternal Leaven (al-khamîr at al-aralîya).41

It is the idea of this leaven propagating itself like the sap in the branches of the tree of Wisdom that leads Suhrawardi to sketch an outline of the "genealogical tree" of the Ishrâqiyyûn in the last pages of his book of The Paths and Havens. All exoteric opposition between the Greek sages and the "oriental" ones disappears. They are, respectively, the "Guardians of the Logos" (kalimat) on the "occidental side" and on the "oriental side". Remarks by Suhrawardi allow us to draw this genealogical tree as follows.42 At the root of the tree we find Hermes as the father of all sages. Then there are the two main branches. On the "oriental side" we find the ancient Persian sages (the Pahlavutiyân); Gayomart, the primordial King, followed by two heroes whose signs are already invoked in the Avesta, before that of Zoroaster/Zarathustra: the holy kings Fereydûn and Kay Khosrow. It is after the latter

41 Mutârahât, Physics, Book IV, next to last chapter, cited in Prol. I, p. 41.
that the ecstatic sages who have appeared since him will be named *Khusravânîyûn* (below, chapter 6) and it is the leaven of these *Khusravânîyûn* that Suhrawardi sees transmitted to himself through three Sufi masters: Abû Yazid Bastâmî (the "migrator" of Bastâm), Mansûr Hallâj (the *fatâ* or "knight" of Bayza) and Abû'l-Hasan Kharraqânî (the migrator of Amâl and of Kharraqânî). 43 On the "occidental side": Asklepios, Empedocles, Pythagoras and Plato; thereafter the *leaven* of the Pythagoreans passes in Islam to Aldhî AldŒmîn (Dhûl-Nun Mînî) and Abû Sahî Tustari. 44 Finally, the two "sides" are rejoined again in a group of spirituals whose discourses are the organ of the *Sâkîna*, as the branches of the cypress tree grow together again at the top.

Having mentioned this last word, we must pause still a little while longer because what it connotes goes back to Suhrawardi's most fundamental Zoroastrian notions that he revived, namely that of the Presence-Light, the Light of Glory, *Xvarnah* (below, chapter 3), which by this same token determines the spiritual ascendance that in his thought and from his experience ties together the spiritual leaders of Islam and the mystical theosophers of ancient Persia.

Let us merely point to some summary characteristics. For Suhrawardi and for mystics like him, the *Sâkîna* is essentially the sentiment of a Presence attested to by a Sign, or Signs, whose perception does not depend on organs used in sense perception, but on "spiritual senses" ordained to the perception of the intermediary or *imaginal* world. The word *Sakîna* is the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew *Shekhîna*, an important concept in the Kabbalah and which can be defined for Jewish consciousness as the personification or hypostasis of the Presence of God in this world. 45 The Arabic word means more directly quietude, trust, gentleness; the root *skn* that it contains conveys the notion of a dwelling, of a presence that quiets, appeases and gives security.

Koranic verses that allude to this idea have been amply commented upon, e.g., "Those who believe and whose hearts are appeased by the remembrance of God. Yes! It is by the remembrance of God (dhikr Allah) that their hearts find appeasement" (13:28). Quietude and appeasement: *itmi'nân*. To this verse another one responds: "Oh serene Soul! Return to your Lord!" (89:27-28). It is precisely this idea of *itmi'nân*, quietude of soul as the absolute certitude of faith in the things seen by the soul, that the 5th Imâm Muhammad al-Bâqîr noted as a commentary on another verse: "It is God who makes the *Sâkîna* descend into the soul of the believers so that their faith ever increases" (48:4). 46 To reiterate: those over whom the *Sâkîna* descends are those meant by this verse: "It aids (inspires, gives strength to) them through a Spirit which comes from Him" (58:22). Finally, this *hadith* alludes to them also: "There are those in my community who speak and there are those to whom they (the Angels) say..." 47

The fundamental idea is therefore that of a Presence that comes to live in the soul. With

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Suhrawardi this Presence is specifically one of the Flashing Lights, that of the photisms or epiphanies of Light, whose experience Najmuddin Kubrah and his school announces and anticipates.\textsuperscript{47} When these Lights reach their maximum, when they stabilize themselves and subsist for a while: this is what is called the Sakîna.\textsuperscript{48} When Suhrawardi speaks to "those who possess the major Sakîna" (al-Sakînat al-Kubrah), he refers to "those in whom the spiritual Lights and the sparkling Flashes make a habitual indwelling", as explained by his commentators.\textsuperscript{49} This is why the page cited above, where the double leaven of the mystical tradition is reunited and fuses itself to the community of the Sakîna, amplifies a development where the different states of the Light of Glory, the Zoroastrian Xvarnah are outlined.\textsuperscript{50} With the Ishrâqiyyân the reunion of the double leaven operates under the double aspect of Sakîna-Xvarnah. The idea of such a reunion determining the spiritual ascendance of the Ishrâqiyyân professed by Suhrawardi opens a direction still unexplored by research in comparative theology and mysticism. Because this Presence-Light comes to dwell with the pure souls it is this Light that guides the blessed kings Fereydun and Kay Khusraw; it is again the same Presence-Light that manifests itself to Moses when a voice secretly spoke to him at the Burning Bush (28:30). The case of Kay Khusraw typifies the soul's illumination, having itself become a burning bush according to the ishrâqi hermeneutic of the Koranic verse of the Light: "God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth: this Light is like the hearth in which there is a flame, a flame in a crystal... it is the Light upon Light" (24:35).\textsuperscript{51}

Understandably, by so establishing the ascendance of the Ishrâqiyyân, Suhrawardi does not write (objective) history of philosophy or mysticism. He is writing a history of souls as he perceives it in the history of his own soul, which is its locus. It will therefore be totally inappropriate to object to him, as historians might, that his schematization is a view of the spirit, under the pretext that it does not concur very well with our own established concepts. Such an objection will be overruled, overruled by the only history that Suhrawardi wants us to know about, namely the history that he himself made, he himself, not some external gesture, but a reality lived in the ultimate depths of himself. It is at the moment where his spiritual perception accomplishes this history that the predecessors grouped together in the genealogical tree become and are truly the Ishrâqiyyân's predecessors, since the author himself is both its witness and the evidence. There is a reversion in time here: time now starts at the one for whom these predecessors will be the predecessors of the Ishrâqiyyân and this is the whole difference between existential historicity and what is currently called historical existence (allusion was already made to this, above, book 1). Unfortunately it so happens that the former is misunderstood in favor of the latter. We will return to this at some later point.

Having thus determined the ascendance of the Ishrâqiyyân, we are now able to attempt to attain with them what Suhrawardi called the "oriental" source. First we outline the examination of what this "oriental" source consists of, which gives these "oriental" sages their qualification.

\textsuperscript{47}See our study on The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism, trans. (eng) by Nancy Pearson, London 1978, p. 95 ff.


\textsuperscript{49}Cf. Hikmat al-Ishrâq, \textsection 267, and I'qâd al-Hukamâ, \textsection 15, in Op.Met.II, p. 250 and 271. "Certain spiritual lights bloom for them; they pass to an habitual state and they become the Sakîna".

\textsuperscript{50}Mutârahât, \textsection 224, in Op.Met.I, p. 504.

Chapter 2

Oriental Theosophy

Hieratic Wisdom

There has already been occasion to point out (book 1) that it is possible to translate the terms hikmat and hukamâ with "philosophy" and "philosophers", but that these are not exact translations of either one or the other. "Theology" and "theologians" do not fit any better; hikmat and hukamâ are not situated on the same plane as scholastic theology (kalâm) or the Islamic scholastics (mutakal-limân). Hikmat is not simply an accumulation of philosophical research and dialectical theology. Hikmat is better translated by "wisdom" (sophia), provided that this term is used in its sophianic sense, marked by the imprint of Gnosis, the way it is used in the recital of Kay Khusraw’s ecstatic vision (below, chapter 6) and not to simply signal a certain attitude or experience, as most often happens in modern languages. The adjective sapiential (derived from sapientia, wisdom) does not make its origin sufficiently clear either (sapere, to savor, to taste, to experience, the dhawq of our texts). According to the authors that we are studying here, the operation of thought originates in three sources, all with equal validity on their respective levels. Tradition (naql) nourishes theology. The intellect (‘aql) is the organ of dialectical philosophy (that of the kalâm and the falsafa, the Arabic transposition of the Greek philosophia). Finally, what can be called "spiritual perception" or "hierognosis" (kashf, literally "to unveil, to uncover") is the source of the knowledge that constitutes theosophy (hikmat ilâhîya) and mystical Gnosis (‘irfân). Understandably, the latter does not ignore the first two, it presupposes them, just as the esoteric (bâtin) presupposes the exoteric (zâhir).

When Suhrawardi and his associates use the expression ilâhî, divine sage, theosophoshakîm ilâhî, "divine sage", or "sage of God", we understand this as an exact transposition of the Greek "theosophos". Hikmat ilâhîya, often just hikmat for short, is theosophia, taking the word in its etymological meaning. "Oriental theosophy" (ishrâqîya) is the sage’s wisdom, gathering at once the highest speculative knowledge and the most profound spiritual experience, which can also be etymologically called speculative, in the sense that it transmutes the being of the sage into a speculum, a pure mirror, in which the Pure Lights rising in the Orient of the spiritual world are reflected and embraced. The hierarchy of the "oriental" sages (below, § 2) will be founded on this basis.

The perfect "oriental" sage is a hakîm muta’allîh. This is not just a mystic who has an experience similar to many mystics who are devoid of philosophical training, or who believe that something as this is superfluous and look at it as dangerous; neither is it a philosopher, like many philosophers, who ignore the putting into spiritual practice, the personal "realization", of their philosophy. The integral spiritual experience of this "theosophy" by a sophos

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1 Cf. Prolégomènes II, p. 20 ff.
or sage of the divine sophia, can be characterized as sophianic.

It is therefore fitting to technically deepen the meaning of the terms that Suhrawardi makes use of when he speaks of the *ta'alluh* as the spiritual state of the *hakim muta'allih*. This word, (verbal name of the root 'lh in the fifth form) connotes a dual sense of deification, or theomorphosis and adoration, the devotional service of the divinity. It should be noted that under its first aspect it corresponds to *theosis*, a term used among Byzantine mystics in the same period as Suhrawardi’s. Meanwhile, to focus attentively on the characteristic parts of his works that constitute the "initiatory recitals" and his "Book of Hours"!, we are prompted to examine his intentions in the pursuit of a direction, something to which he draws our attention himself. There are some pages where he deals with the meaning of the word "Magi". This approach might indeed be useful here in an attempt to follow his directions in referring to the teaching and examples of Zoroaster and Plato, two names that can equally well mean "Chaldean Oracles" and "Neoplatonic sages" at the level of his "Oriental Theosophy". It indeed seems that in the meaning of the word *ta'alluh* there could also be included something that is similar to what the later Neoplatonists called *theurgy* and that the *muta'allih* sage has many characteristics in common with theurgist sages, or "hieratics". "Hieratics" is a category that contains the entire Suhrawardian view of the world, where every species is a "theurgy", the "hieratic" work of its Angel.

The Greek word *theurgos* appeared as a neologism of the "Chaldeans" who drafted the *Oracula* towards the end of the 2nd century. Proclus and his school generally referred to the "Chaldeans" as theurgist sages, i.e., members of a mystical community referred to by a sufficiently vague term, whose doctrine they revived. In contrast to the *theologians*, who are "those who say divine things", the *theurgists* are they "who work divine things". This contrast agrees exactly with the one that Suhrawardi so carefully brings about, between someone merely called a philosopher and the *hakim muta'allih*. The "divine work" can be understood in several ways. Theurgy can be called a "divine work" because it confers upon man a divine nature, thanks to the "sacrament of immortality", which is at the very heart of the Chaldean doctrine and its initiations. As this immortalization (apathanatismoi) appears as the "daughter" of deification, so is the word *theurgy* colored with a metaphysical sense that the Neoplatonic philosophers gave it. For both Iamblicus and Proclus the human intellect is incapable of seeing the supreme God in the perfection of his nature. The intellect’s power allows it to attain a vision of Ideas in their plurality, but not one of their source, the indivisible unity of the noêton, the intelligible, or rather the supra intelligible in its unity. This supreme end can only be reached by the organ of a superior perception, the "flower of the intellect ". It is therefore no longer a process of intellection, but the result of a suprarational state, a living flame that the divine Light ignites in the soul, as the flower is a flame that the Sun’s ardor ignites in the breast of the Earth. As the philosopher Damascius observed, this Gnosis must be thought with the "flower of thought", which "is no impetuous knowledge and does not struggle with its object, it does not hasten to appropriate it, but rather it abandons itself to it."

This *cognitio passiva* signals the state of union (enôsis) described by Plotinus. In various formats the Islamic Gnostics and Sûfis just repeat the very same thing, in attempting to describe the moment where the presence of the divine Subject emerges into consciousness, the real Subject of the latter’s activities.

It is indeed a similar power that also renders the Suhrawardian sage capable of the supreme vision of the "Light of Glory", that *power* that the Neoplatonists call theurgic and which according to the Chaldean Oracles postulates the ascension (anagogê) of the soul. The notion of theurgia among the Neoplatonists applies to a practical method of active union (drastike) with spiritual beings. It is a suprarational union where the Subject who performs the "divine work" is the divine Subject itself. This "method" is therefore again designated

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2Cf. Hans Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy* (above, note 37, page 22), Excursus IV, pp. 461-466. We are compelled to restrict ourselves here to just a few summary comparisons.

3Ibid., p. 166 and note 374.
as "hieratic": the "hieratics" are those who put it into practice and for the Neoplatonists the Chaldean theurgy was one of these hieratic methods, but not the only one. It is always based on certain ascetic rules and presupposes a whole framework of theosophical knowledge. It seems that the Neoplatonist Iamblichus borrowed the term hieratic from the adherents of hermetic philosophy. When he affirms the superiority of the hieratic life over that of a mere philosopher, then this precedence agrees exactly with the one Suhrawardi gives to the hakismmuta'allih in the mystical hierarchy of the sages whose origin goes back to Hermes.

The expression to which the term "hieratic" is given as an adjective again narrows and defines its meaning. For example, there is a "hieratic hope". "Hope in the continuous fire will be your nourishment", say one of the Chaldean Oracles. Hope is a noetic faculty, i.e., an organ of knowledge, and like all those in the Oracles it is qualified by a word where fire enters into its composition, because this concerns the descent of a gift from the Supreme Intelligence. However, this "hieratic hope", in the language of the mystery communities (e.g., those of Eleusis), like the word hope itself, refers to the confidence of the initiates in a life of happiness beyond death. This is at the heart of the "sacrament of immortality" of the Chaldean Magi, in unison with what Suhrawardi and the "Platonists of Persia" profess.

In any case, the theurgic or hieratic ascension of the soul (anagôgê) was the principal mystery of the sacramental community for whom the Chaldean Oracles were the Scriptures and not just the science of a mystery. The goal of this sacrament, of this mystery (teletē, mysterion), the goal of initiation (teleiôsis), was the immortality of the soul. We know from Proclus and others, from the teachings of the "hieratics" on this point, that its aim was to effect the separation of the soul from its physical body before its exitus. It dealt with the capability of conferring upon the soul the faculty of breaking the bonds with the body and physical nature (this reminds one of the correspondence between the two Greek terms: teleutain, to die, and teleiosta, to be initiated). The soul has only provisionally descended into this world to accomplish its mission and the role that befalls it. This mission and its role only find their accomplishment if the soul is capable of returning there from where it descended. However, this presupposes that it has been accustomed to separating itself from the physical body when it travels back there again, carried by its own subtle body (okhēma). Otherwise it is in danger of being submerged by the violence of physical death. The Greek terminology that designates this dual movement of descent and ascent (kathodos and epanodos) has its literal equivalent in that of the mystical theosophers of Iran (the two arcs of nuzzāl and su'ūd). The idea of the necessity of the forestalling of physical death to render it harmless is felt as being so urgent that its precept is placed on the lips of the Prophet himself in a hadîth: "Die before dying..." The great philosopher and spiritual Shi'ite, Mîr Dâmad, will repeat it in the 17th century and cite a similar passage from Suhrawardi: "No one is truly a muta'allih, a hieratic, unless he is capable of shedding his body just like he takes off his tunic." Whether one says khôrismos (separation) in Greek or in Arabic, it means exactly the same thing.

By these we do not necessarily mean phenomena that are today reputed to be "disturbing" or "abnormal". Let us be guided solely by the predilection with which the mystical theosophers of Islam have all cited Plotinus's famous recital of ecstasy, as they were able to read it in the Arabic text of the so-called Theology of Aristotle (the beginning of the recital can be found below). That is what this is concerned with. The ascension of the soul is described in several fragments of the Chaldean Oracles that have come down to us. We are also able to have a foretaste of "the sacrament of the immortalization of the soul" in as many recitals. This concerns a drama mystikon and cannot merely be called a recital. In any case, this is what the "recitals of initiation" written by Suhrawardi are concerned with. We similarly find several remarkable traditions that go back to the Shi'ite Imâms; one of the better known ones is the hadîth of the "White Cloud", commented upon by Qâzi

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4 Ibid., p. 147 and for the subsequent ones, p. 177 ff., 187-188, 206.
Sa’îd Qummî (below, book 5, chapter 3). All of this agrees with what can also be found in the text known as "the Liturgy of Mithra", as well as in the recital of the mysteries of Isis, by Apuleius. The action of the theurgic sacrament tends to represent the destiny of the souls of the initiates after their physical exitus and this is the same thing that Suhrawardi’s Recital of Occidental Exile alludes to. It is the history of the passion of the soul: descent and return, death and palingenesis. As Proclus says, citing one of the Oracles: "the souls who knew the works of the Father (the Ideas, the spiritual worlds) escape the fatal fall of Destiny." "The theurgists do not belong to the multitude of men subject to Destiny."

Lest there be some misunderstanding here: supreme salvation is never the work of hieratics by themselves. It is a sign of a great ignorance of the religious history of mankind to believe, as certain theologians do nowadays, that the difference between Christianity and other religions consists in the fact that in Christianity man’s salvation is divine work, while in the other religions man assumes his own salvation. Certainly all spirituality of Islamic Gnosis and of Islam in general belies such a simplistic reduction; besides that, Neoplatonic piety, whose agreement with the Shaykh al-Ishrāq has been alluded to in these few pages, equally attests to the fact that the hieratic is not joined to spiritual beings without their help, for the principal reason that for the theurgist the agent of the "divine work" is the divine Subject itself.

If Proclus knows that "only those who possess an angelic soul are able to accomplish the hieratic work", but guards the secret regarding the nature of this sacrament conferred upon the soul, then it is precisely because this quality is conferred by a ray of divine Light at the very moment when its hieratic ascension culminates in a mystical union with this Light. Proclus knows the hierarchy of Angels who "inflame the soul with Divine Fire"; he speaks of the Angel who is the "separation Guide", i.e., the Guide in the exodus of the soul beyond its physical body, who resembles the one who revealed itself to Suhrawardi at the end of his recitals. On their side, the Chaldean Oracles know that the Angels are "noetic beings" who descend from the Empyrium to come to the aid of the hieratic soul by order of the supreme God. It is for this reason that the hieratic soul has its post mortem dwelling among them, as a "potential angel", in "angelic space".

It remains to be said that this hieratic operation, the ecstatic anticipation of death’s exitus, can only manifest itself and can only be lived except as the end of time and of all things, as an individual eschatological event. So it is exactly with Suhrawardi. We will see this further on in the recital of the ecstasy of Hermes, as well as in the heroes of such ecstatic eschatology. It is precisely how the Shaykh al-Ishrāq typifies this ecstatic event, as lived by mystical hieratics, the hakimmuta’ālih, and labels it with words like "the Great Destruction", or "the Great Overwhelming" (al- tāmmat al-kubrâ), which accompanies the announcement of the Final Hour, the eschaton, in the Koran. This theme is heard again at the beginning of the Recital of Occidental Exile (below, chapter 6), and at the moment of the vision of the Lights, described at the end of the book of "Oriental Theosophy".

The preceding pages have attempted to identify the harmony between ta’ālih (mystical apotheosis) as the charisma of the hieratic theosopher (muta’ālih) and the doctrines to whom Suhrawardi appeals in support of his own experiences: those of Zoroaster and Plato, the sages of Persia and of Chalke, as these appear in the context of Mago-Chaldaism and later Neoplatonism. Now, this muta’ālih theosopher, in whom we recognize a colleague of the theurgist sage or of a "hieratic" from the Chaldean Oracles and the Neoplatonists, is for our Shaykh al-Ishrāq eo ipso also the ishrāqī sage, i.e. oriental. This last characterization makes its imprint on all of his doctrines and on his entire school, as was recognized by an Indian work written in Persian in the 17th century (the Dabestân al-Madhahîlb, see below, book 4), in speaking of the Ishráqīyân-i Irân, the "oriental" theosophers of Iran, also called

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5 Ibid., cit. p. 212, note 142.
6 Ibid., pp. 219-220, 260.
the "Platonists of Persia".

We must now note in Suhrawardi’s work the characterization of the hieratic sage as an "oriental" theosopher or ishrāqī. To encompass the idea and the ideal of Ishrāq, we have briefly perused the area of magianism’s extension towards the West and southwest in its "Chaldean" and Neoplatonic formats. The statements made by Suhrawardi about Ishrāq now allow us to recover the bond, never completely broken, between the Chaldean magianism of the Neoplatonic "orientalists" and the true Iranian Zoroastrian tradition of the holy Book, the Avesta. The way of, of "oriental" knowledge, is the way through which he invites us to recover with him the "oriental Source", the Light of Glory (Xvarnah, Khurrarah), which is the key notion of Zoroastrian cosmology and spirituality. The Light of Ishrāq (Nār ishrāqī, Lux Orientalis) is for our Shaykh identical with the Light of Glory.

Oriental Knowledge

In Suhrawardi, the expression ishrāqī, "oriental", both qualifies the supreme mode of spiritual knowledge and the group of theosophic sages, the "hieratics", who have its knowledge as their goal and vocation. Many references have been gathered thus far under this term ishrāqī. The terms "Orient" and "Oriental" are not simple geographical or ethnic references, but they essentially indicate something that cannot be located on any geographical map. It is therefore necessary to open up a passage from the literal meaning to the spiritual meaning of the word "Orient"; what opens this passage is the idea of illumination, of the phenomenon and the vision of Light, of a photism. However, the word illumination, taken by itself, will be insufficient, because this expression must be considered with its oriental source. As a corollary, in using the words Orient and Oriental, we must always be on our guard against any geographical misunderstanding. From an ishrāqī viewpoint it is particularly true today that the geographic orient is populated with a whole host of "Westerners", while quite a few "Orientals" live in the West. It behooves us to be guided therefore by what was alluded to above: "There were among the ancient Persians a community of elect, guided by God". Suhrawardi in this way transposed what was alluded to by a Koranic verse. On condition that we seek to repeat this transposition, it furnishes not only the criteria for the ascendance of the Ishrāqīyûn, but also for those of their posterity, of the "oriental" tradition, which alone gives the "oriental" sages their qualification.

Let us begin in Suhrawardi’s great book with the passage where the word Ishrāq appears for the first time and where his two principal commentators, Qutbuddîn Shirāzî and Shahrazûrî, enlarge upon it, almost in unison. The author makes a reference to the insistence of his friends, his "brothers", to get what he finally gives in to when he writes his Oriental Theosophy, to which he was inspired, as he says at the end of his work, "in a single instant, after a marvelous journey". Qutbuddin pauses on the two words that form the title of the book, as follows:

These words signify the theosophy based upon the Orient of Lights (Ishrāq, the light of the Orient), which is the spiritual perception (kashf), or rather the theosophy of the Orientals (mashāriqa), who are the inhabitants of Persia (Ahl Fârs). In any case, this amounts to the same thing, since the theosophy of the ancient Persians was as a spiritual perception, experienced as an intimate relishing (khashfiya dhawqiyah). Therefore, it originates in the Orient of Lights (Ishrāq), the Orient that is the epiphany (zohûr) of pure Lights, of pure Intelligences; it originates in the fulguration and in the effusion of illuminations that rise (ishrāqât) over their souls in a state of isolation from their physical bodies. The foundation for the point of reference of the ancient Persian

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theosiphers was the experience of a feeling of intimacy and spiritual perception. This was equally true for the ancient Greek sages, except for Aristotle and his school, who took as point of reference rational dialectics and logical demonstration, and nothing else.

In this passage, three items stand out:

1) The first meaning alluded to is the spiritual meaning of the word Orient. The Orient, the Light rising over the Orient (the hour of Ishrâq), is the Manifestation and the primordial epiphany of being. It is the spiritual perception produced in consciousness by the fulgurations of this Light and it unveils the transparencies of being, as the Rising Star reveals the presence of things through the illumination of its rising. At the level of the physical world the star rising in the physical sky at the hour of its Orient corresponds to the instant at which knowledge rises, knowledge through which the subject of this knowledge rises to itself, to its Orient. The expression Ishrâq thus has a precise technical meaning that differentiates "oriental" theosophy from all other forms of knowledge. Likewise, as the morning splendor, the instant of the first bursting of the star, in the physical world is signified by the growing crimson color of dawn, so it also signifies in the spiritual sky of the soul the epiphanic instant of the Knowledge of itself.

2) The second meaning refers to the way the theosophy of the Orientals is understood, i.e., the people who live in the geographical Orient, and we noted that these were the ancient Persians, the people of Fârs, Persia. This does not concern ethnic qualities. It is not enough to live in the Orient or to be a Persian, to be an "oriental". It is another investiture that qualifies the "oriental" theosopher, the ancient Persian sage, an investiture expressed by the transposed words Orient and Oriental at the level of their spiritual significance, i.e., at the level where the rising of the star in the physical sky "symbolizes" the star rising in the spiritual sky, like the expression Ishrâq itself. Indeed, as Qutbuddîn remarks, if theosophy of the Orientals amounts to saying Oriental theosophy, then this is exactly because the wisdom of the ancient Persians was precisely the high theosophy that we saw through the visionary perceptions of Kay Klaïsraw and Zarathustra, through their teachings on Xvarrâbab and the world of archangelic Lights. Nevertheless, they do not amount to the same thing. It is because their knowledge originated in this Orient that the ancient Persians were "Orientals". Stated in another way: it is "oriental" knowledge that makes a sage an "oriental" theosopher; it is not his ethnic connection with the geographic Orient that makes his knowledge "oriental" knowledge. Their investiture thus defined, the ancient Persian sages are the legitimate ancestors of the "oriental" theosophy that Suhrawardi proposes to resurrect.

3) Indeed, these "Orientals", in the spiritual sense, are also found in the sages of ancient Persia, Orientals in the geographical sense, and one notes that it is absurd to want to separate the two: a theosophy which by its own accounts is the "illuminative" theosophy of Ishrâq, and a theosophy of the Orientals (see above, page 19). Our philosophers never effected such a separation. Avicenna himself pursued an "oriental" philosophy. Suhrawardi, in a much better position to judge such matters than we are, told us the reasons for Avicenna's unsuccessful attempt and why the oriental theosophy was then constructed by him, the Shaykh al-Ishrâq. There is more. We see here, as we did previously in the genealogy tree, that there was no reason at all to place the Greeks and the "Orientals" in opposition. The ancient Greeks themselves were also "Orientals", because they also had access to the source of high mystical theosophy. The opposition exists only between the "Orientals" and the Peripatetics of Aristotle's school, chiefly the "modern ones" of Islam, the principal antagonists alluded to by Suhrawardi when referring to the scholastics of the kalâm.

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8 Prolégômenes I, pp. 27 ff., and Prolégômenes II, pp. 22 ff.
The two expressions, Orient and Oriental (Ishrâq and Ishrâqi), mark the apogee of a triple vision, unique in itself. First there is the Rising Star, the hour and the place of its Orient. Then there is the illumination, the matutinal splendor that illuminates this Orient. Finally there is the rising Star itself. From then on one can say that this deals with a knowledge that is oriental, because it is itself the Orient of knowledge; an illuminative knowledge because it is oriental and oriental because it is illuminative. That is so, because this Knowledge is the rising, the morning of Knowledge itself, the hour of Ishrâq; it is the primordial place of Knowledge, the Orient where all knowledge rises. Finally it is a Knowledge of the same essence as the knowing subject whose knowledge of itself causes all cognizable things to rise in this Orient. The "oriental" theosopher is an ishrâqi, because his Knowledge is his presence to himself, eo ipso his presence to the dawn, to the Orient of knowledge; vice versa, his knowledge is oriental because this presence makes the Orient of this knowledge its own "being present to itself". "Oriental" qualifies a mode of being and a mode of knowing at the same time, reciprocal with one another. One could accumulate words to make up for the incapability to put this into a singular terminology. It reminds us of the aurora consurgens of Jacob Boehme, or of the expressions that are found in Hegel: light of the Orient, ascending light, substance of the dawn, and again: essence of the rising sun, rising light (orienty!), substance of the Orient, pure luminous essence of the aurora. This is all Ishrâq and "oriental" theosophy. All of these expressions agree with the ones also found in Latin Hermetism: cognitio matutina, knowledge "at dawn". Everything that precedes this dawn is but a groping around and an illusion in utter darkness.

Thus, in this title Suhrawardian theosophy fashions its most beautiful symbol linking it with all the traditional symbolism of light and darkness. In any case, all sages of the "oriental" kinship have expressed themselves symbolically in an encoded language (rumûz). In mentioning this last word, we don’t mean an abstract emblem or sign, or some inoffensive allegory, but configurations of an intermediary world, which is the only way to represent universes that are superior to it. Let us speak more exactly of the universe that symbolizes one with the other for the sign to find its truth in what is symbolized and superior to it. Furthermore, for the spiritual esoteric truth at the level of signification to become the exoteric truth at the level of being, which is higher than it. The function of the symbol is essentially mystagogical here. As Suhrawardi writes:

I have all who walk on God’s Path for support in everything that I have taken into account of the Pure Lights (or beings of Light), as well as all the rest. This high knowledge was indeed the ultimate experience (dhawaq) of Plato, the Imam and leader of those who have wisdom, a man endowed with great force and interior light. Such was also the case with Hermes before him, the Father of all Sages, up to Plato himself, and other eminent philosophers, pillars of theosophic wisdom, like Empedocles, Pythagoras and still others. However, the doctrine of these ancient sages was presented in the cipher of symbols, so there is no refuting it. When someone claims to have an argument with the exoteric appearance (zâhir) of their doctrines, then their true intentions are never encountered, because symbols cannot be refuted. However, the basic oriental doctrine, the one concerning Light and Darkness, the doctrine that constitutes the very teachings

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of the Sages of ancient Persia, such as Jāmāsp \textsuperscript{10} Frashaoshtra \textsuperscript{11} Bozorgmehr \textsuperscript{12} and still others before them is founded precisely on symbol. This was not the doctrine on which the impiety of the dualistic Magi (\textit{Majūs}) or Mani’s deviation was founded.\textsuperscript{13}

This passage, with its final characterization, confirms what we read before. The book’s two great commentators, Qutbuddin Shīrāzī and Shahrazūrī, nearly say the same thing in their amplification, in the following terms:

The doctrine of Orientals (\textit{ahl al-Sharq}) is founded on the symbol. The sages of ancient Persia professed the existence of two Principles (\textit{ash}) of which one is Light and the other Darkness. These are respectively the symbols of being in its necessity and being in its non-necessity. Light represents (\textit{Qā'im maqām}) necessary being, Darkness that of non-necessary being. The absolute first Principle never redoubles itself into two principles, one Light and the other Darkness. This no penetrating mind has ever maintained and it was also the weighty reason that the elite of the sages of Persia (\textit{fuzulî Fārs}) fathomed the depths of the ontological sciences. This is why our Prophet (Muhammad) said in their praise: Science will be suspended from the Pleiades and the men of Persia will attain it.\textsuperscript{14} Their high sciences and their doctrines are precisely those that Suhrawardi has revived in the present book. It was apparently also the ultimate experience of the elite of the Greek sages, because the two communities (Greek and Persian) agree on this principle. Those (the Persians) were, for example, as the author notes, Jāmāsp, Zoroaster’s disciple, Frashaoshtra and more recently Bozorgmehr. Their predecessors were the kings Gayomart, Tahmuras, Fereydûn,\textsuperscript{15} Kay Khusraw and Zoroaster, a number of high ranking kings and prophets. Certainly, various vicissitudes have ruined their high sciences; the most disastrous event was the loss of their sovereignty and the loss of Alexander’s books in the Great Fire. However, after attaining certain aspects and noticing their agreement with things that

\textsuperscript{10}Jāmāsp, disciple of Zoroaster, who married his daughter Pouruntchista; see H.S. Nyberg, \textit{Die Religionen des alten Iran}, Leipzig 1938, pp. 151 ff., and Yasna 33, regarded as the "Eturgy of marriage". It is his contribution to write the Avesta (A. V. W. Jackson, \textit{Zoroaster, the Prophet of ancient Iran}, New York 1938, p. 117, note 3) to Dēnkārt) and was the first successor to Zoroaster in his priestly office. There is considerable literature about his name, principally astrological and apocalyptic, cf. Bidez and Cumont, \textit{Les Mages hellénistes}, subject index s.v. \textit{Djâmâsp} and \textit{Zâmâsp-Nâmak}. A systematic study still remains to be made.

\textsuperscript{11}Frashaoshtra was Jāmāsp’s brother and became Zoroaster’s father in law, when the latter married Hvōvī, taking here as his third wife. Frashaoshtra and Jāmāsp were on familiar terms with the court of King Vishtaspa, the sovereign who favored Zoroaster’s predictions. Hvōvī remains an eschatological and ascansant figure; her children, the Soshygants, or Saviors, whose coming will successively close this \textit{Aton}, and have not yet been born. Cf. H. S. Nyberg, \textit{op.cit.} subject index s.v. \textit{Hvōvī-Geschlecht} and \textit{Frashaoshtra}.

\textsuperscript{12}Bozorgmehr was the chief physician and minister of the Sassanian king Khusraw Anushāvān (= Khusraw "the immortal soul", d. 579 AD.). His person is related to the legend of Ahiqar and hence with the book of Tobías, also with the introduction of the game of chess into Persia. It is probable that he is none other than the famous physician Buznē, translator of “Kalîlagh and Damnagh” into Pahlavi. Cf. A. Christensen, \textit{L’Iran sous les Sassanides}, 2nd Ed., Copenhagen 1944, pp. 57 ff., 423 ff., 429 ff.


\textsuperscript{15}About these personages: Gayomart, the primordial Man; Tahmuras (\textit{Toeeza Uruja}), legendary hero, who cast out demons and roamed the world astride on Ahriman; Fereydûn (\textit{Thraētaona} in Avesta, \textit{Fretūn} in Pahlavi), cf. A. Christensen, \textit{Les Types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l’histoire légendaire des Iranies}, I-II, Copenhagen 1917-1934, vol. I, pp. 124. See especially, Sven Hartman, \textit{Gayomart, étude sur le syncrétisme dans l’ancien Iran}, Upsala 1953, who gathered and translated a number of lesser known Arabic and Persian texts.
appear to spiritual perception and intuitive vision (kashfiya shuhûdiya), the author has tested their excellence and labored to achieve it. 16

This is the way Suhrawardi’s commentators expressed themselves in their appreciation of his work in the 13th century. The final characterization in the passage with the reference to the Magi and to Mani especially draws our attention. Suhrawardi considered it necessary to avoid all confusion, because what he suggests is an "oriental" knowledge for which he claims an "oriental" ascendance, coinciding with the one from ancient Persia. Already one of his statements (above, see page 21), has given us occasion to determine who the Magi were from whom he wanted to isolate himself. These were essentially the Magi who professed a radical dualism, and above all those who "covenanted" with Ahriman. We will see (below, chapter 3), that the great event of his spiritual life was a visionary perception that transformed his consciousness and his view of things. In a flash, it showed him how very narrow the Aristotelian theory of the Intelligences was. It was also the source for his own interpretation of the Platonic Ideas with a Zoroastrian angelology. In a confirmation of his own vision, he appeals to the witness of the prophet of ancient Persia’s ecstatic visions; he was certain that Zoroaster was not one of the ones who professed a radical dualism, opposing two eternal Principles, from the origin of origins and on an identical ontological basis: a primordial power of Light and a contrary primordial power of Shadows.

We now come to see in what sort of terms Suhrawardi and his commentators show us the true meaning of the duality of principles in cosmology and cosmogony. The Shaykh al-Ishrâq will always stay with this interpretation, because it agrees with that declaration to which he beforehand gave the import of a manifesto: "And there was among the ancient Persians a community of elect, guided by God, who walked on the Path of righteousness, eminent sages-theosophers, who were unlike the Magi." As far as we are concerned, we can use the word "Magi" and narrow down its meaning, absolving it then from any suspect characteristics. Suhrawardi would rather not give another meaning to the word majûs in Arabic, other than the one current in the Islamic world. This is why he preferred to use another word (and will speak of the Khusravânîyûn). We have previously met the "Platonist Magi" here. Thanks to Suhrawardi, their link with their Iranian ascendance has been reestablished. Having accomplished the "revival" of the theosophy of ancient Persia, he can eo ipso lay claim to the Iranian ascendance of his own theosophy, which for this reason he called ishrâqî, "oriental". Starting with him, the past is no longer something that was. Time has become reversible. This is what is meant by the word "revival". The revival of Zoroastrian theosophy for ishrâqî spirituality was now conceivable in Islam. Ahriman’s shadow was felt to have been definitively subdued by and for Suhrawardi, who also professed the esoteric tawhîd (Unification of the One). The ta’wil, symbolic hermeneutic of two principles, lead these back to two ontological aspects of being, necessary being on the one hand, affirming its positivity by right, and non-necessary being on the other hand, whose potentiality measures its negativity.

Certainly, the Suhrawardian hermeneutic (ta’wil) presupposes a change in classical Maz- daism, if it is to be fulfilled. This modification already had some precedents. Suhrawardi’s passage cited above, with his commentators’ amplifications, will call for a deployment of our inquiry into three directions. These are: 1) the efforts to overcome metaphysical dualism, 2) the person of Zoroaster, 3) Mani’s case.

1) The classical Iranian form under which modified radical dualism appeared is known as Zervanism. Zervân, limitless time, is seen as the absolute original divinity from whose thought two "sons" proceeded: Ohrmazd, the Principle of Light, was born of Zervân’s triumphant thought, Ahriman, principle of Darkness, was the child of doubt, of negativity,

who obscured Zervân's thought. Meanwhile, this manner of overcoming dualism can still only be situated on the level of two antagonistic Principles, making Light and Darkness again indeed equal, by giving Ahriman an immortal presence and postponing Ohrmazd's reign to the end of time. That was no solution for Islam's Gnostics. When traces of Zervanism are revealed in the latter this is why this indeed refers to "Neo-Zervanism", founded at the price of a radical dramaturgical alteration of primitive Zervanism and safeguarding the supremacy and original antecedence of the Principle of Light. Zervân is no longer the Supreme Principle, but one of the Beings of Light, one of the Angels in the highest ranks of the Pleroma. Thus Darkness is not born of the Original Light, but from a being derived from the Light. Nonetheless, a characteristic trait of Zervanism has been kept: that of doubt, a sort of vertigo of nothingness giving birth to the Other by him. Ahrimanian Darkness is invested in the Angel Zervân. This is the way the cosmogony of the Gayomartian Gnostics (named after Gayomart, sometimes primordial Man, sometimes one of the kings in the Iranian epic legends) is shown to us in Shahrastâni's writings.

This dramaturgical modification reoccurs, *mutatis mutandis*, in the cosmology and cosmogony of the *Oracula*, the "hieratic ascension of the soul" (*Oracula chaldaïca*) and the *Logia* of the Chaldean Magi (already alluded to, above, page 22) and their Neoplatonic interpretation. Darkness and evil originated in a sudden catastrophe in the Angelic Pleroma, and there is no longer any need to profess a radical metaphysical dualism; the principle of metaphysical monism is now safeguarded. The Chaldean Magi, in accepting the Platonic axiom of the divine creation of matter, accepted the principle of a monistic explanation of the world's genesis. They were no Majûs, whose impiety Suhrawardî condemned. Except, when the catastrophe that Ahriman, or the anti-god Hades, is the demons' leader is admitted once, then anthropological dualism reigns again with renewed vigor in every way that these demons correspond to the soul's lower or irrational parts. The antagonism between Ohrmazd's faithful and the followers of Darkness reaches all of its acuity in the antagonism between the pious theurgists, the "hieratics" aided by the Angels, the Avestic *Yazatas*, and the "wizards", the Ahrimanic magicians aided by demonic powers, the *Dêvs*. Unquestioningly these magi degenerate into magicians and enter into the category of *majûs*, exploiting the ambiguity of dualism. Whence the necessity to protect the conditions of the "hieratic ascension" against the traps of their demonology with vigilant and ascetic morality, so the other catastrophe cannot occur, of which traces are found all the way in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, where we read that Clinschor, the fallen knight, lost to black magic, had been initiated into *ars magica* in "Persidâ".

One should not neglect to point out here that the "Neo-Zervanite" cosmology of the Gayomartians agrees point for point with the "drama in heaven" that describes the cosmogony of Ismailian Shi'ism. The same Angel Zervân is now represented as the third of the Intelligences of the Pleroma, the *Spiritual Adam*, who through his vertigo of doubt falls to tenth place and becomes the Demiurge of this world, in order for the ones that are his to find an instrument of salvation there.

There is still more. It seems that this trait characterizes a philosophy that expresses the profound and constant concerns of the Iranian soul, which we discover again in a great Twelver Shi'ite philosopher from Safavid Persia of the 17th century, Sayyed Ahmad 'Alawi. He was the son-in-law of the great Mir Dâmâd (d. 1611), the "master of ideas" of several generations of Iranian philosophers, and he used the occasion of a commentary on Avicenna's...
to write a monumental work. He entitled it "The Key to the Book of Healing" (Miftâh K. al-Shifâ), explicitly justifying this title by the reference Avicenna makes in the prologue of his great work to his "oriental philosophy". For Sayyed Ahmad 'Alawi the key is this "oriental philosophy". When he comes to the explanation of the Avicennan theory of the Magi, he alludes to the Pythagorean principle: "When the One emanates from the Cause, the Not-One also emanates", to reference "the teachings reputed to Zoroaster", which in fact is the "Neo-Zervanism" alluded to above. We have treated of this ishrâqî witness elsewhere and will not return to it here.\(^{20}\)

2) We have seen that Suhrawardi and his commentators distinguish with great care between Zoroaster and the sages of ancient Persia on the one hand, and the dualist Magi on the other. We noted Iranian magianism's extension to the southwest, meeting Chaldean wisdom and finally Neoplatonic wisdom. Although the Neoplatonists noticed the identity, or a certain affinity, between the doctrine of the Chaldean Oracles and what was considered to be professed by the Magi of Zoroaster,\(^{21}\) some ancient authors, struck by certain traits that indicated a different person in the works of some of them, were lead to distinguish between Zoroaster, the Persian prophet, and Zaratos (or Zorades, or some other form like it), a Chaldean Magus. Traces are found of such a distinction in Clement of Alexandria, Pliny, and in some Manichean homilies.\(^{22}\) Let us also note that one of the most notable philosophers of Ismailism, Abû Hâtim Râzî (4th/10th cent.),\(^{23}\) attested to it, for whom Zaratoletic, the Persian Zoroaster, was a dâ'î, a dignitary during the fourth cycle of prophecy, i.e., Moses' period. Besides this, the orthographic differences only record variants in pronunciation, so we are strictly and etymologically dealing here with the same name. The historian Agathias positively affirms that Zoroaster and Zarades are the names of the same person.\(^{24}\) This is also Suhrawardi's position and that of the Ishrâqiyyûn, who never touched upon the idea of splitting Zoroaster's personage in two. We have here a prime example of a type of perception and representation that we are unable to identify positively, because we don't know how to distinguish between what is historically true, as we understand that word today, and what is phenomenologically true.

3) The case of Mani seems to us to be very simple here. We have seen above that Suhrawardi spoke of Mani's "deviation". However, his own doctrine and its spirituality of Light had in many ways a Manichean imprint. Perhaps there is something like a "personal protection clause" in his estimation about those in Islam who had no more of an idea about Mani's doctrine than some of today's publicists, who speak randomly of "Manicheism", when in fact it has nothing to do with Manicheism at all. There are no other examples of Suhrawardi's position. We have noted elsewhere the undeniable and definite imprints that Manichean Gnosis left on Ismailian Gnosis;\(^{25}\) only Mani's name is never mentioned. It is important to always keep in mind the ketmân, the "disciple of the arcane". The example of a commentator like Shahrazûrî, who was an ishrâqi disciple at heart, will illustrate this best. On the one hand, Shahrazûrî outlines all the things that were then known about Mani in the prologue of his book: his Mazdean origin, that Mani offers a synthesis of two religions, Mazdean and Christian, that he claims a prophetic mission and appeals to an asceticism

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22 Ibid., I, pp. 37-38.
23 Cf. Abû Hâtim Râzî, in his still unpublished book, Ithbât al-nubuwwat; see W. Ivanov, Ismaili literature, a bibliographical survey, Teheran 1963, p. 27-33. According to Ibn Nadim, Abû Hâtim was originally Manichean. He seemed to have a thorough knowledge of Manicheism, because he referred to the Shkh-purâag of Mânî. He unquestionably had a slight contact with Armenian Christians, and had excellent information about Zoroastrians, Mazdakites, Bihâfarîs, which he mentions in his book (Ibid., p. 24). On the controversies with his compatriot and contemporary, the physician Rhazes (Râzî), see our Histoire de la philosophie islamique, I, pp. 194 ff.
24 Mages hellénisés, I, p. 38.
25 See our Trilogie ismaïlienne, subject index s.v. Colonnes de Lumière, Forme de Lumière, manichéisme.
that will result in the ruin of society. These are briefly all the facts of a current opinion, as poorly informed about Manicheism as one was for a long time in the West about the Cathars. However, we also find a long treatise by this Shahrazûrî in the section of his work on Oriental Theosophy that deals with Manichean eschatology, where a doctrine is explained, not of the bad Mani, but of the Sage Mani (al-Hakîm Mânî), that concerns the Column of Light and the Earth of Light. The commentator places this with the Suhrawardian doctrine of the imaginal world of the "eighth clime" (the middle or intermediary Orient, see below), and concludes with: "If the intention of the Sage Mani, expressing itself in these symbols, is what we just stated, then his doctrine is true."

However, Shahrazûrî never considered that hypothesis.

Thus it seems that all this information achieves to teach us better about the mode and contents of "oriental knowledge" and allows us to get to know those who in the past have been its pillars. On the other hand, frequent usage of the terms orient and oriental in a technical lexicon allows us to pinpoint their accepted meaning. The esoteric toponography of the spiritual universes consists of Jabarût, the universe of pure cherubinic Intelligences (the Angeli intellectuales of Latin Avicennism), above Malakût, the universe of Angel-Souls (the higher Malakût of the Angeli coelestes or Celestial Souls, the lower Malakût of the human souls). Internal differentiation between these spiritual universes through multiple worlds will be pointed out below (chapter 3). Let us note here that they are respectively designated by Suhrawardi as Major Orient (or Spiritual Outer Orient, al-sharq al-asghar) and Minor Orient (al-sharq al-asghar).

The physical world (mîlîk) and the phenomenal world (shahâdat) are the Occident into which souls descend. This will be the theme of the mystical Recital of Occidental Exile (below, chapter 6) and it represents a toponography that Avicenna was already familiar with.

In the descending order of the procession of being the Intelligences "rise" to the Orient or to the horizon of the Deity, the Light of Lights. The Celestial Souls also "rise" to the Orient, to the dawn, which for them is the world of Intelligences. Human souls descend into the Occident of the physical world, into the Darkness of Matter, the "land of exile" where they are provisionally governed by a fleshy body. Inversely, about the return to the origin (sû'ûd, ma'âd), the Manifestation of the Soul beyond the physical body consists in that the world of Souls is revealed to it. This is its "Orient". It happens through profound meditation, ecstatic visions, or through death, and is the rising dawn (its Ishârîg) and its epiphany (tajallî) after a catharsis or perfect purification. It "rises" to the Orient in revealing itself to itself, i.e., in lifting itself up from the horizon of the body, which was its Occident. Following this, the world of Intelligences is revealed to it, the Major Orient, to which "it rises" in lifting itself higher than the world of the Soul, which then becomes like an Occident in relation to the "Oriental Intelligence" (al-Aqîl al-mashriqi).

Besides these two Orients there is still the question of a "middle" or "intermediary" Orient (al-sharq al-ansat). This "middle Orient" is only another name for what our philosophers refer to as the "eighth clime", in comparison with the traditional geographical seven others. It is the "second world", where all forms, figures and colors of this world appear, with ever more richness and diversity, but in a suprasensible state. This is where the mystical cities Jabalqâ, Jâbarsâ and Hûrqalyâ are located. It is the universe of Malakût, "rising" to the world of the Soul and this is why it is an intermediate Orient, between the Orient of the Soul and the Occident in which Souls are engulfed in darkness. We have already elaborated elsewhere on this universe, so there is no need to repeat it here.
Its basic characteristics are as follows. Each of the three universes has its own proper perceptive organ: intellective intuition for Jabarî; imaginative intuition for Malakât; sensible perception, and empirical knowledge through the five external senses for the physical world. Let us repeat that the imaginative or imagination ordained to Malakût should not be confused with the imagination we call fantasy. The former is an authentic organ for knowledge, has its own noetic function, and the world that corresponds to it has an ontological reality in its own right. It seems that Suhrawardi was the first one to systematically establish a proper "regional" ontology for this intermediary universe, obliging us to reject the adjective "imaginary" in order to designate this mundus imaginalis (alâm al-mîthâl). We have suggested elsewhere to call it imaginal, because, for example, the jism mîthâlî is an imaginal body, but not an "imaginary" one. Knowledge of the imaginal world, i.e., the middle Orient, is an "oriental knowledge", while sensible perception and the fantasy that secretes the "imaginary" are an "occidental" knowledge.

This imaginal world assumes an indescribable function. It is the one that delivers us from the horns of the dilemma where we are caught so often today regarding spiritual facts, when we ask ourselves: is it myth or is it history? Events in the middle Orient are neither one nor the other. That world is the place for events proper. In that Orient, or "eighth clime", the appearances of the Revelations given to the prophets occur, there the events of hiero-history narrated in visionary Recitals and the manifestations of Xvarnah, or Light of Glory, occur as well. Finally, the event of the Resurrection (qiyyamat), the prelude to future palingenesis, also takes place there. Suhrawardi observes in his own right that no philosophy that deprives itself of this intermediary world can ever understand the ishrâqī language. There will again be occasion to return to this, in relation to his Mystical Recitals and to the mysterious land where the hidden Imam resides (the Green Isle, and others, see below, book 7).

There is thus a succession of Orients to which human beings "rise" by returning from their accidental exile, from one world to the next, in an "hieratic ascension" of dawns and illuminations. This is what istîshräq is, literally the "quest for the Orient". The mustashräq is the mystical traveler on the "quest for the Orient" (there is a certain irony in the fact that modern languages use the same word for orientalist scholars; ishrâqī vocabulary ventures to place an unintended obligation upon them). This "quest for the Orient" of the Ishrâqīyân is the journey across Orients which "rise" from vision to vision, from ecstasy to ecstasy (called "little" death), until the final ecstasy, the "great death" to the "occidental" world, when the soul definitively raises itself to its Heaven. This is not just some increasing evidence of intellectual certitude, but a spiritual conjunction with the degrees of a hierarchy of beings, right up to the threshold of thresholds. It is very indicative that Suhrawardi made Hermes the first hero of these eschatological ecstasies, or of this ecstatic eschatology (below, chapter 6), the archetypical hero of this travel leading back to the Orient. We will again observe further down, that Suhrawardi's Hermetism makes a definite contribution to the theme of the Quest, a contribution unfortunately neglected in recent research that revealed the hermetical origin of the Quest of the Grail, as shown in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival.

"Oriental knowledge" (ʿilm ishrâqī) is thus both the end and the means of the traveler's Quest for the Orient. It is not a theory of knowledge but a metamorphosis of being. It is a Real-Presence knowledge, literally a "presentational" knowledge (ʿilm huzûrī). It is opposed
to representative knowledge that conforms to the Peripatetic theory of knowledge, i.e., a knowledge that only attains its object through a form of knowledge. Not the thing, but a re-presentation of the thing ("ilm surî).\footnote{There is a doctoral dissertation on presential knowledge. Cf. Medhi Yazdi Hairi, A Treatise on Knowledge by Presence, U. of Toronto 1979. Source: DAI 40/12A, p. 6310 Pub, AAC032926.}

Previous to his great book, Suhrawardi already gave a description of "oriental" knowledge in his "Elucidations",\footnote{This is the great Recital of the dream vision during which the Primus Magister, Aristotle, initiates him into the secret of self-knowledge, Talwîhât, §§ 55 and 89, in Op. Met. I, pp. 70 ff., 115. Prélégomènes I, pp. 34-35.} in the recital of one of his dreams, or visionary conversations, occurring in a state between sleep and waking. He tells us that at the time he was obsessed by the problem of Knowledge; he had given himself to an unrelenting meditation on its problem and was overcome by its difficulties, without reaching a solution. On a certain night however, he felt himself enveloped by a great joy, a resplendent light, and in front of him he saw the outline of a man forming. He watched attentively and soon recognized the Primus Magister, Aristotle, astonished by his beauty. He alludes to this conversation in one of his other books, to explain what happens in Jabarsâ,\footnote{This reference is made in the book of Mutârâhât, § 208, Op. Met. I, p. 484. The author defines the best way for the searcher to behave, before dedicating himself to a study of the "Oriental Theosophy". The latter should follow the way he himself pointed to in his Talwîhât, where he related what happened between himself and the Imam of Dialecticians (Aristotle) "in the mystical station of Jabarsâ". On the difference between the two cities, Jabakqâ and Jabarsâ, see our Celestial Earth...} i.e., in one of the cities of the middle Orient, of the "eighth clime", the imaginal world, to which we alluded above and for which this example suffices to show that the structure of the worlds cannot be disregarded.

Is there humor in Aristotle's Platonic language? Is it merely a trace of the indomitable conviction that Theology's author (a rework of Plotinus' writing) was always esoterically Platonic and that his followers were the ones responsible for Peripateticism? At the end of the conversation, Suhrawardi asks Aristotle whether Islam's philosophers (Fârâbî and Avicenna) approach Plato's rank. Aristotle answers: "Not within a thousand degrees!" Then Suhrawardi recounts his thinking of Yazid Bastami and Sahl Tustari, two Sufi masters who previously figured in the Ishrâqîyûn genealogy. Bastami transmitted the leaven of the Khusrawâniyûn and Tustari that of the Pythagoreans. Aristotle then reads the visionary's mind and tells him approvingly:

Yes, those are philosophers and theosophers in the real sense (al-falâsifa wa'l-hukamâ haqqan). They are not satisfied with just ordinary knowledge. They have gone beyond that, to attain presential, universal Knowledge. They started from where we ourselves did and they proclaimed what we ourselves have... That is where the Sage left me and I cried because of the separation. Ah! The gloom and the tears because of this miserable condition!

Unfortunately, we can only mention a few points about this conversation, whose recital covers several pages, further amplified by the commentators. The visionary explains his difficulties to the philosopher and the latter answers: "Return to yourself and those difficulties will be resolved". This point, where the conversation ends and to which it alludes, is also a point of departure. In summary, the entire conversation is a progressive initiation into a knowledge of the self as immanent and conditional to all other forms of knowledge. This initiation tends to awaken in the soul a knowledge, not the product of abstraction, nor of a re-presentation of the object, but a knowledge unconstrained by any intermediary of species of form. No, this knowledge is not superimposed upon the knowing subject; it is its own essence, the essence of the soul itself, of personal existential subjectivity (anâ'îya), because
this is life, light, epiphany, consciousness of self (hayât, nûr, zohûr, sho'hûr bi-dhâhi-hâ) in essence. All these are all valid designations for pure Essence separated from Matter, whether absolute ones, like the archangelic Intelligences, or in charge of the government of bodies, like celestial Souls and human souls. This is no knowledge of universal logic. In opposition to a knowledge of the abstract universal, called representative knowledge (‘ilm sârî), Suhrawardî gave the former the name of presential, unitive, intuitive knowledge (‘ilm ), knowledge of an essence in its absolutely true ontological singularity, i.e., absolved from any reference to abstract logic or from concretization in sensible phenomena. When every veil has been lifted and taken away, because the soul’s being is a Light-being, an illumination emanates from the soul, the aura of its presence (ishrâq huzûrî), upon the object of its vision. Henceforth the soul knows this aurora, because it is itself present to and through the soul, not just represented for her through forms and ideas. It is its own presence, consisting in the soul "rising!" to the object present, thus rendering it present to its own presence; its epiphany is the presence of this presence. This is what the oriental presence consists of (huzûr ishrâqî), the presence of knowledge to the Orient itself.

Meanwhile, this power to "render present" (istihzâr) is proportional to the degree of separation (tajarrud), i.e., proportional to the disengagement of the knowing subject from this world’s matter, eo ipso the degree of its presence to the Orient or Orients. At the same time, Domination over matter and darkness through the Light (tasal lut ishrâqî) is proportional to inmaterialization, because it so happens that the soul tends to a state of indecisive darkness, the evening twilight, the abyss called occidental exile by Suhrawardî. However, Presence is proportional to Domination by Light and knowledge is proportional to Presence. This is a preview of how Sadrâ Shirâzî, in whom the metaphysics of existence culminates in one of Presence, rightly will belong to the "oriental" (ishrâqî) kinship. It shows how "prophetic philosophy", aligned to the teachings of the Holy Imams of Shi’ism, leads this ishrâqî kinship to a metaphysics of testimony, a testimony that is the presence of an eye-witness (shâhid, shahîd, see below, book 3).

Through this idea of the domination of Light and correlative "Oriental Presence", determining the hierarchy of the degrees of being and knowing, a fundamental conception of Mazdean theosophy is thrust upon us and is revived to a new philosophical life, namely, the Light of Glory, Xvarnah. When Suhrawardî uses the characteristic expression tasal lut ishrâqî to mean victorious Dominion of the Light rising to its Orient, epiphanic matutinal Domination, or even Anwâr gâhîm, angelhood of the dominative "victorial" Lights, then Persian or Pahlavi words are understood by the Arabic ones, pêrôz, pêrôzîh, connoting "victoriality of the victorious" (compare the Latin title Angelus Victor, meaning, the archangel Michael, see below, chapter 3). These are as many Suhrwardian expressions corresponding to manifestations and powers of the Light of Glory, Xvarnah, glorified in the Avesta, the Zoroastrian Scripture (below, chapter 3). Finally, in Suhrawardî the vision of Ishrâq, the Light of the Orient, originates in that of Xvarnah, whose manifestational forms, the illuminations (ishrâqât), ordain the successive aurorae and dawns of being.

The Light of Lights (Nur al-anwâr), radiates at the very summit of the hierarchy of Light or being, in an eternal aura,34 whose transcendence and inmateriality (tajarrud) transcends all inmateriality. Its absolute victorious Dominion (tasal lut wa qahr) summons all existence to being, i.e., it renders all existence present from an absolute presence. From the Light of Lights, whose essence is identical to what the ancient Persians called the Light of Glory (Avestic Xvarnah, Persian Khvarnah), emanates the first of the "archangelic Lights", or "Victorial Lights" (Anwâr gâhîm), to which Suhrawardî gives the name it had in Zoroastrian angelology (Vohu-Manah in the Avesta, Bahman in Persian), Amahrspands,35 or "Immortal

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35Let us state once and for all that we prefer the philologically correct reading of the word Amahrspand, to the traditional one of Amastaspand, which goes back to a misreading of the graphic.
Saints", the first of the Zoroastrian Archangels. From the illumination and reflection forming the relationship between the Light of Lights and the first Archangel proceeds a new Light, the second Archangel, and so forth. This original relationship is the archetype and source of all others; it is the source of successive radiations of gradated orients of being. Illumination and reflection, imperialism of Light and aspiration of Love responding to this, since it is quickened by it (qahr wa mahablat), the original relationship in the aurora of being is one of original Beloved and Lover. The Force of the suprasensible Blaze shapes the being of each being, gradates the totality of beings of all universes in pairs and causes the initial relationship of the Love between the Light of Lights and the First Archangel to be repeated indefinitely. Not dualism but dualitude, an essential bipolarity of all beings that they discover in being present to the Orient, to each other's "dawn", as every being is present to its Angel or Lord of its species. So it is that the whole hierarchy of archangelic Lights illuminates by Presence each inferior degree, from degree to degree.

Suhrawardi's original and primordial intuition of and Xvarnah is pregnant with instantiations that will be made explicit in the following pages. What is outlined here in a few lines will find its complement and amplification in angelology (below, chapter 3, §3 and §4). This is also why all expressions out of the Suhrawardian lexicon are grouped in characteristic harmonious combinations: oriental vision, contemplation of the Orient (mushâhadat ishrâqiyâ), oriental presentational knowledge (īlām ishrâqi hazârî), Orient of a Presence (ishrâq hazârî).

A vision that makes the "dawn" of its object rise, which makes it present, because the seeing soul, itself illuminated by archangelic Intelligence, closer to it than it is to itself, is itself the light of this "dawn". Its knowledge of all "objects" is lead back to the knowledge with which it knows itself. "Oriental Presence" (huzûr ishrâqi) makes up what is separated from matter in every degree of the hierarchy of being and is exonerated from potentiality in the Orient of things and being. This is absolute knowing whose truth has no relation to any temporal aspect annexed by the object ("will be, has been", etc.). Knowing in the present, where presence constitutes the specific "oriental" relationship (izâfât ishrâqiyyâ) with everything known, known in this presence. Such are the "oriental sciences" (ulûm ishrâqiyyâ). This relationship is so elemental to being and knowing that all expressions where it is expressed reciprocate themselves; it is the aurora of the substance and the substance of the aurora; the vision of the essence and the essence of the vision.

This is why attainment of "oriental learning" is not reached without satisfying a rigorous requirement. Suhrawardi formulates this on a page so impressive that it has been quoted by many who followed him in the Ishrâqi tradition and who have quoted it in turn. For example, Mir Dâmâd, whom we cited before and Qâzi Sa'îd Qummî, one of the greatest names among Persian Safavid mystical theosophers (below, book 5). Suhrawardi likewise referenced past examples: the ecstatic vision of Plotinus which he knew from the so-called Theology of Aristotle, the visions of Hermes and Zoroaster and those of the prophets of Islam. This page is none other than the one from which we quoted earlier, where our Shaykh describes the ascendance of the Ishrâqiyûn beginning with Hermes. After mentioning those who transmitted the double leaven of the sages of ancient Persia and the Pythagoreans, the end of the page in question runs as follows:

Briefly, the theosopher who really possesses the hieratic experience (haḵîm muṣa‘allîh) is the one for whom the body has become like a tunic, which is now taken off and then put on again. No one can be counted among the mystical theosophers when this sacrosanct leaven is ignored, and this dressing and undressing has not been tested. After that they can rise to the light, if they wish. If it so desires, it manifests itself in any form it wants to. As for the power granted to them, it is actualized by the

light of the Orient when it embraces one's self (al-nūr al-shāriq 'alay-hi). Don't you see that iron brought to incandescence by the action of the Fire resembles it, bright from its brilliance and burning from its flames? So the soul, spiritual in essence, when it submits itself to the action of the Light and clothes itself in the robe of the rising dawn, also produces the effect and action of the Light by itself. It becomes a sign and things happen at its beckoning. It imagines and things will come about according to the image imagined. Impostors (the wizards) seduce through juggling. The enlightened ones, the Perfect ones, whose love attaches itself to what is free from all evil, these come about through the spiritual action of the Light, because they themselves are the children of the Light.

Finally our Shaykh states it exactly: these things can only be really understood concerning what happens in the "intermediate Orient", i.e. the imaginal world, whose ontological reality and rank was first affirmed by Suhrawardi, as we stated above.

### The Hierarchy of Spirituals and the Mystical Pole

When Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî (below, book 5) in turn characterizes ishrâqî spirituality as a bridge connecting the methods of the pure Sûfis (interior purification) and those of philosophers (pure knowledge), he expresses the essence of "Oriental Theosophy" and is in complete fidelity to the Shaykh al-Ishrâq's inspiration. There is indeed some Sufism that deliberately avoids, even misrepresents, all philosophical learning as causing the spiritual to be slowed down in reaching the goal. There is also philosophy that ignores this goal in its involvement with theoretical problems. For an ishrâqî, an "oriental" of Suhrawardi's school, a mystic deprived of philosophical formation is in great danger of being misled and a philosopher who ignores that his philosophy must blossom into a personal spiritual realization is wasting his time with useless research.

Oriental Theosophy addresses itself to neither one nor the other, expecting of its readers from the very beginning a serious philosophical formation. This must be started by studying Peripatetic philosophy, discussed in full in the works which form the propædeutic trilogy. However, the second condition is that the reader must want to stay there. The ishrâqî school is not a tariqat (congregation) of Sûfis, nor a philosophical society. It has no organizational needs, nor is in need of archives and one does not belong to it simply for holding some opinion or other. Traditionally, our authors have repeated that Ishrâq, "Oriental Theosophy", regards theoretical philosophy as Sufism looks upon the scholastic theology of kalâm. Analogies of relationships, not expressions, convey this situation better. If it should happen that one is a Sûfî and an ishrâqî at the same time, then this is no reason for membership in a certain tariqat, but for efforts of a life totally dedicated to interior "esoteric" truth; in this sense we see Haydar Anuli (below, book 4) explain why there is Sufism that is true Shi'ism. But it is possible to be a Sûfî without being an ishrâqî, just as it is possible to be a Sûfî without being a Shi'ite, even a Shi'ite who doesn't know himself. This is why we see that Sadrâ Shûrâzî, as an ishrâqî, denounces certain "obscurantist" Sufism, and a complete Shi'ite theospher and profound spiritual, like Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâ'i, equally objects to Sufism. These are some of the demarcation lines in Iranian spirituality which the present book hopes to help discern and give the appetite to deepen.

The previous pages have pointed out what Suhrawardi's ideal of a mystical Sage is; the following pages are going to further refine this notion. We heard the sadness of those times lamented: the high sciences abolished, the way to theosophic wisdom blocked. The author alluded to his incessant searches for a partner who could share his dilection for the high
sciences and we were asked how it was possible he had never met one. There certainly were
some around, but no doubt he voiced the same pessimism before his friends (his "brothers", to whom he dedicated his books). On the one hand, this pessimism is explained by the
conditions placed upon the realization of a complete theosopher sage; the combination of
philosophy and mystical experience is rare, even exceptional. The proportion of both is
exactly what determines the hierarchy of the "Sages of God". On the other hand, this
pessimism expresses itself as despair that doesn’t cease to hope, despite itself, because it
knows to have confidence despite itself. However, this desperatio fiducialis (to use Luther’s
expression again) is not only characteristic of the Shi’ite ethos, but Suhrawardi’s reason for
it is exactly the same as Twelver Shi’ism’s reason for it. There is a trait here which is more
than an affinity, but a connivance between Shi’ism and Ishrâqism, which explains why so
many Shi’ite philosophers felt "at home" with Oriental Theosophy.

This reason is formulated from the moment Suhrawardi describes the hierarchy of mystical Sages. It is expounded in the Prologue of his great book, in lines quoted here previously,
forming the context where the author sketches the ascendance of the Ishrâqîyûn, the line
of transmission for the "spiritual leaven". It is an affirmation which, from the very begin-
ning, secretly negates that radical pessimism professed before the ruins of the vanished high
sciences. He writes:

Don’t imagine that mystical theosophy existed in an age before us and that it since
has disappeared. Not at all! The world has never been and never will be without
mystical theosophy: there will always be someone who gives proof and witness in the
world. This is the one who is God’s Caliph (vicar) on Earth and it will be this way as
long as Heaven and Earth will last.38

Twelver Shi’ism professes the same thing about the Imâm presently hidden, the Pole
. From a human point of view there is no hope. However, since it is completely "God’s
cause", pessimism never ceases to triumph over itself. This theme is fully amplified by the
commentators; they know that around the hidden pole there is a whole group of men who
are in truth "the pillars who ever hold up the world!", because it is through them that the
flow of divine grace reaches the world and if it should happen that some age be without
them, the world would perish in a final cataclysm. Who are they? What groups do they
form? Again we meet the theme of the esoteric hierarchy which Shi’ite tradition has already
told us about (above, book 1, chapter 3, § 4). Suhrawardi divides this hierarchy into five
degrees, where the central one, the third, forms the summit of the pyramid. Indeed we
distinguish five cases.39

In the first case, the theosopher, the "Sage of God" ( ilâhi, divine sage, theosophos hakîm
ilâhi) has penetrated head-on and profoundly into mystical experience (the , theosis), but
the experience is not accompanied by philosophical implementation. The commentators
emphasize that such was the case with the prophets and the "Friends of God" among the
Shaykhs of Sufism, like Bastâmi, Sahl Tustari (let us recall their places in Ishrâqi genealogy)
and Hallâj.

In the second case, the reverse of the previous one, the Sage is a master of philosophical
speculation, but deprived of mystical experience. This is the case with most Peripatetics
forming Aristotle’s school.

In the third case, the Sage possesses both perfect philosophical knowledge and perfect
mystical experience. The commentators remark that this case is rarer and more sublime than
the Philosophical Stone and the alchemical elixir. They add that for this it is necessary for

39 Ibid., § 5, pp. 11-12.
the philosophical edifice to be completed; it was granted to Aristotle. Among the "moderns", i.e., in Islam, they know of no one who has accumulated such double wisdom of philosophy and mysticism, before the author of *Theosophical Wisdom*. 40

Finally, a fourth and fifth case can be distinguished, according to which the sage can have much experience in speculative philosophy, but only average spiritual experience, or the opposite, adequate mystical experience but a mediocre philosophical foundation.

To these five degrees of, as one might say, "professed" theosophical sages, Suhrawardi adds another three degrees of searchers, or aspirants, novices, corresponding to the triad that the first five can be reduced to. There are those who exclusively aspire to mystical experience; those who aspire only to philosophical knowledge; finally those who aspire to attain both the one and the other. Eight degrees in all in the hierarchy of sages as considered by "Oriental Theosophy".

Now certain refinements are in order. Without a doubt, the third case represents God's authentic *Caliph* on earth. To whom must authority, the vicarial investiture, revert to in his absence? We are told that the mystic who is no philosopher has precedence over the philosopher who, although perfect in every other way, lacks in mystical experience. This is so, the authors and his commentators explain, because the minister must receive direct investiture from his sovereign. Yet what direct investiture can a purely rational philosopher claim here? How can these be the guarantors of a world they have not really met and how can they respond for it? Suhrawardi himself specified that it was granted him to first test what he spoke of in his book, before undertaking any philosophical justification. However, this question of succession remains theoretical since the perfect Sage is never truly absent from this world, even if he is occulted from it. At the time of his trial, the *Shaykh al-Ishrāq* rejoined with a Shi'ite profession of faith in the hidden Imām in such an impressive manner that Aleppo's *'olamā* never doubted him. He writes:

The Earth is never deprived of a sage who possesses the supreme mystical experience. Without a doubt, there will be no authority resting on a sage who, while being a perfect dialectical philosopher, has never penetrated very far into mystical experience on God's Earth. It will rest on the sage who possesses the supreme spiritual experience, and this sage is more worthy of authority than the one who is only a philosopher. The Caliphate (or vicariate) requires a direct investiture. In speaking here of authority (*ri'yāsat*) due the perfect sage, I don't mean a triumphal exercise of temporal power.

40 Cf. ibid., § 4: "Although the *Magister primus* [Aristotle] was a person of great ability and eminent authority, a man with a profound mind and perfect speculative vigor, it is nonetheless inadmissible to heap hyperboles on him, in a manner that amounts to depreciating those who were his masters, namely that group of persons who were the authors of the holy books and the legislator-prophets, such as Agathodaimon, Hermes, Asklepios, and still others*. Shahrâzûrî comments at length and Qutbuddîn Shîrâzî just about repeats it: "Agathodaimon, i.e. Seth, Adam's son [above, page 18, note 28]; Hermes, i.e. Idris (or Henoch) the prophet; Asklepio, *famulus* and Hermes' disciple, father of philosophers (*hukamâ*) and physicians: all three of them were eminent prophets (*anbā*) who accumulated prophetic excellence and philosophical wisdom in their person, this is why they were in a position to constitute the *corpus* of theosophy ( *tadwîn al-ḥikmat*) and to initiate into its philosophy. The author names all three here, and does so because Aristotle received the wisdom from Plato, who received it from Socrates and Socrates from Pythagoras, who received it from Empedocles, and so on until we reach the two Imāms, Agathodaimon and Hermes - since your master's master is also your master; again so, because Aristotle himself contributed to their books and explanations of their doctrines. Thus they were also his masters. If this seems unfair to Avicenna, it should be understood that the sources developed by Aristotle, he owed to Plato*. Then follows, in both commentators, an enthusiastic eulogy of Plato, the contemplator of divine Beauty, "eminent theologian, who was entirely capable of rational dialectics, as Avicenna has said. Yet many of his books have not even been translated into Arabic; they have been lost and have disappeared". Cf. *Op. Met.I*, pp. 304-305. This long citation, abbreviated here, gives testimony to a vivid sense of "prophetic philosophy", i.e. that the Sage-prophets (Empedocles, Hermes and Agathodaimon) were the start of all philosophy; they also testify to the "Platonic renaissance" called forth in Islam, at least in Iranian Islam, by Suhrawardi's works.
Far from it! For if it can happen that the Imam, investied with the "hieratic" experience (al-Imâm al-muta'âlih), is made manifest and that his authority is publicly recognized, so it can also happen that he stays hidden. Even so, it is he who is called the pole (qutb) and upon whom authority rests, even though he is totally unknown among men. When power rests effectively in his hands, then the epoch is one of Light. However, when the epoch is deprived of all divine economy (tadbîr ûlâhi), then Darkness rules.

The Shi'ite sound of these lines is very noticeable. The translator and commentator of the Oriental Theosophy into Persian, Muhammad Sharîf Harawi (16th century), underscores that this has essentially to do with a spiritual authority (ma'âlî), not with the exercise of exterior authority over temporal affairs in the visible world. Shahrazûrî remarks:

On the other hand, the people who exercise visible power are not even worthy to be called by that name, in as much as their souls are miserable and their ignorance total. All the more reason to ask how the name that means authority in the true sense will be merited. No, it can only mean the realization of human perfections, as these result at once from mystical experience and philosophical knowledge, or even the first one alone.

If it happened in the past that temporal power fell into the hands of the perfect sage, then this was always an exception, e.g., in ancient Iran in the case of Gayomart or the blessed kings Peraydûn and Kay Khusrav. As for the case of the prophets and their spiritual heirs, here our commentators allude to hiero-history, which leads us to the idea of a "cycle of prophecy", with which we are already familiar from Shi'ite prophetology. There is a group of Perfect Ones in every age and epoch, but only one among them combines the qualities that makes him the pole. Our authors know that each messenger-prophet was followed by twelve Imâms, however, neither of their groups, nor of any of them in particular, can it be said that their presence was common knowledge among men and so acclaimed by them. Far from that, the "epochs of Light" were exceptions. This does not include the sage governing the ideal Platonic City. That sage came down from his contemplation to mingle with the affairs of men. The requirement is the other way around and far more radical in nature. All of humanity, of which the Imam, the Sage of God, is the pole (qutb), must raise itself beyond its destiny above the horizons of terrestrial history. From prophet to prophet this Appeal has been heard. The time between one prophet and the next are that of an interregnum. However, now the cycle of prophecy is closed. Qutbuddîn writes in his commentary:

Because the time of the prophets has passed, imbeciles and dummies have seized

41Ibid., p. 12. Even in time of occultation (ghaybat), he remains the Pole, because there is no need for human recognition in order for him to be what he is, and his being is not fulfilled in any social function, but in a metaphysical and scordial one. There is nothing to transpose in the expressions: what the Ishrâqîyûn say about the "Pole" agrees literally with what the Shi'ites say about the Imam, who is exactly the "Pole". After all, Ishrâq philosophy prospered in the Shi'ite milieu.

42Regarding Muhammad Sharîf ibn Harawi, translator of the book of "Oriental Theosophy" (2nd part) and Qutbuddin's commentary into Persian, cf. Prélègomenes II, pp. 60-61 (this translation carries a date of 1008/1559-1560). The introduction reveals a distinct trace of Indian Sufism (Shâh Akbar died in 1605). The translator cites a long epistle of Mîr Sayyed Muhammad Gîsû-Darâz (d. 1421), cf. J. H. Hollister, The Shī`a of India, London 1953, pp. 105 ff. - the text we alluded to states: "My intent in uttering the word "power" has nothing to do with government or visible power, such as will be necessary for God's Caliph to effectively possess authority over people in the visible world. Far from it! My intent is to state that he possesses the aptitude that makes him worthy of the Caliphate (or Imamate) and such even if he finds himself in extreme obscurity [...]. Thus it is evident that the words allude to the spiritual authority of the Sage and in no way to temporal power".

43Shahrazûrî, ms. Sarny Ahmet, III, fol. 17.

44This is the scheme of Shi'ite prophetology and imâmology, as set forth by e.g. Haydan Amoli, and already in Masûdî's K. Rûdûd al-wasâyî (cf. above, Book I, note 46).
power. This is a fact in an age like ours, where religion has lost its force, where catastrophes follow one another and the paths and voices of wisdom have been erased to where no trace remains of them, an epoch where the ranks and degrees that make up the hierarchy of Intelligence have been abolished.\textsuperscript{45}

Really, everything has always gone very badly. Qutbuddin Shirâzî wrote these lines in the thirteenth century, the century of the Mongol invasions. Is a \textit{ta'wil} necessary for people of "modern times" to read them? One is lost if the time "between the times" is not recognized now, which Shi'ite imâmology designates as the time of occultation (\textit{ghaybat}), the time of the hidden Imâm. His "polar" function is primarily metaphysical and mystical. This is why there is no need for the Imâm to be recognized publicly. Known or unknown by the mass of humanity, the Imâm remains the Imâm; his Imâmate is independent from the fashion of ideas and the whims and favors of men. This is the fundamental thesis professed by Shi'ism.

However, Suhrawardi’s text can be read in two ways. One reading will suit the numerous Sûfis who profess that their \textit{khir qa} (investiture of the robe, signifying their status as a Sû) goes back to one of the Twelve Imâm. They recognize that the 12th Imâm was "in his time" the mystical pole. A line of Sûfi Shaykhs has succeeded him as pole, from generation to generation, whose name and number is known to the initiates. This presupposes that the Twelfth Imâm left this world and passed through the gates of death. This is what Sennâni seems to profess (below, book 4). However, under the Shi'ite appearances of the acknowledgment of the Imâm, there is something that is incompatible with Twelver Shi'ite consciousness.

This is why the Shi'ite \textit{Ishrâqîyûn} must follow another reading here. The occultation of the 12th Imâm does not result from his death; it remains a mysterious event that can be represented in various ways, however all of them have to keep the sense of the Imâm’s presence in this world, as the Imâm "hidden to the senses but visible to the hearts of his faithful". When it is said that the Imâm resides in the "eighth clime", the "middle Orient", limitrophe to our world, which is in communication with ours unlike the superior universes, then this is what is meant.\textsuperscript{46} After all, his mode of manifestation during the "great occultation" cannot be explained without this "eighth clime". This is why the Twelfth Imâm remains the mystical pole, until his parousia, announcing the Resurrection. There are and will be no successors. These times will remain "the times of the hidden Imâm". Even if one gives the title pole, in a figurative sense, to such and such an eminent shaykh, the Imâm remains the Pole of poles (\textit{Quth al-aqtâb}). However, we can point out Suhrawardi’s extreme discretion in these matters. In the few lines where he affirms the existence of the mystical Pole, there is nothing that can make us read them in any way other than the one requiring Twelver Shi'ite theosophy.

It is around this Pole that the mystical hierarchy of "Oriental" Sages is clustered, a purely spiritual hierarchy, unknown to men, as invisible as their leader; it is founded upon a criterion that does not rely upon ordinary rules of evidence, but is only perceptible with the "spiritual senses". This hierarchy is only known to the Imâm; it does not solicit its members through co-option, election, or competition. The service it renders to humanity is far more than the one that is called "social" nowadays. It is because of this hierarchy that the world is able to continue, yet mankind doesn’t even know them. Since the laws governing their state are identical, we have called these individuals the "Knights of the Grail" in the past and repeat that practice here. For, if one of them personally avails himself of the Imâm’s secret in this respect, confined to the secrecy of his consciousness then he will lose its power, since it will eo ipso cease to be what it is by being made public.

\textsuperscript{45} Qutbuddin’s commentary, Teheran lithograph 1315, pp. 24-25; Shahrazûrî, fol. 17 [above, note 91].

The facts centered around the idea of the Pole and the mystical fraternity that surrounds it have been alluded to previously (above, book 1, chapter 3), at the conclusion of the conversation between the first Imam and his disciple Kumayl ibn Ziyâd. The Imam stated everything there was to say at that point. Suhrawardi’s commentator and adept, Shahrâzûrî, knew this and for this reason, to explain his Shaykh’s intentions, quoted the entire passage of the conversation word for word, which we translated (fr) before. This is how the concept of the hierarchy of Īshráqîyûn finds itself lead back to that of the esoteric hierarchy professed by Shi’ism. We have previously alluded to its principal sources. We will see that this hierarchy appears again in Rûzbâhân, as those through whom God keeps "looking at"- is concerned with - our world (on this theme, see also book 4, chapter 4 and book 6).

An entire book is necessary to combine the Shi’ite and Sufi texts that are concerned with this basic theme. We have already noted some of the variants that make up the traditions describing the structure of this mystical hierarchy. We take note of some of them here. Certain connections and similarities emerge, half visible in the twilight, and perhaps they will not define themselves any further. We note, for example, that the Imam is given the name , according to a certain Isma’ili tradition reported by Hasan Sabbâh, the famous founder of Alamût. In this manner a link reveals itself between imâmology and a Gnostic school known in Christian theology as the "Melchisedechites", whose teachings grew between the 3rd and 5th century of our era. One easily senses the importance of such a link for comparative studies. On the other hand, Kâfîmî, a Twelver Shi’ite from the 9th/15th century, stresses the identity of the Pole and the 12th Imam, and he puts into relief the analogy between the structure of the esoteric hierarchy and the cosmic tent: the Imam is the axis, the central pillar, the four Autâd are the pegs placed at the four corners, etc. However, not so long ago this analogy inspired a learned Zoroastrian theologian to start a comparison with the idea of the pole in Taoism. Among the latter, the polar region of the heavens is represented as the home of the "Angel" of sanctity, one attains the summit of sanctity as one reaches the celestial North Pole. The expressions to be compared are therefore, on the one hand, the arithmological configuration of the mystical palace of Ming-Tang, which determines the structure of Taoism’s mystical hierarchy, and on the other hand the structure of the mystical hierarchy, as Shi’ism and Sufism show it. Comparative research appears to be very promising here, as it can highlight the importance of a dominant figure in Zoroastrian spirituality, namely the Angel Srâosa (Persian Sorûsh), whose celestial habitat is exactly "on the polar axis". Religious phenomenology is able to consider this Angel of the Avesta as it relates to the idea of the Pole in Shi’ism and Sufism. The name of the Angel Srâosa also appears in certain of Suhrawardi’s texts. There is still more. Since every species, and by this is meant also every spiritual and moral species, has its "angel" ( Rabb al-nâ), a Shi’ite philosopher like Qâzi Sa’îd Qummî, emersed in Ishráqi theosophy, will show in his analysis in one of his famous lectures, that the Imam as the Pole is the "angel" of a "species", namely spiritual vigilance (taqwâ, below, book 5). Finally, mention must be made of the mysterious "order of philosophers", of whom the Encyclopedia of the "Brothers of the Pure at Heart" ( Ikhwân al-Safâ) describes their liturgical calendar, rituals and feast days in complete detail.

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47 On the conversation between the first Imam and Kumayl ibn Ziyâd, cf. above, book 1, notes 83 and 85.
48 On the esoteric hierarchies, cf. above, Book 1, notes 91 to 100, and the passages that refer to these notes. We again refer to: Hujwîrî, Kashf-almahjûb, trans. by R. A. Nicholson, London 1936, pp. 213-214 (on the four thousand and the three hundred), p. 228 (on the Autâd), etc. Rûzbâhân Baqlî Shirzâ, Commentaire sur les paradoxes des soufis [B.I., 12], pp. 52-53. Abîs Qummî, Safîfat, I, 28 (on Elias, Khezr and the abdâl); I, 64 (= Bihâr VII, 368), khâtûf of the 6th and 8th Imams (the abdâl, autâd, sayyîd, etc.); 11, 438-439, after the Mashâbî of Kaf’îmî (the autâd, the abdâl, the nujâb, the pole who is the Mahdî, i.e. the 12th Imam. Abû Ya’qûb Sejastâmî, Livre des Sources, § 19 [in Trilogie ismaélienne, 1].
49 See our study on The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism, trans. (eng) by Nancy Pearson, London 1978, pp. 181 to 246, and J.C. Coyajee, Cults and Legends of Ancient Iran and China, Bombay 1936, chapter 6, The Srâosa Yâshî, its place in the History of Mysticism, pp. 100-166. We will cover this theme at greater length elsewhere.
The choice of the pole star as *qibla* (axis of liturgical orientation) means that these Sages have a certain affinity with the Sabians and hence with Hermeticism ("Plato's prayer", "Idris's Oration", i.e., Hermes, during the last third part of the night).\(^{50}\)

We have to apologize for the rapidity with which these details concerning the mystical Pole have been mentioned; however, it is important at least to mention them, even though more cannot be done. These citations were motivated by the affinity between *ishrāqī* doctrine and Shi’ite theosophy. This affinity is found in the persistent witness of Iranian history of philosophy and spirituality. In summary, we again stress three characteristics.

The first characteristic is none other than the one we have already mentioned when Suhrawardi used the phrase *Qayyîm al-Kitâb*, "Keeper of the Book", since this expression conveys the function of the Imâm, as defined by Shi’ite *hadîth*, particularly well. The same expression (*Al-Qayyîm*) is again repeated in the final pages of the *Elucidations*, without making its intention explicit.

A second characteristic is raised in the last part of the same book, in injunctions addressed to the mystical traveler: "Raise yourself gradually to the family of the *Tâ-Sîn*, perhaps you will see your Lord on the main highway, where you are making good progress."\(^{51}\) The two letters of the Arabic alphabet, *Tâ-Sîn*, as *Yâ-Sîn*, belong to the mysterious letters placed by themselves at the heading of certain suras of the Koran. All total there are fourteen letters. They have sometimes been interpreted as the sura's name, sometimes as ciphers for the Name of the Supreme God, etc. The letters *Tâ-Sîn* are at the beginning of sura 27 and *Yâ-Sîn* is at the beginning of sura 36, to which they give its name (it is recited for the deceased and the dying). Besides, verse 130 of sura 37 states: "May peace be upon the family of *Yâ-Sîn*." Shi’ite commentators see in *Yâ-Sîn* a designation for the prophet Muhammad and in the "family of *Yâ-Sîn*" a designation for the Holy Imâms. Suhrawardi's commentators refer to a tradition that identifies the "family of *Yâ-Sîn*" with "the family of *Tâ-Sîn*".\(^{52}\) In short, the fourteen letters placed as "key signatures" to certain suras of the Koran are the "letters of Light" according to the spiritual science of letters professed in Islamic Gnosis; they represent the hidden Spirit, like the number of invisible stations of the Moon, and the *Northern* signs of the Zodiac.\(^{53}\) The fourteen "letters of Light" that can be permuted thus refer to what is esoteric, i.e., the Imâmate as esoteric to prophecy; they are the ciphers of the "Fourteen Immaculate Ones". From here on the identification between "the family of *Tâ-Sîn*" and the "family of *Yâ-Sîn*" presents no difficulties. The Suhrawardian injunction: "Raise yourself to the family of *Tâ-Sîn*," is permeated with Shi’ite resonance as the commentator Shahrâzûrî has already stated. It invites the mystic to the

\(^{50}\) See our study *Rituel sabéen et ézégie ismaélienne du rituel* (in Eranos-Jahrbuch XIX), Zurich 1951, pp. 181 to 246.


\(^{52}\) *Ibid.*, Ibn Kamâmîna comments: "It is said that the Al *Tâšîn*, like the Al *Yâšîn*, are members of the holy kinship [Ahl al-*Bağt*, i.e. the Holy Imâms]. Thus it seems that the author (Suhrawardi) means those who have attained supreme perfection. *Tâ-Sîn* is the beginning of sura 27 (sura of The Ant), but I do not know why the Shaykh makes special mention of this sura here". On his part, Shahrâzûrî observes: "*Tâ-Sîn*, are the pure Intelligentes and the Celestial Souls. All the letters set apart, standing at the beginning of certain suras, refer to these essences separate from matter, like those letters are also separate. When the ascension towards the pure intellectual Essences and the conjunction of the Perfect Souls, who are the members of the family of Prophecy [Ahl bağt al-nabwawat] - if we agree to say that those are the Al *Tâ-Sîn* -, becomes easy for the mystic [âdîk, the traveler], then the latter is given the contemplation of the One, if he continues to be what he is. In this case the words of the author are true: 'Perhaps you will see your Lord on the main highway where you are making good progress'. However, this ascension to the Pure Intellectual Essences and the contemplation of Being, necessary by itself and with the certainty of an eye-witness (*agn al-gafrâh*), cannot be realized through theoretical knowledge, which gives only theoretical certitude (*tin al-aqîqât*). It can only be done through an actual mystical experience (the *oriental* knowledge)".

company of the "Perfect Souls who are the members of the family of Prophecy", i.e., the Twelve Imâms. From then on, the injunction that also figures in the last pages of the same Elucidations as it is addressed to Hermes during the ecstatic vision of the Midnight Sun: "Climb to the battlements of the Throne,"\textsuperscript{54} extends itself in hidden resonances: Hermetism, Ishråq, Shi'ism. Other examples will illustrate this.

Finally, a third trait is none other than the one that characterizes the person of the Mystical Pole, the hidden Imâm, as holding the sole unimpeachable authority, that of the Spirit. Without a doubt it will be said that this idea can be found elsewhere, in other religions and other areas of mysticism. Indeed, this will be noted here and in the pages that follow, because a universal significance is confirmed by it. One can even say that Twelver Shi'ite theosophy, e.g., in Qâzî Sa'îd Qummî, founded the basis for a general theory of religions in the idea of the Imâm. In this sense, the explanation that finds it only natural for a wretched community to seek compensation from its temporal setbacks after a disaster in the idea and the hope of the parousia of the Imâm even appears derisive. In general, this sort of explanation is professed by those who remain complete strangers to the spiritual fact of a living faith. Anyhow, we ask ourselves, what is the sense of this sort of explanation when we are dealing with Persia since the Safavid period? The position of Shi'ism is in no way that of a persecuted minority. No. Neither Suhrawardî’s words regarding the Pole, nor those of Shi'ite thinkers regarding the hidden Imâm, depend on historical contingencies. They allude to an essential truth, a permanent claim, namely, the absolute sovereignty of the Spirit. Regarding the temporal, we have already pointed to the insistence with which a Qâzî Sa'îd Qummî noted that the Prophet Muhammad did not choose to be a royal prophet but a servant-prophet and that he did not transmit to the Imâms what he refused himself.

Now we are also able to understand Suhrawardî’s intention when he states who is ad-

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\textsuperscript{54} Tâlâtîhât, § 83, in Op. Met. I, p. 108

\textsuperscript{55} Another characteristic expression from the Shi'ite lexicon: the mujtahid is a theologian who has dedicated his whole life to this research. Shi'ites select each of their mujtahid in order to consult them and follow their advice.

\textsuperscript{56} The Divine Light -\textit{ al-bâriq al-ilâhî}. Qutbuddîn Shirâzî explains: "This is a Light which effuses immaterial Intelligences on the human soul, following spiritual exercises, sustained effort and a preoccupation exclusively focused on the realities of the spiritual universes. The Immortal beings and their modalities are known due to this Light. It is the theosophical Elixir [\textit{Iksir al-hikmat}]." [Op.Met.II, p. 307]
of being, to construct upon these conclusions a certain amount of valid knowledge, e.g., astronomy and the other sciences, we also observe certain spiritual realities and as a result construct the metaphysical and theosophical sciences upon our observations. Whoever cannot make this way their own can have no part of mystical theosophy and will be delivered over to every doubt like a plaything.\footnote{Hikmat al-Ishrâq, § 6, in Op. Met. II, p. 13.}

Our Shaykh cannot be more clear and more explicit in setting down such stringent conditions. May everyone believe that they have not rashly entered upon the reading of this book, beginning with the present editor and translator! In the preceding pages we were permitted to explore the approaches to the "oriental source" and to know the qualities required of those who undertake the pilgrimage towards it. Suhrawardi has just told the non-elect without circumspection, that it is better for them not to enter upon this road. Therefore, we have to know how this "oriental source" is revealed to someone. It is there in particular that we will witness the manner in which the spiritual experience of the theurgic sages of ancient Persia is really lived. The signs are many. There are crossroads where the "Compatriots of the Quest" coming from other perspectives will meet one another. Now we will see how Suhrawardi, in creating magnificent symbolic "histories", created the \textit{mystagogue}, the adept’s guide towards the "oriental source".
Chapter 3

The Mazdean Light of Glory (Xvarnah) and Angelology

The Light of Glory as Oriental Source

We are face to face here with a Zoroastrian concept that is as typical as it is basic in the Mazdean religious universe. There is no one expression in any modern language that is able to cover all by itself every aspect under which this celestial Light of Glory, this "Victorial Fire", makes itself known. First it is the primary characteristic and attribute of the Divine personages of the Avesta, the celestial Yazatas (the "Adorable Ones"). One of these aspects manifests the Aura Gloriae in a visible manifestation, at least iconographically so, through the halo and the flame. They already form an aura around the princes of Iranian dynasties before or outside our chronology, like the Kayanians, of whom more will be said later. The Flammula or Oriflam is considered a symbol of this Aura Gloriae.¹ This sacral Glory manifests itself as a stylized halo and is transferred from the figure of the Saoshyant, or Mazdean Savior, to the West and the representations of Christ and the Saints, to the East and the figures of Buddha and the Buddhisattvas. In Shi'ite Islam it is seen in the iconography of the Holy Imams.

In Suhrawardi this very precise representation attests to a direct relationship. Suhrawardi claims an ascendance for his doctrine that goes back to the theosophy of ancient Persia, because it is alive in him. He claims to have the right to affirm to have revived it and that there was no precedent for such a course of action. We have previously stressed the point that this enterprise was not contrary to Islamic spirituality, as the 'orafā always would have us think. Far from that, it presupposed Islamic spirituality, the putting in place of a ta'wil as a spiritual exercise. The Prophet of Islam had similarly been placed in situations to personally participate in the exemplary lives of his predecessors, the prophets, in order to revive scriptural antecedents of his Revelations (e.g. visitations of the prophets during the Mi'râj or celestial assumption). Whence the idea of the "cycle of prophecy" that we isolated previously from the traditional teachings of the Shi'ite Imams. The Shaykh al-Ishrâq followed this exemplary direction. When he extends the privilege of ta'alluh, of a theosis, to all of "God's Sages", he knows that his own experience has reproduced the visions that were personally lived by the prophets and the "hieratics", whose heritage he is deliberately assuming. With predilection does he refer to the visions of Kay Khusraw and Zoroaster. Even so this does not preclude the exemplary significance that he gives to Hermes as ecstatic hero and father of Theosopher-Sages and to Plato's (or rather Plotinus's) vision of the "Spheres of Light", because this vision is an antecedent to the Prophet's vision of the

¹Cf. J. Hertel, Die Avestischen Herrschafts- und Siegesfeuer, Leipzig 1931, p. VIII.
"seventy-seven veils of Light".\textsuperscript{2} To assume the task of unifying the spiritual kinship of the ecstatic ones presupposes a \textit{ta\'wil}, or spiritual hermeneutics. It is Islam, or Islamic Gnosis to be precise, that puts its resources of \textit{ta\'wil} at the disposal of the \textit{Shaykh al-Ishrâq}. The key to this \textit{ta\'wil} is his own person, because it is in his own person that Islamic spirituality attests to its capacity of integrating within its own perspective the exemplary visions of Hermes, Zoroaster and Plotinus. Suhrawardi confides us his personal secret of this capacity: access to the "Oriental Source" that Divine Grace has granted him. This "Oriental Source" is precisely what he designates under the name of \textit{Khurrâh}, the Persian equivalent of the Avestic \textit{Xvarnah}, Light of Glory, Blaze of Celestial Light, source of "Oriental" knowledge.

Access to this source allowed him to erect his "Oriental Theosophy". He forcefully warns us that this was not the result of any theoretical knowledge, but that it was drawn from the experience of the Light itself. This is the calling of all "Orientals" or \textit{Ishrâqîyûn}, i.e. all who can claim such a qualification. The notion of \textit{Ishrâq}, whose essential aspects we have previously extracted, finally coincides with that of \textit{Xvarnah}. Orient of Light, Oriental Light, Light of Glory, are as many descriptions of the very same Source of Sources. Suhrawardi repeats it in his books: the experience of these Lights is never the theoretical knowledge of an object, the formation of a concept or a representation coming from an object. It is what makes Oriental Theosophy possible and on which all of its knowledge is based: the Light is no object of vision itself: it is \textit{what makes one see}.

This is not the place and it is beyond our expertise to attempt a complete linguistic analysis of the term \textit{Xvarnah}. A few remarks are necessary though, in order to position Suhrawardi’s principal texts, where this word is used in its Persian form. We have previously noted that the word \textit{Khurrâh} is the Persian derivative of the word \textit{Xvarnah} that belongs to the language of the Avesta; it corresponds to \textit{Xvarnah} in northern Pahlavi. This expression also occurs in Persian, in the form of \textit{farr} that is no longer a derivative from the language of the Avesta, but from the old Persian of the Achemenids (\textit{farnah}). In southern Pahlavi an intermediary form is \textit{farrah} (an element incorporated into certain proper names of Iranian sovereigns, noticeably as Greek transcriptions, like Artaphernes, Pharnadates, Gondophares, etc.,\textsuperscript{3}). At least some twenty descriptions, definitions and translations have been given by iranologists since Anquetil-Duperron.\textsuperscript{4} They are nearly always the same expressions that reappear in order to encompass this notion: Glory, Burst, Splendor, Sovereignty, Majesty, Blazing, \textit{Victorial} and Supernatural Fire, Halo, etc. Briefly, it is the idea of light, glory, sovereignty, of a suprasensible blaze, but manifesting itself in the sensible world through certain \textit{signs}. Without a doubt there are attempts to show that, "in the beginning", the word meant to convey a very practical explanation, devoid of any mystical sense. We strongly fear that unconscious or unspoken wishes are hidden under the guise of such explanations. In any case, this kind of explanation is of no use to us here. Presuming that lead has been changed into gold, it is the gold we are interested in. The word \textit{Khurrâh} is perfectly clear and precise. In Suhrawardi, in his commentators and disciples it is in complete agreement with tradition.

Let us recapitulate to better safeguard both material and mystical meanings. We can state with Darmesteter that \textit{Xvarnah} is "the halo of Light and Divine inspiration which descends upon the saints. It is the celestial principle which gives to everyone to whom it is

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item See the definitions collected by H. W. Bailey, \textit{op.cit.} pp. 75-77
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granted, power, talent, and happiness. It is Divine fortune." Additionally, the connection that makes Xvarnah the principle of being and of life must be emphasized, as Beneviste did. Xvarnah, "luminous sign of celestial favor and powers granted by the gods, but also the internal agent of vitality and force, that attaches being to existence and symbolizes radiant prosperity." Indeed this connection is essential in order to understand how this concept penetrated into Islamic Gnosis with the meanings gathered in time under the term Xvarnah. This is not only true in Suhrawardi’s Oriental Theosophy, but already before this, in Ismailian Gnosis. What establishes this connection is the idea of the Light of Glory (the Greek doxa) and that of personal destiny (the Greek tykhê). The coalescence of these two has been principally the work of Zervanism, the same Zervanism whose reappearance we have noticed at the price of a dramaturgical alteration in Ismailian cosmogony. It could be said that it already has its symbol in the Aramean ideogram representing the word Xvarnah in the Pahlavi of the Zoroastrian books. Here a number of things happen that must briefly be summarized.

The Greek equivalencies for the word Xvarnah that occur in the different texts are in effect partly doxa, glory, and partly tykhê, destiny. For the phenomenologist this equivalence is already charged with meaning. In the final analysis it explains the manifestation forms and the hypostases of Xvarnah. It also explains the qualifications that one gives it and how Xvarnah can be apprehended as a person appearing in the world of Light. We use the word "mythology" sparingly, because this deals with a reality at once suprasensible and perfectly concrete and individuated. There is a host of properties that must first be extracted in order for these to be recognized in Suhrawardi’s Oriental Theosophy.

The writing of Zoroastrian books in Pahlavi presents a curious process known as uzvaresh. Probably a remainder from the time that Persian documents from the Imperial Chancellery were translated into Aramean, this procedure consists in the fact that for certain words the Aramean word is written instead of the Pahlavi one. The Aramean word is read but one says the Pahlavi word. The Aramean words that are encapsulated in this manner function as ideograms (there are about six hundred of them), well known to experts in Pahlavi, for whom this has meant no small effort. Now, the Pahlavi word xvarnah is represented by the Aramean word gaddêh that means destiny, fortune. Thus the connection mentioned above is already revealed in the written sign. This Glory-Destiny (xvarnah-tykhê) appears on certain Bactian coins, typified by a figure that is both masculine and feminine (similar to the Syrian god Gud, Dea Fortuna of the Romans and Agathê Tykhê of the Greeks), while under the aspect of Light-Glory it is represented both as a halo and as a flame that rises up from the shoulders.

This kind of representation has a typical capability of Mazdean thought as precedent, namely to be able to see beings and things by meeting them in the person of their "angel", their celestial archetype. In other words: to see what they are regarding their essence, by seeing who they are. In this manner, Xvarnah is itself apprehended as one of those

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5J. Darmesteter, Le Zend-Avesta, Vol. II, p. 615. Cf. ibid., p. 29, Xvarnah as hypostasis, Yazata object adoration [Yasa]; its Pravarti is infinite Light (asar rûshnîh).
7Cf. H. W. Bailey, op. cit., pp. 22, 39. Besides this reference, cf. F. Cumont, Textes et monuments relatifs aux mystères de Mithra, I, pp. 284-285; Bidez and Cumont, Les Mages Hellénisés, I, p. 68 ff.; 11, p. 52 note 5, p. 87, 89, 92 note 2; H. S. Nyberg, Questions de cosmogenie et de cosmologie mazdéennes, I, (Journal asiatique, July-Sept. 1931), p. 71 and Chap. V, pp. 66-67; L. H. Gray, op. cit., pp. 121 and 128. This same "encoding" phenomenon has been detected among Ismailian authors, who, under the Arabic jadd, read the Persian bakhê (lot, destiny). Now, in the triad Jadd, Fath, Khayyê, the first word is related to the Angel identified with Gabriel, and the two others with Michael and Seraphiel [Abû Ya’qîb Sejestânî, Mawāzin, Chap. XII]. See also our study Cyclic Time... (above, note 67) pp. 179 and 191, as well as our étude préliminaire pour le Livre des deux sagesses de Nâsîr-i Khusraw [B.I, 3 and 3a], pp. 91 and 112.
8Cf. our book Celestial Earth... pp. 32 ff.
from the subtle world of Light, one of the Yazatas (the "Adorable Ones"). This is why it has a Fravarti (furûhar in Persian), i.e., its archetype, "angel", like every being of the subtle celestial world, that is designated as "Infinite Light". Like the other personifications of Mazdean angelology, Xvarnah can totally exist in each of the individualities that relate to the world manifested in material form (gêtik), without ceasing to be a hypostasis from the spiritual world (mênôk) itself. It is the celestial figure itself and also at the same time the energy that it invests and develops in a being from the material world. In this manner the Avesta already knows three hypostatic forms of Xvarnah in the terrestrial world. They are: 1) the Light of Glory of the Argas (Aryanem Xvarêno), the heroes from the Zoroastrian faith, both men and women. 2) The Royal Light of Glory (Kevam Xvarêno), of Vishtasp, Zoroaster's protector and the sovereigns of the Kayanian dynasty. 3) The Light of Glory of Zoroaster himself. We will faithfully find signs to these three categories of Xvarnah back in Suhrawardi, charged with nuances that reflect meanings accumulated under this expression during the centuries, before getting to him.

The descriptions of Zoroaster's Xvarnah are particularly instructive for religious phenomenology. Sometimes it is said that Xvarnah descended under the appearance of a Flame born of the Infinite Light and penetrated into Zoroaster's mother to be born by her. Sometimes Zoroaster's Fravarti (the "Celestial Entity") and its Xvarnah are united to constitute the form of the infant Zoroaster, or else they are placed by the Amahraspands (the "Archangels") into some terrestrial substance (the hom and the milk) that is nourishment for his parents.

Later, this same Xvarnah of Zoroaster is kept in the waters of lake Kansaoya from where the auroral mountain, Mons Victorialis, rises; a multitude of Fravartis watch over it. At the end of our Aiôn a young girl will descend into the waters of this mystical lake. The Light of Glory will emanate into her body and she will conceive "the one who must subdue all evil spells of demons and men". Understandably, this does not refer to the anatomy and the physiology of a physical body; Xvarnah as an element of Zoroastrian anthropology appertains to the "body of Light", to what can simply be called the "subtle body".

The nature of Xvarnah, flame of primordial Light, its transmission through the mediation of archangels and its expected appearance in the person of the future Saoshyant closing our Aiôn, all of these phenomena call for a comparative study of Xvarnah and the theme of the "Muhammedan Light" (Nîr Muhammadi). Shi'ite prophetic meditated on it (above, book 1): its mystical transmission from the Pleroma to Adam, then from prophet to prophet up to Muhammad and to the last Imâm of the Muhammedan period. To continue: the supernatural process leading up to the birth of the infant Zoroaster corresponds indeed to the process that is a prelude to the birth of the Holy Imâms. These striking analogies can only be pointed to here.

We have been able to identify definite traces of the Xvarnah theme in an Ismailian theosopher of the 4th/10th century, Abû Ya'qûb Sejestâni. This author invites us to practice the same exercise on the Arabic word jadd as was imposed by Aramean ideograms on Pahlavi, by reading the Persian bakht for it (destiny, lot). In the Pahlavi commentaries on the Avesta, Xvarnah is similarly interpreted as bakht. The direction was quite clear, because Abû Ya'qûb's descriptions made it possible to reveal in the archangelic triad of Ismailian Gnosis, Gabriel-Michael-Seraphael, the three hypostases of Xvarnah, Aura Gloriae or Doza-Sophia.

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12 Ibid., pp. 32 ff. and our étude préliminaire... (above, note 113), p. 100.
14 This is the central theme of our Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth, see index s.v. jassad and jism.
15 Cf. H. W. Bailey, op.cit., p. 34
Since it therefore deals with Zervân, each of the epiphanic Figures of the terrestrial individuality. As much as it pre-exists in one way or another and is the eternal archetype and norm of terrestrial individuality. As the pre-existent energy that individuates this being and radiates its protective aura around it, the latter cannot detach itself from this being without getting itself into grave danger. It cannot attempt to suppress or deny it without destroying its own being. It also assumes the characteristics of an eternal Companion of Light, who is at the same time the goal and the Guide towards this goal. This "Glory" imparted to a being is truly its "Destiny".

However, this Light of Glory has other manifestations and individualizations than that of the plenary, royal and sacerdotal charisma. It was noted above that it is the power that constitutes the being of a "Light-being". In this sense this Glory even constitutes the soul, in as much as it pre-exists in one way or another and is the eternal archetype and norm of terrestrial individuality. As the pre-existent energy that individuates this being and radiates its protective aura around it, the latter cannot detach itself from this being without getting itself into grave danger. It cannot attempt to suppress or deny it without destroying its own being. It also assumes the characteristics of an eternal Companion of Light, who is at the same time the goal and the Guide towards this goal. This "Glory" imparted to a being is truly its "Destiny".

Here that we are able to catch a glimpse of a whole host of representations that are connected with the idea of Zervân as Absolute Time, as Eternal Time. More precisely, it is a transparency play to which passages from diverse sources bear witness. Zervân appears simultaneously as Light of Glory and as Destiny, i.e., as the "ideal place" for the coalescence on which we are focusing here. In very summary fashion, the Greek equivalents given to these notions tend to fix this transparency play on the vision of a particular Figure, namely that of Hermeticism’s Agathos daimôn, i.e., on a Figure who every time becomes the Tutelary Angel or the Celestial Partner. However, this transparency is in agreement with the one already noticed in Zervân and Wisdom-Daênâ alike, both a hypostasis of Mazdean religion (the Mazdean Sophia) and the Celestial Self of the believer. Essentially Zervân assumes many forms: he is the Aiôn, Eternal Time, the pantomorphos theos (Omniform God). Since it therefore deals with Zervân, each of the epiphanic Figures of the Aiôn is eminently qualified to say to the adept: "I am your eternity" (your Aiôn).

The representation that connects Light of Glory and Destiny under the same Form and Figure has the same secret as the one we rediscover when Destiny (tykhê) is identified with the Figure that dominates the perspectives of Hermetical religion, namely, Agathos daimôn. She is simultaneously Noûs-Intelligence, the divinity of Hermeticism, and the good personal daimôn of Hermes and the Hermetic adept; she is daimôn paretmos, the Celestial Partner, the tutelary "Angel" of the one who is her terrestrial counterpart. However, it is precisely

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16Cf. our étude préliminaire... (above, page 55, note 7) pp. 93 ff., 97-106. Besides this, one is able to note in quite another context, namely that of the sophiology of S. Bulgakov, Glory identified as Wisdom, the Doxa Sophia hypostasis, as Divine ousia, in the three hypostases which typify the three archangels Gabriel, Michael and Raphael. The tradition of icons has made this representation famous [André Rouleve]. On the other hand, it has been suggested to recognize Xvarnah, the Light of Glory, in the archangel Ohriel, “God is my Light”. Cf. E. Blochert, Quelques notes à propos de l’Arda Viraf Nama [in Oriental Studies in honor of Caselty Erachi Pauri, London 1933].


18Cf. Cyclic Time... p. 26 (with the references in the footnotes which are not reproduced here); cf. also Reitzenstein and Schaefer, Studien, pp. 320-322 (Iranian xvarnah and Hebrew shektôna, Ezekiel’s vision, the Merkabah).


20Cf. ibid., 191, note 1 and Pommader, p. 18, note 8, Agatôd, angel of Victory and Joy).
Agathos daimôn who Suhravardi knows and invokes under the name of "Perfect Nature" (al-Tibâ al-tâmm), since that is the very name of the "Form of Light" who appeared to Hermes and "projected" knowledge into him in Islamic Hermetical tradition (see below, § 5 and chapter 6). Let us also note that a trace of this "Perfect Nature" is found again in a Shi'ite hadîth about the first Imâm.\(^{21}\) Similarly, we refer to the "Form of Light" who joins the Ismailian adept from initiation onwards and of which we have shown elsewhere that this was related to Manicheism.\(^{22}\)

Stated very quickly these things seem to get all tangled up in great confusion. Indeed, the interpenetration of the religious universes that are combined in these representations is one of the most complex chapters in the science of comparative religion. To the degree that one is content to speak too easily of "syncretism", everything may indeed appear arbitrary and mixed up. However, if one applies oneself to the discovery of the intentions of a personal faith, one that organizes one's universe, then it becomes the "inexplicable" that becomes the explanation. Hermetism and Zoroastrianism meet in the personal faith of Suhravardi in a way to which, in the final analysis, his own person is itself the answer. This meeting manifests itself in the putting into effect of notions so characteristic as the Mazdean Light of Glory and the "Perfect Nature" of Hermetism. Of the former Suhravardi gives witness in the recital of a vision. Of the latter he speaks in one of the most beautiful psalms in his "Book of Hours". The conjunction takes place through the link with a subordinate idea that splendidly appears in the identification of the Light of Glory and personal Destiny.

To summarize the few facts noted above, we state the following: 1) In Zoroastrian Mazdeism, Zervân is Infinite Time in the religion of Ohrmazd (Daênă, Persian Din). It is Ohrmazd's voice that forever rings out in the Light\(^{23}\) and also Wisdom, or Divine Sophia, the "robe" and the Eternal Time of Ohrmazd. This is she who, post mortem, shows herself to the Mazdean soul who has won the battle, as its Celestial Self, its Self of Light. Consequently, in the features of a Figure that leaves Eternal Time transparent, the soul who has incarnated on earth recognizes its Celestial Partner, or pareudos.\(^{24}\) 2) In the Corpus hermeticum, the Aiôn, Eternal Time, also presents itself to the Soul in the active and creative world as an hypostasis, as the Power of God identical to Wisdom-Sophia.\(^{25}\) This is the mother of the Anthropos, i.e. of the regenerative mystery, having given birth to its "immortal body" (athanaton sôma). However, precisely this assurance of immortality is tied to the attainment of the daimôn pareudos. This is the "Angel" or Celestial Partner and a gratuitous gift obtained through prayer and initiation. The parallelism is striking. In this manner Zervân, or the Aiôn, assumes the figure of personal Destiny. It does so in Mazdeism as the angel Daênă-Sophia, both the hypostasis of the Mazdean religion and the personal "Angel" of the Mazdean believer. In Hermetism this occurs under the traits of Agathos daimôn, simultaneously a divine hypostasis and the daimôn pareudos, the personal Angel of each adept.\(^{26}\)

Thus we see in a very basic representation something in common between Mazdeism
and Hermetism. However, something in common is what coheres in Suhrawardi the vision of Xvarnah, Light of Glory and the Form of Light designated as the "Perfect Nature", personal destiny, because it is at once "father" and "child" of the adept. This conjunction opens up a vast perspective. Further down we will see the research that has been done connecting the Zoroastrian idea of Xvarnah and the Holy Grail of our western heritage. This also makes a connection between the personages of Kay Khusrav and Parsifal. In parallel, other research has shown the sources of Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival in the Corpus hermeticum. From such investigations the idea of an encounter arises that is an accomplished fact in Suhrawardi's Oriental Theosophy.

The accomplishment of this fact is already visible in either the mental or real iconography of Xvarnah, whose triumphal visions are the same ones that express the lexicon of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq. The transparency of Figures at the edge of the visible and invisible worlds shows those of the believers, adepts, or mystics in an aura of victory, passing through the regeneration inscribed in their destiny. The idea of the victorious force inherent in Xvarnah, at once Light of Glory and Destiny, changes into an attribute of those who are invested with it. This Gloria victrix manifests itself in Mazdean theosophy under the traits of the angel Ashi Vanuhi, "daughter of Ohrmazd, sister of the archangels, Spirit of Wisdom". Prestigious and proud, it is the sister of the Nike of Greek sculpture in terms of a mental iconography, those "victories" who were the beginning of the first representations of Angels in Christian iconography, principally under Gnostic influences. She withholds and confers Xvarnah, but at the same time she is this Victory, this Victorial Fire. In her person the meanings of Glory and Destiny meet, the Aura Gloriae of a Light-Being. In its turn Mithraism sees her as tyche, destiny, in the sense of Fortuna victrix, Gloria-Fortuna. Her meeting with Zoroaster in Erân-Vêj (famous episode in the Avesta, Yasht 17), as exemplary event in the "center of the world", is the prefiguring and also the precondition of the post mortem meeting between Daenerys, her sister, and the believer whose "victorial force" she is.27

We allude to images and scenes here, because these typify the attributes of Xvarnah which give the Suhrawardian lexicon its fundamental tonality. It is the idea of victory, of triumphant force (Pahlavi pêrûzîh) inherent in the Light-beings. There are many equivalents of this in Persian and Arabic texts: grandeur and beauty ("azamat o zibâî, bahâ'", light (nûr), splendor of joy (bahâjat), etc.28 (here one thinks of Repanse de Schoye, Wolfram's Queen of the Grail). The words that Suhrawardi makes use of when he writes in Arabic are mostly qahr (to triumph, to dominate, to subjugate, pîrûz or frîrûzî in Persian) and qâhir, as nomen agentis (pîrûz or frîrûzî in Persian). The "archangelic Lights", who originate at the "source of the Light of Glory and the sovereignty of the Light" are called precisely Anwâr qâhîrâh: "victorial", dominating Lights29 (we alluded above to the Greek Nike sculptures and before that to the Christian designation of the Archangel Michael as Angelus Victor).30 Meanwhile, something must be mentioned in order to avoid certain misunderstandings. The terms qahr and qâhir, whose technical meaning are protracted in their derivations, also occur in the Arabic astrological lexicon. They are able to allow there the idea of violence and domination exercised by an inauspicious star. Certainly, the Suhrawardian notion of Xvarnah allows for astrological allusions, but in the lexicon of Oriental Theosophy the terms in question are devoid of any inauspicious or malefic undertones.31 Generally we translate

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29 Regarding the connection between ishrâqî Theosophy and Ismailian Gnosis, cf. étude préliminaire, pp. 107-108.
this with the adjective "victorial", to indicate a functional modality, a permanent aptitude of being, in preference over the word "victorious" which rather connotes a qualification based on a past event. We chose the word "victorial" through the Latin name that means "auroral mountain", where the Savior is to come again, according to certain Christian exegesis of Zoroastrian prophecies, and where the Magi were en route to: Mons victorialis. To designate the entire concept of this "victorial force", Suhrawardi will say, e.g., al-amr al-qahrî, something akin to res victorialis.

Perhaps we have now succeeded in the determination of a minimum amount of information necessary to understand the various meanings and implications of the texts in which the Shaykh al-Ishrâq describes the categories and the epiphanies of the Light of Glory. These are described in the visions that were given to the sovereigns and the prophets of ancient Persia. They are also described in the archangelic hierarchies that eternally "rise" to that Orient, from the supreme Archangels to the Form of Light who is the closest to each mystical traveler and who is his "Perfect Nature".

At the end of the metaphysics of his great "Book of the Paths and Havens", between the pages where he explains the genealogy of the Ishrāqiyyūn and the ones where he alludes to the events that occur in the mystical cities of the "Intermediate Orient", Suhrawardi gives a long description of Xvarnah as Light of Glory and personal Destiny. His triple differentiation corresponds to the three forms of manifestation of which the Avesta informs us (above, page 56). He writes as follows:

1) If what predominates in the real essence of the soul is res victorialis (amr qahrî), then the rising Light (shurûq) has the effect of making the res victoriales (umûr qahrîya) predominate in the soul as they originate in the sidereal configurations and in the Angels for whom the stars are the theurgies. Indeed the subtle reality that the ancient Persians (the Pahlawîyûn) called Light of Glory (Khurrah, Xvarnah) is a reality originating in the Celestial Flames, whose imprint on the human soul makes itself felt in its victorial force (qahr). So they who are invested with it in this particular way become heroes, royalty, victorious ones.

2) If the rising Light has its source in the hieratic flames of pure spiritual Lights, proportionally to the soul's aptitude for ardent desire and love, then the imprint of the Light of Glory investing it makes itself felt in that the recipient finds his happiness and joy in things subtle and delicate. It makes itself felt in that the sympathy of souls spontaneously inclines towards him and that these souls experience love towards him, while people celebrate his praise, because of the brilliance that is invested by the Angels in magnificent theurgies, worthy of magnificence and love.

3) Finally, when there is a superabundant likeness to the modalities of Light through the Lord who is the Sublime Luminary, then its keeper is a magnificent king. He will inspire respect and overflow with knowledge, power and felicity. This is the only one who is called "Royal Light of Glory" (Kayân-Khurrâh). When it attains its plenitude, this last category is the most conspicuous of the three, because it implies a perfect equilibrium of Light, besides the fact that the Sublime Luminary is the portico to every great ecstasy.

In this classification we recognize, notwithstanding the particular nuances of the Oriental Theosophy, the three categories of the Light of Glory already distinguished in the Avesta. In the first of these categories we recognize the Xvarnah of Iranian chivalry and that of the

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32 About Mons victorialis, see Celestial Earth..., pp. 73-74; mentioned in the fragment of the "Book of Seth", contained in the Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum, cf. G. Messina, I Magi a Bethlemme e una predizione di Zoroastra, Rome 1933, pp. 65-67 and 83.

legendary hero. In the second one there is the sacerdotal charisma of the "hieratic" souls, the men of God, after the example of the prophet Zoroaster. The third category has its own proper name in Persian, Royal Xvarnah, "Glory of the Kayanians", (Kevaem Xvarêno); this is the complete Xvarnah that contains the other two, tempering everything in a perfect equilibrium of Light.

Three remarks are in order:

1) In each case there is a medium of transmission whose idea originates in astrology or astral theosophy. It is the idea of a brilliant light in the Heavens at the time of birth of the one who is invested with Aura Gloriae. In the second and third categories special mention is made of the mediators, who are the "spiritual lights". In no way are these sidereal configurations or celestial bodies acting in some mechanical fashion; the active agents are the ones Suhrawardian angelology designates as the Angels governing these theurgies (tilimsât) that are all bodies from the terrestrial world as well as from the sidereal universe. These Angels are the mediators of the "oriental source" (shûrq), the Light of Glory, from where they originate themselves and that relates to the suprasensible world. Royal Xvarnah, as the complete Xvarnah, has as mediator the "Sublime Luminary" (al-Nayyîr al-a'zam), i.e. the Sun. Again, we are not dealing here with the astral mass of the Sun, but with its theurgic Angel, who Suhrawardi calls by its Iranian name, Hârakhsh, as we will see further down, because it is the portal (pîshgâh) of great ecstacies: Sol invictus. Thus a trace of Mithraism is revealed in Ishrâq (see below, § 5, the Psalm to the Archangel of the Sun, and chapter 4, § 1).

2) The three categories of Xvarnah can be related without difficulty to the three categories of spirituals or theosopher-sages mentioned in the Prologue of the Oriental Theosophy (above, p. 45 and following). The first concerns the Xvarnah of pure philosophers, the heroes of knowledge. The second is the one of the heroes of "theurgic piety", or pure mystical experience, without a mixture of philosophical knowledge. The third concerns the heroes of both, the perfect human in theosophic wisdom and mystical, theurgic experience. The latter is the Khalîfât Allâh, God’s Vicar on earth (called exactly Gubernator terrae by the Corpus hermeticum). Such was the case with blessed King Khusrav, as Suhrawardi regarded him. This is why the transition from the first to the third category can perhaps best be typified by what we will thematize further down (chapter 4, § 4) as the passage from the heroic to the mystical epic. The theosophical sages following the path of Kay Khusrav, the ecstatic king, are called Khusravânîyûn (the Persian adjective connotes a general sense of royalty, imperiosity). Kay Khusrav is occulted to this world, after having renounced temporal power. Suhrawardi has warned us that he does not mean the exercise of temporal political power by "caliphatal" authority (above, p. 46). Xvarnah also invests the pole, the "Hidden Imâm". He is invisible to the multitude of men, while his light illumines the hearts of the faithful, guiding them mysteriously to the threshold of his dwelling in the "eighth clime" (below, book 7). These are the Khusravânîyûn. The Suhrawardian vision unites in one common kinship of "hieratics" the royal sage of ancient Persia and the mystical Imâm (mystikos =hidden) of Shi’ite Persia. These characteristics enlighten us better regarding the intentions of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq.

3) Finally, here as well as elsewhere, Suhrawardi insists on the fact that the Lights that are encountered by the spiritual and whose source is the Light of Glory are no theoretical knowledge or conceptual representation. If it was known in this way the "Oriental Source" would not be the "source" any longer, but one knowledge among others, an accidental happening to a knowing subject. However, it is the Orient of knowledge; its revelation affects the very heart of the being who encounters it. Suhrawardi insists on this at the end of one of his works written in Persian, the Partaw-Nâmeh or "Book of Light Rays", on a
These Flashes and Lights are no theoretical knowledge and no intellectual representations. No indeed, these are hieratic irradiations (i.e., of the spiritual world). The spiritual world is all the lights in a state separate from matter. There is absolutely no limit, in power and splendor, to the Light of the Necessary Being and of Intelligence. For souls in the other world it is far more manifest than all other splendors of light. The light of spiritual beings is not something that is added to their essence; no, they are Light, Light in a state separate from matter, as the theosophers of the light claim after their own visionary experience. The Royal Light of Glory (Khurrah-i kayâni — Kayân-khurrâh) and the royal splendor of Light (farr-e nûrânî) is conferred upon every sovereign initiated into wisdom and persevering in the cult and adoration of the Light of Lights. They are clothed by divine fulgurations with a robe of majesty and beauty. They are the natural leaders of the world and receive triumphant assistance from the superior universe; their dreams and inspiration attain perfection.

Sometimes we are able to have a presentiment of what the Shaykh al-Ishrâq lays claim to when he speaks of the visions that were given him after the example of Kay Khusraw, Zoroaster and others, and on which he subsequently built his Oriental Theosophy.

The Visions of Kay Khusraw and Zoroaster

Suhrawardi alludes to the event that decisively influenced the course of his spiritual life in a brief personal secret, or even a "self criticism", at an important moment of his Oriental Theosophy. He refers to a direct vision that eradicated all his doubts and the limitations with which he had locked himself into Peripatetic philosophy. The opinions toward which he tended in the beginning of his career were overthrown. As his commentators emphasized, this dealt with the adolescent period of the author, when he was making his debut in philosophy. The Peripatetic doctrine that he defended was its cosmology limiting the number of Angelic Intelligences as movers of the Spheres, to ten or fifty-five and no more. This is how he now sees it, fully aware of the error of his youth: "No matter how marvelous the order and the relations are in the world of bodies that is the world of night and darkness, those who rule in the world of noble and pure Lights are necessarily anterior and superior to it. But what can the Peripatetic philosophers do with a pleroma of Intelligences that is limited to such a silly number? No, the relations and proportions that matter in the world of Light are infinitely more marvelous, far more real and more complex than the ones that we discover in this world that is only their projected shadow."

What Suhrawardi therefore rejected out of hand was a cosmology unaware of the worlds of the multitudes of beings of Light. The conversion of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq is tied to a revelation of angelology that, as he will remind us on many occasions, inspired and regulated the cult of the ancient Persians. Let us note: Suhrawardi had a foreboding of the unfathomable wonders of the "Heaven of Fixed Stars" (a designation that groups together all galaxies and systems beyond our solar system). His discovery of angelology went hand

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Kayân-Khurrâh. The word "hieratic" is used here and elsewhere in our translation (fr) in a Neoplatonic, etymological and sacral sense, in order to translate (fr) qudsî, qudsîya, as a qualification of the spiritual world; there are already too many words for which our translations (fr) are reduced to that term "spiritual".

in hand with an astronomical revolution that shattered the limited Heavens of Aristotelian or Ptolemaic astronomy, while in the West this revolution took place at the expense of all angelology. This is not the least of the contrasting signs between our two cultures.  

Suhrawardi knows that the pure spiritual lights have been contemplated by all who have been made "homeless", deprived of the habitation of their physical bodies at one moment or other and then sent to guide others by the writing of their witness. Such is the contents of all ecstatic confessions, those of Hermes, Empedocles and Plato; the latter reported his own experience and witnessed that, having been stripped of all darkness, he had a direct vision of the world of Light. We now know that Suhrawardi is referring here to Plotinus’ famous ecstasy under the name of Plato in the *Enneads*, as contained in the so-called *Theology* of Aristotle. He makes reference several times to this famous recital during his *Oriental Theosophy*: "Plato (i.e. Plotinus) has said: I have seen the Spheres of Light because I was separated from my physical body." The commentators stressed that this expression refers to the supreme archangelic Intelligences, who with their more intense Light embrace those whose Light is fainter, as the celestial Spheres in astronomy are enclosed within each other. Suhrawardi further refines this, continuing with Plotinus’ recital:

Plato himself reported that he achieved certain spiritual states by being stripped of his body and found himself separated from his material condition. At that time he contemplated the Light and the Beauty in himself. Then he was elevated to the divine causality that encircles the All; it seemed to him that he was deposited in it, suspended from it; he contemplated the Sublime Light at the highest Summit. This sums up his recital: "Behold, conscious reflection ended by the drawing of a veil between me and that Light." About his part the Legislator-Prophet of the Persians and Arabians (the Prophet Muhammad) said: "God has seventy seven veils of Light," they hang before His Face, the Flashes of His Face set fire to everything that catches sight of its looks.

Suhrawardi already alluded to the ecstatic confessions of Hermes and Plato a few pages previous to this, concluding as follows:

The sages of Persia and India are unanimous on this point. Well! Since in the matter of astronomy one takes into consideration the observations of one or two people, then why not take into consideration the explicit declarations of those who were the pillars of wisdom and prophecy, concerning something they saw directly during their spiritual observations?  

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36 See our book *A vicenna and the Visionary Recital*, pp. 94 ff.
37 *Hikmat al-Ishrâq*, § 171, pp. 162-163. Suhrawardi quotes here the first words of Plotinus’ ecstatic recital (attributed to Plato); the commentator Qutbuddin then cites the whole passage, as Suhrawardi did in the *Talwîhât* ([Op. Met.|, p. 112), cf. above, note 108. "Often I retire inside of myself and divest myself of my body, leaving it aside. It is then that I become a separate being: stripped of my physical facade, free of material conditions. In that state I am interior to myself and exterior to everything else. I then contemplate in myself a beauty and a brightness, a splendor and a light, of beautiful things that are so extraordinary, so strange and so gracious, that I stay amazed, overcome with a stupor..." This is the text that corresponds to the Greek version of the *Enneads* IV, 8, 1, where Plotinus writes: "Often I wake up to myself and escape from my body and I see a beauty too astounding to believe..." (trans. (fr) Bréhier). Regarding the tradition of the seventy seven or seventy seven thousand veils, their source is in Ibn Bâbûyeh, *K. al-Tauhid*, Chap. 38. Qâzi Sa’id Qummi’s commentary regarding this matter is of a remarkable complexity and richness (cf. *Annaire 1967-1968* of the Department of Religious Studies of the école des Hautes études, pp. 139-140). Every Spiritual is inspired by this *hadîth*. We will see further down (Book III) that Rûzbehân dedicates an entire treatise to it.


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That is for Suhrawardi the decisive argument and a phenomenologist of today won’t know how to say it any better. We recognize indeed that the phenomenon that appears has as first condition the capacity of the one to whom it appears. The objectivity of the vision is in solidarity with that connection. Those for whom the phenomenon remains hidden can only attempt one thing: to discover the conditions under which it appears to those who do see it. This is perhaps why the equivalent of our word "phenomenology" has already existed for such a long time in the Arabic expression *kashf al-mahjûb* (the action of unveiling, of uncovering what is hidden), serving as a title to many Gnostic and mystical treatises. Any other criticism of the visionary object in fact fails that object and prejudges its mode of being. Any attempt to pilfer away from the reality of the thing seen, by being satisfied with a causal "explanation" in order to reduce it to a signification that stays on this side of the reality that shows itself, does not interest a Suhrawardi, who will always argue: how can anyone who has not seen, validly challenge those who have seen? In the Glosses concerning these pages, Mullâ Sadrâ Shirâzî reminds us of the sense of sight of the Beyond (*hâss basari* ukhravî), the perceptual organ of *Malakût*. Those who are unequipped with this can always deny what the others see, but surely their denial is groundless. Sure of the witnesses that he calls upon, particularly of the sages of ancient Persia, since it is their theosophic wisdom that he wants to revive, the *Shaykh al-Ishrâq* explains himself in the following way:

The author of these lines (i.e., Suhrawardi himself) started out by being a vigorous defender of the Peripatetic doctrine as far as the negation of these matters are concerned, because he had an excessive zeal for their doctrine. He would have persevered in this attitude, had he not himself seen the definitive proof given by his Lord.

As the commentators emphasize, we are indeed dealing here with a direct vision, a visionary perception of the pure Lights, so that the author sees that all forms, shapes and species that exist in this world are icons or images (*asnâm*), shadows and silhouettes (*ashbâh*) of the immaterial Forms of Light that exist in the world of Intelligence. Suhrawardi continues:

What if somebody does not believe this witness, and what if his proof is not enough for him? Well! May he take up the practice of spiritual exercises and may he enroll in a school of Masters who have the visionary gift. Perhaps a visionary ecstasy will befall him, which will lift him up to the world of *Jabarût* (the world of cherubinic Intelligences), and perhaps he will see the celestial entities of the world of *Malakât* (the world of Angels, "Lords of species" or archetypes, see below). Perhaps he will contemplate the Lights that Hermes and Plato contemplated, those spiritual splendors, sources of the *Light of Glory and Sovereignty of Light* of whom Zoroaster was the annunciator and towards whom the most veracious and blessed Kay Khushaw was elevated, through an ecstasy that allowed him to have a direct vision of them. The unanimity of the theosophic sages of ancient Persia in this regard is such that, according to them, water is an Angel-Archetype (*sâhib al-sanam*) in the world of *Malakât*, they called it *Khurđâd* (Avestic *Haurvatât*). Plants have an Angel, they called it *Murđâd* (Avestic *Amertât*). Fire is an Angel, they called it *Orûbehest* (Avestic *Artâ Vakhshâta*).

These are also the Lights that Empedocles and many other sages referred to.

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39Cf. below, Vol. III, Book V, Chap. II.
40For what follows, cf. Hikmat al-Ishrâq, § 166, pp. 156-158, with the commentators’ passages reproduced at the bottom of the page.
We emphasized the characteristic expression: the sources of the Light of Glory and Sovereignty of Light. Suhrawardi combines two technical Persian terms into one Arabic phrase in order to say: Yanâbî' al-Khurrâh wa'l-Rây. The first part is already familiar to us (Avestic xvarnah, Pahlavi xvarnah). The second, rây, represents an Avestic term (raj) connoting the idea of grandeur, sumptuousness, royal magnificence. The coupling of two terms, or of their adjectives derived from them, is classical and characteristic in Avestic as well as in Pahlavi texts. The indication that Suhrawardi improvises nothing resides precisely in these words: he follows a tradition that in one way or another became known to this "reviver of the wisdom of ancient Persia".

Other terms make as many allusions to these "sources of the Light of Glory" during the course of the book. As we have stated, the book of Oriental Theosophy begins with a radical reform of Logic and finishes with a sort of memento of ecstasy, captured in two lyrical psalms. It is a question of "wanderings that went knocking on the portal of the great halls of the Light" and an encounter towards which "Angels who draw others to the Orient" advance and pour Water that springs from the "Source of Beauty" (Yanâbî al-bâhâ). We already noted above (page 59), that the word xvarnah is translated exactly by the Arabic bâhâ (beauty, flash, splendor). "Sources of Beauty", on this page is therefore equivalent to Yanâbî al-Khurrâh, the Sources of the Light of Glory, from the magnificent account of his personal confession. The qualification given to the Angels illustrates even better that, to Suhrawardi's mind, xvarnah and Ishrâq, Light of Glory and Light of the Orient, Source of xvarnah and Oriental Source, are mutually interchangeable terms. Water and Light are traditionally also mutually interchangeable as sources of Life and Knowledge. We encounter the expressions "Sources of Life" and "Sources of Light and Life" on other pages. The Source is itself not an object of knowledge but that what makes it gush forth.

Understandably, these passages especially attracted the attention of the immediate commentators, Shahrazûrî and Qutb Shîrâzî, and their glosses indicate to us the state of their knowledge about the spirituality of ancient Persia. Both clarify that the "spiritual splendors", the celestial irradiations that Suhrawardi speaks of, are indeed the ones whose prophet had been Zoroaster, "that Sage and most excellent, perfect Imâm from Azerbaijan". The latter proclaimed in his "Zend Book", that the world is divided into two categories: mînôvî, the world of Light, the spiritual world, and gîtî, the dark, corporeal world. These are indeed the two great cosmological categories of the Avesta, mainyuva and gaêtya (in Pahlavi mênôk and gêtik) . From the world of Light a Light effuses over the souls of

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42 xvarra kast (Avestic), xvarra manda (Pahlavi), qualifies the one invested with xvarnah, Ray o kharrah, or rather kharrôh o ray according to Suhrawardi's usage, is the Persian equivalent of the Pahlavi rây ut xvarrah. See the texts cited by H. W. Bailey, Zoroastrian problems, pp. 10 ff., 28, 41, 43, 58, 75.

43 Hikmat al-Ishrâq, § 261, p. 215 and Prolegomenes II, p. 56, note 121a. Cf. H. W. Bailey, op. cit., p. 63, the texts where xharrah is translated by bâhâ, beauty, splendor; 'azamâd o zîbâ', majesty and beauty; bhajat wa sa'ada, beauty, or joy and felicity. One will note that in this same phrase of Suhrawardi, the angels are mentioned as mushtriqfû, i.e., as the commentators explain, drawing ["orienting"] the souls towards Ishrâq. Cf. also note 477, below.

44 Cf. our study on Qâzî Sa'îd Qummî, The Configuration of the Temple of the Ka'bâ, in Temple and Contemplation, London 1986, p. 211. The Intelligence is the Throne ([arsh]; the Light is the Water on which the Throne is founded, i.e. the objects of intellection; but the Intelligence is also the objects of intellection which it contains.

45 Hikmat al-Ishrâq, p. 224 line 3, p. 226 lines 4-5.

46 We have already alluded to a topographical "rotation" [explained very well by H. S. Nyberg] that permitted the Sassanid and post-Sassanid Magi to rediscover, in northwestern Iran, the holy places of Zoroastrianism, cf. Celestial Earth..., p. 22, and H. S. Nyberg, Die Religionen des alten Iran, pp. 306-303.

47 In fact the Avesta and the Zend, i.e. the Writing [or the Book] and the commentary; but the word Zend has become the designation of the book itself: one has even spoken for a long time of the "Zend language"!

48 Note that in Mazdean cosmological terms, mênôk denotes the transcendent, celestial, subtle state of
the Perfect Ones that assists them, gives them splendor and power (ta’yîd and rây!); souls are irradiated by it and an aura rises over them, brighter than that of the rising sun. It is the Light which is called Khurrâh in Pahlavi, about which Zoroaster says: Khurrâh is a Light which effuses the Divine Essence; creatures are ordered into a hierarchy of precedence through it and at the same time everything is fixed into activity and production through it. What is special to sovereigns is called Kayân-Khurrâh. Thus a fundamental concept of Mazdean theosophy made its reentry into the current of Gnosis and Islamic theosophy.

From generation to generation the Ishrâqîyûn, the heirs of the Khusrawânîyûn, passed on what was bequeathed to them by Suhrawardi and his commentators. Next to the prophet Zoroaster, "the blessed king Kay Khusrav" is named here again. Indeed, he is the ultimate and dominant figure of the Kayanian dynasty, previous to whom Vishtaspa, Zoroaster's protector, does not appear. Each of the Kayanians has very precise traits and an exact gesture, rich in heroic and tumultuous details. It is impossible however to have them enter into our chronologies. They are forever their own times that through Kay Khusrav are also the time of all Khusrawânîyûn sages. This prestigious figure whose "history" goes beyond history and extends into the "eighth clime" will reappear in a few pages from here. This climate beyond climates is the place where the passage from heroic epic to mystical epic secretly takes place. It is also the place where the meeting between a mystical Iranian chivalry such as Suhrawardi conceived of it, between the Khusrawânîyûn initiates, i.e., the Ishrâqîyûn, and our own chivalry of the Grail becomes possible (below, chapter 4 and 5).

A page that Suhrawardi consecrates to Kay Khusrav elsewhere, shows us under what hieratic traits the personages of the Iranian sovereigns appeared to him, inscribed into the kinship of ecstatic heroes from Hermes to Empedocles. Understandably, every commentator has reproduced this page:

"It happened that Kay Khusrav the Blessed was absorbed in prayer and in deep meditation. Then, behold, the Wisdom (Sophia) of the most holy Father appeared to him, and she conversed with him about the world of Mystery (the ghâyû, the non-manifested). He was carried off to the supreme world; his soul received the imprint of Divine Sophia; the archangelic Lights showed themselves to him face to face and in this direct contact he understood that mode of subtle reality, called the Royal Light of Glory (Kayân-Khurrâh), that it is the projection (ilqâ) into the soul of a victorious (qâhir) element, before which heads are bowed.

Kay Khusrav's visionary ecstasy is thus of the same kind as the ecstacies that carried creation, while gêtîk connotes the visible, material state, without at first attaching as such the idea of evil and reprobation to the latter. Ahriman launches his attack on both the visible world and the state of gêtîk. For Mazdaism the material world does not have the sense of an instrument created for the salvation of the souls of Light, who are its captives, as in Manichaeism and Ismailism. There is a Manichean nuance in Suhrawardi's conception of Zoroaster's religion.

49 Hikmat al-Ishrâq, p. 157, with the passages from the commentators.

50 This is a page in the original Arabic version of K. al-Anwâh al-Imâdîya (Imâd Tablets (tr)) cited ibid., p. 157. Cf. the Persian version in Op. Met. III, ed. S. H. Nasr, §§ 94-95, pp. 186-188, pages in which Suhrawardi develops the hagiography of the sovereigns of ancient Persia, Perseiydin [Thmêtaona] and Kay Khusrav. The latter was the spokesman for the invisible world; he voluntarily left this present world when the hour had come, on a call from God. It seems there are slight variants between the original Arabic and the Persian, cf. the following footnote. On Kay Khusrav, cf. below, Chap. IV and V.

51 We have never found this expression, Mantiqîyat Abî'l-Quds, anywhere else; it seems that there is a certain Manichean resonance here (the Virgin of Light?). The expression does not appear in the corresponding part of the Persian version (§ 95, p. 187); nevertheless, the context in both Arabic and Persian versions, where it is stated that "the soul of Kay Khusrav received the imprint of the Divine Sophia", indicates that this deals with Wisdom as celestial hypostasis (cf. in Mazdaism, Menôk Xrât, Celestial Wisdom).
Zoroaster face to face with the Divine Heptad, after his conversations with the "Archangels", the Seven Most Holy Immortal Ones. Kay Khusrw's conversation with Celestial Wisdom likewise reminds us of the conversations recorded in a Pahlavi work that has exactly the title of Mênôkê-Xrât (Celestial Wisdom). Nevertheless, the long pages that the Shâh-Nâmeh of Ferdawis dedication to Kay Khusrw's gesture fall far short of what Suhrawardi writes about the vocation of the ecstatic hero; the same can be said for the other Iranian heroes in his mystical Recitals (below, chapters 4 and 5). Indeed this is precisely the mission of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq, to take charge of the spiritual heritage of ancient Persia. He leads its heroes to the goal of their calling and is himself their history. He decodes what the mystery of the final occultation of Kay Khusrw hides for us, as he disappears from the eyes of the people of this world without crossing the threshold of death. Later the 12th and last Imam of Shi'ism will do the same and since then he is the One to come. Kay Khusrw typifies the mystic who is the perfect sage initiated by Wisdom, Celestial Sophia in person, and who by this investiture is consecrated as mystical King of the world, possessing what the Neoplatonist Iamblicus called, "hieratic powers". Since then it has become invisible to the people of this world that Kay Khusrw is truthfully the mystical sovereign. "Projection into the soul of a victorial element": the Form of Light who is the Perfect Nature also projects the forms of knowledge into Hermes. The hermetical mystic himself also becomes the Gubernator Terrae.

How will mystics who according to Suhrawardi aspire both to philosophical knowledge and mystical experience reach the goal of their desires? Suhrawardi makes them understand that it is Oriental knowledge; he shows them where the Oriental Source is. But how will that event become their event? This is precisely what Suhrawardi will describe in the course of the symbolic histories, stating the great themes of the mystical epic. Their scenography, their dramatis personae, will presuppose that he has initiated his adepts into the hierarchy of being, eo ipso into the hierarchy of the Light-Beings. She who is the nearest of them is to be their guide, if they so deserve, because they also originate in the Orient of Lights (origo-oriens), in the sources of the Light of Glory and the Sovereignty of Light. Briefly, in bold outline, this is Suhrawardi’s basic angelology, basic in the sense that it is the basis for the schematization of being and of the epiphanies of being to consciousness.

The Archangelic Lights and the Platonic Ideas

Now it is fitting for the entire Suhrawardian angelology to be explained here. Necessarily we are only able to point out the essential parts. The order that the figures proceed in must be kept in mind; the significance of the world of the Shadows for Suhrawardi must be remembered; the vocabulary he uses to designate the hypostasis of Light, identified by him with the Platonic Ideas, must be specified. These Ideas are not the ones of which Plato speaks, because they are understood here in terms of an angelology that expressly refers to Zoroastrianism. On the other hand, it is true that the late Platonists, like Proclus and Damascius, commentators on the Chaldean Oracles, would very much return to them again. Finally, the structure of the hierarchy of Lights who eternally proceed from the Light of Lights must be noted and the meaning must be understood of this angelology for the spirituality and the "hieratic" ethos of the theosophic visionary.

As we stated previously, the name of the most high Lights originates from Xvarnah, Light of Glory, Blazing Majesty, Energy that relates the being of each being with the Halo of its suprasensible Fire. This is its "personal Angel" and its "destiny" that the visionary perception of our Shaykh identifies with the source of the Light that mingles with Being itself, the Orient of each Light and the Light of each Orient. The name of the most high Lights originates from this Light of Glory. They are the ones that immediately precede the more feeble Lights and are their mediators. The former are the Awnâr qâhirâ, the "victorial" Lights. Qâhirâ is the Arabic equivalent of the Persian pîrûz; it declares that their being
combines the twin qualities designated in Pahlavi as xvarrômand and mîgômand (above, note 147) and is attached to beings invested with the Light of Glory and the sovereignty of Light. We often also translate (fr) this by "archangelic Lights", because the Orienting Lights (the primordial Ishrâqât) proceeding immediately from the Orient of Lights, are literally the Archangels (the Ru‘asâl-Malakût al-Qâhirât68) and in the word "archangel" the element arché connotes both the idea of beginning and that of command, supremacy. Apart from this, what is able to evoke the expression "archangelism", again completes a mental image that conforms to the chivalric ethic that develops Zoroastrian angelology on the different planes of being: the combat of the powers of light sustaining Ohrmazd, who is Light-Wisdom. It also refers to the combat of the Fravartis (Persian forûhar), literally "they who are chosen", who are the arch typical celestial entities of each creature of Light who descends into this material world to fight against the Ahrimanic negative forces. As far as the name that Suhrawardi chooses to designate the Lights that govern a body, since our Shaykh calls each one a Light (Nâr) Espahbâd 65 this old expression of command suffices to evoke the gesture of Iranian chivalry (see below, chapter 5). We mentioned previously (above, page 42), how the primordial illumination and the primordial reflection of the Light of Lights or the Light of Glory are the origin of the initial relationship of First Lover and First Beloved. This bipolarity is inherent in an eternal photism, the phenomenon of Light coinciding with the revelation of being itself, since the concept of being and that of light coincide. Being signifies in its very self light and sovereignty of light. Its revelation and determinations can only occur in a hierarchy of degrees, a progressive "degradation" of Light. This is so because the Light is not only the source of all sovereignty but it is sovereignty itself, because certain beings have a predominance over others and the latter are subordinated to the former. Predominance and subordination only express and essentially determine a resemblance with Light: a degree of Light, more intense with some and weaker in others. According to this relationship, the procession of the Multiple from the One is schematized in the same structure of fundamental Ishrâq or Suhrawardian angelology that is substituted for Peripatetic or Avicennan angelology. This relationship is in every degree essentially one of love. Each Light that is more intense dominates ("Lords" it over) a Light that is less intense and rules it through an attraction that is exerted upon it, while the latter aspires to the former, ordaining itself to it. These are the

68. Hikmat al-Ishrâq, § 230, p. 201. On the expression qâhîra, see above, notes 147 and 148.

53. The term Espahbâd is derived from the ancient Iranian chivalric lexicon: here it means the directing soul, the "hegemony" of each human being, as well as for each celestial body, each of the Species, directing them in the name of the Archangel-archetype, of whom the species is the icon (sanam) or the theurgy (telesma), the place of the battle that each Light Espahbâd wagers for the victory of the Powers of Light from which it emanates. Cf. A. Christensen, L'Iran sous les Sassanides, 2nd edition, Copenhagen 1944, p. 104, note 4 and index (Avestic spâdâhapti; Pahlavi spâbåht, espâhbat; rendered in Arabic as isfâhâd). For the mythological-historical usage of the term spâhbat, cf. H. S. Nyberg, Questions I, pp. 198-199, the passage of Mêhôkê Xrât (Book of Celestial Wisdom), Chap. VIII: the twelve signs of the Zodiac as twelve generals or commanders (spâhbat) on the side of Ohrmazd, the seven planets as seven generals on the side of Ahriman.

54. The expression isfâhâd is derived from the ancient Iranian chivalric lexicon; here it means the directing soul, the "hegemony" of each human being, as well as for each celestial body, each of the Species, directing them in the name of the Archangel-archetype, of whom the species is the icon (sanam) or the theurgy (telesma), the place of the battle that each Light Espahbâd wagers for the victory of the Powers of Light from which it emanates. Cf. A. Christensen, L'Iran sous les Sassanides, 2nd edition, Copenhagen 1944, p. 104, note 4 and index (Avestic spâdâhapti; Pahlavi spâbåht, espâhbat; rendered in Arabic as isfâhâd). For the mythological-historical usage of the term spâhbat, cf. H. S. Nyberg, Questions I, pp. 198-199, the passage of Mêhôkê Xrât (Book of Celestial Wisdom), Chap. VIII: the twelve signs of the Zodiac as twelve generals or commanders (spâhbat) on the side of Ohrmazd, the seven planets as seven generals on the side of Ahriman.

55. Cf. above, note 30 on page 59. Besides this, on the identification of Mons victoriaxis and Kuh-e Khwâjeh (Mountain of the Lord), on the latter and his palace, his Temple of Fire, the figure of King Condophares, introduced into Christian hagiography by the Gnostic book of the Acts of Thomas, cf. F. Herzfeld, Archaeological History of Iran, London 1934, pp. 58 ff. Herzfeld thinks (p. 62) that it should not be "Victorious Mountain", but "the Mountain of the Victorious One" (i.e. of the Saoshyant). Meanwhile, the Latin text reads Montem ilium Victorisalem.

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two dimensions of *qaḥr* and *mahabbat* that reflect the varied lexicon that Suhrawardi uses: sovereignty of Light (*tasâllot nûrî*), epiphanic Domination (*qaḥr zuhûrî*), Divine fulgurations (*al-bâriq al-ilâhî*), etc. All such representations originate in the Light of Glory (*Xvarnah*) forming an epiphany of multiplicity of *Ishrâqât* (Orients of Light, Illuminations). Ever since the eternal dawn of being this is the relation that we find between the Light of Lights and the primordial Archangel, whom Suhrawardi calls by its Zoroastrian name in Persian, *Bahman* (Avestic *Vohu Manah*, Good Thought, Greek *Eunoia*).

This is why Suhrawardi has to exercise caution when he refers to "the sage Empedocles". The terms *qaḥr* and *mahabbat*, known by Neo-Empedocles from Islamic Gnostics, do not correspond to the "love" and "discord" of the classical Empedocles, something what we have already expressly alluded to. With Suhrawardi, *qaḥr* is essentially a domination, the yoke that the lover rests on the beloved, analyzed under so many aspects in the mystical poems of Persia. *Mahabbat* is the ardor ordaining and sub-ordaining the loved one to the lover, as what is caused is ordained to its cause, because it is the illumination of what elevates it to being by rising over it. He writes:

> Know that each cause, as it has the nature of light, feels at once love (*mahabbat*) towards what is caused and dominating superiority (*qaḥr*), while what is caused experiences a love for this cause and a feeling of dependence (*dhîlî*) is present. This is the reason that the structure of being presents itself as ordered in pairs, corresponding to the distribution of Light and Darkness and of Domination and Love. Superior rank is inherent in the power to dominate through a relationship with what is inferior. The feeling of dependence is inherent in the love of what is superior. Thus the Most High God said: "All things we have made in pairs, so you may give thought" (51:49).  

What does the universe, beginning with the physical world, look like to the *Shaykh al-Ishrâq*? It is an immense succession of abodes and echelons marking the stages in the degradation of the Light, until its final entombment in pure Darkness. Every ardor of Love, to every degree and in every form that it exists, is nothing but an aspiration of being to rise again and to return from this tragic loss, as it calls upon the force of the Light that precedes and dominates it. Thus from echelon to echelon the redemption of the Light operates through Love for what is in distress, a distress that is only compensated for by the "victorial" Force of the superior Light, calling to itself the one that is exiled from it.

Drawn in bold outline, the physics of the Oriental Theosophy presents us with the following: certain things are Light, brightness, splendor in their essential reality and other things are Darkness, obscurity and night. Light can be an accidental modality for something other than itself, something for which it is precisely, light. It can also be a subsisting substance by itself and for itself. That is what happens with the archangelic Lights of the various orders, like those of the Souls governing the bodies of the various categories. Similarly Darkness can be designated as the modality of Darkness that something possesses and it can also mean the bodily substance itself, as such inert and deprived of Light and Life. This is what Suhrawardi calls a *barzakh*, commoting the idea of something in between, a

56 Regarding the personage of Empedocles in Islam and other Islamic philosophers, cf. our *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* I, pp. 305-309.
57 *Hadîmat al-Ishrâq*, § 157, p. 148. Mullâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî, refers at length (Gloss 429) here to the doctrine of syzygies with Ibn 'Arabî (*Futûhat*, Chap. 332): "Know that there are three types of nuptial union: divine, spiritual and physical..."
58 For what follows, see *ibid.* all of Chap. III of Book I of the second part, § 109, pp. 107 ff. It is unfortunately impossible to state here the position of Mullâ Sadrâ's Glosses; these are of capital importance for the orientation of Iranian philosophy. We will return to this elsewhere.
59 The word *barzakh* means everything that can be a screen, a barrier, something that is "in between two
screen, an interval. According to the *Ishrâqîyûn*, the body is neither composed of atoms nor of matter and form like in the hylomorphosis of the Peripatetic philosophers. It is everything that forms a screen, everything that forms an obstacle to the Light and that at the same time can also be a receptacle for it and a place for its manifestation (*mazhar*). The "body" is therefore everything that remains as Darkness, inert and undifferentiated, when the Light is withdrawn from it.

Let us note that for Suhrawardi there is no "neutral state", neither Light nor Dark, and this is the difference between the physics of *Ishrâq* and that of the Peripatetics. For the latter it was not enough for the Light to draw back or to be absent from something for that particular thing to be called dark. It also had to have a virtuality, or a possibility of receiving the Light. E.g. Air (i.e. cosmic space) cannot be said to be dark. It is diaphanous; it allows light to pass through; it does not stop nor reflect it as a *barzakh* would. Light for it is simply impossible. On the other hand, the notion of Darkness professed by the *Ishrâqîyûn* goes beyond the notion of *barzakh* itself, since they affirm, contrary to the notion of the ancient sages, that Air (cosmic space) can be called Dark. This is because everything that is not Light itself or a receptacle of Light is Darkness (the case of *barzakh* when Light withdraws from it, and the case of Air that cannot be called itself a receptacle). All that can be said is that there are certain *barzakh* from which Light never withdraws (the sun or the stars), while there are others from which it does, temporarily or permanently. Therefore, *barzakh* cannot by themselves be the cause of something and they are only distinguished and differentiated by the Light that befalls them, as a stranger exiled among them. This Light does not take any of its existence from their dark substance, since nothing can give existence to something that is superior to it.

On closer scrutiny, one discovers nothing other than Light as either a more remote or a more proximate cause. E.g. movement and heat are two forms of manifestation (*mazhar*) of the Light. The Light is its cause and not the other way around. Movement and heat "prepare" the receptacle for the actualization of Light in it, a Light that corresponds to an aptitude grown in it and whose primary reason is only the Light itself, emanating from the "victorial Light" (*Nûr qâhir*). It is indeed Light that causes movement and heat to exist; by essence it is active and diffuses itself (*fâ'âl, fayyâz*). In order to illuminate, it is sufficient for the Light to be, there is no need for another agent to intervene. Consequently, all modalities of *barzakh*, i.e. all aspects and figures appearing in bodies, are all caused by the Light. The source that dispenses it (*Dator Luminum*) cannot be a *barzakh* but must be something extrinsic to all dark substances and modalities.

Certainly a difficulty would have occurred if Suhrawardi had not taken care to separate himself from the "dualist Magi" and if the sages of ancient Persia, whose theosophy he intended to resurrect, were not so close to the "Chaldean" theurgists assimilated by the Neoplatonists (above, chapter 1, §2 and chapter 2, §1 and §2). Since *barzakh*, essentially Darkness, subsists when the Light that is a stranger to it has withdrawn from it, this dark substance is neither simple non-being nor simple privation. Then what is it? What is its origin? Suhrawardi cannot answer this the way the dualists would, whose radical dualism he has expressly rejected as an impiety. He writes: "It appertains to the perfect Light to be the cause of the imperfect Light". The following is apparent to us: from degradation to degradation, by the very fact of its propagation and diffusion, the Light declines until its total decline in the Occident. The material body, the *barzakh*, is an extinguished Light, dead, that will temporarily be animated by a Light that is exiled there, because in the...
government of this body it finds the means for its own redemption, a springboard for its "hieratic ascension" and its apotheoses. This concerns something that previously also was a Light but that brought about its own downfall, a decline, through denial and an inordinate attachment. This presupposes that there must have been a most profound and radical catastrophe that resulted in the degradation of the Light and in its pure negativity, if there are Light-Souls that are snatched away from their exile. This event Ismailian dramaturgy has admirably presented as a catastrophe, as something that occurred at the level of the Pleroma of Light (above, chapter 2, § 2) and whose course is here and now decided since the "spiritual Adam" has extracted his Iblis-Ahriman from himself. Everything occurs here as a metaphysical process. Suhrawardî alludes to this implicit dramaturgy that occurred in the pre-existence of the soul in certain of his mystical recitals (see below, chapter 4 and 5).

It remains true that it is not possible to base any causal explanation on a dark, inert and lifeless substance, to render an account of what something is the durable or ephemeral form or manifestation of. Here are two examples, among others. If the oil in a lamp rises towards the flame, then nothing is explained by citing some physical law, that this is caused by horror vacui or some active property of fire. In similar fashion, declares the Shaykh al-Ishrâq, the sages of ancient Persia found it a strange opinion that the marvelous colors in the plumage of the peacock were simply the result of a certain complexion in the body of the bird, of some mixture or composition of its plumage, without a determined personally active intention. No indeed, in this case as in others, the intelligent economy is revealed, the work of the Angel, the "Lord of the species". In the first case it is the Guardian Angel of the cone of the flame, the same one that the Persians call Ordibehest (Arta Vahishta of the Avesta). The corporeal species is like a shadow, a projection, an icon (sanam) of its Angel, a theurgy (tilism, Greek telesma) operated by it in the barzakh, that by itself is dead and absolute night. "The ancient Persians," says Suhrawardî, "were super experts and assiduous in questions regarding angelology (fi arbâb al-anwâ). This way they honored with a special cult the Angel they called Hûmâ Izad, i.e., the Angel of the haoma, the plant that plays such an important part in their liturgical institutions." Similarly, the six Zoroastrian Archangels (the Amhraspands, the "Holy Immortal Ones"), who form the Divine Heptad of Light and Wisdom with Ohrmazd, their Prince and Principle, are successively named during Suhrawardî's work. Qutbuddî Shirâzî and Sharazûrî, the commentators, each time emphasize these names and furnish their appropriate attributes; the respective relationships of the group of the three "masculine" Archangels and of the three "feminine" Archangels with their theurgies are carefully indicated. We are told again that the sage Zoaraster was initiated by each of the Divine Heptad into the high sciences. They precede one another "like a lamp illuminates another lamp, without the brightness of the first one being diminished at all".

We have already seen that the Light who is the first to proceed from the Light of Lights is the sublime Light that the ancient Persians call Bahman, identified with the Ismailian

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61 Regarding this dramaturgy, cf. our Trilogie ismaélienne, index s.v. "drame dans le ciel". Mullâ Sadrâ, in a long gloss that we cannot go into here (Gloss 354, on § 126, p. 120), develops the idea of an incapacity, an impotence or deficiency, inherent in the acts of being, of existence, in the order of the "descent" (nuzûl); the Darkness originates from this incapacity as negativity of the Light. Inherency per accidens, not essentially. Secondary matter, material corporeity, both are struck with an inherent weakness in their act of existence, which are their very opacity. However, according to Mullâ Sadrâ, one cannot escape the dualism (thanawîya) which poses the necessary and demonic existence of Ahriman, except on condition of professing a metaphysics of existence that grants primacy to esse, to existence over quiddity. One cannot speak of the degradation of the act of existence; if one speaks of a degradation of essences, then ultimately a dark quiddity postulates a dark principle. This is the great problem at the heart of Mullâ Sadrâ's philosophy, for which we refer to our translation of his Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques (B.I, 10).


63 Sarcomennna acidum (tr).


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as well as the Avicennan First Intelligence of the Pleroma. From this sublime Light proceeds Ondibhesht, Angel of Fire. Next comes Shahrīvar (Xshathna Vairyra of the Avesta, "Desirable Reign"), Angel of the sun and of metals (cf. also, below, § 5, on the sun as theurgy of the Angel). Next, we have Isfandārmuz (Spenta-Armaiti of the Avesta), the archangelic Light (Nār qāhir) whose theurgy is the earth, and whom the Mazdean texts greet as "Ohrmazd's daughter". The function of "mistress of the house" (kadbâ-nâ'îya) under which Suhrawardi knows her, expresses these attributes exactly. We have attempted to show elsewhere the importance of this figure in the spirituality of ancient Iran, as well as that of Islamic Persia, even under different names. In her person the transfiguration of the earth takes place. Finally there are the two Archangels already mentioned: Khurštâd (Avestic Haurvatât), the Angel of water, and Murdād (Avestic Amertât, "immortality"), the Angel of plants. Our Shaykh al-Ishrâq knows that these Light-Beings are also the ones that Hermes, Agathodaimon and Plato claimed to have contemplated. This is why he said that none of them supported their affirmations with rational proofs; they claimed a personal direct vision and gave witness to that. If this is what they did, so says our Shaykh, then we ought not to differ with them about this. His position, which we already know, does not vary regarding this: when it concerns astronomy the Peripatetic philosophers have confidence in the observations of a Poemeny as well as those of the astronomers of Chaldea. Well! Exactly the same sages of Chaldea, as well as those of Greece, claimed a personal vision of things in the spiritual world. Why have confidence in their observations when these concern the physical world and challenge their experience regarding the spiritual world? What is true in one case, must also be true in the other.

We have here a vision of the world that gathers together the entire celestial universe known to the sages of ancient Iran and is also the meeting point of all mystical theosophers that Suhrawardi alludes to. We are not speaking here of "syncretism", a word too easily used and abused to discredit a doctrine or to dispense with more analysis of it. Some find it convenient to speak of this when other opinions don't agree with or match their own. Be very reserved in the use of this word, consider the object of these opinions such as it presents itself to those who profess it. Suhrawardi does not proceed towards an harmonious synthesis of philosophical opinions that have affinities with one another. He bases his philosophy on objective fact, on the concordance of witnesses of this object. The spiritual world that the direct vision of theosophers of diverse branches gives witness to is quite the same world. That is what matters to him and what matters to us. It is no "syncretism" to reunite a collection of testimonials. Only, it does imply that one "believes" in this spiritual world. Keeping this condition in mind, we can ascertain that what occurs here is indeed the conjunction of Zoroastrian angelology and the "magianism" of the Chaldean sages, the ones from the Oracles, commented on by the Neoplatonists. This is the sense that we have previously attempted to extract from the Suhrawardian initiative. This research will therefore have to emphasize the metamorphosis already undergone by the Platonic Ideas in Chaldeo-Neoplatonic theosophy. This is a considerable task. In the encounter between

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65Ibid., § 138, p. 128 (Bahman); also § 159 p. 149 (Sharivar; Hürakhsh, theurgy of the latter); § 157, p. 157 (Khordâd and Mordâd); § 209, p. 199 (Isfandârmuz as kadbânt). 
66Ibid., § 209. The word kadkhudâ (Master of the House, feminine kadbânt) only doubles the word ratu in order, in Zoroastrianism, to designate the function of celestial protector, tutelar angel (cf. H. S. Nyberg, Die Religionen des alten Irans, p. 145). In Suhrawardi, it only designates the notion of Lord or "Angel of the Species" (râb al-nâ', sâhib al-sanam) in a purely Iranian form. On the other hand, the word is currently in use in astrology (it is the literal equivalent of the Greek oikodespotes). Through the activity of transcribing, it has undergone a profound change passing into Latin, where it is found again, with T. Campenella, under the strange vocabulary of Colocodea. Cf. Prolégômenes II, p. 40 (referring to the valuable discovery by Nallino), notes 100 and 101, and p. 34, note 75.

67On the passage of Isfandârmuz, the Kadbânû of the Earth, to Fâtima as type of the Celestial Earth, see our book, Celestial Earth... pp. 55-56. 
68Mutârahât, § 190, in fine, p. 460. 
the Chaldean theurgists and the metaphysics of the middle Platonists and Neoplatonists the great solution that Suhrawardi puts into place in all of its abundance is already found very enticing, even as he brings his personal experience to bear on it. This solution identifies the Platonic Ideas, the archetypes of Light (mithal Iflātānīya nārīya) with the Archangels and the archangelic entities of Zoroastrianism. This identification is the major spiritual fact of his Oriental Theosophy. The phenomenologist can only proceed from this fact onwards and understand it while extracting the intentions and the object that these are aiming at. Nevertheless, if one proceeds dialectically along these abstract concepts the difficulties will not end. Already in the 8th/14th century there was a scholar who, unfortunately remaining anonymous, explained in a learned dissertation that Suhrawardi’s position does not entirely match the problem posed by Plato.70

Suhrawardi’s angelology reflects the same vision as that of the Neoplatonist commentators of the Chaldean sages. The Khusrawāntīyūn sages whose witness he invokes are indeed in that respect the "Persian Neoplatonists". We have already an indication of this in the name given to the Angel-Archetypes. Each one of them is an Angel. A Lord of the Species (Rabb al-n-n’), the image or icon (sanam) of the theurgy (tilism) that constitutes the corporeal species of which it is the Angel, because it is its theurgic action. The notion of archetype is no longer quite the same as the one for which the classical Plato formulated the problem. On the other hand, this notion orientates all the piety and the spiritual life of the Ishrāqīyūn. The angelological interpretation of the Platonic Ideas, in short the ta’wîl (hermeneutics) of the theory of Ideas, is what Suhrawardi considers the most precious part of the theosophy of the ancient Persians. All of his decisions in physics, psychology, cosmology and metaphysics are taken with its safeguard in mind. However, the problem is to know what sort of ontological "participation" (methexis) occurs between the celestial hypostasis who is the Angel of the Species and the individuals composing the material or terrestrial existence of this species; in short, what ontological reason forms their right to a community in the "sacred name" itself?71

Suhrawardi recapitulates his own position in three theses: 1) The affirmation that the Angel is an hypostasis, a spiritual entity existing in itself and for itself. 2) There can be no question of an immanence, inducing the Angel and the species to be mixed into some sort of a collective. Since the Angel of the species is an Intelligence of the world of Light, how can that Intelligence exist at the same time individualized in itself and also immanent in its species and the multiple individuals? 3) Finally, there can be no admission that, e.g., the Angel of mankind exists because of and in view of what is below it. (The same is true for the Pole, the Imâm in according to Shi‘ite understanding. We know that his quality as Imâm in no way depends on the knowledge, or lack thereof, in human beings. This comparison makes no less a thinker than Qâzî Sa‘îd Qummî look on the Imâm in terms of Ishrâqi angelology and make him the "Lord of the species" of his faithful). If the notion of archetype is limited to signify a model that has for its unique reason for existence the existence of what is below it, then the Angel-Archetype cannot be said to be the "Lord of the Species". Suhrawardi knows that the ancient Sages never committed such an aberration.72

70Cf. above, page 39, note 30. This is the anonymous treatise referred to by our Prolegomenes l, p. 50, note 79 and is entitled: Risâla fī-mithul al-‘aštîya al-a‘fâtunîya wa h-mo ‘alaqa al-khaydîya (Treatise on the Platonic Archetypes, having the Nature of the Intelligible, and Images in suspense having the Nature of the Imaginal). The treatise has since then been edited by ’Abdurrahman Badawi, under the title of Ideae Platonicae, Cairo 1947. The title immediately draws the distinction between the Idea as archetype, on the level of intellectual intuition and Intelligence (the world of Jabârî), and the Idea on the level of imaginative perception and the world of the Soul (the world of Malakâtû). "In suspense" means that these Ideas-Images are not immanent in matter, like the color brown is in a piece of wood, for example. Suhrawardi never confused the two; however, his interpretation of the Platonic Ideas proceeds from another tradition than that of the falâsifa.

71Cf. Prolegomenes l, pp. 50-51.

72 Ḥikmat al-Ishrâq, § 367, pp. 158-159.
For each species, e.g., among the plants, there must be a spiritual being separated from matter and endowed with knowledge and consciousness who is the protector of that species, a tutelary Angel taking care of it. It is this being, declares Suhrawardi, that the ancient Sages of Persia called the Angel, or Lord of the species (Rabb al-nû'). Understandably, this affirmation concerns everything that is a substantial species, not accidental or partial things. All events in the life of plants, like all those that happen to man unknown to his thinking soul, are governed by the respective Angel of the species. This Angel must not be confused with the soul itself. The soul forms a unique individual with the body. The higher a species is elevated in the hierarchy of being, the more intermediaries there are between it and its Angel: e.g., for the human being there are the thinking soul and the subtle organs that constitute the three categories of pneuma. Suffering and mutilation of the body can affect the soul that animates it, but not the Angel. Neither the Angel of plants, nor the Angel of fire, nor the other Angel-Lords are affected by violence inflicted on the species they govern. Their compassion for their respective species is not a passion but an action, as behooves an active Intelligence. Everything that is going to happen to a species, in the sense of its coming into being and its perpetuation in being, proceeds from the action of this Intelligence, i.e. from the acts of its intellection and contemplation through which this species is emanated. Since it is thus the contemplative action of this Intelligence of the Angel of the Species, this species is called the theurgy of the Angel.

It follows that, as archetype, the Angel of the Species appears as a person-archetype. Meanwhile, if its intellectual and contemplative activity causes the emanation of a corporeal species, it never has a need for this species. Such a need only occurs for the souls that must pass through the pedagogy of sensible knowledge in order to attain their perfection, i.e., terrestrial existence. However, the law of the descending hierarchy of being is rigorous and constant. A higher degree cannot find its perfection in a lower degree, but inversely every degree has its perfect state in the principle from whom it emanates and who is its primary cause. The species that it governs is not the Angel's finality; it is the Angel who is the finality of what it governs, because it is "personally" its perfect state. In this sense it is its archetype. The luminescence of the species is not something that is added to the Angel's essence, to its own ipseity, something that it will acquire below. Certainly, other Lights are perpetually added in an eternal epiphany over and above its own Light, because of the epiphany from on high to below. Human souls too are separated Lights and receptacles of the hieratic Lights in their respective quiddity; sensible perception can only prepare them to receive the latter. The theosophists of ancient Persia know that for lack of this, the "exotericists" remain chained to their books and never raise themselves towards a personally effective vision.

What do the "oriental" theosophers, the Khusravâniyûn, mean when they speak of the Angel of the Species as the universal of that species? This can never be concerned with the universal that corresponds to the concept of that species such as logic treats it, i.e. as that species is represented in its generality, implying eo ipso the participation of a multitude in what immanates the contents of this concept. The status of that generic concept is precisely a negative condition (bi-sharti lâ), namely the exclusion of all determination will prevent all individuals of the same genus to participate in that concept. However, the Oriental Theosophy makes the Angels of each Species hypostases of Light, existing for and by themselves, each being an individuated ipseity in which no others participate. Thus when we understand the concept of a species, this in no way means that we eo ipso know the Angel of that Species. Then what kind of participation is there between the Angel and its species? It is understood that this participation is based on the fact that, if the Angel is an hypostasis, a spiritual ipseity, then it is from its thought, its contemplative activity, that the material species proceeds like a theurgy. All relationships and natural proportions that

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74 Ibid., § 194, p. 466.
are noted in a corporeal species are the shadow, the image or the icon (sanam), of spiritual relationships and modalities of Light that exist in the modality, the ipseity, the "person" of the Angel and its noetic activity. Since the material individual is ephemeral, it is the species as a whole that keeps this Image in an ongoing manner. The Angel is thus universal (a metaphysical universal) in the sense that it is the "mother of the species" (Umm al-nû') and that, as such, its relationship with all and with each one is equal, because it is the "Lord of the Species" (Rabb al-nû') who dispenses perfections and guides the species by guiding its infinite individuals. Only conditioned by the being that it is in itself and that it has from its Principle, the Angel is neither conditioned by its generality of the concept of the species, nor by certain determinations of the ephemeral concrete rather than by others. This is why the Angel of Humanity appears each time to each human being by individualizing itself as that one's own Perfect Nature, its own tutelar Angel. If the Angel of the Species is therefore called the Universal of that species and if the name of the species is common to both the Angel and the species then this is because of a relationship analogous to one between the form present in a mirror and the person facing it. We again discover the fundamental notions of Islamic Gnosis (as we found them in Shi'ite Imamology) of mazhar and mazharîya: the form of manifestation (that of the mirror) and epiphanic function of that form. Similarly the Angel is the Universal of the species for whom it is the Lord, in the sense that its care extends equally to the whole species and to each member. Aside from this, in its metaphysical individuality of absolute person-archetype, i.e., acquitted from every other condition, other than its ipseity of Light derived from its Principle, it presents to the whole species its finality, i.e., its perfect, completed, accomplished state and does so to each individual of the species. The Angel of the Species is the being in whom everything that claims its being is in act, the being in whom the perpetually revived desire is perpetually satisfied by the presence of what is desired.75

That is where the qualification of accomplished, complete, perfect (tamm), comes from. It is of hermetic origin and was given to the "Perfect Nature" who appeared to Hermes in a vision and to whom Suhrawardi dedicated one of the psalms of his "Book of Hours" (compare this with the name of the Perfect Man, Insân Kâmîl, Greek anthrôpos teleios). This is how the insistence must be understood with which Suhrawardi rejects the opinion that the Light-Archetypes have as primary reason to serve simply as models in the creation of the species and of individuals. It subordinates them to the inferior existences that they govern and that are their image and theurgy. Inversely, the latter are they who know that they are the image and the typification of their Angel, to the degree that they strain to rejoin their "perfect state", because they owe their existence to the being-archetype of the superior Light and because they receive the dignity and the finality of their being from it. In short, the relationship between the species and its Angel who is its Perfect Nature is better understood by going back to the words of the psalm that Suhrawardi dedicates to her (translated (fr) below in Ÿ 5) or by referring to the "Prayer of the Heliotrope", as Proclus wrote it in such a beautiful poem.76

This is why Suhrawardi’s intentions are perhaps not exactly the same as Plato’s when the Lights are called "Ideas of Platonic Archetypes of Light" (muthul aflâtâniya nûriya), species in a state of Light (anwâ nûriya) each having the character of an angelic hypostasis, but at least they are in perfect agreement with those of the Neoplatonists. They also bring us closer to the Avestic and Zoroastrian notion of râtu, something that means the tutelar Angels of celestial and terrestrial beings. We also noted above that Suhrawardi gave to Isfandâmuz, the Angel of the Earth, the specific Avestic qualification of kadbâ-nû'îya, "mistress of the house".77 There is still more. As will soon be shown, the Angel of Humanity is none other

75Ibid. and Hikmat al-Ishrâq, § 166, pp. 156-158, including the passages of the commentators.
77Cf. above, note 66 on page 72.
than Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, the "Active Intellect" of the philosophers. In the individuation of her relationship with a specific human being this Angel appears to the latter as being its "Perfect Nature". Now, as we pointed out above, a great Shi‘ite theosopher of the 17th century, Qâzî Sa‘îd Qummî, in his commentary on a famous sermon of the first Imâm, homologates the relationship of the Imâm with each believing faithful to the relationship of the Holy Spirit, Lord of the Human Species, with the soul of each adept as its "Perfect Nature". Philosophical ishrâqî piety and Shi‘ite Imâmic piety have thus a fundamental trait in common in the spirituality of Iranian Islam. We discover the roots of this in certain representations of Gnosis. We find it in the multiplication of theophanic relationships. It is a mystical piety that never aspires to emptiness and the informal, but to an interpersonal, unifying relationship and is at the same time concerned with safeguarding the **tauhid**, the transcendence of the Oneness of the One.

The Hierarchy of the Archangelic Lights

This perspective, briefly summarized here, allows us to understand Suhrawardî’s angelological plan and to situate its breaking point with the Peripatetic and Avicennan ones, a rupture that was pointed out by Suhrawardi himself in the Recital of the vision of the Light of Glory (above, page 64). In Avicenna, the procession of the multiple begins with the First of the Cherubinic Intelligences (Karûbîyûn) and a triple intellective "dimension" that constitutes its being. These are: the intellection of its Principle, the Intellection of its own being as necessary by its Principle, and the intellection of its own being as virtual non-being if considered apart from its Principle. These three acts of contemplation form respectively, an hypostasis of a Second Intelligence, a First Angel Soul who is the moving Soul of the first celestial orbit, and the First Heaven itself. Indeed, Avicenna seems to have long hesitated on the angelological structure that he saw fit to deduce a posteriori from astronomical data: when one adopted Aristotle's celestial physics or Ptolemy’s theory, was it also necessary to admit ten Intelligences and no more? Or did there have to be, as Aristotle claimed, a few more than fifty, according to the number of secondary orbits necessary to explain the irregularities of the planets?

His vision of the "sources of the Light of Glory" convinced our Shaykh of the insufficiency of this scheme. From then on, instead of restricting himself only to our solar system in deducing a system of orbits connected with each other (either Aristotle’s homocentric spheres, or Ptolemy’s epicycles and eccentrics), his vision of the world applies itself above all to the contemplation of the "Heaven of Fixed Stars". Its explanation has more than once caused trouble for celestial physics. His meditation says that it is truly fitting to scrutinize the mystery of the multiplication of being in the heart of those wonders, when focused on the quasi infinity of sidereal individuations that this eighth heaven is composed of (i.e., all universes exterior to our solar system). Earlier philosophers never thought of exploiting the theory of the acts of contemplation and love of the Intelligences in order to explain the apparition of these Imnumerable Ones. The two intellective "dimensions" of the necessary and the possible, which the Peripatetics recognized in each Intelligence; were by

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78In Avicenna, the procession of the Multiple from the One begins with the three acts of contemplation of the First Intelligence, a triad, or a triple "dimension", that constitutes the being of each of the Intelligences that Avicenna calls Karûbîyûn (Cherubim). See our book, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, Index under Cherubs, Intelligence(s), and *Protéoménes II*, pp. 43 ff. On the other hand, it should be noted that the term Karûbîyûn designates the 18th degree of esoteric Ismailian hierarchy, according to Jâbir ibn Hayyân, cf. P. Kraus, *Les Dignitair es de la hiér ar chie selon Jâbir ibn Hayyân* ([Bul letin Ist. fr. d'ar ch. orient. XVI, 2, 1942, pp. 84-85]).

79Nasîruddîn Tûsî, in his commentary on the *Ishâr ât* of Avicenna, observed a prudent reservation on this point, even though it proposed a scheme that was inspired by *Ishâr ât*, what did not elude Mullâ Sadrâ’s vigilance, cf. *Sharh al-Ishâr ât*, lithograph, Teheran 1305, III, pp. 66-67.

80See the entire chapter VIII of Book II of the second part of *Hikmat al-Ishâr ât*, §§ 150-157, pp. 138-148.
themselves derisively insufficient. Suhrawardi expresses the presentiment that even beyond the "Heaven of Fixed Stars" other even more marvelous universes abound. The angelology that his intuition a priori seized the necessity of was measured by the same breath-taking dimensions as calculated by modern astronomy. The very opposite has happened since the "astronomical revolution" in the Occident, that eliminated angelology all together.\footnote{Ibid., § 158, p. 149.} 

This Suhrawardian angelology consists of three phases:

1) From the eternal genesis of the first-born Light of the Light of Lights, whom he identifies with Bahman, the first of the Zoroastrian Archangels proceeding from Ohrmazd, Suhrawardi renounces the two or three intellecitive "dimensions" that constituted the angelology of the Peripatetic philosophers. It consisted of three acts of contemplation that are repeated from Intelligence to Intelligence following one another. He substitutes for them a plurality of "dimensions" that puts into operation all of his "Oriental Theosophy". There are "dimensions" whose names, qahr and mahabbat, domination and love, are derived from the same concept as the Light of Glory and there are "dimensions" of independence and indigence. There are also truly "oriental" dimensions of contemplation and illumination. Contemplation "rises towards" a superior Light and illumination "rises upon" an inferior Light. There are also the "dimensions" of irradiation and reflection, etc. Through these multidimensional relationships the multiplication of the hypostases of Light rapidly attains the innumerable. As exemplified by the laws of optics on the suprasensible level, these "dimensions" enter into a composition with one another; their participation in one another and the proportions of these participations themselves all offer a limitless complexity. Every time each Light, whose individuation results from those irradiations and multiple reflections, receives them from every Light that precedes it and communicates them to every Light that follows it, at once directly and through every one’s mediation. The complexity and increase in rhythm defies the effort of the imagination exhausting itself attempting to follow and evaluate it. Thus the universe of the "Primordial archangelic Lights" eternally proceeds, causing and following one another, forming a descending hierarchy that Suhrawardi calls the Longitudinal Order (tabaqat al-Tûl). This is the universe of archangels whom he designates as sovereign lights, Supreme Springs (al-Usûl al-A'lâûn), as the "world of Mothers" (al-Umma-hât).\footnote{Ibid., § 183, p. 179. One cannot help but think here of the world of "Mothers" in Goethe's Faust. However, this "World of Mothers", a characteristic of Suhrawardian angelology, must not be confused with the "mothers" (umma-hât), which in physics signify the Elements, and who in opposition with the "fathers", the celestial orbits, produce the sublunar births through their conjunction.}

2) The hierarchy of the archangelic world of "Mothers" results in a dual succession within the Pleroma of Lights, because of the two categories of "dimensions" that make up their being: the one can be called positive, while the other indicates a need, i.e., the measure of indigence inherent in each Light who gathers its being not from itself in its own right, but from its Principle. On the level of the "dimensions" of the first category (domination, independence, illumination and active contemplation) there is a second order of archangels or "victorial" Lights. These are no longer causes of one another nor subordinated to one another, but correspond to and are on a par with one another. These are the Lights that form the latitudinal Order (tabaqat al-'Ard). They are the "archetypical" Archangels, the "Lords of the species" (either the masculine arbâb al-anwâ, or the feminine rabbât al-anwâ). They are the Angels of all those theurgies that form the species of the sensible or the imaginal world. We have previously stressed their ontological status; they are in no way reified or substantialized concepts, but angelic hypostases. They exist for and by themselves and their universality consists in the effusion of all their Light on the beings that compose the species opened to their contemplation. It also consists of the providence that they exercise regarding all those beings.

The "Heaven of Fixed Stars" is common as form of manifestation to the second category.
of intelligible "dimensions" of the "World of Mothers". They denote an indigence (love and aspiration towards their superior Light, dependence on the latter, illumination received from it, etc.) among the primordial Archangels. The innumerable sidereal manifestations and the constellations are as many emanations of this Heaven that materialize into celestial matter. It is a still entirely subtle materia prima, part of non-being that hides their being, because their being is fictitiously considered as separate from the Light of Lights that eternally establishes their need-to-be. With the followers of Avicenna the movement of the Heaven of Fixed Stars proceeds from the desire of the Soul, the unique mover of this Heaven, towards the unique Intelligence from which it emanates; the subtle matter of this Heaven marks the interval between the desire of this Soul and the object of its desire. In Suhrawardi the innumerable marvels of the Heaven of Fixed Stars postulate the multiplication of Intelligences and Souls.

3) From the second order of Archangels, the latitudinal Order, Lords of the celestial Species of the sidereal universe or of the elementary species of the sublunar world, emanates a new Order of luminaries through whose mediation the Archangel-archetypes govern these species. While the Lights of the first two categories are called "Victorial" (Anwâr qâhirâ) those of the latter category are called "Regent Lights" (Anwâr mudabbîrâ). These are the Angel-Souls. More significant still, as we indicated above, the Shaykh al-Ishrâq gives to the Lights of this hierarchy an ancient Iranian title of command and chivalry, namely that of Espahbâd-Lights. This name reminds one of the higoumenon or hegemonikon of the Stoics, but the context noted here is still more typical. We are now directly involved with the heroic epic of Iranian chivalry and also in the battle waged from the beginning of the world, described in the first chapter of Bundahishn, the Mazdean Book of Genesis.

The Espahbâd-Lights are the thinking and directing souls (cf. the Greek exêgetês, the one who guides, interprets, the hermenenêtes); they are also the Lights who, in moving the celestial bodies, govern the species in which they are immanent, as mediators of the Archangel-Archetype, for whom this species is the icon, or the theology. The species is at once the instrument and the place of the "battle" that each Espahbâd-Light wages for the triumph of the powers of Light, from which it itself emanates. The Espahbâd-Light thus assumes in Suhrawardi the role of the Fravartis (furûhar), "choosing" to descend into the material world to fight against Darkness. When the outcome of the battle "for the Angel" proclaims itself as the "rising" of the Espahbâd-Light, emerging triumphantly from its "Occident" and rising again to its "Orient", then the passage from heroic epic to mystical epic has taken place. We will see (chapter 4, §3 ff. and chapter 5) that this passage is perhaps the most profound usage of ta'wil, of spiritual hermeneutics, reintegrating the world of Light of ancient Persia into Islamic Gnosis, the very meaning of Suhrawardi's work.

Such is Suhrawardi's angelology, sketched in bold outline. There are, in summary, three great orders of Lights, the "victorial" or Dominating Lights (Anwar qâhirâ, al-Qawâhir) subdividing itself into two orders. 1) The "longitudinal" Order of Archangels, forming the world of "Mothers". They are transcendent Lights without direct relationship with the world manifested to sensible perception. 2) The "latitudinal" Order of Theurgist-Archangels. These are Person-Archetypes or Lords of species of whom they are the image, the icon, or the theology. One will have the impression that the ontological status of these two hierarchies is similar to that of the Di-Angeli, Angel-Gods of Neoplatonism, mediators of the hidden God, and distinctly different from those of the Bible and the Koran. This is an impression quite foreign to the sentiments of the Ishraqîyyûn philosophers.

83 On the word Espahbâd, see above, note 53 on page 68.
84 This is why, perhaps, Suhrawardi never accepted the thesis of Avicennan angelology, defining each Angel as an individuality constituting a species in itself. That was also the angelology of St. Thomas Aquinas and it inspired Leibnitz. What for Suhrawardi determined each angelic entity, was never the fact that it individually constituted a species in the Peripatetic meaning of the word, but the degree of the intensity of its luminescence. The notion of intensity is indeed introduced as far down as the category of substance.

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Angel-Souls, Celestial Souls, who are the movers of the planetary orbits and human souls, the Espâhbad-Lights.

A few remarks are in order. In the first place, the unique order of supreme Intelligences, or "Cherubim", as Avicennism knew them, turned out to be divided into two; more precisely, it grew into a dual hierarchy whose names and functions (on the one hand the "world of Mothers" and on the other the "Lords of the species" or archetypes) had not been foreseen in Avicennism. Secondly, it no longer is the lunar orbit that delineates the boundary between the celestial world and the material one, as in Peripateticism, but it is already the Heaven of Fixed Stars which forms the border between the angelic universe of Light (Rûhâbâd) and the world of barzakh. Barzakh is the limit, the frontier between the Occident and the Orient of being; the Celestial Spheres, even though their matter is very subtle, are already in the Occident. All this the Avicennian Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân is aware of. A third note concerns the change that occurs to Zoroastrian angelology. Suhrawardi names all the Amahraspands by their Persian names; the role they had in Zoroastrian theology they equally assume in Suhrawardian theology. So when Suhrawardi identifies the Archangel Bahman with the First Intelligence, proceeding from the Light of Lights, the other Amahraspands will have to follow immediately in the "World of Mothers". However, the "longitudinal Order", the hierarchy of the "World of Mothers", is interpolated between the Archangel Bahman and the "latitudinal Order" of archetypes, where Suhrawardi places the names of the other Zoroastrian archangels. Thus it looks like a division of the Zoroastrian heptad (or hexad). Without a doubt such an amplification was necessary for the hierarchies corresponding to the Diî-Angeli of the Neoplatonists to fit in. What really happens is the following: between the archangels who are the supreme principles, or the "World of Mothers", and the ones who are the "archetypes", designated by the same names as the Zoroastrian archangels, there is a relationship of imitation and typification, analogous to the one that exists between a species and its Angel. Indeed, the latter results from coalescences and exchanges of Light whose proportions multiply themselves among the supreme archangels. Ought we to speak here of archetypes of archetypes? The question remains open in one way or another, especially since its meaning agrees with the Mazdean view of the Fravartis as celestial arch typical entities of all the beings of Light. Even the Amahraspands and Ohrmazd himself, as well as the multitude of Yazdân (the Diî-Angeli), have their Fravarti. The road is open to meditation to explore this.

Lastly, the "latitudinal Order" of Lights who are the Angels of the species includes the one who is really the Lord of the human race, the Angel of Humanity (Sâhib tilûm al-Nu’al-nû’ al-nâ’al-insânî) This is also the Angel who is at the same time the Angel of knowledge and the Angel of revelation, the Angel Gabriel identified with the Holy Spirit in the Koranic tradition and with the "Active Intellect" of the philosophical tradition. This figure occupies no rank in the group of Amahraspands, but it shows certain characteristics in common with the Angel Sraosha (Persian Sorûsh) of the Avesta. In any case, from the fact that this Angel forms an integral part of the pleroma of archangelic arch typical Lights, the junction between Biblical-Koranic angelology and "Neoplatonic Zoroastrian" angelology of the Oriental Theosophy is formed. The mystagogical function of this angel is of capital importance in the written work as well as in the living piety of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq. We have already mentioned above that the way in which this piety addresses her as "Perfect Nature", reveals at least the manner in which Suhrawardi conceived of the relationship of One soul can be "more soul" or "more intensely a soul" than another (Mutârahat, § 66, referring to Plato). The degree of this intensity finally constitutes also as rigorous an individualisation as professed by Avicennism or Thomism; besides that, the road stays open to an ascension of degree of intensity. We cannot continue further here on this comparative angelology. Cf. also Protéogémones II, pp. 46 ff.

85 Cf. Celestial Earth..., p. 6 and p. 273 n. 15.
86 Hikmat al-Ishrâq, § 210, p. 200. This is the celestial Anthropos, the spiritual Adam of several Gnoeses, the Angel of Humanity of the Book of the Assumption of Moses.
87 Cf. above, note 49 on page 48.

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this Angel of the Species with each of the individuals that compose it. This must also be
said of the other personal liturgies that make up his "Book of Hours". An explanation of
his angelology would be incomplete if this were not pointed out; its inspiration conforms
with the "Chaldean" inspiration of the hymns of Proclus, the Neoplatonist.

Psalms to the Archangel of the Sun and to the Perfect
Nature

We have already noted this group of very original compositions which form something like
a "Book of Hours". The manuscripts are very rare and the texts themselves difficult. Nevertheless, Mullâ Sadrâ Shirâzî, the great master of ishrâqî philosophy in the 17th cen-
tury, knew them very well; he gives long citations of them in his Glosses on the Oriental
Theosophy, attesting to the persistence of this liturgical format across the centuries, which
vibrates with the "hieratic" piety of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq. Part of this "Book of Hours"
is a series of eschatological sermons. Their eschatology must be understood in a personal
sense, from the moment that the soul of the adept definitely wakes up to the world of Light
and "rises to its Orient", thus occulting itself to this present world which is its "Occident".
Secondly, this "Book of Hours" consists of a group of doxologies in honor of the Angels of
the seven Planets. Sadrâ Shirâzî analyzes them in terms that we understand perfectly well:

For each of the seven days of the week the Shaykh al-Ishrâq has a special doxology
by which he celebrates and invokes one of the Seven [Angels]. Each liturgy consists
of a doxology that is followed by a prayer, they complement one another so well that
nothing can be added.9

This "Book of Hours" leads us back to Suhrawardi's basic conception: perfect mystical
theosophy, the hakîm muta'allîh, cannot isolate its philosophical knowledge from its spiritual
experience. The Shaykh al-Ishrâq's "Book of Hours" represents precisely the final result that
Neoplatonist metaphysics reached in the theurgic or "hieratic" piety of the Chaldean Oracles
and the Orphic hymns that they commented upon and that in turn inspired them (above,
chapter 2, §§ 1, ff.). These are so faithful and precise yet descriptions of the mystical
experience of the sacred are still only descriptions. To show them in the act, where they are
transmuted into an event, two directions are possible. First, recitals of mystical symbols in
the first person; Suhrawardi wrote a number of these (below, chapter 5 and 6). Secondly,
prayers, especially the ones called munâjât, the "confidential psalm", where the psalmist
speaks in the "second person". It is only at this instant that all philosophical knowledge
is changed over into a divine work, a theurgy, implying a personal spiritual realization.
When it happens to a scholar, as happened to Suhrawardi, that he creates both his own
symbols and also formulates the Prayer that is truly his very own because he is the only
one that can formulate it (the "Prayer that his own Perfect Nature teaches him", as it
is called in hermetical style), then without a doubt he can teach us more about himself
and about the "objective" reality of these worlds that are present to him than a thousand
pages of explanatory theory are able to do. Suhrawardi addresses himself in the style of
the "theurgic psalm" to the figures in the Pleroma and to the Lights of divine beauty that
were caught by him in veiling visions. Below we will give the translation (fr) of two of
these psalms. Similarly, his piety comes closest to the "hieratic" method of a Neoplatonist

88 Cf. Prolegomènes I, p. 17.
89 Mullâ Sadrâ Shirâzî, Gloss 430 [in according to our own enumeration], on § 159 of the Hikmat al-Ishrâq,
Teheran lithograph, 1315, p. 357.

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like Proclus, a true thinker about the most abstruse metaphysical speculations and also capable of composing hymns in honor of the divine beings to whom he addresses his personal devotion. Suhrawardi knows that on his part he is in profound agreement with the tradition of the sages of ancient Persia and Chaldea.

This is to be especially noted in recalling the reasons for which these theosophical sages practiced the cult of the Flame. Just as each species is the theurgy and the image of a Light among the victorious Lights, a Light from which they emanate and which governs them, so also Fire, the luminous Fire (nâr dhat al-nûr), not the infernal Fire, is the theurgy of the Archangel Ordibehest (one of the seven Amahraspands, Avestic Arta-Vahishta). Movement and heat as we have explained already, are the manifestational form (mashâr) of the Light; they have no other cause than the Light. However, they reach their highest degree in the Fire. Fire is what is closest to life and it is the help against Darkness. Far from simply being one of the four elements of classical physics, it is the "brother of the human Espahbad-Light". Since the human soul is invested with a major caliphate in this world, Fire assumes a minor caliphate as representing the celestial Lights in the world of bodies or barzakh. What is therefore honored in it, is the particular image and theurgy of one of the archangelic Lights. Fire assumes in our world the same epiphanic function as the suprasensible Lights in the superior world and the ancient Persians had every reason to take the Flame as the qibla (axis of orientation) for their prayers. Suhrawardi’s commentators recall the liturgical institutions addressing the sovereigns of ancient Iran: Hūshang, Jamshid, Fereydūn, Kay Khusrav, all definitely codified by the sage Zoroaster.

Mullâ Sadrâ knows this perfectly well and in the Gloss to which we refer below underlines that, if the Flame was the qibla of their liturgical services, then this is because the ancient Persians "called the Flame, the Daughter of the Sun (bint al-shams). She is for them like the representation, the vicar (nû'ib) of the Sun, because of the force of its being and because of its manifestation at any moment and in any place, even though the Sun may be absent, like the Moon is the representative of the Sun during certain moments of the night". Therefore, this evocation of the cult of the Flame forms a transition point and leads up to the passages that he not just intends as an echo of ancient solar theologies, but as a psalm entirely changed in accordance with his whole "Oriental Theosophy".

There is nothing dead or inert in the sidereal universe since each Sphere is governed and animated by a thinking Soul. The Soul communicates its energy through the intermediary of the star enshrined in this Sphere, of which it is this way like its principal organ, its heart; it is through the intermediary of this organ that the energies communicated to it by the Anima caelestis are diffused over the sensible world. In this manner Suhrawardi calls the Sun by its Iranian name of Hārakhs (Sol splendidus), whom the Avesta salutes as

91 Cf. P. J. de Menacse, Une apologétique mazdéenne du IX siècle, Sikkand-Gumânîk Vilkâh, Fribourg 1945, p. 36 (note to Chap. II, 12-18): "When the Ahrimanic smoke mixes with the Fire, this nevertheless does not combine itself with the latter's luminosity; an antagonist of the luminosity of the Fire, it is connected with its heat. The pure and purifying Fire cannot be of the same substance as hell, as the Muslims mean it [...]. The creatures of Ohrmazd [e.g. Water and Fire] do not know how to destroy; it is the druj which attaches itself to one of these elements that destroys".
92 On Arta (asha) and Fire, see L. H. Gray, The Foundations of the Iranian Religions, Bombay s.d., p. 40.
93 Cf. the gloss to which this refers, in note 194. Mullâ Sadrâ again notes all the Koranic verses where God exalts the sun and the celestial luminaries, to the point of making them witnesses of his oaths. Likewise, in the book (Sahîh) of the IVth Imâm, a book designated as the Psalter and Gospel of Akl al-Bayt, an invocation of the Moon as caliph of the Sun during the night takes place, which agrees perfectly well with the Suhrawardian tonality: "You who rapidly return to the dwellings assigned to you, You who dispose of the Heaven that you govern, May I be protected from the Darkness by the One who dispenses your Light, who through you enlightens what was lost in uniformity, who has made you the key to each new month, in order to open a new event", etc.
94 Cf. Borhân-e Qâte’, Mo’in edition, IV, p. 2390, s.v. hārakhsh, where the various etymological uses are discussed: zhaâlêta (brilliant) Hvare (Sun), Persian zârshid khôrshid (cf. L. H. Gray, op.cit., pp. 85-87); Hvore-rozsâma, from where Hûr-rozshôn, Hûr-masâ and Hûrâkhsh are derived, after a Pahlavi translation
"the most beautiful manifestation of Ohrmazd". Suhrawardi designates it as the theurgy of the Archangel Shahrivar (in the Avesta, one of the seven Amahraspands, Xshathra Vairya, "Desirable Reign", precisely identified as "having the appearance of the sun") and who in the Suhrawardian hierarchy of the archangelic Lights pertains to the "latitudinal" Order of archetypes. It is in the ishrâqî tradition of "oriental" theosophers to honor this star with the powerful brilliance, the "producer of the day and Prince of the heavens", with a special cult.

If a break occurs here through the mention of the "oriental" theosophers, then this is for a specific reason. The incandescent mass of the sun is certainly admirable and the continuation of life on earth depends on its light. However, our Shaykh is thinking of something even more basic here, namely of everything that for him is implied by the notion of "Orient" and "rising Sun" (above, chapter 2, § 2). There is a certain way of seeing things in this world and in Malakât, i.e. in the suprasensible world, of perceiving the spiritual Sun of the suprasensible world at the same time as the Sun of this world, and it is the rising of this spiritual Sun that is important to the "Oriental Theosophy". This is what is explained in a long passage in the Book of the Paths and Havens, quite indispensible for the understanding of the psalm that is found below; the Shaykh explains that without the obstacle of the material body our souls would receive the imprint of the knowledge of the Animae celestes directly. Then he makes allusions to certain inferior practices of divination that are of no concern to the spiritual elite (the same distinction the "Chaldean Magi" draw between the theurgist sages and the wizards). Regarding the "hieratic" sages, their knowledge as well as their spiritual practices are "ciphers and symbols" (marmûza), some of which will be found in his book of Oriental Theosophy. Next he describes how the meeting with suprasensible realities (al-amr al-ghaybi) can happen: sometimes like reading something written, sometimes in the hearing of a voice of an invisible speaker, either speaking softly or terribly loud, or sometimes in a faint sound. Sometimes it happens that the speaker shows himself as a certain person; that can be a sidereal figuration, or it can be one of the celestial Princes in a manifestational form corresponding to the spiritual state of the visionary. It always has to do with real things, although they do not happen in this world, but in the mystical world of Hûrqalyâ, the mundus imaginalis or the "intermediate Orient". As Suhrawardi specifies:

The portico (pîshgâh) of all authentic ecstacies of the mystical world of Hûrqalyâ is precisely that of the magnificent Lord Hûrqash, the most magnificent of the ones who have taken a material body (mutajassûn), the Most Venerated One who is the supreme Face of God according to the language of the oriental theosophy (the language of Ishrq), because it is He who watches over meditation and dispenses light during it and is the contemplation-witness.

These clarifications suffice to suggest that we are evidently concerned here with something else than the physical star, the heliacal incandescent mass perceived by our profane senses. When the psalm translated below addresses the Lord Hûrqash who is the "portico" of ecstacies, as "the most luminous of beings endowed with life and thought", when it notes "the splendor of his thinking soul", then it unequivocally addresses a superior spiritual

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95 Cf. L. H. Gray, op.cit., p. 46 (Yashî XLIII, 16).
96 Mutârähât, § 223, and Celestial Earth... p. 123 and p. 296 note 45.
97 On the mundus imaginialis, see our book Celestial Earth..., in the index under Hûrqalyâ.

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entity. This entire psalm brings to mind the text known as the "Liturgy of Mithra" that is a personal ritual of initiation, a celebration of a mystērion or sacrament of immortality, rather than a liturgy. We know that in the Avesta, Mithra is the Lord of Celestial Light, and as a result of all the celestial luminaries. Neither in the mysteries that bear its name nor in the Avesta itself is Mithra the sun itself, but the sun is his vehicle. In the Suhrawardīan psalm the doxology celebrates the "body of Light" of the Lord Hurakhsh and the invocation is addressed to him as to the one who is the thinking soul of this body of Light. The angelological scheme described above is verified here. The psalm in addressing itself to the Lord Hurakhsh, prays to him that he may pray in turn to his "father", who causes "his thinking soul to rise to his orient", that is the heaven of Hurqalyâ. The incandescent heliacal mass is indeed the theurgy, the hierophanic form of the Archangel Shahrîvar and of the Anima caelestis that governs it, who "moves it through the ardor of love", who is indeed the Lord Hurakhsh, the Celestial Soul, the Espahbad-Light who moves his heavens by the desire that links him with the intelligence from whom he emanates.

The name of "father", repeated during the course of the invocation, corresponds to its symbolical usage among the Neoplatonists and in the Chaldean Oracles. Aside from this, it reminds us of something else from the "Liturgy of Mithra". The highest of the mysteries of Mithra were called "fathers"; those of the degree immediately below were called the "sons" of these "fathers". There was a much stronger link between them than between a physical father and son, a spiritual link, since they were all sons of Mithra, their "father". It is in this name and this title that Mithra is invoked as the "father", who alone can impart or not to his "son" what is his proper substance, namely that power (dynamis) for which birth, the "initiation" into mankind, is the sacramentum of its apotheosis. The final invocation in the present psalm aims at something similar. The term "father" will again be employed by Suhrawardi in this psalm, a hermetical inspiration that he addresses to his "Perfect Nature". We also see that it reappears at every rank of the angelic hierarchy, uniting all these degrees with a tie that gives rise to a classification analogous to the one that unites initiates in its brotherhood.

Suhrawardi’s psalm starts out with a doxology, proclaiming the beauties of the visible star, of the body of light of Lord Hurakhsh; after this comes the invocation proper. One will note that it spreads out in ascending meditations; it addresses itself first to the Lord Hurakhsh; through Him to the Archangel Shahrîvar of whom his body of light is the theurgy; through the latter to all of the Victorial Lights; then to the Primordial Archangel Bahman; finally, to the "Light of Lights", "God of Gods" (this term appears alike in the encyclopedia of the Brothers of Basra). This liturgical ascension corresponds to the "hieratic" ascension that the Angel of Initiation proposes in many of Suhrawardi’s visionary Recitals. This is the "Great Invocation to Hurakhsh":

Blessed be the most luminous of beings endowed with life and thought, the most manifest of persons, the brightest of stars. Hail to Thee! May the salutations and benedictions of God be upon Thee, sublime Luminary, most august of the moving stars; you who obey the one from whom you originate, you who are moved by the ardor of love for the inaccessible majesty of your Creator. You are Hurakhsh, the most

98 Cf. Hans Lewy, Chaldean Oracles, p. 327, and Plotinus, Enneads V, 1, 8: "He says (=Plato) that all things are in the King who reigns over all things […]. He speaks again of the "Father of the cause". But the cause is the Intelligence; the Intelligence is, for him, the Demiurge" [translation fr Bréhier, p. 25].
100 Suhrawardi’s “Book of Hours” has two invocations to Hurakhsh: Hūrakhsh al-kabîr and Hūrakhsh al-seghîr. The first one has been published by Muh. Mo'in in Yaghmâ I, 2 (1327 h.s.), pp. 88-89. Our citation here is from Mullâ Sadrâ’s text, which is better, Gloss 430 on the Hikmat al-Ishrâq, § 159, Tehran lithograph, p. 357 in the margin.
powerful, Vanquisher of darkness, Prince of Heaven, Author of the Day, through the order of God the Most High. You are the King of the Stars, Prince of Persons on High. You reign through the power and the obeyed divine force over the Lights incarnated into bodies. You are the body that dispenses Light, the Vanquisher, the Brilliant One, the Sage, the One surpassing in Excellence. You are the most magnificent of the offspring from the spiritual world through your incandescent splendors. You are the Caliph of the Light of Lights in the world of bodies, who encircles you with a Light that culminates in its victory. You are an Image of its grandeur, an exemplification of its beauty, its proof for the eyes of the faithful. Glory to the one who gives you your form and your Light, who has made you a mover through ardent desire for His inaccessible majesty and who has enshrined you in the Fourth Heaven.

Oh Holy Father! I pray to you that you may pray to the One who displays the splendor of your thinking soul to His Orient, who is your Father, your Cause, the object of your Love and the Principle of your movement, whose shadow and therurgy (the Archangel Shahrivar) you are. Pray with Him to all archangelic Lights, the immaterial Intelligences, that they may pray in their turn, in that form of prayer that belongs to the eternal world bereft of change and alteration, to the One who is their Father, their cause and the object of their Love, the Most August of Beings, of Primordial Birth, Light closest to the Principle, Intelligence of the Universe (the Archangel Bahman). May He pray this same way to His God, the God of Gods, eternally subsisting Light of Lights, God of every Intelligence, of every Soul, of every ethereal and elementary body, simple or composed, Necessary Being. May He pray Him to illuminate my soul with the brightness of the spiritual world, with theosophical knowledge and superior powers. May He pray Him to count me among those who have that nostalgia for His Light and make me immune to all infirmities of soul and body, to make the faithful of the Light and the mystical Orient triumph. May He bless them and make them holy and us also, for ever and ever. Amen.

This psalm that is so typically expressive of Suhrawardian piety and so faithful to the inspiration of "Oriental Theosophy" has a symbolism whose key is perhaps found in the psalm to the "Perfect Nature". Without a doubt, this symbolism is associated with a concept of the universe, an astronomy and a physics that is no longer ours today. Still, it seems superfluous to us to suggest that it really makes no difference whether for mystical consciousness in its profundity a geocentric or heliocentric theory is professed for celestial phenomena. Either theory is equally far removed from the reality that is being considered. Better said yet, to use Suhrawardi’s own words, these are no more than the "portico" that has to be surmounted, and we realize quite well that no sputnik or future space-station will in any way be able to do that. The heaviness that the soul, the interior man, has to extricate itself from in order to do this surmounting, has nothing at all to do with the forces that triumph in the scientific discoveries of today, no matter how prodigious they are.

Another remark is suggested by the ascending series of meditations invoked in the psalm. This liturgical gradation implies a structure that we note again in a strange dialog, where the speakers are the famous Christian Orthodox physician Constantin son of Luke (Qosta ibn Lûkâ), who lived in the 9th century, and his disciple 'Amâlaq the Greek, whose personality remains a mystery. Typically, it seems that Ismailian theosophy was fitted into this dialog, since it occurred in a still unpublished Ismailian work that we have discovered. We only cite a very brief extract from it:

**Disciple**: Will you teach me to know my God?

**Master**: Do you know who causes you to know yourself [...], who delivers you from sadness, who produces something that you taste the intimate sweetness of and whose
strength you feel at the same time, who renders you independent from all that is not himself? That, if you know it, can only be what is part of yourself. Yes, so it is when you have found your God; so it is when you are a true believer.

**Disciple:** What is beyond my God, that I may be among those who have everything?

**Master:** Beyond him, there is one who is to himself as he is to you, a One for a One, until the threshold of Him in whom all Ones are contained.¹⁰¹

This dialog opens a "monadological" perspective, proper to both Ismailian Gnosis and ishrāqī theosophy. The Master's last words are in perfect agreement with those found at the end of many of Suhrawardi's initiatory Recitals, just as the beginning words of the Master imply what Suhrawardi calls the "Perfect Nature" and what in all of ishrāqī tradition is connected with a reminder of Hermes's mystical experience. We will at least stress the psalm of the "Perfect Nature", for want of being able to cover all of Suhrawardi's "Book of Hours"¹⁰² and to note its connections with the Chaldean and Orphic piety of the Neoplatonic hymns, as well as with the astral liturgies of the Sabians of Harran of the hermetic tradition.

This psalm is addressed to that spiritual entity whose name springs directly from hermetic revelation, as it was known to Suhrawardi and his school, namely the "Perfect Nature" (al-Tībā al-tāmm). We have already seen in what went before, that she is the "Angel" of the philosopher (above, pp. 76 and 58), his agathos daimôn, she recapitulates in her person the double meaning of Xvarnah: she is Light and she is the personal Destiny of the one whose "Angel" she is. Its eschatological significance lies in the fact that in the ecstasy in which she happens to appear, as she appeared to Hermes, is an anticipation of a personal eschatology. We have already alluded to her presence as far as Shi'ite imamology.¹⁰³ The commentators sometimes identify her with the Angel of Humanity (Gabriel, Holy Spirit), because of the relationship she individualizes with each human individuality; she is each time what this Angel is for everyone, just as beyond the Angel is the One who is for Her what she is herself relative to the human species; we spoke a few lines ago of a "monadological" perspective.

In the preceding psalm, the author prayed to the Angel of the Sun to pray to all of the archangelic Lights and to pray together to the First One among them. Similarly, in Suhrawardi's visionary Recitals (e.g., in "The Sound of Gabriel's Wings" and the "Recital of Occidental Exile") a mysterious person appears in the beginning, or at some other point and alludes to others who are above it, saying: "I am their language; beings like yourself cannot communicate with them."¹⁰⁴ Likewise, there are Angel-Hermeneutists in Proclus the Neoplatonist who interpret what for human souls is Silence and the Inexpressible, belonging to the angels and gods of the higher realms.¹⁰⁵ Whoever is in a hurry and wants to bypass these mediators, forgets a very simple phenomenological truth: the form that supreme divinity shows itself corresponds to the mode that it exists for the recipient, because it can't show itself in any other way than according to the latter's capacity, its aptitude to know it. Simultaneously it reveals the recipient's limitations and what its being is, the Beyond of this limit, by the "gesture" itself. That is the meaning of the Angel, and what Suhrawardi

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¹⁰¹ For the entire translation of this strange passage and for a more complete context, see our study *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, p. 337. The text is cited in the important work *Zahr al-ma'ānî* (Chap. XIX, publication in preparation), of the great Yemenite, Idris 'Imāduddīn. We intend to return to this at greater length elsewhere.

¹⁰² Cf. e.g., the *İaqds* of the Archangel Bahman, at the front of the *Taqdîsât*: "Proclaim holy, God's servant and Veil of the Supreme God, Light of Most Great God, work of the Most High God, First Archetype, the Holy One and closest to God, Angel of Angels, Chief of the archangelic Compatriots, Lord of the Celestial World in the Presence of God, Bahman..." [Râghib 1480, fol. 182].

¹⁰³ Cf. above, note 127.


means by the name of "Angel of Humanity" and what he experienced in the apparition of the Perfect Nature.

Remember at this point that the original relation that the Shaykh al-Ishrâq attributes to the "dawn" of being, to the "Orient" of all the Lights, namely the relation of the first "beloved" and the first "lover", repeats itself at all levels of being and orders the entire universe into pairs. That same relationship is repeated between the Angel and the Species that is its theurgy and emanates from its Light, just as this is repeated for each entity as a relationship of love that unites it with the celestial cause that emanates it. Every being, says our Shaykh, has its loved one in the superior world, towards which its desire goes out, who mediates between it and Being by right (al-Haqq), and through whom it contemplates the divine archangelic Lights. Thus it is in an entirely symbolic manner that Suhrawardi employs the word "father" here, since we are dealing with a birth that the beloved owes the lover. If the beloved as such owes its birth to the same object that it loves, then that is also because this love reveals it its very own "theurgic" origin in the lover. It is to a higher "I" that it says "you", not to some object that is addressed in the "third person". However, eo ipso, through this revelation it also gives birth to the lover itself. Hence that characteristic reversibility of terms that is noticed from the very beginning in the psalm that follows. The Shaykh writes in the Book of the Temples of the Light:

Among these mediating archangelic Lights of the one who is Being by right (al-Haqq) there is also one who has a relationship like a "father" to us; it is an archetype, the Lord of our Species, the Giver from whom our souls emanate. It is called the Holy Spirit; and the philosophers call it the Active Intellect. 106

The Shaykh clarifies this in the Book of Oriental Theosophy:

It is the archangelic Light of which the thinking species is the theurgy, i.e. the archangel Gabriel. This is the "father" of the human race, our Kin among the supreme archangels of malakāt, the Giver from whom our souls (Rašh al-Quds) emanate, the Holy Spirit, the Giver of knowledge and inspirational grace, who confers life and preceellence. From it emanates an immaterial Light, the Light invested with the government of the human body, to govern the most perfect constitution, the human constitution, i.e. the Regent-Light called the "Espahbad of the human reality" (Espahbad al-nâsît), the one who identifies itself by saying "I" (bil'l-anā'îya).107

Thus the Tenth hypostasis of the Avicennan pleroma gets integrated into the pleroma of Archetype-Lights in isherāgi theosophy. Stated more rigorously, this Light pertains to the "latitudinal" order of Angel theurgists, or archetypes of species, following the Zoroastrian archangels (Amahruspāndān) named by Suhrawardi. It is in last place, because all irradiations of all preceding archetype-Lights converge here, just like in the human microcosm all the powers and radiations of the cosmos converge. The names that Suhrawardi gives it provide an exact identity: the Holy Spirit, the Angel Gabriel, the Active Intellect. It is especially fitting to emphasize the very Persian term Rašh-al-Quds ("the one from whom our souls emanate"); we have shown elsewhere how this term comes from a Manichean metaphysics of Light.108 Traditional Persian dictionaries only sanction the accepted usage,

without telling us where it comes from: "It is the name of the Angel who possesses knowledge and wisdom; in Arabic it is called the Holy Spirit." Suhrawardi has illustrated this theme of Ravân-bakhshest, the One who dispenses our souls, with a conscious mental iconography at the beginning of one of his initiatory Recitals. He tells us: "The angel Gabriel has two wings: the one on the right is turned towards being and is pure and absolute Light; this is the one from which our souls emanate. The one on the left is turned towards non-being and carries a reddish imprint, from its darkness the world of illusion and appearances comes forth."  

There is still more to say. This Angel Holy Spirit, the Angel of Humanity, is equally identified with the Paraclete, and this identification is charged with meaning. We have indicated (above, book 1), how in Shi‘ism, e.g., in Haydar Amuli, the "Hidden Imâm", the "Waiting Imâm", were similarly identified with the Paraclete. Again, we are on a track that permits an eminent Shi‘ite scholar like Qâzî Sa‘îd Qummi to homologate the relation between the archangelic Light that is the Holy Spirit, and every soul of Light, to the relation between the Imâm and each adept, i.e. each "orphanned" or "widowed" soul in the world of Light. Such convergences between Ishrâq and Shi‘ite theosophy are typical in Iranian Islamic spirituality. Just as Haydar Amoli expressly refers to St. John’s Gospel so Suhrawardi quotes these words of Jesus: "I go to my Father and your Father, that He may send you the Paraclete who will show you the meaning of these symbols (John 14:16, 26)." Lastly, we must point out that Suhrawardi’s symbol of Simurgh (below, chapter 5), corresponds to the symbol of the dove for the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 6 we will more fully discuss the relation between the Angel of Humanity, the Holy Spirit or Paraclete, and the Perfect Nature, in reference to a mental vision of Suhrawardi, where relation sometimes becomes substitution. Let us merely state here that this Perfect Nature is for every human what the Angel of Humanity is for the entire human race. Essence of Light, pre-existent to man’s terrestrial birth, it has a relation with him that makes it his guardian Angel, with whom he is finally united again after death. It is especially significant that in Suhrawardi’s didactic works its mention is always accompanied by the name of Hermes. He remembers the vision that Hermes recounted: "This is how an entity from the spiritual world inspired me (‘projected into me’) with the high sciences. Then I said: ‘Who are you?’ She said: ‘I am your Perfect Nature’." All Ishra’qiyûn after him do the same.  

Elsewhere the dangers encountered by Hermes during an ecstatic vision will be described that made him cry out: "You who are my father, save me." These signs make one think of Poimandres in the Corpus hermeticum. Together with what we have just seen, they enable us to understand that ardent and lyrical invocation that appears in Suhrawardi’s "Book of Hours". It follows the hymns or psalms he composed for each day of the week. It is called Invocation (da’aiwat) to the Perfect Nature. Here is the translation (fr):  

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You, my Lord and Prince, most Holy Angel, my precious spiritual being! You are my father who gave birth to me in the world of Spirit (al rûhânî) and You are my child
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109Ibid., p. 50, note 103; Burhân-e Qate’, Mo’in edition, II, p. 968.
110Cf. Le Bruissement..., [above, note 200], pp. 78-79, where the Avicennan angelological scheme is described, that we have to refer to in order to understand this symbolism.
114After the Râghib 1480 manuscript, fol. 314. This is a jewel from Suhrawardi’s "Book of Hours" that we always have in mind to publish, despite the difficulties that these passages present. Cf. also below, note 420.
in the world of thought (\textit{walad ma\'nawi}). With divine permission You are completely dedicated to the government of my person. You are the one whose fervor intercedes for me before God, the God of Gods, to make up for my deficiencies. You who are clothed in the brightest of the divine Lights, You who reside at the summit of the degrees of perfection, I implore You, through the One who has overwhelmed You with such sublime nobility, who has bestowed on You such immense effusion of grace. Oh! That You may manifest yourself to me at the time of the Supreme Epiphany, that You may show me your dazzling Face! That You may be my mediator before the God of Gods in the effusion of the light of mystical Secrets; that You may lift the veils of darkness from my heart, this I pray in the name of the One who has claim over You and ranks over You.\textsuperscript{116}

It indeed appears that the Mithraic ritual ("Liturgy of Mithra") has a spiritual condition that agrees with the one at the beginning of this psalm. There also the mystic seeks to open up the "mind space" of the higher "self", the celestial Pole, the "ego" in the "second person" who is the "father" of the terrestrial person. But although this celestial "self" is our "father" in the sense that we are born from it, we are also here below and in another sense give birth to this celestial "ego", a relationship of the "first" to the "second" person. We are dealing here once more, according to the Neoplatonic commentators of the \textit{Chaldean Oracles}, "with something paradigmatic", the result of the "theurgic power" that distinguishes the mystics who have reached the highest spiritual level.\textsuperscript{117} As we anticipated above, the "Recital of Occidental Exile" (below, chapter 6) will give us occasion to combine other passages relative to the Perfect Nature. Just as several sources of inspiration, Hermetical, Neoplatonic, Zoroastrian, can be noted in Suhrawardi, so they also unite in their devotion to the "person" of the Perfect Nature, the way it is present and the way it is invoked. Without a doubt, the whole mystique of the "Fedeli d'amore" [\textit{Fidèles d'amour}]\textsuperscript{118} (below, book 3) is merely another way of accessing the epiphany of the Perfect Nature.

We have said before that the characteristic moment in Suhrawardi's work, or rather in his spiritual life, occurred when doctrine ceased trying to speak of the Ineffable and instead became an \textit{event}. That is the moment when theosophic knowledge and "hieratic" spiritual experience met. This event can take place in a psalm where the spiritual speaks in the "second person", or even in a recital where he himself is the subject in the first person, but about which he speaks as if it happened in the \textit{eighth clime}, in the \textit{imaginal} world. The Suhrawardian Recitals form a cycle. If the heroes of the event are heroes of the Iranian epics, as in the Recital translated (fr) further down, then the latter undergo an "oriental" transmutation; this is why the passage from heroic to mystical epic (above, pp. 61, 67) is manifested remarkably well in Suhrawardi, where king Kay Khusrav is the exemplary hero.

If today we are subjected to a dilemma that only leaves us a choice between \textit{myth} and \textit{history}, or between the unconscious and rational consciousness, then the fault of this doubtless lies with an agnostic ontology both incapable of recognizing the \textit{real} rightful \textit{existence} of the \textit{imaginal} world and distinguishing this from the \textit{imaginary}, as we have noted before. In Suhrawardi's recitals and in many traditional Shi'ite ones everything happens at a level beyond the two ends of our faulty dilemma: they are neither \textit{myth} nor \textit{history}, in the current sense of the word. That is what is happening in the meeting between the mystic and its Paraclete or Perfect Nature. It is therefore so much more important to recognize where

\textsuperscript{116}The \textit{bi-haqq} conjuration formula (through so and so's claim over You), related to Hermetism and typical in Shi'ite invocations.


\textsuperscript{118}Kristine Anderson translates this as "Devotees of Love" in the article on \textit{Esotericism} by Antoine Faivre, \textit{Encyclopedia of Religion}, vol. 6, p. 295. Liadain Sherrard in the translation of \textit{History of Islamic Philosophy} by Prof. Corbin uses "Love's faithful". Ralph Manheim uses \textit{Fedeli d'amore} in \textit{Cyclic Time...}, which we adopt here[trans.].
the mystical Iranian gesture intersects the cycle where the West deposited its most profound mystical secret, at the very moment when men could no longer bear it, namely, the cycle of the Holy Grail. This deals with something much more unambiguous than all those folklorist connections or recurrences of archetypes from the collective unconscious. It has to do with universal "hieratic" Presences, with the Presence of a world common to everyone. It concerns Presences who require that the reality of their being is recognized by right, something that evidently assumes an ontology that has done away with that separation between thought and being, something that so many in the West have such difficulty in doing. We have already alluded many times to the chivalry of the Holy Grail in regard the Shi’ite Imam and his faithful. There will again be occasion to do so. What they have in common, a common Presence, is what the Iranian spiritual world can show us in a most fascinating way. It is no less significant that certain connections between the world of Iranian chivalry and that of the mystical chivalry of the West are now elucidated by a Zoroastrian scholar.
Chapter 4

The Light of Glory and the Holy Grail

Hermetica and Mithraica

The combination of two Latin adjectives that introduce this chapter, alluding to matters that pertain to the treasures of two great religions of humanity, Hermetism and Mithraicism, results from two recent investigations. One of them sought to find the source of the western mystical tradition of the Holy Grail in the Corpus hermeticum, specifically as it occurs in the Germanic cycle, i.e., in the work of Wolfram von Eschenbach. The other and older of the two attempted to rediscover the source of the conception of the Grail and the chivalry belonging to it in the Zoroastrian Xvarnah, the Light of Glory and representations for which this Light is the center. Neither an Ishráqí nor someone doing research in matters of Ishráq can afford to ignore these most interesting studies. In the first place, Suhrawardi’s "Oriental Theosophy", reviving the world of Light of ancient Persia while invoking Hermes’ name and the Hermetic tradition, seems to us the ideal place for the intersection of these two lines of investigation. Secondly, the point of view that Suhrawardi assumes puts us in a position to estimate in ishráqí terms the level of "credibility" of both of these studies.

The name of the Grail and the chivalry of the Grail have been alluded to on several occasions. One of them was at the occasion of Suhrawardi’s revival of the themes of ancient Persia, as well as when the esoteric hierarchies in Twelver Shi’ism were mentioned (book 1, chapter 3). Aside from this, the idea of Xvarnah equally comes to the foreground in the archangelic triad of Ismailian theosophy; in Suhrawardi this is explicit and conscious. Xvarnah shows itself to the Shaykh al-Ishrâq as the "oriental" source itself and is related to a mystical kinship of the guardians of a hidden treasure, having its summit in the one who is the mystical Pole of the world. There is a typical perpetuation of this idea of a clan of compatriots who are faithful to every test: in Zoroastrianism there is a group of compatriots who surround the Sauoshyant or Savior before he manifests himself at the end of the last (twelfth) millennium of our Aion, and opens with them the Transfiguration of the world (freshkart); in Twelver Shi’ism there is an elite of compatriots who surround the 12th Imam, presently hidden, who from now on prepare with him the event of the Resurrection (Qiyāmat).¹ We find certain traces of Iranian chivalry in the names given by Suhrawardi to

¹It is very enlightening to see in this regard how the Gnostic group of Ahl-e Haqq presents the order of succession in its hierohistory: after the dynasties of ancient Iran follow, without loss of continuity, first the Prophet and the twelve Imāms, then the Shaykhs of the sect. Cf. Shāh-Nāma-ye Haqīqat, Le Livre des Rois de Vérité, histoire traditionelle des Ahl-e Haqq, Persian text published by Mohammad Mokri, Vol. I (B. 1. #14), Teheran-Paris 1960, p. 12, v. 215 ff., p. 23, v. 429 ff.
the entities of Light descended into this world (the Zoroastrian Fravartis): "Espahbad-Lights of the human reality"; it so happens that the elite among them have a vision of the sources of the Light of Glory. A modern Zoroastrian scholar now seeks to prove the theory that the Light of Glory, Xvarnah, and the Holy Grail are the very same representation.

On the other hand, Hermes is for Suhrawardi the father of sages and of all wisdom. Suhrawardi’s Hermetism and the affinity of certain of his psalms with the astral liturgies of the Sabians, themselves followers of Hermes and Agathodaimon, clearly stand out. Kay Khusraw’s and Zoroaster’s visions of the Light of Glory and the "hieratic" ascension of Hermes to the world of Light "at the hour when the column of auroral Light strikes", the hour of ışhrâq, of the "Orient", are two similar versions of the Event that occurs in the spiritual destiny of the myst. This involves the descent into this world, forgetting of one’s destiny, the hearing of the call, placement on the road of return, regeneration and apotheosis. The second of the investigations that we alluded to rediscovers the sources of the spirituality of the Grail in Hermetism itself.

The two investigations in question were carried out independently of one another and the more recent one was unaware of the first one by the Zoroastrian scholar; it is therefore the more interesting to summarize their respective conclusions. Aside from this, they both ignored Suhrawardi’s "oriental theosophy" and the entire Iranian tradition that he "revived" and that appears to us to be the ideal place for their convergence. Hermes, Kay Khusraw and Zoroaster are here indeed heralds and mystagogues of equal rank of the same Light of Lights, that Light of Glory that Suhrawardi names by its traditional Iranian name (Khurrâh, Xvarnah) and in which the Zoroastrian investigator rediscovers a representation that is identical to the Holy Grail. The two investigations seem to us to be of extreme interest, since on the one hand it is the vision of that Light as a return or transfer to the "Orient", the myst’s goal, that renders us an account of the entire part of Suhrawardi’s work where doctrine becomes initiatory recital. On the other hand, this is where we see a link established between the Suhrawardian tradition of ışhrâq and the cycle of the Grail to which the West has perhaps confided its essential mystical secret. A sense similar to Suhrawardi’s work is revealed through this link and with it an entire aspect of the Iranian spirituality of Islam in a far greater proximity to us. On the one hand we are lead back in a certain way to Hermetism through the Grail; on the other hand we return to the Grail through the Iranian theosophic tradition of Suhrawardi. The circle closes in upon itself, drawing an immense spiritual arc, that of ışhrâq.

It is this very circle that permits us to sketch the two great investigations that we have referred to here. They were conducted through different means and in a different precision. We will give an account of them while reversing their chronological order. The more recent one is the work of two researchers from the University of Illinois, Henry and Renée Kahane.2 The other one is the work of a Zoroastrian scholar from India, Sir Jahangir C. Coyajee, and goes back some thirty years; unfortunately it appeared at the start of the second world war in a publication that is not readily available.

Understandably, we have to forego here the various amplifications that these captivating studies result in, and limit ourselves to a simple outline. The Kahane research is characterized by a meticulous comparison of the texts (the Corpus hermeticum and Wolfram’s Parzival), a thorough knowledge of the romance languages of the 12th century and at the same time by a sensible scientific prudence; it proposes and suggests more than it positively affirms, perhaps gaining more strength this way, opening the way to further research. What we have to say here principally concerns the manner in which the authors of the research represent the transmission of Hermetism to the West, in this case the Holy Grail; their ability to identify certain proper names whose altered form has for a long time caused difficulties

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to investigators; finally how the culminating point (the *klimax*) of Wolfram’s epic situates us at the same location where Suhrawardī guides the disciple of *Ishrāq*, the traveler to the "Orient".

The establishment of similitudes and correspondences between the doctrines, episodes and vocabulary of the *Corpus hermeticum* and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, as the result of an extremely detailed examination, presents us in the first place with the plausibility question of a transmission. How did Hermetist knowledge get to Wolfram, so that *Parsifal*³ and the hermetist myst’s lives agree regarding this direct knowledge, both as to the fact that it is the only explanation for them and that it furnishes the key to Wolfram’s references to his "sources"?

The authors take three phases into consideration.⁴

a) The conservation of Greek Hermetist "material" in Syriac and Arabic literature.

b) The prolongation and elaboration of the Hermetist tradition in Arabic (and Persian) throughout medieval Islamic civilization. Here a primary role is evidently played by the Sabians of Harran (the ancient *Carrhae* in Mesopotamia), who survived in Islam until the 17th century, indeed with considerable difficulty since they never managed to be completely considered one of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (community having a Book revealed by a Prophet), although they certainly had their "Book" and their "Prophets", Hermes and Agathodaimon.⁵ The cult of Hermes, the Sabian astral liturgies, their doctrine of Light and Darkness (their affinity with Suhrawardī’s doctrine will have to be developed further, something we cannot at present go into), their particular knowledge of the 4th treatise of the *Corpus hermeticum*, having as title "The Krater", these are as many indications that situate their community. Thābit ibn Qurra (9th century), an eminent philosopher and scholar, founded a new branch of Sabianism in Baghdad and wrote, among others, a book on the "Liturgal Institutions of Hermes". Aside from this, we know that there are still a considerable number of unpublished Arabic texts under the name of Hermes.⁶

c) Finally the transmission of Greco-Arabic Hermetist "materials" to the West must be considered.

First the investigation must focus on the identification of the name given to the Grail in the *Corpus hermeticum*; next the methods of transmission have to be investigated in order to finally answer the question: what can we say about an Urparzival, a "primitive*⁷ Parsifal?"

The central idea is this: the mysterious *Krater* which gives its title to the 4th treatise of the *Corpus hermeticum* is none other than the Grail itself: both in so far as the concept and regarding the word itself.⁷

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³Let us formally state here that we are adopting this form of the name, since Richard Wagner familiar to everyone (but note that the Kahane article uses *Parzival* (ir)).

⁴H. and R. Kahane, *op.cit.*, pp. 113 ff.

⁵See our study, *Rituel sabéen et exégèse ismaélienne du rituel* (Francois-Jahrbuch XIX), Zurich 1951, pp. 181-246.

⁶Cf. Our *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, I, pp. 179-183. Louis Massignon has outlined an inventory of Hermetist Arabic literature in Appendix III to A. J. Festugière's *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste I*, Paris 1944. We have ourselves had the opportunity to notice on numerous occasions the presence of Hermetist treatises (astrology, alchemy, medicine) in the private and public manuscript collections of Iran. Will there one day be a systematic collection? Although up to now, no one has been able to identify references to one of the treatises of the *Corpus hermeticum*, as we know them, allowing one to deduce that the latter were not unknown. Besides this, it is necessary to speak of Persian Hermetism, an eminent representative of which is the Iranian philosopher Afżahudīn Kāshānī (cf. an article on him by Karīm Mojtahedī in the journal *Orient*, 1969...). A good summary is found in Qutbuddīn Ashkāvarî’s work, *Mahbûb al-Qulûb*, in-folio edition (1st part), lithograph Shirāz 1317 h.s., pp. 38-45.

⁷H. and R. Kahane, *op.cit.*, pp. 13-16, notably the philological explanation of the passage from *krater* to *gradale*.
We rediscover the theme of the messenger from the beyond in Suhrawardi's writings. The herald invites everyone who is able to comprehend the mission to baptism in the Krater sent to earth. Whether they have intelligence or not, and through this understanding of the meaning of the divine mystery, all humans are divided into two groups: those whom Gnosis changes into "perfect men", and those who will never know what they were sent into this world for.

To rejoin Wolfram's text, let us indicate the highlights as pointed out by the investigators. The Greek word krater is the same as the word grail (already used by Chrétien de Troyes, where it has the Latin form as basis). The Greek word passes into Latin in the form of crater and cratera. The changes into gradale and graal (cup, bowl, vase, basin) present no difficulty. We leave the details of the demonstration to the authors, except to stress one other point, namely the astral significance of Krater, an old tradition that discerns in the stars two "vases", one of wisdom and the other of forgetfulness. Souls bathe in one or the other of these vases, or rather, they drink from them before incarnating on earth. This theme is already present in Macrobius (4-5th century) and in the famous Coptic Gnostic book of Pistis Sophia. So in book 9 of Parzival, in the middle of the book, at the high point of Parsifal's initiation by the hermit, it is said that Flegetanis, the "pagan" of great wisdom who descended from Solomon and who wrote the history of the Grail, "discovered by examining the constellations profound mysteries that he could only speak of while trembling. It was," he said, "something that was called the Grail. He had clearly read its name in the stars. A group of angels had brought it down to earth after which they disappeared again beyond the stars. They were too pure to live here below." The Krater-Grail is thus indeed "something" carried from Heaven to Earth. Wolfram followed his "sources" and according to Macrobius's tradition, does not derive the name from a material vase from this world, but from a constellation that can only be that of the Krater. The Holy Grail is associated with a constellation like a Vas mysticum.

It is similarly under the aspect of a vase or mystical cup that we rediscover the Grail in Iranian tradition. Is there an opposition, or even indeed a contradiction, in the representation of the Grail as a stone, such as it is found elsewhere in Wolfram's Parzival? Here again it seems that the authors have judiciously resolved a difficulty that has frequently been discussed as an enigma. The final lines of the Hermetic treatise of the Krater conclude with a similarity in which the key word is "lodestone" (magnétis lithos): "This, O Tat, is the image of God that I have drawn for you as well I could; and if you look at it carefully and conceive it with the eyes of your heart, then, my son, believe me, you will find the upward path. Or rather, the image itself will show you your way. For its contemplation has a power of its own: those who have once seen it are possessed by it and it draws them upwards, as it is said that the lodestone attracts iron."

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8 Corpus hermeticum IV, 3-6, trans. (eng) H. and R. Kahane, op.cit., pp. 13-14. Cf. A. J. Festugière, Le Baptême dans le Cratère, in Hermétisme et mystique païenne, Paris 1967, pp. 100 ff., showing that "the author of C.H.IV has arbitrarily mixed two rites, the first of which is not baptism but sacramental wine drawn from a krater" (p. 102). "Whether this deals with water or wine, the formula 'drink knowledge' signifies a technical phrase in all branches of Gnosis" (p. 105). The Gnostics from the 2nd book of Jeti (in Pistis Sophia) "celebrated the sacrament of baptism and the Eucharist as a single sacrament and thus have put in place a very complex cult ritual" (p. 111, citation from C. Schmidt).


11 Corpus hermeticum, trans. (eng) H. and R. Kahane, op.cit., p. 22. It is preferable to translate this by "lodestone" rather than "magnet" because it is the "stone" that matters.
Wolfram almost paraphrases this final exhortation on the page where he says that "it is by the power of this stone that the phoenix burns to ashes, but the ashes give it life again. It is thanks to this stone that the phoenix molts and changes its plumage so he can reappear again in all its brightness, as beautiful as before." And Wolfram continues: "There is never a man so sick, who is not assured of escaping death in the week following the day that he saw it. He who sees it stops growing old [...]. This stone gives man such a vigor that his bones and flesh regain their youth again. This stone is also named the Grail." We will show further down that the ascension of Hermes, as it was known to Suhrawardi, seems to us to combine the motif of lodestone from the Corpus hermeticum and that of the Phoenix, and we are inclined to agree with our authors judgment, when they conclude that Wolfram is showing us in this stone a synonym for the Grail. Certainly, this equation does not point to the mathematical reality of a tool; it is a figure, and a figure that justly preserves the relation posed by the Corpus hermeticum between the lodestone and the Grail. In other words, Wolfram's use of the word "stone" does not tell us anything about the shape, the material, or the use of the Grail. "In short, nothing indicates that the Grail is not a vessel." In any case, the stone is the receptacle for the mystical host that the "celestial dove" deposits there every Good Friday. What we can decipher here is the following: "The soul, symbolized by the phoenix, is attracted by the Monad or Grail, symbolized by the lodestone; the soul's purification and regeneration is symbolized by the fiery death and rebirth of the phoenix."13

Having embarked on this route, our authors are able to decipher what is hidden under the aberrant form of lapis exilis, and propose to read instead lapis ezilis (paltry stone). "They (the Templars of the Grail) live from a stone of the purest kind. If you do not know it, it shall here be named to you. It is called lapsit exilis." These lines have been endlessly discussed. The authors note that the lodestone is generally described, e.g., by Claudian (4-5th century), as decolor, obscurus, vilis; a passage from the 13th century calls it "a stone drab and dark".14 The magnetic stone is thus indeed the lapis exilis; but, because it is "magnetic", it is also something else under this form. A few lines before this Wolfram called it "a precious stone". We on our part suggest that this investigation should be directed, typologically at least, to the symbolism of the Black Stone in Shi'ite Islamic Gnosis, the stone which is enclosed in the oriental angle of the Temple of the Ka'ba. An old tradition from the 6th Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, reports that this was originally an Angel from paradise, Adam's companion Angel, whom God "threw" to this Earth to follow him into exile. Adam did not recognize it at first, under its mineral appearance, paltry and obscure (lapis ezilis). When his eyes were opened, he understood; the Stone became the angular stone of the pure, spiritual Temple. This theme cannot be noted here without stressing this.15

Regarding his "sources", Wolfram von Eschenbach names them, but in such a way that on this point too there have been many hypotheses and discussions. Three proper names have caused the greatest difficulties for interpreters of Wolfram: the name of Trevirizent, the

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13H. and R. Kahane, op.cit., p. 109 and plates 16, 17 and 18 (the phoenix and the Aion, the "Sabian" phoenix); cf. A. J. Festugière, Hermétisme et mystique païenne, Paris 1967, pp. 256-260: Le Symbole du phénix et le mysticisme hermétique (and Plate I, showing the mosaic of the phoenix at Daphne). On Simunugh and the phoenix, see below, p. 100, note 218 and Chap. V, § 3.
14Ibid., p. 110
15Ibid., op.cit., p. 109, note 110

hermit sage who initiates Parsifal into the mystery of the Grail; the name of Flegetanis, the "pagan" sage who was the first to write the history of the Grail; the name of Kyot, from the province of Provengal, Wolfram’s informant. All of this forms quite a conundrum; the Kahane research seems to offer us for the first time a coherent picture.

First the name of Trevrizent. Here again we can only summarize the results, without entering into the details of the course that was followed. Trevrizent is described by Wolfram as a saint and an ascetic, a master and a sage. He pre-eminently typifies the adepts of the "Krater". All the traits that characterize him correspond to a spiritual portrait of Hermes; the mystagogue of the community of the Grail reproduces the characteristics of Hermes, the mystagogue of the Hermetic community. Trevrizent in Wolfram fills the same role as Hermes in the Corpus hermeticum (3rd, 4th and 13th treatises), and he initiates Parsifal into the science of the stars, with the authority of Hermes, founder of the astrological sciences. Then how should his strange name be read (disfigured, like all Latin names are in Wolfram)? Our authors had a fortuitous insight here that throws a ray of light into the direction to follow. A connection of rigorous philological deductions lead them to suggest to read for Trevrizent’s name the Old French of Triple Escient (triple wisdom, triple knowledge). From then on, nothing else is hidden under the name of Trevrizent, the sage with the threefold wisdom, than the qualification given Hermes by all of Hermetist tradition: in Latin, triplex sapientia vel triplex scientia; in Arabic, as Suhrawardî’s commentators were aware of it, muthall leth bi’l-hikmat. So, this Arabic term is none other than the translation or the equivalent of the Greek Trismegistos (the thrice great) and the qualification given Hermes Trismegistus as Hermes of Hermes.

Meanwhile Hermes is not only the master, the mystagogue, who initiates his disciples; he is also the supposed author of Hermetic Treatises, because he is the Sage possessing the encyclopedia of all knowledge: things from the natural world, from the sidereal world and of the invisible worlds. So it is under this double aspect that he appears to Wolfram, on the one hand under the name of Trevrizent, triple wisdom, and on the other hand as Flegetanis. This last name seems to defy any attempt at reduction; this is not to be wondered at if one thinks of the incredible deformations that Greek names had to undergo in their transcriptions into Arabic and subsequent re-transcription from Arabic into Latin, e.g., the alchemical texts (Hippocrates ends up as Picatrix, Empedocles as Pandolphus, etc.). It seems plausible that the first part of the name contains something like the common Arabic falak (Celestial Sphere, Heaven). The important point is that our authors have assembled a whole array of characteristics, placing in parallel the image that can be formed of Hermes according to Arabic documents (notably his astrological knowledge and what is derived from this), and also of Flegetanis according to Wolfram (explaining the presence of the Grail on earth). There is, among others, a great astronomical treatise attributed to Hermes in Arabic (al-falakîyat al-kubrâ). The investigators suggest that this work, falakîyat, be taken as the basis for the explanation of Flegetanis’ name. Meanwhile, it must be acknowledged that the suggested explanation carries a consequence with it; it requires an added fact of perhaps having passed through Persian. Whatever the case, our authors judiciously observe that

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16 H. and R. Kahane, op. cit., pp. 59-63. On the qualification of Trismegistus as the Islamic philosophers understood this, cf. the work of Qutbuddîn Ashkavârî, cited above in note 228. The qualification is explained as related to Hermes’ wisdom (hikmat), prophetic mission (nubuwat) and sovereignty (molk).
17 Ibid., pp. 117-122, 150-151.
18 In reality, there has never been a good explanation for this word. Recourse to the Arabic al-Falâk al-thânî (the "Second Celestial sphere", the one of Hermes) is no more convincing. In that case one would have to expect something like alfâlaketani. We ourselves have encountered in a manuscript a designation for Hermes al-falâkî (the astronomer). Recently Walter Hinz returned to an improved reading of something proposed by J. Görres [1833], namely the Persian falâk-dân [Firmamentkeeper]. Cf. Persisches im "Parsival", in Arch. Mitt. aus Iran, N.F., Bd. 2, 1969, pp. 177 ff. Also see the article by Paul Kunitsch in Z. d. D. Morgenl. Ges., Bd. 119, Heft 1, 1969, pp. 193-206. Therefore, whatever is proposed must equally apply to the person and the function. So his vision of the name of the Grail inscribed on the stars, in Wolfram’s book 9, prepares for the final outcome of the poem [the vision of the Grail given Feirenz by his baptism].
on the one hand, in Islamic prophetology, Hermes is identified with Enoch (himself identified with Idris) and on the other, in Wolfram, Flegetanis is pagan through his father and Jewish through his mother and related to Solomon. This double ascendance indeed reflects a fusion of Hermes and Enoch in the same person. Aside from this, it should be noted that in Wolfram, Flegetanis insists on the necessity of baptism for whomever aspires to see the Grail; a perfectly coherent necessity, since we are dealing with a baptism in the "Hermetic Krater". Hence it will finally be appropriate to admit that the dual aspect of Hermes hides under the two names of Trevrizen and Flegetanis: Trevrizen, the Sage in the Triple Science, is Hermes as mystagogue; Flegetanis is Hermes as author of the Hermetic Treatises.

If such a double identification is accepted, then the only other problem that remains is that of the transmission of Wolfram's Hermetic Arabic "material" to the West, and the person who, in Wolfram, is the agent of this transmission. This accounts for the third name mentioned above, Kyot the Provençal. The discussions seem fruitless as long as one postulates that Kyot transmitted an Urparzival to Wolfram that already contained a constructed history of Parsifal, because there is no trace of such a work in Provençal. Again, I can only refer to the clues that lead Henry and Renée Kahane to identify Kyot the Provençal with Guillaume de Tudèle, Wolfram's contemporary (Kyot = Guillot, diminutive of Guillaume in Catalan-Aragonese): a converted Jew, whose maternal language was so close to Provençal that he could be surnamed, from a linguistic point of view, "Kyot (Guillot) the Provençal". He knew Latin, Hebrew and Arabic, knew the ABC (i.e. in Arabic, the abjad, the philosophical alphabet, philosophical science and mysticism of letters). He was an expert in astrological geomancy and geomantic symbolism was then seen as being part of theology itself. The astrological pages in Wolfram's Parzival (attesting to a direct knowledge of Arabic terminology) have indeed such a character; they not only underline such and such an astral phenomenon, but also its symbolic meaning and the interpretation that follows from it.

The eloquence of the Kahane article cannot be stressed enough and we hope that the brevity of our remarks will not attenuate the weight of their argumentation. The résumé of their research shows a parallel course that encompasses the correspondences between the stages in Hermetist initiation and Wolfram's myst, typified in the person of Parsifal: not just a pedagogical novel (Erziehungsroman), but an initiatory poem. The same Mystical Vase, the Grail-Krater, is at the center of the 4th treatise of the Corpus hermeticum, as well as of Wolfram's Parzival; for both, the Monad in the Corpus hermeticum and Wolfram's Grail are the beginning of the root of all things. "There is nothing that has no beginning; but the beginning itself springs from nothing but itself, since it is indeed the beginning of all else. The Monad as the beginning includes every number, without being included in any of them; it generates every number, and is generated by no other number." Thus the Grail procession (the 24 young maidens appearing successively, carrying 17 lights, until the

proclaims the ultimate union between the Islamic world and Christianity, made during a vision of Princess Narkès, mother of the 12th Imâm. Similarly, in the Quest for the Grail knights are a universal elite who are recruited by the Round Table equally from "heathendom" as well as Christianity (cf. below, vol. 4, book 7).

19 Ibid., pp. 122-127.
20 Ibid., p. 147, with the well documented explanation of geomancy, pp. 132-149.
21 Ibid., pp. 164-171. The résumé makes mention of elements that we cannot go into here: religious ones (certain Catharistic doctrines) and political ones (references to Anjou and the Plantagenets which, as was noted well by Jean Marx, is inseparable from a "Glastonbury tradition" without which the "history" of the Grail, the Holy Earth in England, is difficult to comprehend). We also add that, if one admits that by transposing Hermetist history into Christian history Wolfram put into place his conviction of the affinity between Hermetism and Christianity, then in Wolfram (and also in the School of Chartres which manifested such a vivid interest in Hermetism in the 12th century) a precursor is seen of the Christian Hermetists of the Renaissance and this is no matter of small importance regarding the significance of the Grail cycle for our spiritual culture.

Queen of the Grail appears) is a "representation of the mystic journey of the soul towards the Monad, itself symbolized by the Grail".23

How should the Urparzival be pictured? The original version of the history as told by Wolfram was found by Kytô-Guillot in Tudèle (up to now, this was read as "Toledo"), written "in pagan script" (Arabic). The details of the origin remain a mystery. In any case, by his own account, Kytô-Guillot makes it available to Wolfram. But not in the form of a finished book, a coherent account, written and completed so Wolfram only had to transcribe it. Wolfram said himself that he had worked without a ready-made model, i.e. "without a book". The Hermetist elements that were used by Wolfram were spread over an entire corpus of hermetic writings. The hypothesis proposed by our authors is that the Urparzival was a set of doctrines and symbols collected by Kytô-Guillot and Wolfram, and organized by them into a history of the myst Parsifal.24

It seems to us that the hermetist elements in Suhrawardî (let us recall again a tradition that dates back the origin of the Ishráqiyyan to Hermes' sister) refer to a similar process. We have elsewhere presented the translation of the text where Suhrawardî describes the ecstatic ascension of Hermes.25 Similar to Hermes's vision of his Perfect Nature, such a recital bears the traces of a Hermetist tradition in the Arabic language, where the history of the myst that Suhrawardî has orchestrated in his own initiatory recitals is prefigured. Hermes is praying at night in the Temple of Light (i.e. gathered in himself in the presence of "the Sun" of his soul hidden in the material body). When the "column of dawn" blazed forth he saw an Earth about to be engulfed (his own physical person engulfed, like the phoenix, in the fire of "oriental" Light, that of his own soul blazing forth beyond the limits of the physical body, when the Light of Light inflames it). He calls for help to his "father" (the Nous, his Agathas daimôn, or his Perfect Nature). The answer he receives is: "Take hold of the cable of Irradiation and climb up to the battlements of the Throne." Hermes is carried into Heaven (Like Enoch with whom he is identified in Islamic prophetology, or like Elias in the chariot of Fire). The ray of Light seen as a cable that draws and links him with the "battlements of the Throne", plays the same role as the lodestone of the Grail in Wolfram. We know that for "oriental" theosophy the "column of dawn" is the apparition in the mystical "Orient" of the splendor of the Light of Glory, or Xvarnah. For the myst, the return to this "Orient" is the dawn of his apocalyptic. At the rising of this dawn, or spring, we will see in Suhrawardî the intervention of the mysterious bird Simurgh. To the degree that Simurgh and the phoenix can be identified we see Wolfram's theme of the phoenix reappear in Suhrawardî.26 However, this deals with a mystical illumination: the incandescence of the soul and the "oriental" Light, i.e., that of Xvarnah or the Grail. When it happens that in the high Middle Ages certain Haranians and even Indians, stimulated by the story of Hermes, were burned to death in a material fire, then this is one of the tragedies of the sensus litteralis understood literally.27

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23 Ibid., p. 105, and pp. 101-105 regarding the symbolism of the number of maidens, the color of their robes, the lights that they carry and finally, the One-and-All Queen of the Grail who closes the procession.
24 Ibid., pp. 3-5. Pages 155-156 suggest that if Parzival is in one way or another derived from the Corpus hermeticum, then it follows that Chrétien de Troyes' sources, from whose work Wolfram borrowed while blaming the author for having made certain alterations, should be looked at in a different light. Let us say that one has sometimes exaggerated the tendency to treat the mysterious book passed on to Chrétien by Count Philip of Flanders as literary fiction, and has underestimated the importance of the silentium mysticum observed by the hermit in teaching the secret prayer. Even if one only ascertained affinities, independently from the "sources" in the historical sense of that word, the cycle of the Grail needs another hermeneutic than the one that, through piety or habit, is always content to rediscover, symbolically or not, the teachings of the official church. It is a little too negligent of a structural framework to identify as "Cistercian" elements that are inseparable from a whole that nevertheless excludes such an identification.
25 Cf. above, page 87, note 114: for the complete translation of Hermes' ecstatic Recital, as well as the commentaries, see our Celestial Earth... page 120.
26 See above, page 95, note 16, and A. J. Festugière, La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste III, Paris 1953, pp. xi-xii, on the phoenix as symbol better adapted to "a religion that can be a pure religio mentis".
27 H. and R. Kuhnke, op. cit., p. 112, referencing D. A. Chwolsohn, Die Sassabier und Sassibismus, St.
The ascension of Hermes, the attainment of the source of Light and Life, is what Suhrawardî's myst attains on mystical Sinai, on the Emerald Rock (Mount Qâf, the Mountain of Salvation), at the end of his "occidental exile". It is for the Shaykh al-Ishrâq the same event in the world of Malakût as Kay Khusraw's and Zoroaster's ecstasy enrapped in the presence of the "sources of the Light of Glory" (Xvarnah). The bursting forth of the dawn, the soul rising to the "Orient", to the horizon of the world of Pure Light, this is for Suhrawardî the same vision of Xvarnah (the link between the dawn and Xvarnah is already marked in the Avesta by the name "mountain of the dawns"). The "oriental" hero is carried off to the mystical world of Hûrqalyâ; he is occulted to this world while alive, like Kay Khusraw was, like the 12th Imâm of the Shi'ites was, like the Holy Grail now is. When Parsifal speaks of the Holy Grail in the Orient, or when it is reported by Galahad to be in Sarras where it ascends into Heaven, then this is the same thing and it will often be repeated, because "Orient" and "Sarras" are, like Hûrqalyâ, places in the "eighth clime", invisible to the senses of those who are not "baptized in the Krater". This transfer is the transfiguration of the myst, anticipating his personal eschatology. Suhrawardî speaks of it in a magnificent "Recital of the Grail" where Kay Khusraw is the hero (below, § 5).

Thus on the one hand, from the research that we just analyzed, the Holy Grail from Wolfram's Parzival leads us back to Hermetism. From the finality of hermetic gnosis we again meet a converging attestation in the theme of Hermes' ascension in Suhrawardî, for whom the meaning of this mystical episode is the same as that of the visions of Kay Khusraw and the prophet Zoroaster. They are all heroes of a mystical epic which leads them back to "the Orient", which means the Splendor of the Light, Ishrâq, what the ancient Persians called Xvarnah. So also on the other hand, it is Xvarnah, the Light of Glory, that leads us back to the Holy Grail, if we follow the thread of the second investigation that was mentioned above. The circle closes in on itself, a circle where Suhrawardî's "Oriental theosophy" is at once the center and the periphery, as can happen to spiritual circles, which are different from natural ones.

As was stated, the second research effort is by a Zoroastrian scholar, Sir Jahangîr C. Coyajee. It is now some thirty years old. Unfortunately it ignores the works of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq (true, at that time still unpublished). This research inferred a link between Xvarnah, the Holy Grail, between the Iranian chivalry of Kay Khusraw and our own chivalry of the Holy Grail. If it is plausible, then it appears to us that the intervention of the heroes of the Iranian epic in Suhrawardî's recitals, where their heroic gestures are consummated as a mystical epic, confers on the connection the evidence of another order. Unfortunately, if the preceding research followed the track leading from Wolfram to Arabic Hermetism, then the itinerary leading from Xvarnah to the Grail in the same texts does not always follow equally precise landmarks. On the other hand, we already know that Suhrawardî bridged that imaginary distance with ease: in his work he places himself between the vision of Xvarnah accorded to Kay Khusraw and the "Recital of the Grail" where Kay Khusraw is the hero. Beginning with him the connection is made and propagates its effects over the entire past. That is why we just spoke of evidence of another order: that of spiritual facts making up the history of the soul who, always living in the present, bristles against the irreversibility of time. This is not just a conjecture that has come about through the reconstitution of fleeting material traces of a past that has since disappeared.

The Zoroastrian scholar suggests that the connecting link between Iranian chivalry and
that of the Grail is constituted by something else than Hermetism, namely Mithraism. Indeed, these two forms of initiatory religion have not been without conflict with each other, even before what we call the "Platonists of Persia". The situation that Coyajee intends to resolve we now present in summary form, while following his remarks as closely as possible.\textsuperscript{30} A lot of work and ingenuity has been spent in explaining the legend of the Holy Grail (through the cult of Adonis, the Eleusian mysteries, those of Samothrace, etc.), whereas by noting Iranian analogies a single hypothesis can plausibly be made that has the merit of explaining a number of things. Indeed, so says our author, it is difficult to explain how the connection was formed between the theme and the legend of the Holy Grail in its Christian format and the entire Celtic cycle composed of the Grail legend, the saga of King Arthur and the chivalry of the Round Table. Some have thought it was the work of Robert de Boron; others that the latter already found it formed from an older Latin source; still others that it was the work of Chrétien de Troyes.\textsuperscript{31} (As is shown by Wolfram’s work, a new event takes place in the Germanic cycle, that precisely put the research previously analyzed here on the path of Hermetism).

According to our author the Iranian analogies will finally form a convergence of indices, leading to the admission of elements that are derived in the Grail cycle from Iranian epics. In the first place, these analogies will permit the recognition of an identical representation in both the Holy Grail and Xvarnah, namely, the Light of Glory. The idea of Xvarnah is organically connected with the idea of a chivalry grouped around the lineage of its holders (we met the same theme in Suhrawardi, inspired by the words of the 1st Imâm). Kay Khusraw (a central figure in Suhrawardi, after whom the eponym Khusrawáníyân is formed, the "oriental" Sages or thecosophers, the ishrâqîyûn) belongs among the holders. Kay Khusraw is placed by our author in a position similar to Parsifal and King Arthur. However, we are dealing here with the identification of a positive historical direction and we must uncover the material trace of such an encounter between Celtic and Iranian culture. For Coyajee the form under which this contact takes place on the Iranian side is Mithraism.

On the one hand, the hymns of the Avesta (cf. the Zamyad Yasht and the Mîhr Yasht) create a special bond between Mithra and Xvarnah. Wherever the cult of Mithra appears it is accompanied by the Xvarnah cult (recall that Xvarnah means Glory and Destiny; the term "Royal Xvarnah" is translated into Greek as tykhê basileos). There are all the details of Mithraic iconography: the vases, plates and kraters that figure in the sculptures of the taurine Mithra, alluding to the ritual of the celebration of his mysteries, the communal Mithraic feasts. Mithra, a youthful figure, armed with sword and lance; on Bactrian coins Xvarnah is represented as a god armed with a lance, etc. Krater, sword, lance, are as many typical symbols in Grail literature.

On the other hand, Coyajee shows that there is an ideal community in between the Mithraic sodality and the confraternity of the Grail. It consists of the quest for the Spring of Life, an ideal of physical and moral purity, a strict bond of fraternity (perhaps there has been too much talk of Mithraism as a "religion of soldiers"; in fact, the professional military was never especially called to it, rather the initiates were the ones who were called miles, milites; that is of course not the same thing. In passing let us note that the medieval Latin miles means precisely "knight"). This communal tie is placed at the service of a cause that can be compared to the Iranian culture underlying Mithraism and the chivalry of the Round Table. Certainly all this offers material for introspection. Unfortunately so many historical records have been lost that we only know very little about Mithraic rituals and initiation (we have referred several times to the text known as "Liturgy of Mithra"). It is true that


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 101. Concerning the origin and the Celtic elements in the Grail cycle, see the two works by Jean Marx, La Légende arthurienne et le Graal, Paris 1952, and Nouvelles recherches sur la légende arthurienne, Paris 1965. In the first of these works, Marx roughly accepts the connection outlined by Sir J. Coyajee of the Grail and Iranian Xvarnah.
what is important is essentially to know the direction of the mystical itinerary proposed by the various sources. Mithra's myst was initiated into a voyage of the soul to the Islands of Light in the Stellar Ocean beyond the planetary spheres. Perhaps these are converging paths since it always concerns the "world of Hurqalya", the "eighth clime", the intermediate "Orient", still occident to the "Major Orient" of Jabarût. Similarly our knights are lead towards Avalon or Sarras as well as to the Green Isle, the home of the 12th Imam, or to the "occidental paradise" of Amithaba, the Buddha of Infinite Light, according to the Japanese Buddhism of the Pure Earth.

Let us return from these distances to cast a glance at our maps, where understandably cities of the "eighth clime" will not be found. Yet an interesting question does arise about geographic meeting places between Mithraic and Celtic priesthoods. Coyajee notes in this regard the wide diffusion of Mithraism in Gaul, Italy, Great Britain and the Roman Germanic provinces. Vestiges of Mithraea have been located in considerable quantity. Inversely one could speak of an extension of Druidism from Ireland to Galatia in Asia Minor. Similarly, colonies of Magi had been founded in Asia Minor since the Achemenids (and we had occasion to previously note here a link between these Magi and the cult of Mithra). An encounter between Iranian and Celtic tradition, between Magi and Druids, is more than likely or plausible. Mithraic tradition would have been able to enter this way into Celtic beliefs well before the advent of the Roman Empire.

Certainly, no objection can be made against this view as a whole, although for lack of texts its likelihood cannot be raised to the certainty of an explicitly formulated theory. Here research can only aim at extreating analogies; the conditions are not as favorable as in the case of Wolfram's Hermetism, where careful comparison of texts was possible. For what matters to us here it seems much better to assume a thoroughly phenomenological viewpoint, i.e., to focus on the things that appeared to Suhrawardi, to understand why and how they appeared to him the way they did. It is beginning with the spiritual fact that we must understand the secret (bātin) he shows us and why and how he does so, something that happened, but happened spiritually, as it constituted his vision and firm resolution, where the visions of Hermes and Zoroaster, the Light of Glory and the Holy Grail met. This is why we preferred not to speak of a migration of symbols here, of a history of ideas, of great "currents", or of recurrences of archetypes from the unconscious. These are all fitting interpretations but on condition that a more or less agnostic premise is accepted: that the only interesting and accessible matter is somehow the "gesture" of a thinker or a doctrine, never really what this gesture shows.

So what Suhrawardi wants to show us is the direction of Ishrâq, of Malakât, of the spiritual world. That is where all events that matter to "oriental" theosophy take place, the ones in which Hermes, Kay Khosrow and Zoroaster are the heroes. Malakât is neither in the past nor in the future, neither old nor "still going on"; it is the Present in itself, an absolute presence, i.e., absoluted from all those conditions that we impose on what we determine to be past or future. Is it possible to let it show itself while keeping a "thoroughly" phenomenological viewpoint? This "unveiling of the hidden" (kashf al-mahjûb) is the same as what Suhrawardi and his people produced in showing us what the "Orient" shows, which is not on our maps, where the gesture of the heroes follows its course and consummates in a mystical gesture, where eo ipso Iranian chivalry and that of the Grail meet. This "orientation" put into motion by the Shaykh al-Ishrâq will fructify the analogies noted by Coyajee, especially those regarding Xvarnah and the person of Kay Khosraw.

32 We cite here as a reminder the research on the Grail and Iran formerly published by F. von Suhirsch in Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 82 (1928), pp. lxxx ff., where the border between philological explanation and pun remained a little doubtful. To summarize the two investigations that we analyzed here, let us say that the one gives us a presentiment of the motif of the ascension of Hermes, of the myst's initiation, of the Quest (the "Song of the Pearl") in Urvarzival, while the other invites us to rediscover the lineage and the charisma of Xvarnah. The conjunction between the two fits remarkably
The Manifestational Forms and the Lineage of Xvarnah and the Holy Grail

Again we are only able to note in bold outline a small number of the multiple comparisons proposed by the Zoroastrian scholar. We do this while alluding to the way it seems to us that the observations of the manifestational forms of Xvarnah and the Grail and the holy lineage of their holders or guardians are really significant.

It is correct to observe that neither Xvarnah nor the Holy Grail are specific descriptive forms, but rather both are similar manifestational forms from which certain common and general properties can be derived. It is said that the Holy Grail is neither wood, metal, stone, horn nor bone; meanwhile it does assume certain material appearances (vase, cup, bowl, stone) while accompanying the appearance of other "marvelous objects" (lance, sword). Xvarnah is equally spiritual in essence in such a way that it is at first the stage of a battle between the celestial powers and the Ahrimanic contrary powers. However, it can also assume the form of a cup, stone, lance, or of a flame, indeed even of a bird (when it abandons King Yima), or of a part of the sea (when it escapes from Afrasîyâb the Turanian).

Among the forms where Xvarnah "materialized" in the Iranian epic cycle there was one of a stone, a talisman (a theurgy), endowed with supernatural properties. Kay Khusrav inherited it from his distant ancestors. This talisman possessed extraordinary curative properties; it could return sanity to people struck with insanity and bring the dead back to life (we saw above that Xvarnah is also the energy that binds existence to something that is, it is its "destiny" and its "Light"). This talisman gave energy and spiritual powers that were a guarantee of victory. Similarly, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's epic poem, the Stone, "also called the Grail", carried from Heaven by angels and confided to the custody of a mystical knighthood granted to those who contemplated it the gift of longevity, indeed immortality, because the Grail is the Source of Life.

No less famous is the form of the cup. Suffice it to note here the central object of the Christian cycle of the Grail. Identified with the chalice used at the Last Supper and given to Joseph of Arimathea who caught the blood of Christ in it, it is transported to the White Isle (i.e., Great Britain) by a group of mysterious messengers who have as their leader, sometimes (in according to Robert de Boron) Bron, Joseph of Arimathea's brother-in-law who received the first kingship in the holy Lineage, at other times (e.g. in Lancelot) Joseph of Arimathea's son Josephes, the mystical figure of the first Christian bishop. At any rate, this has nothing to do with the sort of journey and with stages that can be plotted on a map; it has to do with transportation of a different sort. The supernatural powers of this cup and the theme of the "quest of the Grail" are all themes that our Grail literature is filled with (possibly some day soon the "Grail Canon" will be contained in one single publication, in a modern language, available to the interested reader).

However, the cup is also one of the manifestational forms of Xvarnah. In the Iranian cycle the cup is called Jâm-gît-nemâ, "the cup (Grail) that shows the universe", or "mirror of the universe". It is the cup in which the entire cosmos can be contemplated at the moment of the spring equinox. This does not refer to the affairs of the "seven climates" of the terrestrial world, but those of the invisible world that the planets and constellations are only signs of. In order to attain such a contemplation there must be a "hieratic" invested with Royal Xvarnah, like Kay Khusrav. Suhrawardi's poem, cited below, where Kay Khusrav is the hero, is one of those that show the mystical meaning of the Iranian Grail. The theme of the cup is passed on to all of Persian mystical literature (Jâm-e Jam, the Grail of Jamshid).

The themes of the lance and the sword are equally in agreement. Kay Khusrav attacks

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well with Suhrawardi's intentions.

33For what follows, cf. Coyajee, op. cit., pp. 50-56 [we forego citation here of multiple references to Avestic and other texts].
The magician’s malefic fortress armed with a supernatural lance. The lance is cast at the battlements; the gloomy fortress disappears; the demons that occupied it disappear; in its place another magnificent castle appears, bathed in light and flowers. Kay Khusraw reveals himself in this drama as the possessor of Royal Xvarnah and Kay Kāüs’ successor. He is "the one who knows the meaning of the lance". On the other hand, when Parsifal finally asks what the meaning is of the lance and the Grail, the enchantment and the magical prohibition immobilizing nature into sterility and desolation ceases. Again the earth is now vibrant with the brightness of flowers and the singing of birds.34 However, like our Grail cycle, the Iranian epic knows equally well the case of the fallen knight (e.g. Farîb orz). "He in whose hands the epic breaks", typifies the knight in whom the quest is accomplished by defeat. Regarding the "castle of the Grail", the person of Kay Khusraw will again allow us to allude to this below.

In summary, the following can be said: there somehow is the idea of a force or a mysterious power that has the manifestational form of a marvelous Object, a talisman or theurgy, and that is surrounded by an aura of saintliness like the holiest of relics.35 This marvelous object, whether in the form of Xvarnah or the Grail, dispenses the food of immortality and illuminative knowledge. Those who have the fullness of Xvarnah possess, with the gifts that correspond to these "hieratic" perfections, a knight’s victorious power. Xvarnah passes successively from one hero to another without needing the intervention of any visible agent. This is what leads Coyajee to place in parallel the royal lineage of the possessors of Xvarnah and that of the guardians of the Grail.

As the Grail is carried to earth by angels and is given to knights, who are the purest of men, so also Xvarnah originates in the powers of Light; it belongs originally to Ohrmazd, to his archangels, to the Yazatas, to all beings of Light, those of the invisible spiritual world (mênk) as well as those of the terrestrial material world (êtik). It passes from the one sovereign to the other in the first two legendary dynasties of the Iranian gesture: the Pishdâdîyân (the "legislators") and the Kayanians, from Kay Qubâd to Kay Khusraw. It passes to Zoroaster/Zarathustra, the prophet of Ohrmazd’s religion (Ahu Mazda, the "Lord-Wisdom") and to king Vishtaspa, his protector. Then it passes to Zoroaster's last son, the one who has to be born at the end of our Aiôn, as a kind of Zarathustra redivivus (the last Saoshyant who is to Zoroaster in a similar relationship as the 12th Imâm is to the Prophet Muhammad). The Light of Glory "will accompany the victorious Saoshyant and his compatriots when it will make a new world, take away old age, death, decomposition; eternally living, eternally believing...".36 Let us note here that the idea of eschatology, so characteristic of all of Iranian spirituality, co ipso comprises the present of Xvarnah, as it does the present of the 12th Imâm and under the same implication it also comprises the occultation of the Grail. This junction would be the ideal place to investigate the idea common to all of those whom Suhrawardi calls the Khusrawânîyûn and the chivalry of the Grail, and with it the basis of a common ethic that dedicates both incognito to the same battle. Both of their forces are sacred and invisible, as both of their dwellings are incognito.

The struggle for Xvarnah "began in heaven"; Ohrmazd’s Holy Spirit (Spenta Mainyu) and Ahriman (Angra Mainyu) enter into battle for it (Yashî 19, 46). Xvarnah’s hierohistory on earth is the manifestation and the continuation in the visible material world of the battle between Ohrmazd’s powers of Light and Ahriman’s powers of Darkness. Again, what the Iranian Kayanian dynasty and the guardians of the Grail have in common should be seen from this point of view. We have the impression that Coyajee’s intent as a comparative historian is far-reaching. (It is strange that in the area of facts and material things the critical historian ventures much farther than the phenomenologist, while in the matter of recognizing

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34 Cf. the Continuation of Gerbert de Monstreuil, A. E. Waite, op. cit., pp. 229-230.
and basing spiritual facts, the phenomenologist ventures farther). The Zoroastrian scholar alludes to analogies that allow him to compare king Kâûs with Titurel; Siyâvakhsh, son of king Kâûs, with Amfortas the "méhaignéed king"; finally, Kay Khusraw and Parsifal. Old king Kâûs wishes for the arrival of the heroes of his offspring (his grandson) to whom Xvarnah will be transferred. Because his son Siyâvakhsh has been killed by order of the king of Turania, Iran is now desolate and ruined. A voice from heaven informs the Iranians that if they want an end to the desolation and devastation they must search for the future possessor of Xvarnah. When Kay Khusraw manages to slay the Turanian tyrant Iran is covered again with fresh flowers, like the land of the Grail after Parsifal's return. According to the author this is how an Iranian lineage coincides with the Germanic cycle of the Grail.

As we know, the lineage of the guardians of the Grail as found in Wolfram, i.e., the Germanic cycle, is not the same as the one in, e.g., Robert de Boron's Joseph and the cycle derived from this. There is no lack of problems and discussions on this subject. Here we will only take into account the aspect that holds Coyajee's attention. There is the prayer in which Joseph of Arimathea asks that the guardianship of the Grail stay within his descendants. Should this be understood as a lineage according to the flesh or one of mystical adepts? The Zamyat Yast (hymn to Dea terrestris) describes how Xvarnah attaches itself to the eight kings, beginning with Kavi Kavata (Kay Qubâd) and ending with Kavi Husravah (Kay Khusraw) and is successively passed on. This is the lineage of the Kayanians as described in Ferdowsi's Shah-Nâme. Similarly there are eight Grail guardians, from Joseph of Arimathea to king Pelles. In a reduction of this kind there is much to be gained. Coyajee is of the opinion that all difficulties posed by the different versions, about kinship relations between the guardians of the Grail and those achieving the Quest, are solved if there is agreement on the identification of the lineage of the eight Kayanians, guardians of Xvarnah, and the holy lineage of the Grail. The desolation in the land of the Grail is in this way explained by the murder of Siyâvakhsh, son of Kay Kâûs and holder of Xvarnah, treacherously killed by Afrâsiyâb the Turanian, whose son-in-law he had become. Finally, the characters of Kay Khusraw and Parsifal become transparent to each other as heroes of the conquest or re-conquest of either Xvarnah or the Grail.

The consequences of such a proposition will be the return pure and simple of the Arthurian gesture of the Grail to the Iranian gesture of Xvarnah as the source that it is derived from and with whom it is identified regarding its origin. Perhaps such a proposition easily satisfies material and exterior facts, like showing antecedents to Corneille's Cid in Spanish predecessors or showing how Welsh tribes are related to one another. Yet from the viewpoint of phenomenology this seems to go both too far and still remain short of what really is its cause. It goes too far because such a thesis of material identification is extremely vulnerable; we also risk losing the benefits acquired from the uncovered analogies. While causing us to lose everything, it remains short of the consequences of these analogies, in so far as these allow us to catch a glimpse of the area of spirituality common to both Xvarnah and the Grail. However, it is one thing to say that the Kayanians are through their relation with Xvarnah what the holy lineage is through its relation with the Grail; it is quite another to say that the latter is historically tied to the former. To doubt such material identification.

37Cf. Coyajee, op.cit., pp. 62-63. Unfortunately Coyajee believes it possible to homologate Afrâsiyâb the Turanian with the King-Fisher, as present in the Welsh romance Peredur. Is there even hostility between the King-Fisher and Peredur-Parsifal that will allow such a homologation? Afrâsiyâb the Turanian certainly was Kay Husravah's maternal grandfather, and several times attempted in vain to conquer Xvarnah by force, by "fishing" in the mystical waters. But in proper phenomenology one cannot isolate a few traits of someone in order to proceed with a homologation. So, Afrâsiyâb's entire person in Iranian tradition decidedly resists such an homologation with the King-Fisher in our Grail cycle, and besides this, Peredur does not quite appear to be a "canonical text" pertaining to the Grail Quest cycle. Indeed, it is Kay Kâûs (paternal grandfather of Kay Khusraw), whom it will be possible to homologate with the King-Fisher, cf. below.

38Cf. our book Celestial Earth..., index s.v. Zamyat.

is in no way the same as refusing to see the analogies that were raised, but a matter of valorization: to draw one’s inspiration from what Suhrawardi did, i.e., by understanding the nature of the bond he himself established between the Khusravânîyûn, the theosophic sages of ancient Persia, and the Ishrâqîyûn, the theosophers of the Light of Islamic Iran. Certainly, a historian who only cares about material facts will shake his head before a fact that escapes the categories of positive science and that cannot be accounted for by going back causally step by step. When a philosopher recognizes his spiritual ancestors and claims his ascendance then this does not concern a succession of rightful claims backed up by legal proof. It concerns an event that innovates, occurring in the history of the soul, whose echo is capable of reforming him, so that it cannot be "explained" by pointing to antecedents. Rather, the actual "antecedent" lies elsewhere, at the level of a world whose historical reality in this present world is only an ephemeral manifestation.

A trait common to both the Kayanian and the Grail dynasties escapes the chronological classification systems of our historical treatises. Attempts to assimilate the Kayanians into the Achemenids, well known to the Greeks, have failed. Here is a lineage of heroes with specific traits and gestures, whose tradition continues from the Avesta to the Shâh-Nâmeh, that we cannot give any dates for (like in Zoroaster’s case, the various proposed dates can only be called approximations). The Kayanians only make their entry into history through the chants that celebrate them or the epic that tells about them; nevertheless, the events of their gesture are perfectly real, but of a dimension that is different from that of the history told by, e.g., Julius Caesar in his "Commentaries". That is why we speak of archehistory rather than "mythical prehistory". The former is related to history like the archetype is to the type. Similarly, the lineage of the Grail does not enter into history except like a sanctuary light shining into the night through a stained-glass window. What gauge does it have in common with Caesar’s "Commentaries"? Rather than restricting its scope let us instead say that, like this sanctuary light, the hierohistory of the Grail is projected upon a scene where it cannot be focused on anything, because there is nothing there that has been seen before or by which it can be measured, but this projection is never with a lesser intensity.

The lineage of the Holy Grail has no place in official ecclesiastical history. It doesn’t even enter into competition for the succession of the Apostolic See; it completely ignores it. Instead of Peter and James it speaks of Joseph of Arimathea and a mysterious Josephes. The mention of the Normano-Angevine dynasty of the Plantagenets in certain places of the Grail cycle is linked to the sacralization of the Arthurian sanctuary of Glastonbury, concealing within itself the aspirations of an older Celtic church that was eradicated by force and rose again in a secret Church of the Grail in order to persist incognito in this world. What facts can we introduce without difficulty into a history that is a metahistory and thereby also an archehistory? The transmission of the Light of Glory from Ohrmazd’s heaven to Kay Khusrav and the transmission of the "Muhammadan Light" (Nûr muhammadî) can be placed in parallel with this. It was primordially created from the celestial Adam and passed on from prophet to prophet to Muhammad and from Imâm to Imâm to the 12th. The lineage of the Twelve is not in competition with any dynasty from this world. As we have noted before, this refers to the esoteric guardian lineage of the "Muhammadan Light" and the walâyat, since the beginning limited to twelve. For them this is concerned with something entirely different than what today is called "making history".

Having said all this, what does it mean when we speak of a "meeting" between the Iranian chivalry of Xvarnah and the Celtic chivalry of the Grail? Is this something that can be "explained", causally deduced from the fact that Druids and Magi met in Asia Minor, that Druids and Mithraic mysts met in Celtic areas, in Great Britain? We are not referring here to a lack of documents. It is simply this: Druids and Magi, Druids and Mithraic mysts, can or will stay side by side, juxtaposed to one another, over the centuries without a meeting such as this ever taking place. Why wasn’t there ever hostility, reticence or rivalry? If the
search of an investigator "who has his eyes open" presently discerns the event of such an encounter, then it matters very much that he also discern where the event took place, on what level of knowledge and on which plane of existence this event has significance. Similarly, the Gospel of Nicodemus, containing the hierohistory of Joseph of Arimathea and the entire Celtic saga of King Arthur and his Round Table, will materially coexist in the western world (e.g., in libraries). No knight ever went on the quest of the Grail, made manifest since the Last Supper and become invisible again to this world since Galahad's death in ecstasy, if the event of this meeting did not take place. Where and how then did it occur? That is precisely where the Gospel of Nicodemus ceases to be an "apocryphal book" in order to become a Book in full light. Suhrawardi speaks to us of events that take place, i.e., have their place, in Malakût. The spiritual event in fact "happens" somewhere else than in social history, literary history, or in the history of ideas, etc. Without a doubt this is the most difficult of events and at certain times even impossible to imagine or comprehend. There will again be reason to speak of it relative to the notion of hikāyat; there is no history of spirituality other than this actual spirituality itself; or rather, there is no longer its history. Again we discover the same situation as in the last book, when it was the case of understanding the events of Shi'ism. We will meet this dilemma again: either it is a matter of finding out that there are events whose history is other than the one that is put together by our positivist science, or we impose categories on them from the outside that do not belong to them; in that case they escape us while we are still thinking that we have them in our grasp.

On the other hand, the investigator who has in one way or another made himself capable of "perceiving" these events because he has accommodated his faculty of perception to their true nature will indeed be capable of appreciating the parallelism noted by Coyacee between Kay Khusrav's gesture and Parsifal's. Similarly we saw in the eponym of the Khusrawāniyān mystical theseophers how Suhrawardi claimed for his Ishrāqiyyān the spiritual ascendance of Kay Khusrav. What Kay Khusrav's saga tells us about the ecstatic king prepares here and now a kinship that bases itself in Malakût, the place of all events of hierohistory. One is never a simple spectator to these events; Suhrawardi is their active witness in his psalms and mystical recitals. This is so because it is an entirely eschatological spirituality, like Kay Khusrav, King Arthur and Parsifal are eschatological figures and because the meaning of "Orient" and "return to the Orient" are eschatological. This occurs in an occultation to the world of the sensible phenomenon and its conquest is only achieved beyond this present world, in the universe upon which the phenomenon of this world depends. This is why Suhrawardi's recitals will essentially mark the passage from the Iranian heroic gesture to the mystical one.

Kay Khusraw and Parcifal

The confrontation that was sketched here so rapidly will help cast light on the characteristics of a prince to whom Suhrawardi grants an important rank among the sages of ancient Persia: Kay Khusraw, son of Siyāvaksh and Ferāngiz, daughter of Afrāsiyāb the Turanian. This was a prince whom all texts celebrate as a spectacular human being and whom Zoroastrian tradition glorifies as having understood the Mazdean religion in practice since before Zoroaster's prophetic mission.\(^{40}\) He was the eighth and last king in the Kayanian line, king of Xvaniratha, i.e. of the central keshvar (climate or orb) of the seven that constitute the Mazdean Imago Terrae.\(^{41}\) He is "one of the seven immortal princes of Xvaniratha",\(^{42}\) i.e., one of those who with his knights will be among the compatriots of the Saoshyant preparing

\(^{40}\)Cf. A. Christensen, Les Kayanianes, Copenhagen 1932, referring to Denkart IX, 16, 19.

\(^{41}\)Cf. Celestial Earth..., index s.v. Imago Terrae.

\(^{42}\)Cf. A. Christensen, op.cit., pp. 52 and 153. The list of seven princes varies, but it always contains Kay Khusraw.
Kay Khusraw and Parcifal

the transfiguration of the world (frashkart) at the end of our Aiôn. Presently Kay Khusraw has withdrawn to a place invisible to the inhabitants of this world. This same theme reappears in Twelvever Shi‘ism in the compatriots of the 12th Imâm; we have noted this already and there will be reason to remember it again, since the entire ethos of Iranian spirituality resounds with this same tonality. The person, the role, as well as Kay Khusraw’s gesture are essentially eschatological; the gesture follows its course and is completed in a world that transcends this one and is at once closer and further removed from it.

An essential element of eschatological scenography is the mystical castle whose situs cannot be reported on our maps and which calls forth certain comparisons with the Grail castle. It is unceasingly present within the perspectives of the tragedies that interweave the destinies of Kay Khusraw’s father and grandfather (Kay Kâûs and Siyâvakhsh); it is finally the hidden place where the apotheosis of the former takes place. His mission and reign accomplished, Kay Khusraw withdraws to the mystical castle of Kang-Dêz. It has happened that some heroes and prophets withdraw to it without crossing the threshold of death. That is what the final scene will show, one of Ferdawsi’s Shah-Nâmeh most beautiful ones.

The image of Kang-Dêz’s castle is linked with the theme of mysterious dwellings constructed by kings and heroes and with a basic eschatological meaning. Where is this mysterious castle? Sometimes it is looked for in the east, sometimes in the far north and all of this is true because certain specific geographic localities have their own visionary experiences, but in order to verify these we have to again leave our maps at home. The far north is the celestial pole, the "Emerald Rock". As Suhrawardi knows, this is where the "Intermediate Orient" begins. If it is said that the castle is built in the center of or at the summit of Elburz, or Mount Qâf, then this amounts to the same thing and means that the castle exists in the "eighth clime". To reach it we have to go through the middle clime, i.e. through Erân-Vêj in medio mundi. Now the two poles of the psycho-cosmic axis are in place. The best indication is the one that is presently given us: "At the border of Erân-Vêj". It is precisely there at that "border" that the lot of our hero and his fortress is decided and why there are so many examples of it. There is the var (enclosure) of Yima (Jamshid) that produces its very own light and from where the elect gain eternal youth in order to repopulate the earth some day with a superior humanity, after its destruction. Kay Kâûs builds his own castle from a similar plan. However, Yima and Kay Kâûs are "fallen" kings, having become "mortals" through their own fault. It was left to Kay Khusraw to build the castle on a firm foundation and withdraw to it in order to wait. There are also the dwellings of Darkness, e.g., the subterranean fortress of Afrâsiyâb, where he is protected by a ring of fire. We are simplifying things here; what mainly concerns us is the parallel contrast between the Grail castle and the evil fortress of Clinschor (Klingsor) the Magician and his "wonder castle".

The castle belonging to Kay Kân, Kay Khusraw’s grandfather, is a tragedy in itself. Kay Kân, king of the seven Keshvar, built an immense castle with seven palaces, one of gold, two of silver, steel and crystal, in the center or the summit of Elburz, i.e., Mount Qâf (that is also where Suhrawardi’s mystical recitals lead us back to). From this fortress he keeps all of Ahriman’s demons in check, who have been released into the present world. The seven palaces have magical powers of their own: if a human being, weakened by old age and threatened with approaching death, passes through one of the gates in the castle walls, he

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43Cf. Celestial Earth..., index s.v. Erân-Vêj.
44Cf. ibid., index s.v. Var of Yima
45Cf. A. Christensen, op. cit., pp. 20 and 82.
46See also the articles Gang-behesht, Gang-dêj in Burhân-e Qâfe’, Motâm edition, III, p. 3845.
47Recalling the seven planetary colors used in the construction of Babylonian Temples: in Ecbatan (now Hamadan) concentric walls were decorated with battlements painted in seven colors: white, black, purple, blue, flesh color, silver and gold (Herodotus I, 18). The "source" is not pointed to here through tales and popular legends (Christensen, ibid., p. 81) but through an archetype whose tradition originates against the horizon of a metahistory.
48Cf. Celestial Earth..., index s.v. Elburz, Qâf.
will leave through another one, changed into a fifteen year old adolescent. King Kâûs had experienced this himself;\(^{49}\) this is a transparent symbolism, as everything concerning the onset of the "Source of Life" is. This is what happened in an intoxicating moment of desire for power to Kay Kâûs. On this "frontier" man is in fact placed before a choice: either he understands that it is only possible to reach the other side in the way Kay Khursraw did it, or he imagines that the force of arms or machines will get him somewhere. It is a tragic error: what "celestial" space is it dealing with? The world of Light is not someplace that is reached by force of arms or machines, no matter how "modern" they are: but Kay Kâûs's mistake is being repeated even today. So Kay Kâûs, at the head of an army of demons whom he once fought himself, attacks heaven. Understandably he does not breach the border between Darkness and the Celestial Light, i.e., leave the world of becoming and death. His army is defeated, he falls back to earth, forever wounded, deprived of his \(X\text{varnah}\). In later traditions, e.g., in Ferdawsi, the machines (already known in a Greek romance about Alexander) become derisive but no less meaningful: a gondola carried by eagles, baited by pieces of meat that are hung from lances attached to birds.\(^{50}\) No matter how high he goes, Kay Kâûs never leaves this world: forever wounded and powerless before the demon of death, he can only wait for the one whom \(X\text{varnah}\), or the Grail, will make a victorious hero.

From this moment on, this victorious hero makes his entry "into history", but a history whose real scene is \(\text{Malakút}\). Forgetting for the moment when Zoroaster enters into the present world, we are told (by the Dênkart) that his Fravarti (his celestial entity) was created at the beginning of the 4th "millennium" of our \(\text{Aiôn}\) in the spiritual world (of \(\text{mênôk}\)). Similarly we hear that Kay Kâûs has been chased since his defeat and escape by Neryoseng, "messenger of the gods and promoter of the worlds", who wants to kill him and finish him off, but is prevented from doing so by Kay Khursraw's Fravarti,\(^{51}\) i.e., by his celestial entity pre-existing his birth into the terrestrial world, his archetypal Self of Light, his "Angel". So Kay Khursraw's intercedes: it knows that Kay Kâûs's son, Siyâvaksh, must be born in order for it to come into this world and accomplish its victorious mission as hero over Afrâsiyâb and Darkness. This accounts for the way Kay Khursraw's Fravarti is addressed in a hymn from the Avesta.\(^{52}\)

After Kay Kâûs's defeat his son Siyâvaksh in turn builds a mystical castle called Kang-Dêz in the far north amidst high mountains, i.e., in the heart of, or on top of the cosmic mountain. Meanwhile, although Siyâvaksh started it, only Kay Khursraw will "stabilize" and finish it. The Kang-Dêz castle is characterized by two things: its fantastic architecture of a city in the \(\text{mundus imaginatis}\); and its eschatological meaning and role.\(^{53}\) The castle contains seven walls: gold, silver, steel, bronze, iron, crystal and precious stones. Its walls enclose fourteen mountains and seven navigable rivers; its soil is so fertile that grain grows the height of a man overnight. It has fifteen gates and every gate is as high as fifteen men. Diagonally from one gate to the opposite one is seven hundred parasang;\(^{54}\) it takes twenty two days in the spring and fifteen days in the summer to cross that distance. In this city, whose description is similar to that of the cities of Jâbarsâ, Jâbalqâ and Hûrqalyâ in the "eighth clime", lives one of Zoroaster's sons, Khôrshêd-Teher, who will guide Peshottûn, the leader of the city (another eschatological hero, the son of king Vishtaspa, Zoroaster's

\(^{49}\) Cf. A. Christensen, \(\text{ibid.}\), p. 109. See Birúni's text in \textit{Alberuni’s India. An Account... An English edition... By Dr. Edward C. Sachau}, London 1910, vol. 1, p. 109. The recital, made by Spandyâd at the moment of his death, is preceded (p. 388 ff.) by an explanation of Rasâyana's science, "a science like alchemy", which makes it possible, through a knowledge of plants and certain drugs and procedures, that sick and elderly people return to a state of adolescence.

\(^{50}\) \(\text{ibid.}\), pp. 74-78, 109.

\(^{51}\) \(\text{ibid.}\), pp. 78-79.

\(^{52}\) \(\text{ibid.}\), pp. 19 and Yash X, 133-155.

\(^{53}\) \(\text{ibid.}\), pp. 82-85, where all references to Avestic and Pahlavi texts are given.

\(^{54}\) Parasang = \(\text{farsakh}\), unit of length about 3.5 miles.
protector\textsuperscript{55} and his compatriots at the time of the final battle with the Ahrimanic forces. As one of the seven princes and companions of the future Saoshyant this is where Kay Khusraw retired to. The inhabitants of Kang-Dêz are described by Suhrawardi in the same way as those of Hûrqalyâ: happy and glorious, faithful and pious, strangers to death and old age (see below, book 7, the inhabitants of the Green Isle, the residence of the Hidden Imâm). He will only return to Iran, to Erânshahr, except to prepare the transfiguration of the world (\textit{frashkart}) through the triumph of Ohrmazd and the \textit{Anahraspands} and the destruction of Ahriman.

A long tragedy unfolds between the moment that Kay Khusraw’s \textit{Frawarti} intercedes in favor of Kay Kâûs and that Kay Khusraw escapes to her in order to retire to the mysterious castle, having accomplished his mission in this world. It is a family tragedy that will cause prince Siyâvaksh to go into exile and paradoxically find refuge with Afrâsiyâb the eternal antagonist. He wed the latter’s daughter Ferângîz; this seems like the foreboding of Afrâsiyâb’s redemption through her. Nevertheless, she is a plaything of intrigues; Siyâvaksh is treacherously put to death. The young woman, now pregnant, is saved through the wisdom of an important Turanian dignitary. For the young mother and child to secretly take the road to far off Iran, a vision in a dream, an unexpected consent and an adventurous and dangerous flight are necessary. They are found in the solitude of forests and mountains by a group of Iranian knights (lead by the valiant Gîv) who have for seven years been on the quest for the guardian and keeper of \textit{Xvarnah}.\textsuperscript{56}

Thus begins the chapter that could be called ”Kay Khusraw’s infancy” and that Coyajee has placed in parallel with ”Parsifal’s infancy”.\textsuperscript{57} The sons of Siyâvaksh and Gahmuret have both lost their fathers in a drama of treachery and treason. Both of their mothers are princesses; they are both taken by their mothers into forests and mountains; they learn the secret of their origin that the world knows nothing of from them. Both of the children spend their infancy in the forest playing at being knights. When they appear for the first time in the king’s court, they astonish everyone by their ignorance of etiquette.\textsuperscript{58} Both are sons ”with a pure heart”. Like Parsifal goes to the court of the King-Fisher so Kay Khusraw goes to the court of king Kay Kâûs, his grandfather, also a ”[méhaigné] king”, waiting quietly for the one who is the keeper of \textit{Xvarnah}. Parsifal must vanquish the enemy of the King-Fisher and avenge the death of his brother Goon.\textsuperscript{59} Both restore the king back to health, deliver the land from a magic spell and cause spring to break out again; the one becomes a sovereign endowed with Royal-\textit{Xvarnah} and the other a king of the Grail.

According to epic tradition Kay Khusraw’s gesture begins with the episode noted above: the collapse of the magic and evil fortress from a blow by the supernatural lance and the apparition of the paradisaical dwelling. The religious tradition speaks of a destruction of the idolatrous temple. In any case, it is not the brightness of a natural physical flame that disperses the Darkness amassed by the demons from before Kay Khusraw. It is one of the three forms of Fire corresponding to the three hypostases of \textit{Xvarnah}: \textit{Adhar Gushasp}, the Fire of kings and knights.\textsuperscript{60} This royal Fire stays on the mane of his horse and drives away darkness produces by magic enchantments so that Kay Khusraw can discern

\textsuperscript{55} Cf. Celestial Earth,...

\textsuperscript{56} All this is admirably told in Ferdawsi’s \textit{Shâh-Nâmeh}; A. Christensen, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 111-112.


\textsuperscript{58} Coyajee, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 67-68. Only in the Iranian tradition the situation is different: young Kay Khusraw does not act this way in order to cause suspicion in Afrâsiyâb [cf. above, page 104, note 37].

\textsuperscript{59} Cf. the ”\textit{Continuation de Manessier}”, in \textit{Percival et le Grail, 2ème et 3ème Continuations...}, transcrit en prose moderne... par S. Hannedouche, Paris 1968, pp. 221 ff.

\textsuperscript{60} A. Christensen, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 90 and 91. The Fire of kings and knights, established by Kay Khusraw on mount Asavand, is one of the three forms of the Fire. The two others are the Fire of priests [\textit{Adhar Farrbag}] and the Fire of farmers [\textit{Adhar Burzin Mihr}], established in the places where there had been Sassanid temples.

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the idolatrous temple and destroy it. In its place he builds a temple dedicated to the royal Fire. This temple has been located in Azerbaijan, on the shore of lake Orumiah, or on mount Savalan (where Zoroaster's conversations with Ohrmazd and his archangels also took place). We have already noted how the northwesterly movement of the Zoroastrian Magi consecrated the "visionary calling" of certain geographical locations. The organ that perceives the sacredness of places and knows whether such and such an event "happened there", is a malakûti organ, not one for empirical perception. An ancient tradition also tells us that the holy places of the Mazdaean Imago Ternae are not visible to profane eyes: "Kay Khusraw hid the entrance to the temple until he dedicated to the royal Fire, so that no one would know where the temple was until the day of the Resurrection". \[61\]

Doubtless it is also against the perspective of a suprasensible geography, a "geosophy", that it is appropriate to follow Kay Khusraw's quest and the extraordinary and lengthy journeys that he undertakes for seven years in his effort to defeat Aftâsiyâb-Ahriman, because it takes him to the Sphere of the stars. If some places can be located on our maps, many certainly cannot be and the entire journey is essentially staked out over a route that traditionally suggests a struggle of the soul that "occurs" in Malakûti: across deserts, mysterious and lengthy sea voyages, etc. Kay Khusraw traverses Khotan to China, to the shores of [Mekran], where he embarks on a mysterious sea voyage and after a journey of seven months arrives at the subterranean castle of Kang-Dêz, Aftâsiyâb's fortress. He seizes it and destroys it and its sovereign at the same time. Once the one who wanted to capture Xvarnah is exterminated, the task is finished; the return to Iran is made by reversing the steps. The journey takes place in a dimension where Aftâsiyâb's subterranean fortress and Kay Khusraw's paradisical castle of Kang-Dêz oppose each other in their bipolarity. The hero cannot enter into the latter until he has destroyed his anti-type, his shadow. He must [involve] all climates of the world and the soul in order to present himself "at the border of Erân-Vêj" in medio mundi and cross what is at the same time the origin and the "Earth of Visions", where the reign of the laws of the physical world ceases. \[62\] The quest for the "Spring of Life" extends across all climates before leading to the center. This is the same direction that the "Archangel of Fire" will point to for the ishrâq traveler, who will only reach their goal at the end of their "occidental exile".

From the moment that the Light of Glory rests on Kay Khusraw and the moment that Parsâfâl is invested with the royalty of the Grail, everything is complete. The years during which they reign on earth do not change anything; spiritual ardor can only be perfected. The hero is here and now an eschatological hero, marked to achieve a heroic and mystical gesture. The latter will happen in the "Earth of Visions", in that "Orient" where blessed Kay Khusraw was enraptured in the presence of the "Wisdom (Sophia) of the most holy Father", in a vision to which Suhrawardî expressly makes reference many times, pointing out that the

\[61\] Ibid., p. 90 and F. Spiegel, op. cit., p. 623. Doubtless it is appropriate to mention here with Coyâee (op. cit., p. 57) the importance of Fire (God's caliph in the world of elements, according to Suhrawardî) in the Grail cult. Two passages should be especially noted from the Continuation attributed to Wanchier de Denain: 1) In the enchanted forest Parsâfâl has a clairvoyant vision where "it seems to him that five candles burn so bright and resplendid that the entire forest is illuminated. The vision was wonderful, because it seemed to him that the crimson flame rose to heaven itself". [trans. (fr) S. Hannedouche, above, note 290, pp. 97-98]. 2) Close to the castle of the King-Fisher Parsâfâl sees a tree in the distance with tufted branches, "and thousands of candles in the branches, brighter than the stars". When night falls, the tree turns into a chapel and inside "he sees a lighted candle (ibid., pp. 145-146)". The Grail will be represented as a Light before which all terrestrial lights are extinguished. From all this a added meaning is derived from the fact that many knights wore red or crimson armor, or a robe colored like a flame (Gabhad, the knight Boors, Lug the hero, a homologation of Lancelot; Coyâee, op. cit., pp. 109-110). This path finally leads us to the appearance of the "Crimson Archangel", at the end of Suhrawardî's Recital with the same name, below, Chap. V, note 328).

\[62\] Cf. Celestial Earth..., index s.v. Erân-Vêj, notably pages 32 ff., 44 ff., on the meaning of Zoroaster's entry into Erân-Vêj and the meaning of things that happen there [like in Hûrqâlyâ], where the laws of the physical world are likewise no longer valid.
name of the "oriental" theosophers or Ishráqýûn is only another name for Khusraváníyûn, theosophers of ancient Persia, deriving their name from Kay Khusrav himself. In comparison with this world king Kay Khusrav sets out towards an occultation (in the sense that one speaks of the of the 12th Imam in Shi'ism) that suspends the physical laws of his presence in this world, because similarly the relationship between the "eighth clime" and the seven others does not depend on the laws of physics. The "eighth clime" is at once closer and further away. This is because such a presence (in the eschatological sense of the Greek word parousía) remains imminent. It is enough, or it will be enough, that people see with eyes other than the eyes of flesh, finally seeking to behold what these other eyes behold...

Kay Khusrav's occultation occurs in three periods:

a) He receives a revelation from heaven inviting him to be ready for the "Great Renunciation". He lives in meditation and prayer; his knights can no longer reach him. They are worried. Perhaps they have offended him? When Zâl becomes their representative to the king and they hear that he is speaking of his approaching "ascension into Heaven", they are terrified. Is their prince now seized by that same whim of folly as his grandfather Kay Kâûs was when the latter, stowing his throne on the wings of eagles, claimed to wrench the secrets from a Heaven studded with stars? No, it is not with material engines that one forces one's way into Heaven; their prince soothes them with his modest and calm words. b) Kay Khusrav establishes his camp before the city. He solemnly confirms each of his seven valiant knights in their functions and dignities and designates Lohrasp as his successor, with whom a new dynasty will begin. c) Kay Khusrav goes on his way to a high mountain; in the beginning he is followed by a lamenting crowd. Eight of his knights decide to accompany him but the king talks them out of it; the road that he will take goes through lands without water or vegetation; since they cannot follow him "to Heaven", they can at least spare themselves the difficulties of the return trip. Three of them follow this counsel of prudence (these are Godarz, Zâl and Rostam). The five others persist still longer, at the price of much weariness. One evening they stop near the edge of a spring (no doubt we are here at the border of a mysterious frontier: at the Spring of Life). Kay Khusrav tells his knights that now they cannot go any further. He gives them a grave and last warning: there is a snowstorm coming soon; they should return at once unless they will no longer be able to find their way back to this present world. After he bathes in the spring his companions suddenly discover that they can no longer see him. Rather than following his advice, they spend a long time looking for him without managing to find him (like the followers cannot find "God's friend from the Oberland", see below, book 7). They camp near the spring, speaking of their vanished prince. Overcome by fatigue they fall asleep and the storm buries them under a huge amount of snow. Their souls escape in this manner the necessity to follow the prince who has preceded them without crossing the threshold of death, towards the mysterious castle of Kang-Dêz, where he was already withdrawn in meditation before he announced to his followers his "Great Renunciation".

That is the traditional image of Kay Khusrav that Suhrawardi presents to the spirit, when he reserves for this prince such a high rank among the sages of ancient Persia in his "Oriental Theosophy" and when he recounts his own "Grail Recital". Iran's epic gesture results in a mystical vision; the mystical epic succeeds the heroic epic, just like in Suhrawardi the mystical recital is substituted for a theoretical explanation of doctrine. We have seen that Coyajee has established a comparison at the level of the premises of the heroic epic, by proposing a parallel between Kay Khusrav's and Parsifal's "infancies". It seems that

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64 Lohrasp does not belong to the older branch of the Kayanianas (Yashî XIII, 132 and Yashî XIX, 70-71), but to a collateral branch that began with Kay Peshîn, third son of Kay Qubâd, founder of the dynasty.
65 This Recital forms one of the most magnificent pages from Ferdawsî's Shâh-Nâmeh, see "Ferdawsi's Shâh-Nâmeh, a Revision of Vuller's Edition, newly collated with Ms., together with the Persian Translation of the Latin Notes. 100 Illustrations by Darwish Parvadeh-ye Iran". Tehran, Beroukhim, 1935, Vol. V, pp. 1439-1441.
comparative phenomenology finds the scope of its task enlarged at the moment when this
epic terminates in a mystical gesture. The theme of occultation becomes a privileged theme,
so that its mystery can be seen in various degrees. We on our part note that in one of
Chrétien de Troyes's continuators, in the "Continuation of Manessier", Parsifal reigns for
seven years; afterwards he retires to a hermitage where he becomes a priest. "The Grail
was his day and his night". After his funeral, the Marvelous Objects, namely the Grail, the
Lance and the Silver Dish appear above his tomb. However, then they disappear and are
never seen again.66 Here the Marvelous Objects are occulted to this world in the same way as
Xwarnah is. On the other hand, the hero Parsifal disappears from this world by crossing
death's threshold since we are told about his funeral. In the "Quest of the Holy Grail",
Parsifal is buried with Galahad in the "spiritual palace" of the mystical city of Sarras. Here
we are at a level that approaches mystical occultation, because to be buried in Sarras and
especially in the "spiritual palace" is not to be buried in this world. Finally, in Albrecht von
Scharfenberg's "Titurel", Parsifal and his knights transfer the Grail "to India" and no one
has seen it since.67 This time we connect the idea of the Grail's and the king of the Grail’s
occultation with the idea of the occultation of Xwarnah and Kay Khusrav.

It seems that there is another direction to probe the analogies in, namely where the
occultation and the eschatological role of Kay Khusrav and King Arthur respectively show
their relationship. This will be to compare Kang-Dêz, the mystical castle to where Kay
Khusrav retired, with the fairy island of Avalon (or Avallon) in the Celtic tradition, the
wonderful island of the Other World. It is an island with the fruits of immortality (Avallon,
Avallach, fruit which preserves from death), a mysterious and happy island, also called Insula
puellarum. Let us note in passing that we find just such a name in certain Iranian traditions
regarding eschatology (shar-i dukhtarân).68 It even seems that Parsifal passes through it
during the course of his quest (the "castle of maidens", in the "Continuation of Wauchier").
However, the fairy island, or the island of the Other World, are always represented as a
fortified place, inaccessible and invisible except to the invited, the called or the elect. It is
a place situated beyond the seas (compare the navigation described in Suhrawardî's Recital
of Occidental Exile, with the one that describes the voyage to the Green Isle, residence of
the Hidden Imâm). Likewise one sees so much better that it is the element water that in its
supernatural state (the Spring of Life) occults Kay Khusrav and his companions, when they
were seen for the last time in this world. Similarly, it is to the island beyond the seas, the
island of eternal youth, that King Arthur is mysteriously brought after the last battle of
the Celts against the invading Saxons. He is healed from his wounds by Regina Virgo, the
queen of the island (Morgan), whose beauty surpasses that of her divine companions. Occulted
to the inhabitants of this world, King Arthur will come again to help and give victory to
his followers, like Kay Khusrav who after having passed through the Water of Life has now
retired to Kang-Dêz with his companions, with whom he will return on the last day in order
to bring about the Transfiguration of the world.

Other traditions are also important if we do not restrict our account to suggestions
of a convergence of certain Celtic and Zoroastrian traditions that are of an eschatological
nature. Considered against our common space-time measurements, eschatology signifies a
time delay and an inestimable spatial distance. However, measured in its very own time, i.e.,
as it is lived hic et nunc, in its own proper Malakût, it abolishes delay and distance for the
believers for whom this eschatology is a belief and an expectation. This is realized in each
mystical believer, as Suhrawardî's "Grail Recital" suggests. It transfigures the geographic
locations whose sacredness is from then on seen with an organ other than the physical

66 Continuation of Manessier (above, note 280), p. 236.
67 A. E. Waite, op. cit., pp. 419 ff.
68 A latter day hero, Bahrâm Varjâvând, must come from shar-i dukhtarân, the "city of young maidens",
in the direction of Tibet, in The Persian Rievâjs of Hormazy Faramarz, edited by E. B. N. Dhabhar,
Bombay 1932, p. 434; cf. Celestial Earth..., pp. 70, 291, note 326.
senses. Avalon could be identified in the twelfth century with the haunted lands where the abbey of Glastonbury was erected.\(^\text{69}\) The phenomenon is the same in the case of the localizations of the Grail castle on Mount Serrat, in Montsegur and still others, or with the locality of Zaroute’s visions that moved from eastern to western Iran, to the mountains of Azerbaijan.\(^\text{70}\) All of this is true and indeed so because of a different veracity than the one that the officialdom of deeds and titles is concerned with, a veracity that everywhere and always comprises the "symbolism of the center", as William Blake expressed it in a grandiose vision: "And if man changes his dwelling, the heavens go with him, everywhere he goes, and all his neighbors mourn his loss. Such are the spaces called earth and such are their dimensions".\(^\text{71}\) The *Imago Terrae* can only reflect the *Imago Animae* and this *Imago* is neither an organ nor a representation that depends on empirical perceptions; on the contrary, it precedes, rules and governs these. This is why it cannot transmit its "object" to someone who does not care, nor convince them of the sacred that it perceives in certain places, or of the bond that it perceives between events and persons, because it is the perceptual organ of *Malakât*.

However, an integral phenomenology has precisely the task of "saving", of guaranteeing this, the phenomenon. It pertains to a whole set of facts that mark the lineage of gnosis (*sabilat al-‘irfân*), such as Suhrawardi saw it between the *Khusravîyûn* and the *Ishrâqîyûn* when he traced the line of his spiritual ascendance. To allow the spiritual fact to show itself to us such as it showed itself to Suhrawardi, that is *eo ipso* to comprehend the intent of the faith upon which this fact is based and the perspectives that in turn motivate and explain this spiritual fact. So Kay Khusraw’s mysterious castle, *Kang-Déz-behesht* (Kang-Déz paradise) is itself erect in this "eighth clime" where the city of Hûrqalyâ belongs, i.e., in the "intermediate Orient". City and castle make up the "celestial pole" in *medio mundi*; they are the threshold that Suhrawardi calls the "Orient of Lights", the sources of *Xvarnah* where the theophanies contemplated by the Sages of ancient Persia are born in an eternal aurora.

That the thematic action belonging to Suhrawardi’s mystical recitals marks the culmination of the heroic epic in the mystical epic also implies as a matter of principle that the hero’s gesture is *oriented*, i.e., tends to join this "Orient", is culminated in this "Orient". This "orientation" constitutes the "oriental" finality of the mystical gesture; the rejoining to this "Orient" *eo ipso* confers upon the epic and its heroes their *eschatological* significance. It could be said that the mystical epic begins as soon as the heroic epic, as well as the romantic and chivalric epic is thus *oriented*, in the Suhrawardian sense of the word "orient". By this same token it is made up out of two polarities, an "orient" and an "occident", which comes

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\(^{69}\) Cf. J. Marx, *La Légende arthurienne et le Graal*, pp. 85-86, 198, 305-309, 332. On the other hand, Marx lucidly formulated the problem stated by "Robert de Boron et Glastonbury", in *Nouvelles recherches*, pp. 139-152. This is a typical example of the phenomenon that we have in mind here. Perhaps the identification of Avalon with Glastonbury served the interests of the Plantagenets and perhaps allowed them to obfuscate the eschatological role of King Arthur to the benefit of official ecclesiastical doctrine. But was that enough to change the *Imago Terrae* to which we alluded here, as organ of invention or as the perception of a new place in sacred geography? Whether this identification concealed or not the resurgence of a Celtic church suppressed by the Roman church, it remains a fact that this did not necessarily in itself put an end to the eschatological role of King Arthur. An *hadîth* popular in Shi‘ite Islam has it that the bodies of prophets and Imâms only remained in their tombs for three days before being carried off "to Heaven". Qâzî Sa‘îd Qummi, the famous theoeconom, warned those who wanted proof by opening the tombs not to do so. The bodies that they were looking for they would certainly find. Meanwhile the tomb is empty. Because it is another body that is said to have gone "to Heaven", and "this has nothing to do with the heaven that is above our heads". Similarly, if the remains of King Arthur and his Queen Guinevere had been found in their tombs in Glastonbury, their "body" (their *jisîm malîkhî") is elsewhere, namely there where the eschatological perception of Avalon as the Other World situates them.

\(^{70}\) We have already alluded to the "rotation" of the sacred cartography of Zarouteanism, cf. above, page 65, note 46.

down to saying an interior and exterior meaning, an esoteric and an exoteric meaning (a bâtin and a zâhir). In any case that is where Kay Khusraw’s and Parsifal’s gesture have a trait in common. As there is a key that opens this meaning (Zoroastrianism, Hermetism, Neoplatonism, Christianity, the Celts), so this meaning opens up against a perspective where it is outlined in the concrete spiritual configurations of the world of Malakât, the place of the mystical castles of the soul. The manifestation of this meaning, its real meaning, is the work of spiritual hermeneutics, and we have previously analyzed the pre-eminent operation of this ta’wil in Shi’ism.

Lest one be mistaken here: this is not simply a case of leading the imaginal event, or the living vision, back to some abstract theoretical fact. That would be turning one’s back on the "Orient". As is appropriate to restate here, the event of the soul is at first itself the ta’wil that leads back to the "Orient", that renders its theoretical facts true. This is pre-eminently the phenomenon of hikâyat, of the recital that is at once history and imitation (mimésis), history because it is an imitation of a superior world and imitation because it is an image (mîthâl) thereof. Here even the noetic function of the image and imaginative perception will appear as important. At the same time, the one who tells the recital, the "historian", should not be considered neutral, isolated from the facts of the recital; on the other hand, the listeners or readers only realize its meaning on the condition that this ta’wil, this hermeneutic, happens in them also. The word ta’wil implies in itself the idea of a "passage", of an "conversion", since it designates the act of leading something back to its source, to its archetype (its asl, the origin, or the "original").

All of Islam's Spirituals certainly practiced ta’wil on the Koran. What is special about Suhrawardî is that he practiced ta’wil on the persons in the Iranian religious epics, not only Kay Khusraw but others as well. The gesture of the Iranian heroes, from the Avesta to Shâh-Nâmeh, returns for them therefore to the phenomenon of the Book that we analyzed in book 1. It is with the help of the resources that offered him the hermeneutics of Islam’s Scripture that Suhrwardî reached the height of that perspective. With the phenomenon of the Book he was able to encompass the wisdom of the theosophers of ancient Persia, that of Hermes, and that of the ancient Greeks and Neoplatonists. In the manner that it came about Suhrawardi’s Iranianism should not be judged lightly or be rejected. First it should be understood that this focus is not primarily ethnic, but "hieratic" in the Neoplatonic sense of the word, in the way we have used it up to now. Then the ta’wil that he practiced must be grasped, and this should not be confused with "allegory" or with some other arbitrary construction. The ta’wil, spiritual hermeneutics, is no dialectical construction; it unveils all intentions and leads to the flowering of all virtualities; it is the "unveiling of the hidden" (kashf al-mahjûb). It is likewise able to theologically grasp physical things, which is something else again than the "construction" of a physics. This the Neoplatonists were already very well aware of. Ta’wil leads the event back to its source, to its "original", i.e., to Malakât, to the event where it takes place and where it has its place in Malakât. This is the way that Suhrwardi "leads back" the Iranian gesture to its mystical meaning, to its Orient, because he perceives there an oriented gesture. Hence the importance that the mysterious bird Sinmuh will take on, a figure of the Holy Spirit. So we see that the Quest for the Orient is accomplished where both Kay Khusraw’s and Parsifal’s quests are fulfilled.

The Oriental Finality as the Completion of the Heroic Epic in the Mystical Epic

In more general terms, we are able to speak of a passage from the epic, or historical recital, to the mystical recital, since Suhrwardi’s works where such a conclusion takes place are
brief and written in prose. Something similar differentiates them from the mystical epics that comprise an important part of Persian literature: the works of 'Attâr, Jâmi, 'Assâr of Tâbrîz, Khâjû'i Kermânî, Kâtîbî, and others. So in summarizing what we have just said we can trace a path to comprehension, to the ta'wil, of these mystical recitals by means of two important ideas: 1) The idea of the "Orient" and a return to the "Orient" as a link between the completion of Suhrawardî's Ishrâqî project, his "Oriental Theosophy", and the Grail cycle, because of resonances that are perceptible between the spiritual world of ancient Persia and Hermetism. In Suhrawardî's work both Iranianism and Hermetism occur "in the present" and on the other hand it is through a "return to the Orient", seen as an occultation of this present world, that the Grail adventure is concluded. 2) The moment when doctrine becomes an event for the soul; this is the decisive moment, the Suhrawardian hikâyat, that constitutes the mystical recital and it is important not to be mistaken regarding this occurrence and its hermeneutic valence. This is true for both the Grail cycle and the Suhrawardian cycle: it could be said that it is their "oriental" finality that determines all of their narrated gesture.

1) Kang-Döz is the mystical castle at the summit of Mount Qâf where Kay Khnsraw's adventure is completed. We know that Mount Qâf is in the soul's world, Malakût, the "eighth clime", where ishrâqî tradition knows the name of many cities: the "emerald cities" where Hûrqalyâ is the first. The Grail cycle equally knows the name of a city "in the Orient", where the Grail adventure takes place: a place higher than all summits (Mont-Serrat, Mont-Salvat, Mont-Ségur) and mystical places (Corbenic), where the Grail is shown to its followers in this present world. The name is designated as Sarras. Although the word refers to the Sarraçena, the origin of the Sarrazins that the texts situate "near Egypt", it will again be meaningless to search for its coordinates on our maps, like it is for Hûrqalyâ or the Green Isle. "Near Egypt" is an expression meant to be understood like the tradition that was inherited by Suhrawardî, as a ta'wil of the biblical theme of the "exodus from Egypt", meaning the exit from the "land of exile". Sarras equally means what is signified by the cities of the "eighth clime", as the "intermediate Orient", threshold between this present world and the Other World For the Grail this takes place in two distinct steps: the first from the time of its journey from the mystical Jerusalem to the Occident (Great Britain); the second from the time of its return to the Orient, where it disappears from view once the Threshold has been crossed. This double "voyage" of the Grail corresponds to the dual movement well known to all of Islamic theosophical Gnosis, that draws the two arcs of the descent and the ascent of the soul (nûzûl and su'ûd).

Thus the Grail carried by Joseph of Arimathea, his son Josephes and their companions is present in Sarras from the time of its "descent". This has been a surprise to many, since its inhabitants are described as "pagans", people who adore the stars (like the Hermetist Sabians of Harran). However, it is precisely in Sarras that we are in Malakût, the world of the soul, and this world knows the diversity of all souls and their many dwellings. What gives meaning to Sarras is the palace described as the "spiritual palace" (the Palais espritueus), where the passage from the lower to the upper Malakût takes place. There, in the secret world of the soul, Joseph preaches his first sermon and in the sanctuary of the "spiritual palace" his son Josephes is consecrated with the sacred oil carried by Angels. As the first Christian bishop and guardian of the Grail, it is the beginning of an ascendance that is not in competition, nor can it be compared with any dynasty or canonical succession from this world, as was already noted. It knows nothing about these because its "history" occurs elsewhere.

Sarras is mentioned again on the road of the "return", when Galahad the high Prince of

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"celestial" chivalry completes the adventure of the Grail. Having healed the 
"[méhaigné]"
king at Corbenic he sets out with Parsifal and Bohort to Sarras in the "Holy Land". Here Josephes, who since long has left this earth, appears again; but we are precisely in Sarras and not here on earth. So goes the recital of that ultimate Last Supper where in a few centuries the chivalry of the West deposits its final secret. Surrounded by Angels Josephes celebrates the office of the Grail in the "spiritual palace" of Sarras. He gives communion to Galahad and lifts the paten covering the Grail, then he invites the celestial knight to contemplate the mysteries. Galahad dies in the ensuing ecstasy and his soul is carried off by the Angels. A celestial hand without a visible body takes the Grail and the Lance and takes them "to Heaven". Since then they have not been seen in this world. The supernatural Mass of the Grail has not been celebrated since and neither has the secret formula of the consecration been uttered, as it was confided by Christ to Joseph of Arimathea.

Henceforth the lineage of the Grail is "occulted" to this world and with it the entire chivalry of the Grail Templars (like the lineage of the Imâm, the esoteric lineage of prophecy, has gone into occultation with the 12th Imâm and like the whole hierarchy of his Friends and faithful equally has been occulted from the eyes of men with the occultation of the spiritual "pole"). Parsifal also dies at Sarras and it is said that the bodies of Parsifal and Galahad are buried "in the spiritualities" of Sarras. (The specification supplied by this version confirms what we have noted already: the "spiritualities" of Sarras have to do with the imaginâle body, with the substance of the body of resurrection, the jism miḥâl, made up of elements from Malakût and not of elements from this world.73 Henceforth the idea of burial also takes on a supernatural meaning). The spiritual palace of Sarras is not merely a "sublimation" of the Grail castle. However, there are degrees in the world of Malakût. From there "hierophanies" descend into the present world. Others remain enclosed within Malakût, like the spiritual palace of Sarras precisely because it is the threshold to the Higher Malakût, a threshold that the elect will cross, but never those who are not chosen. Once the threshold is crossed, the return to the "Orient" is completed. This "return" can only be spoken by a recital; any doctrinal explanation can only allude to it. Thus it is the speaking that matters, because according to whether one understands or not, everyone will either reach it or totally miss its veracity.

The Grail cycle knows of many more ways to say this return. In texts later than Wolfram's, the "Orient" is called India and an old passage from Abdías tells us what the word "India" means: "The historiographers tell us that there are three countries that are called India: the first is the India that borders on Ethiopia; the second is the one beyond Media and the third one is the one that is at the end of the world".74 With the third one we find ourselves back "on top of Mount Qâf". Two texts from the Germanic Grail cycle give witness to this.

On the one hand (towards 1300), the history of Parsifal's son Lohengrin, the "Knight of the Swan", effects a revolution of sorts relative to the Grail cycle. Instead of retreating beyond the seas to the mysterious island of Avalon entrusted to the care of the , King Arthur takes the Grail to India at the head of all of his knights; he and his knights then remain its invisible guardians in the distant and unknown country of the "Orient".75 On the other hand, Titurel, the work of Albrecht von Scharfenberg (who wrote around 1270) does what was not spoken of in Wolfram's Parzival. The latter ends with the enthronement of Parsifal as King of the Grail, while his brother Feirefiz, having become fit through baptism to "see" the sacred Vessel, marries Repanse de Schoye, Queen of the Grail and Amfortas's sister, and departs with her to her distant kingdom; there they will have Priester John as son, a famous

73 Cf. our book, Celestial Earth..., index s.v. jasad, jism and Malakût.
and well known figure about whom various opinions have been expressed.\textsuperscript{76} Titurel has more things to say. There the Templars of the Grail notice the calamities that increasingly threaten outside of the Temple and decide to "return"; this return leads to the occultation of the Grail (the motivation for this decision reminds one of the Ismailian leaders, deciding on the "return to esotericism", which is the beginning of our present cycle of occultation).\textsuperscript{77} So Parsifal, accompanied by the entire chivalry of the Grail, takes the Grail and all the Holy Treasures to India, where he intends to rejoin his son Feirefiz. Here Prester John is represented as an autonomous sovereign of a wonderful kingdom very near to all material and spiritual riches, among which are the Seven Gifts and the Twelve Fruits of the divine Spirit of Wisdom. Encouraged by his son Feirefiz, Parsifal wants to confer the Grail upon him and then it is Prester John who on the contrary offers his own crown and kingdom to the one who comes as guardian of the Grail. Finally the decision is made by the Grail itself: Parsifal stays King of the Grail; he becomes Prester John's heir and assumes his name. When in the Dutch Lancelot,\textsuperscript{78} it is Prester John who appears as "Parsifal's son", there is no impossibility or contradiction in the mystical plan of spiritual genealogy (since Parsifal takes Prester John's name, this Prester John that he himself becomes is at once Parsifal's heir, the child of his soul, like Josephes is for Joseph of Arimathea).

The retreat of Prester John is structured in the invisible, there where the different versions of this event take place according to an entirely different norm than that of Caesar's "Commentaries". It is essentially the same event that is said. After Galahad's ecstatic death in Sarras a celestial hand takes the Grail back into the invisible. Here it is Parsifal who takes the Grail to India, i.e., to the "end of the world", the Orient-Origin that does not occur on our geographical maps. The figures of Parsifal and Prester John are superimposed, as if Parsifal-Prester-John is henceforth the pole of all Johannites, those who believe in the Church of John, in the Johannite Church as the Invisible Church of the Grail. So this Johannite faith resounds as a faith in the Paraclete, that same Paraclete that certain of our Shi'ite theosophers identify with the 12th Imâm, the Imâm presently hidden.

Such characteristics are noted here because they have a similar importance as the investigations whose conclusions we analyzed above, that put Zoroastrianism and Hermeticism in contact with the Grail. Indeed, on the one hand Zoroastrianism and Hermeticism are the influences that mainly determine the "oriental" finality of Suhrawardi's theosophy. This finality reaches its actual completion in the part of his works that forms a cycle of mystical recitals. On the other hand, we have also just recovered such an "oriental" finality in the Grail cycle. In general the "recitative" presents a common tonality. Its perception depends on whether one perceives the order of the reality comprised by the events in the recitals, i.e., the level of reality to which the recitals raise the doctrines whose esoteric meaning they are. Under what conditions are these the esoteric meaning of the doctrine and give it its true meaning? The case of the mystical epic or the mystical recital imposes a hermeneutic upon us where it will depend on whether we have access to the reality of these recitals, or whether on the contrary we are incapable of attaining this and are reduced to speaking of "marvels" and "imagination". In other words, it depends on our hermeneutic whether we realize the "oriental" finality or not.

Why does something that can very well be explained in doctrinal form, in a series of logical propositions as Suhrawardi did in his great works, escape in a moment given entirely to theoretical explanation in order to become a recital? The answer to this question is the same concept of the Orient as is professed by the Ishrâqîyûn. It will be enough to summarize


\textsuperscript{77}Cf. our book, \textit{Trilogie ismaélienne}, index s.v. Dawr al-satr. A tradition also exists of the Rose Cross leaving Europe in the 18th century to return to Asia.

\textsuperscript{78}Cf. A. E. Waite, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 419-420.
it here in a few sentences. Their "Orient" is principle and end at the same time (arkhé and télos), origin and place of return, keystone of the two arches of descent (nużûl) and ascent (su‘âd). This cycle is the entire secret history of that category of Light-Beings that Suhrawardi designates as the Nûr Espahbad, Lights governing a body. Already this choice of words by Suhrawardi permitted us to reveal a deliberate resonance with Iranian chivalry. In any case it is a similar ethic involving chivalry (what is meant by the word javânmar dî) that rules from one end to the other. Whether it is a question of the battle of the Fravartis (furâhar) electing to descend to earth in order to help Ohrmazd, or the battle of the Espahbad Lights against the Darkness of ignorance and forgetfulness; whether it is a question of the Light of Glory (Xvarnah) or the Muhammadan Light, of the quest for the Grail or the quest for the Imâm presently hidden, a finality constantly orients such spiritual Iranian combat. Whether it is a vow of one of the compatriots of the Saoshyant, helping him in the transfiguration of the world, or of one of the compatriots of the Hidden Imâm, preparing the "Great Resurrection" (Qi'yâmat al-Qi'yâmat, the Resurrection of Resurrections), the same finality orients it towards the single issue in its combat: the victorial return to its "Oriental Source" (Light of Glory, Muhammadan Light, Light of the Grail, Life and Light of Hermetism), "oriental" because it is not just one knowledge among others, nor even a unique privileged form of knowledge, but the Orient, i.e., the source and the end of all knowledge. The spiritual hero who successfully completes the Quest of it is the one who has at once the high theosophic wisdom and the "hieratic" experience, the that corresponds to the apophatic of the "Chaldean Oracles" and the hermetists (above, chapter 2).

It is therefore a matter of the myst setting out into a direction whose consistent orientation can have many names: it can be the "spiritual palace" of the mysterious city of Sarras; it can be the mystical castle of Kang-Dêz; it can also be Hûrqalyâ. In a word, since it always is a city in the "eighth clime", the "Orient" is the threshold of all "Orients" that Suhrawardi likes to call Nâ-Kujâ-abâd (literally, the "land of not-where"). We have elsewhere dwelt at length on this Persian expression that he created and on its implication, explaining that although it is grammatically the exact equivalent of the Greek ou-topia, it is totally inappropriate to translate it by "utopia". It is the "Not-where", indeed a land and a country (dâd) that is the place of the events in the mystical recitals. It is a country that one can be allowed to see; however, no one who has seen it has done so to the same degree as they have shown it. One can only go there, not through conceptual evidence of a theoretic demonstration, but through the force of the event that happened and that can only be said in a recital. Hence, if it cannot avail itself of a metaphysics that ontologically lays claim to the "third world" of Hûrqalyâ, that is neither one of the intellect nor of sensible perception, then our hermeneutics will be incapable of laying claim to its reality. It will confuse it with the "imaginary" and the "unreal" and the recital will only show something from the "imaginary". That is why we previously insisted on the metaphysical importance of the scheme of the three worlds in Suhrawardi and all of the mystical theosophers that have been associated with this. As a corollary, it recognizes the noetic value rightfully pertaining to the imaginative perception and the imaginative consciousness that is not "fantasy". (A metaphysics that frames it like the one that lays claim to it here, rightly keeps it from being delivered over to extravagances, when the philosophy does not consider it as a "fantasy" arising from the unreal). The imaginative perception is the proper organ to penetrate into a world that is neither imaginary nor unreal but imaginâl, the mundus imaginalis.

One cannot say where this imaginâl world is. Those who have seen it cannot show it. That is why it is called "not-where" (nâ-kujâ in Persian), in the sense that one cannot turn towards it by referring to coordinates of the geographical or astronomical world contained in

79 Cf. our study "Mundus Imaginalis", ou l'imaginaire et l'imaginal (Cahiers internat. du symbolisme, 6, 1964) and Au "pays" de l'Imâm caché (Emann-Jahrbuch XXXII), Zurich 1964, pp. 31 ff.

80 Numerous texts will be found on the question of the mundus imaginalis in our two books: Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth and Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabî.
the Sphere of Spheres. When it is said that "it starts here at this convex surface", then this is meant to suggest a passage to "the beyond", to the summit of the cosmic mountain of Qâf. This is the passage from the outside of things (the exoteric, *ta éso*) to the inside of things (the esoteric, *ta ésô*), the passage from exterior history to true, interior history. However, even there, in the *interior*, we find ourselves back on the *exterior* of things, because if the world of the soul (lower *Malakât* of incarnated souls and higher *Malakât* of released souls) is not "some part" of the world of common sense perception and if therefore one cannot say where it is located, then on the contrary it is the world of the soul that contains, surrounds and encircles this entire universe whose places belong to the category of *abi*. The privilege of the world of the soul is that of the spiritual circles, whose center is simultaneously the periphery. In relation to the places of the sense world, *Malakât* is an *ubique*, an "everywhere", at once very close and very far away. It is only by progressing in the *modes of being* that one progresses there, and the place "from where" one attains it is indifferent. This touch of, or this passage to the reality of *Malakât* can be made visible in many ways: as a celestial hand that in Sarras makes the Grail invisible to men by taking it away; as the return of the Grail to the "Orient" or as Kay Khusrâu’s retreat to the castle of Kang-Dêz. It can be the journey to the mystical Sinai or the celestial pole, the summit of Mount Qâf (Recital of Occidental Exile), or the drop of balsam that passes to the back of the hand when exposed to the sun in the palm (Recital of the Crimson Archangel). Sometimes it is the journey to the Green Isle, residence of the hidden Imâm, or the peregrination on the White Cloud in the company of the Imâm, etc. It is always an exodus from the world that is subject to the laws of the external senses and of physics, an exodus that is carried out through the *quarta dimensio*.

This exodus responds to an injunction uttered in one of Suhrawardî’s recitals: "When it is said: 'Go back!', then this implies a place where one was previously. Too bad if you understand by the place to go back to, Damas or Baghdad, or some other earthly city." This is also the injunction from these Koranic verses: "Oh serene Soul! Return to your Lord, joyful and pleasing... Enter my paradise" (89:28-30). That is why Suhrawardî wrote the lines that Mir Dâmâd, Qâzî Sa’îd Qummî and other great theosophers of Shi’ism will love to quote: "The theosopher who really has had the mystical experience is one for whom the material body (i.e., the apparatus of the external senses) has become like a tunic that can either be put on or taken off. No one is truly a *mutâ‘allîh*, a hieratic, when such unclothing and dressing has not been experimented with." This "unclothing" is a condition for entry into the land of *Nâ-Kujâ-abâd*, where nothing can be perceived by means of our customary perceptions. It is possible to accumulate an immense theoretical knowledge and yet remain incapable of this "unclothing" and never get to the "oriental" side. Because one is incapable of getting there, all this theoretical knowledge has not made room for the *event*.

So the question posed above has now been amplified. Why, we ask, must it be that the doctrinal explanation resolves itself (in the musical sense of the word) into a mystical recital? The answer is that it is never just theoretical evidence that is enough to provoke the "passage" to the "oriental" side. It has got to be that *doctrine becomes an actual event*. However, that event can only be understood as something of the world of *Malakât*. If one is incapable of laying claim to this reality, of recognizing the reality of what happens in *Malakât*, then the visionary recital is degraded to allegory and one begins to speak of a necessary "demythicization", like is done nowadays. This "demythicization" means only surrender and impotence; it is opposed to what is acknowledged as "spiritual realism" or mystical realism. Again, if it was necessary to pass from a doctrinal explanation of esoteric truths to the recital, where truths were changed into events, then what is now the relation between these esoteric truths and the recital? In order to reveal the esoteric meaning of the

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81 *Mutârâhât*, § 223, in *Op. Met.*, I, p. 503. This passage follows directly the place where Suhrawardî traces the ascendance of the *Ishrâqîyûn*. On the *hakâm mutâ‘allîh* and his apotheosis, see above, Chap. I, II.
The Light of Glory and the Holy Grail

recital is it now necessary to return to the plane of conceptual evidence where the esoteric doctrine is situated, because it is formulated in logical propositions? In short, that is what certain rational commentators of Suhrawardī’s mystical recitals have done. But if that was the plain and simple key to visionary recitals, then these recitals are only just superfluous duplications of theoretical explanations that are just as good and even easier to understand as recitals. The recital is then only allegorical. What allegory gives to understand can be understood just as well by way of rational explanation; allegory stays at the same noetic level as the latter. On the other hand, the mystical recital says exactly what cannot be said nor be given to understand except in a form of visionary symbols, perceived by the reciter; there is a noetic change of plane by referring to a doctrinal explanation. The change is that the recital is an esoteric doctrine having become a real event in the world of Malakūt. If it is true that doctrine is the esoteric meaning of a recital then this is never merely as a theoretical doctrine but precisely as doctrine having become event. We will shortly see again that this is the act of hikâyat as "recital" of mystical history. This is also why the hermeneutics of the mystical recital does not consist in a "redescending", a "reclaiming" of the events of the recital at the level of conceptual evidence, but on the contrary, ta‘wîl, the hermeneutic, "leads back" conceptual evidence to the level of Malakūt that is the place for the events of the recital. Doctrine is the esoteric meaning of the recital to the degree that through this recital is promoted to a spiritual event and as such as it will not remain theoretical. The mystical recital solely fulfills a mystagogical function that Suhrawardī has in mind.

By the same token, we should be on our guard against a misunderstanding that will be pointed out below and that will risk that we miss the event of these recitals, their "oriental" finality. In order to make this easier to understand, let us use traditional terminology in referring to the three degrees of certainty: A) Theoretical certainty ('ilm al-yaqîn); e.g., the knowledge that fire exists, having heard it said that there is fire. B) The certainty of an eye-witness (‘ayn al-yaqîn), to see the fire with one’s own eyes and to be a witness of it. C) The personally realized certainty (haqq al-yaqîn); to be burned by fire, to become fire oneself. From level A to level B is the distance between theoretical doctrine and doctrine having become a personal event. For the case at hand, we say that level A is to understand from Suhrawardī’s book of "Oriental Theosophy" what the "Orient" is. Level B is where the doctrine becomes event; it is to become a witness to the "Orient" because one "is taken" into the recital, into what can only be said in a recital format. However, level C is not at all to redescend simply to level A in order to discover the theoretical esoteric meaning of the recital; on the contrary, it is to take everything that is said on level A and exhaust it on level B in such a way that, the doctrine having become an event, now the wayfarer wakes up to a consciousness of this event as something that happens to him, that it is the reality and truth of something inside of him.

That is "oriental" knowledge at its highest point. That is why the mystical recital speaks most often "in the first person". It is the history of the myst returning to the "Orient"; one doesn’t have to prove this event, but one does have to say it, to say what one was a witness to and the world where one was the witness to it. This way it is in and through his own history that he leads the gesture of the heroes back to the "Orient", because their gesture has now become his own. This is the ta‘wîl, the mystical hermeneutics. This is what it was for Suhrawardī regarding the heroes of the Iranian epic: Kay Khusraw, Zâl and Esfandyâr.

The heroic gesture achieves its "oriental" finality in the mystical gesture.\footnote{Cf. our study De l'épopée héroïque à l'épopée mystique, in Eranos-Jahrbuch XXXV, 1967, pp. 177-239.}

2) The misunderstanding that we alluded to above could not only cause us to entirely miss the meaning of Suhrawardī’s mystical epics but also miss the meaning of the spiritual course that inspired the entire mystical epic in the Persian language from 'Attār to Jāmî. This misunderstanding has its deep roots in our so-called "modern" mental attitude. Functionally
it is estranged from the "concrete spiritual" reality of the *mundus imaginalis* and everything that implies a penetration into *Malakât* and hence into the meaning of the real events for which *Malakât* is the *place*. We are of the opinion that this misunderstanding weighs especially heavily on the good research that we have referred to previously, that lead its authors to trace the hermetist elements in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* through a microscopic analysis of Greek and Old-German documents. Why is it that we have the impression that it fails completely when attempting to explain the "passage" of the hermetist *doctrine of the Krater* to the *action* of the Grail poem?

The authors tend to explain the place where "doctrine becomes narration" as an application of the technique of *sensus litteralis*, well known in medieval hermeneutics and rhetoric. They say that when the poet gathered knowledge about some hermetist doctrinal explanation then his work consisted in "moving from" these doctrines that form a secondary *mystical meaning*, in order to arrive at a narration, a recital, which will form the *literal meaning*, the primary concrete significance of it. The poet will this way have passed from the anagogical to the literal meaning: from the sublime teaching shown in the *Krater*, Wolfram made something "real", a series of events set in motion by a group of persons. It seems that such an explanation disregards everything that is prophetic inspiration, poetic creation, visionary perception and feeling, as well as the irruption of any new dimension.

Will everything then depend on some "technique"? How can it depend on some technique that *doctrine becomes event*? Wolfram would only have been able to arrive at a laborious allegorical construction, the elaboration of a fable, that certainly his *Parzival* is not, which is indeed a *real history*. But what kind of *reality*? The mistake on which such an "explanation" is based is above all the troublesome and very current confusion between what is "symbol", or symbolic history, and what is "allegory". We have previously denounced the reason for such confusion: the real is referred to as if there is only one level of reality, grasped once for all. This is exactly what an integral phenomenology cannot admit; it is incumbent upon it to safeguard *Malakât*'s order of reality, the "eighth clime" and the events that take place there. There is very much at stake here: recitals like those of Suhrawardî have more than once been victimized by these kind of explanations, of which the final result will be to make them superfluous, since they only duplicate an explanatory mode that is much more straightforward. Therefore, they can only disappear after having been "explained"! It is readily evident that the crucial issue is the use of the words *literal*, *real* and *event*. The preceding pages had precisely this in mind.

First of all, the Greek word *anagogê* means the action of raising, of elevating (we have noted this in chapter 2, § 2: the theurgic or hieratic ascension of the soul). One elevates oneself from the literal to the anagogical meaning, transfiguring the world of things into the world of the soul. The anagogical meaning presupposes the literal one, which is its support and of which it is the hidden meaning. It is difficult to understand why it is thought necessary to construct a literal meaning, or to "redescend" to it if one is already in possession of the anagogical one, and similarly how the anagogical meaning is at the same time the point of arrival and the primary one. Hermeneutics is not a technique (it can certainly lead to some, to make up different types of exegesis). Hermeneutics is the same thing as the act of *Understanding*. However, this *Understanding* goes through different phases, to be more specific, in the case of our spirituals it causes the flowering of several levels, revealed by the very act itself. These levels *correspond* to one another, each is symbolized by the other. The meaning called literal is not more primary than the anagogical, the mystical or the spiritual one (see book 1). They all have every possible meaning in mind and are manifestational forms (*mazâhir*) or symbols of the very same Ineffable, but at different levels. Each time and at each level there is a hermeneutic, a way to understand the Ineffable (in conceptual
form, as an event that is experienced, etc.). These are all **symbols**, because at each level the Ineffable is able to show itself only in the way that it actually does so and it is impossible at that particular level to **say** otherwise (on the other hand, allegory can only restate a thing already known otherwise, without changing the evident level).

Let us refer to the different levels of certainty (corresponding to the different levels of understanding) that were outlined above (page 120). The movement from level A to B is the passage from the doctrinal explanation to fact shown in the form of a recital. It is so sublime and esoteric that the explanation only marks a virtuality. It shows what will **really** happen if the myst does in fact start out. Hence Suhrawardi’s urgent warning to the latter in his initiatory recitals. From the moment that this warning is heeded we in fact reach something **real**, something put into action, an event. That is why this event is in itself already *ta*’wîl that leads back to the "Orient", not simply something that happened in external history, like Caesar’s "Commentaries", or a popular novel. It is an event of the soul precisely to the degree that it has an esoteric meaning: it is happening in *Malakût*, in the world that is the "Orient" of the soul. Its plenary reality is there and this does not have to be looked for elsewhere, in external history (e.g. the localities, the castles, lakes and forests are all states of the soul; its battles are battles of the soul, etc.). No longer is the meaning like the meaning of a spiritual fact that is simply looking for a theoretical teaching, be it esoteric theosophy, since this event is what puts it into operation, confers it its reality. The **meaning** of this putting into operation is a transmutation of doctrine (transmutation from *'ilm al-yaqîn* to *haqq al-yaqîn*).

We stated above that reaching level C (the one of personal **realization**) does not consist in redescending from level B to level A. That is what has unfortunately been done nowadays when "demythification" is spoken of, but only because level C could not be reached (the event is no longer understood). Level C is reached to the extent that one has raised oneself from level A to level B and to the degree that one has understood the secret of this passage, i.e., to the degree that this theoretical teaching has become transmuted into an event and this event is lived as a personal realization, an event lived personally (this has nothing to do with psychology, but with an event in *being*, in a kind of ontological promotion). Certainly, level B, the one of the recital of the event, will appear from the start as the *sensus litteralis*, but this literal meaning does not pertain to the world of objects, of plain evidence and sensible perception, but to the *imaginal world* (*sensus litteralis in mundo imaginali*). This is a principle in Shi’ite hermeneutical theosophy: what is esoterical at the level of a given world is exoterical at the level of the world immediately superior to it. This is why the "literal meaning in the imaginal world" is esoteric in relation to the *real* of the perception of objects, or events of plain evidence in the world of sensible objects. The mystical recital is the esoterical of doctrinal teaching or external history, because it is its advancement, its transfer to the "Orient". At the same time this same mystical recital is the exoteric appearance of the event that puts doctrine into action, transmutes it into reality. Its esoteric meaning is not simply this same doctrine in its theoretical content, except that it indicates a virtuality (it is on this important point that the downfall of current hermeneutics occurs, which downgrades symbol into allegory), rather precisely this same doctrine existentially **realized**, having become an event of the soul and hence said in the recital. Use of the words *literal*, *real* and *event* ought to therefore rigorously correspond every time to the level that they are applied to. Thus only hermeneutics will safeguard the "oriental" finality of the mystical gesture; this certainly is a difficult and delicate task; it does not consist in simply setting up tables of equivalencies between persons and symbols, but it refers to understanding the progressive transmutation of all persons into symbols.

Let us illustrate this process that we have just described and also the misunderstanding that can befall it by means of some examples. We again borrow these examples from the splendid research that we have referred to above. The authors place certain themes from hermetist teaching side by side with events that correspond to them in Wolfram’s poem. In
order to make the connection with the analysis that went before we will begin each of the examinations with a capital letter that refers to levels $A$ and $B$ described above. 

A) In Hermetism $^{84}$, the Noûs (Intelligence) as the soteriological contents of the Krater, is carried to Earth as "life and light". B) In Wolfram a real resplendent white dove descends on the Grail with a host that gives life. A) In Hermetism the Krater quenches the thirst felt by its adepts for knowledge, to whom life is promised after death. B) In Wolfram the community of the Grail receives nourishment and a real drink from it, while eternal youth is promised to those who contemplate it (let us note meanwhile that Wolfram does not tell us what the real form of the contemplated Grail is. Regarding this real nourishment, designated by the name of food from this world, its reality models itself every time on the type of desire of the one whom it nourishes. This is a specific characteristic of the reality of the imaginal world). A) The Hermetist myst, progressing on the way of his salvation, arrives at a gate behind which shines the light that is symbolic of Gnosis. B) In Wolfram it deals with a real light; the procession of the Grail leaves from behind a real gate and crosses the hall where the community of the Grail is assembled (meanwhile there are twenty five maidens that carry seventeen lights that correspond to the stations of the soul and its spiritual constituents,$^{85}$ the symbolism of these numbers exceeds the real pure and simple. These maidens are certainly not allegories, they are indeed real, but of a reality that is like that of the Grail that appears in the "eighth clime"). A) In the Hermetist community affiliation establishes a mystical filiation between "father and son". B) In Wolfram this filiation becomes a real dynasty in the community of the Grail (certainly real, but of a reality unlike any dynasty in the present world; it does not enter into history in the ordinary sense of the word: its history is real but it takes place elsewhere). A) The hermetist mysts are "brothers" by religious affiliation. B) Parsifal and Feirefiz are real brothers by birth (but the reality of this parentage ends up as the same reality as that of the Grail dynasty). A) The agnostic looks but doesn't see, the eyes of flesh are incapable of perceiving what Hermetism calls God. B) Before his baptism Feirefiz does not see the Grail (but this is the same indication that the true vision of the Grail is of a sacramental order). A) Hermetism speaks of the spiritual beauty of ecstasy, of its absorption into the divine silence. B) In Wolfram, Titurel is the ecstatic, he is alone with the Grail behind a closed door, its physical beauty is extraordinary. A) The hermetist initiation is the knowledge of joy. B) At the time of the Grail procession Parsifal says that he is clothed with a mantle identical to the one worn by Repanse de Sc hoe y e,$^{86}$ the beautiful princess who carries the Grail (particularly at this point the real appears to correspond to what we labeled level $C$, above).

We could easily establish a similar parallelism between themes of the "Oriental Theosophy" and events that occur in Suhrawardi's mystical recitals (Recital of the Crimson Archangel, Recital of Occidental Exile, The Sound of Gabriel's Wings, etc.), as well as the Persian mystical epics in general.

In short, one has the impression that when our authors give the qualification real to an event, that in Wolfram corresponds to the teaching of the Krater, then this is like suggesting

$^{84}$Ibid., pp. 80-91; pages 463 ff. on "Wolfram's Hermetism" analyze the metamorphosis of the IVth Treatise of the Corpus hermeticum (the Krater) by summarizing an abundant amount of data into two columns; pages 172-174 are dedicated to the Technique of the sensus litteralis which we are examining here in particular.

$^{85}$Ibid., pp. 101-105. Note (uniquely so regarding the structure of the symbolic forms) the same number of persons in the procession that appears in the dream of princess Narkès, future mother of the 12th Imam (below, vol. 4, book 7): she sees Christ followed by the twelve Apostles and the Prophet Muhammad followed by the twelve Imams (a total of twenty five persons), ascending together the degrees of the number of Light.

$^{86}$Repansede Scho ye, i.e. meditation, thought or knowledge of joy is, as our authors note, ibid., pp. 85-88, the exact equivalent of the Hermetist expression gnôsis kharâs, Corpus hermeticum XIII, 8; it follows a parallelism that cannot be ignored. One notes, besides this, that the word "joy" in Shiism (taraj) signifies the parousia of the 12th Imam, whence the salutation that ritually accompanies each mention of his name: 'ajalla 'îdâr faraja-ho ("May God hasten the Joy").
that the Grail poem makes the sublime teachings of Hermetism redescend to the level of "reality". If that is the case, were we at the level of the "unreal" before to the Grail poem? Certainly not. It is here that the ambiguity of the word real makes itself felt and why we firmly keep to the outline noted above. Wolfram’s poem does indeed confer its reality on the teaching that as such only represents a virtuality, an "orientation". The poem puts into operation the "oriental" finality of this teaching, makes it pass from level A to level B. When the word real is used therefore, in reference to level B, it is fitting not only to use it regarding "reality" in the ordinary sense of the word, but also in the way "spiritual realism" has this in mind, i.e., that it is important to admit the plenary reality, both concrete and spiritual, of Malakût, of the "eighth clime", where all the events of the Malakût Grail take place. That is why in our examination above, of the relationships noted by our authors, we made a slight correction every time they used the word real for what we are calling level B, suggesting that this real was eo ipso more than the real in the ordinary sense of the word.

The esoteric meaning does not reside in the letter of the Krater’s teaching pure and simple. Certainly, the recital is the esoteric appearance of the event occurring when one passes from level A to level B. However, its esoteric meaning is not on level A just like that, marking its virtuality; it does not consist of a return there. The esoteric meaning is precisely the meaning of the passage from level A (spiritual virtuality of the doctrine) to level B (blossoming of doctrine into a spiritual event). The awakening to the secret of the passage that has occurred, this is what we described above as level C. There is nothing that points this out any better than the final scene, where Parsifal notices that he is wearing the same mantle as the Queen of the Grail (who carries the Grail). So it is only when level A has risen to level C that it is fitting to speak of an anagogical meaning. This presumes that Wolfram’s entire poem be read as an initiatory recital (which in fact it is, as the remarkable book 9 shows, where the hermit Trevrizen initiates Parsifal into the secret of the Grail). Doctrines are promoted to the state of real event of the soul, to the state of a fact in the world of Malakût. At this level there is no longer a doctrine that is the esoteric aspect of the event; it is the event that is the esoteric aspect of the doctrine. Nevertheless, if it was enough to resort to theoretical proof in order to obtain the key to the esoteric aspect of this poem, then the question would be asked once more: what good are Wolfram’s poem and all similar mystical epics, if they are merely duplicates of a teaching that is perfectly understandable without them? It would only be necessary to "demythicize" the Grail cycle. However, we know that whoever speaks of "demythicizing" is simply in the same state of mind as Feirefiz "before his baptism".

The remarks made here regarding Suhrawardi’s mystical recitals and Persian mystical epics in general are so important that this urges us to repeat what we stated previously (book 1) about the hermeneutics of the Sacred Writings. If a few paragraphs ago we dismissed the use of "techniques", then we did so because this will create the impression that the inspired poet as well as the creative poet toil laboriously on an indexing scheme of correspondences. Neither Persian mystical epics nor epics of the Grail cycle are the results of efforts that in any way are related to an "encoding" of administrative documents, or the transposition of the tonality of one part of an orchestration to another. Neither does a composer in the midst of inspiration follow each of his musical scores with a treatise on harmony. Biblical writers, both of "historical" parts and of prophetic ones, wrote from the fire of divine inspiration. The Prophet Muhammad only "recited" what the Angel of Revelation told him. Meanwhile, under the letter of biblical and Koranic recitals spiritual hermeneutists have discovered a wealth of meanings that extend the scale of many worlds. Certainly, whoever "looks without seeing" can only look upon those meanings as interpolations. However, our schematization into levels A, B and C will help anyone who "sees" in absolving himself from such a reproach. The inspired writings did not even set out from what we labeled level A, that is absent in them. From the very start, visionary inspiration, hierognosis, causes its writings to be situated on level B. The hermeneutist who works to understand the spiritual
meaning, the esoteric meaning, does not "redescend" to what corresponds to level A. Certain-
ly, it is incumbent upon him to unveil the correspondences, to show doctrinal contents
spontaneously "encoded" by inspiration into the texts of the recitals. However, if he goes no
further than that, all will be a simple matter of technique. To discover the Gnosis hidden
underneath the exoteric form of the recital is precisely to discover this Gnosis from the very
start, not in a doctrinal state, but in the very act itself (cf. also, below, chapter 5, § 1).

This is why hermeneutics, ta'wil, does not destroy or abolish esoteric appearances. It
does not have to "explain" them but illuminates their depths transparently; these appear-
ances must be kept intact. Esoteric hermeneutics knows that all concrete details are as
many "apparitional forms" (apparentiae reales) as "spiritual realism" is able to validate,
because it has at its disposal the ontology of the imaginal world and neither the visions
of the prophets or the mystics nor events like the resurrection have their appropriate place
without it, as our authors have repeatedly stated. It is exactly this conjugation of levels A,
B and C that differentiates every esoteric hermeneutics based on the "phenomenon of the
Book" from an esoteric theoretical philosophy pure and simple. One has to be made aware
of this in order to grasp the hermeneutics of a Swedenborg, who shows the spiritual history
of spiritual man in biblical recitals, as well as Shi'i hermeneutics that shows the secret
history of the Imam and of the Imamate since its inception in the Koran.87

When we speak of a conjugation of levels A, B and C then this is shorthand for saying
that the esoteric meaning of the recital does not merely take place on level A, but on level
A promoted to an event on level B. The situation is similar with level C, whether this
concerns a biblical or a koranic recital or a recital from the Avesta or Ferdaws: external
history has become internal history, a history whose events are seen in the reality of the
imaginal world; at level C a new dimension opens up that was all together absent from
level A. The key to the esoteric meaning of level C, the one that opens up the way for a
hermeneutical believer, is given by Suhrawardi mainly in two places. The one instant occurs
in his "Recital of the Grail" at the very moment that his own person suddenly becomes
the place for this history, the other in his "Recital of Occidental Exile" at the moment
that he cries out: "This recital is about me!" No technique can supply the means to such
an accomplishment. It is unforeseeable, unheard of, imposing itself with authority like the
creative act of divine grace. This is how that wonderful scene in Goethe's Faust says it:
"The unattainable is reached here. The indescribable is here realized."88

The "return to the Orient" is indeed something that cannot be described. From the
moment that one attempts to say it, it is inevitable that this saying takes on the exoteric
appearance of a sensus litteralis. However, the esoteric meaning of this saying does not reside
in some earlier theoretical evidence that subsists by itself. It happens where all intelligible
evidence is transmuted into an event, occurring "between Heaven and Earth", says the same
Finale in Goethe's Faust, in the "middle Orient", in the "eighth clime", says Suhrawardi.
It is also the place and the very secret of the recital, the hikâyat, as the act of "oriental"
finality.

The Grail Recital of a Khusrawâni Mystic

Suhrawardi who prepares us with his "Oriental Theosophy" for the Inexpressible, that ac-
complished fact of the "return to the Orient", has attempted to say this in one short and
extraordinary "Grail Recital". We mobilized all those themes spread over the preceding
pages especially with this one recital in mind, because the vibrations of this recital ex-
tend themselves into resonances that have complex and multiple overtones. We noted that

87 Cf. our study Herméneutique spirituelle comparée, Eranos-Jahrbuch XXXIII, 1965.

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The person of Kay Khusraw definitely exercised some sort of fascination over Suhrawardi’s thought: he saw in him a typifying figure from before Zoroaster and the sages of ancient Persia and gave the latter the name of Khuraswâniyyân (an adjective derived from the name Khusraw), situating them as predecessors to the Ishrâqiyyân, together forming one spiritual family. That is how we better understand the secret motivation of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq in describing the appearance of Kay Khusraw as "King of the Grail" in this recital.

This is why it was so appropriate to compare the gestures of both Kay Khusraw and Parsifal, of Xvarnah and the Holy Grail. This "Grail Recital" is of the kind that only a Khusrâwânî mystic could compose; it happens very much like a paroxysm. Just as his defiance of the Inexpressible reminds us of something Faustian, so even its intonation inevitably prolongs itself into arpeggios that are very much of a Wagnerian nature.

The event that this mystic attempts to say can in fact be grasped at a level of reality where it is literally true. This is so not in our world but "between Heaven and Earth", between the "Major Orient" and the terrestrial "Occident". Neither Kay Khusraw, Parsifal, nor Galashad have left records on library shelves; Kang-Dêz, Hûrqalyâ and the Spiritual Palace of Sarras remain beyond the reach of archaeological digs. Although these persons are no less real than those of history, in the current sense of the word, they are not seen as such; the places of their gesture are no less real than those of the soil dug up by archaeological tools. However, they are real in a different kind of reality that the foregoing pages had in mind to situate and confirm, all according to the same premises as Suhrawardi’s "Oriental Theosophy".

Thus this mystic has attempted to say this event. However, as he carries out the saying of it, there is also the implication that he manages to make it appear to his listener or reader. Listener and reader are engaged in exactly the same process; each bear a different responsibility but it engages them in the same adventure. Under what conditions can the author attempt to say it? Under what conditions will the listener or the reader grasp what the author has attempted to say? The hikâyat answers this dual question, it answers it in the sense that the conditions of saying in the one case and of grasping in the other one are the same, namely the same ones that make up the hikâyat.

We have referred several times to hikâyat in the foregoing pages and have explained it at length elsewhere.\footnote{Cf. our study Herméneutique spirituelle comparée [note 308, above], pp. 71 ff., and De l’épâpée héroïque à l’épâpée mystique [above, page 120, note 82], pp. 105, ff., 207 ff.}

Let us simply say that this word, in common usage both in Arabic and in Persian, has the capability of connoting at once the act of reciting and of imitating (mimésis); it is a recital that mimics, a history that is an imitation, the active and actual repetition of the Event. We will see that such a history towers above every technique and all expectations of techniques. If technique sufficed then every reader of the Corpus hermeticum could produce a Parsifal; every reader of the "Oriental Theosophy" could produce a cycle of Suhrawardian recitals. Instead of producing them, it does remain necessary to understand them and to perceive something different than technique. Without a doubt the Event will never take place for anyone who sees only technique here; the responsibility of the reader or listener is engaged in the same thing, namely that of understanding. No one will understand the Event that the recital wants to say except those in whom the Event is at least beginning to reproduce itself. Hence Suhrawardi’s warnings and invitations to "return" (to where you were before), to take your place in Noah’s ark and say with him: "May we set sail and make a port call!".

Through such injunctions Suhrawardi divides the responsibility for the hikâyat between author and reader. He puts the latter before the same obligations that he, the author himself, had to satisfy in order to be personally the place for the event of the Inexpressible that his recital attempts to say. We indeed know very well that an "oriental" philosopher in Suhrawardi only "makes history" for philosophy in the very act of philosophizing. So to
philosophize is not being a spectator of philosophy but to act the philosophy. Suhrawardi has shown us that according to him to "make history" for the Ishrâqiyyân is to perform "oriental theosophy" while claiming the ascendance of the Khusrâwânîyân, the Sages of ancient Persia. The event carries the authority with it and eo ipso activates the past that the Shaykh al-Ishrâq makes his own as the "resurrector of the theosophy of ancient Persia"; in so doing he "makes the history" of the Ishrâqiyyân and the Event henceforth continues because Suhrawardi does not merely describe or recount a history; he is that very history.

What comprises the hikâyat seems to me to be best defined by a text that is unfortunately still unpublished, as are so many others. 90 It deals with a passage where Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâï explains that the three principals in the act or the action of the recital (the hikâyat) are the reciter, the recited gestures and the heroes (or someone else) who are spoken of in the recital, and the fact that they are all one together. Likewise the witness (shâhid, the one who is present, who watches), the thing that is contemplated and that is present to him, and the one to whom he testifies regarding this, these three things are all one and the same in the act of witnessing (shahâdat). Plurality and difference only exist functionally depending on the point of view that is assumed. That is so because the hikâyat, the mystical recital, only seizes reality once the mountain of egoism that has fenced itself in has been evened out. "So it is correct to say that the reciter, the gesture that is recited and the hero of the recital (the exemplary hero who is "imitated") form one and the same reality." And the shaykh concludes: "This takes place in everyone as a function of the ability they possess. Meditate and meditate more!"

Those last words, "in everyone", say what matters most. They show that this tri-unity from the hikâyat forms itself anew in everyone who is in turn the repetition of it because they are not simply "disinterested readers" but fully assume its custody. This is why we can speak here of a history that disrupts the course of ordinary history since in the act of this repetition time becomes reversible: the event extracts the past from the past. There is a gap between what a few pages ago we called level A (doctrinal as well as historical explanation, as virtuality summoned to blossom into a spiritual fact) and level C (the finished passage from external to internal history). The act of the hikâyat breaches this gap, like the history that reconstructs our familiar history in order to consider the only real one, the one "that counts." As we said before, there is no history of spirituality other than this spirituality itself, because only the thing that this spirituality itself is the history of "makes history" here in one way or another. So it is always a matter of degree, but it can be so in a catastrophic manner.

It could be said that every historical hermeneutics also implies for itself a "historiosophic" position, to use Schelling's appropriate expression. The historian can be conscious of it or not, he can say it or stay silent; it remains true that as a function of the "historiosophy" that is inevitably expressed he will "make history" for what he speaks of. As "objective" as he can be this objectivity itself will mark the final moment of the "history" that he has taken charge of "making" in one way or another. The "final moment", in as much as so-called historical consciousness excludes all absolute meaning from either philosophy or doctrine; historical consciousness can only put everything in a museum of history, or rather into a "dialectical" museum, since the sense of a philosophy or a doctrine is measured essentially by its relation to moments in the past. How to absolve such a signification from the whirlwind of historicism and then find an absolute sense in a doctrine or a philosophy? The conditions for the hikâyat answer this question, as Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâï summarizes them in a few lines; they are only another aspect of what has been called "spiritual realism".

90This has to do with a commentary on the K. al-Fawâ'id (Book of Teachings) of Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâï, by one of his pupils, Muhammad ibn Muh. Nasîr Gilânî (i.e. from Gilân on the southwestern coast of the Caspian Sea), who scrupulously reported the sayings of his shaykh. The latter also wrote a commentary on his own book but the two are independent of another; cf. our study De l'épopée héroïque (above, page 120, note 82), p. 326, note 14 and 478 16 of the unicum (Teheran, Soltâni's collection).
in the foregoing pages. It could be said that it is a sort of necessity that goes against the grain of the concepts currently in use in the humanities and the social sciences. Perhaps just as well; it does not behoove us here to reform the objectives and intent of our humanity sciences but instead to attempt to show how a Suhrawardi dissolved Kay Khusrw’s heroic gesture into his own mystical gesture and to discover "what happens" in his Grail recital and the other mystical recitals.

Shaykh Ahmad tells us "this takes places in everyone", but he also narrowed it down with "everyone in whom the mountain of egoism has been evened out", in other words the mountain of subjectivity (anâ'îya). Two paradoxes oppose each other here. On the one hand the "objectivity" of the practical methods of historical consciousness regarding the sense of doctrines goes hand in hand with a "subjective skepticism". On the other hand the hikâyat as we described it will perhaps bring about what western philosophy characterizes as pure "mystical subjectivism". However, to form the tri-unity that absolves the past from its death in the past, the hikâyat presupposes the abolition of subjectivity or subjectivism. The objection that was raised is then done away with. If it is brought up anyway then this will be because of an ignorance of the "polar dimension" of the human being, a dimension that disrupts the "latitudinal dimension" of historical consciousness. This "polar dimension" (vertical, "longitudinal") is initiated by the apophatic theology of Shi’ism and Sufism even though it says that what we call God remains forever Unknowable, the Abyss, the Silence. God only makes himself known to us by reverting to qualifications and modalities that correspond every time to what we are ourselves. God can only reveal himself to us in ourselves and by ourselves. Such an admission can only be seen by rationalist critics as one of "absolute subjectivism". No doubt, but then apophatic theology itself is able to go much further and ask: who absolves from this absolute subjectivity? It is precisely nothing else than the relationship itself with the Ineffable that is revealed because therein lies the Face to Face: the Face that God uses when he reveals himself and shows himself to man is also every time the Face of man as he knows himself and shows himself to God (this is the famous line: "They who know themselves know their Lord"). The Face by which man knows his God is eo ipso the Face by which God knows him. This constitutes in Shi’ite theology (above, book 1) the theme of the Imâm as the pole of this relationship, absolving itself from all other conditions than itself, and this is precisely only knowing God through himself.

From this it can be seen, that if in the tri-unity of the hikâyat the reciter is the active agent of the gesture that is recited, then he is also at the same time the passive subject acted upon by this gesture. It is the same paradox that we just tried to describe and which our spirituals know how to say in a language and a style that is their very own because it comes from the mysticism of Love (as was done above all by Rûzbehân, cf. book 3, below). Thus in the context of advanced speculative theosophy, Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâ’î again refers us to what poetry said about Majnûn and Laylâ (the pair of Tristan and Isolde in Arabic and Persian poetry). Majnûn cannot look at Laylâ’s beauty because she blinds his perception with it; he has to see Laylâ in himself the way Laylâ sees herself, just like we can only see God the way he sees himself in us: "God is only known by us through a gaze that is Himself of Himself but in us, like the poet said: 'When the Lover wants to see his Beloved, although he doesn’t have the strength for that, then through her mercy she bestows on him a glance of herself, so the glance by which the Lover sees his Beloved is the same as the Beloved seeing herself’."

Thus the tri-unity of the hikâyat is realized "in everyone in whom the mountain of egoism (=subjectivism) has been evened out". In being evened out, a subjectivity absorbed from itself is positioned into an absolute subjectivity by the very act that operates inside of it and

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absolves it. These clarifications put us into a position to be able to understand Suhrawardi’s hikâyât of the Grail, to the moment of the affirmation where a growing tension is now resolved: he is Kay Khusraw’s Grail himself.

As we know it through three very rare manuscripts, this "Grail Recital" makes up one of the chapters of the mystical treatises that were translated by him into Persian. They appear like a rhapsody, like a series of twelve apologues or mystical recitals, where the first lends its title to the rest: "The Language of the Ants" (Lughât-i mûrân). The fourth treatise is the hikâyât, Kay Khusraw’s mystical Grail recital. We distinguish four movements: three episodes and a conclusion.

1) A preface announces the theme: there is a mysterious Cup, one of the manifestational forms of the Light of Glory that was in Kay Khusraw’s possession. Because of its origin this Cup is traditionally referred to as "Jam’s Grail" (Jâm-i Jam) i.e. belonging to Jamshîd (Yima) , the primordial sovereign who received the order to rule in Erân-Vêj, in medio mundi, the var or paradisical enclosure that offers so many analogies with Kang-Dêz as well as with the cities in the "eighth clime". This Grail, first Jamshid’s and thereafter Kay Khusraw’s, has the powers of a microcosm, it is the "mirror of the universe". Its owner can contemplate the mysteries of the visible and invisible worlds in it (as it was given to Galahad to contemplate the supreme divine mysteries in the Grail, while in the spiritual palace of Sarras).

2) Next comes a brief explanation of the mysteries of the Grail, whose mystical meaning is already apparent from the preface that listed its powers. The recital tells us that the Grail is the spiritual microcosm, the Man of Light within man (the Light Espahbâd), enclosed within a "sheath of flesh", or a "leather bag", i.e., within the body of material flesh. But it happens that this Light unites its links, "unsheathes itself"; from this moment on the Grail (this Light) becomes invisible. That is the moment that Kay Khusraw, like Titurel alone with the Grail behind the symbolic gate, becomes absorbed into its contemplation that unites him with the beings of Light (this corresponds to the arrival of the pilgrim in the "Recital of the Exile" at the summit of Mount Qaf; having become definite, it is the disappearance of Kay Khusraw to the eyes of his knights, close to the Spring of Life, or the transfer of the Holy Grail back home "to the Orient" by Parsifal). The Grail is only visible when the leather bag (the physical body) ties it down again; however, what is then seen is uniquely what appears "fashioned individually every time" under that form (the "ten points" that are mentioned typify the 5 internal and 5 external senses).

3) The moment of the dissolution of the bonds comes when the soul of Light (Nûr Espahbâd) raises itself to its "Orient", in an ecstatic moment that is an anticipation of its exitus from this world. This "Orient", this hour of Ishrâq is designated as the "spring equinox", the moment when Day enters into equilibrium with Night and when the triumph of Light over Darkness is decided. This typifies the entire tradition again of the Jamshid Grail. Kay Khusraw then holds the Grail against the Sun so that the impression of all visible and invisible universes are made manifest. This is a reminder of the symbolism of the drop of balsam that is put on the palm of the hand and passes to the other side, if the hand is held up against the Sun (in the beginning of the Recital of the Crimson Archangel). From that moment on the "Oriental Theosophy" is no longer simply a doctrine, the intellect’s tail; its "oriental finality:" is now put into operation in anticipation of a personally experienced eschatology. The transposition from eschatology to the register of personal experience is announced by means of three Koranic verses; ta‘wil propagates their resonance to the very heart of the mystic. That is why these verses have been translated into the present, as a grammar that authorizes it and a ta‘wil that necessitates it.

4) Then comes the last declaration in a quatrain that finally says what the Grail is.

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The revelation of the Grail bursts forth like that of the man of Light having reached the knowledge of himself.

Here is our translation (fr) of the Grail Recital:

I. Kay Khusrav was in possession of the Grail, the mirror of the universe. He contemplated everything that could be the object of his desire in this Grail; there he was told of invisible worlds; there he investigated every realm of being.

II. This Grail was enclosed in a sheath of flesh, of a form that was individually fashioned every time and composed of ten joints. When Kay Khusrav wanted to know some mystery of the Invisible again he handed the leather bag to the turning wheel once more (to destroy it). When all bonds had been broken the Grail was no longer apparent. However, when all bonds had been established once again the Grail appeared once more, because of the effect of the wheel.

III. At the time of the spring equinox, Kay Khusrav exposed the Grail and held it up against the Sun. The brightness of the Star hit the Grail and behold, all the lines and imprints of the worlds were seen in a manifest state.

"When the Earth is leveled and casts forth whatever is in it and becomes utterly void, obeying its Sustainer as in truth it must, then, Oh man, thou that hast been toiling towards they Sustainer in painful toil, now thou meets him!" (84:3-6) "Not even the most hidden of your deeds will remain hidden" (69:18). "Every [soul] will at last comprehend what he has sent ahead and what he has held back in this world" (82:5).

IV. When I heard from my Master the Recital of Jam's Grail, I was Jam's Grail myself, mirror of the universe. May my own Grail be unsheathed a mirror of the Universe; this shrouded Grail is a burning Flame that nourishes itself on our death.

The conditions that we analyzed in full in the preceding pages exist in actuality in this brief and gripping "Grail Recital", recapitulated and verified. What is contained in doctrine, leading the way to knowledge of self opens up in the image of Kay Khusrav's Grail, at once real object and real event. The Inexpressible that the "Oriental Theosophy" strains to speak of has occurred as a "return to the Orient"; the event becomes the hidden meaning and the occurrence of the hidden meaning of the doctrine. At the same time this recital expresses this hidden meaning under the appearance of a sensus litteralis. However, the hidden meaning of this "literal meaning" is no return to the theoretical evidence of the doctrine, expressing what the "Orient" is; it exists at a higher level where, doctrine having become event, the myst now awakens to the consciousness of this Event that his own person is the place for. "I was (I became) Jam's Grail myself, the mirror of the Universe". The Grail is the real

93 Cf. the beginning of Safîr-i Sîmurgh: "Every hoopoe, who in the spring takes flight to mount Qif..."

94 Cf. Op. Met. III, p. 299, line 13, where the text of the critical edition reads something like: "This Grail is shrouded in (=what hides it) our old woven coat". This sounds edifying but is not very original and is the way we understood it once. Meanwhile, the MSS Istanbul Râghib 1380 (which unfortunately did not contribute to the critical edition) exhibits the nervous and precise graphics of a learned hand (but unfortunately without diacritical punctuation), such that it creates a problem with the word that is read elsewhere as pashtînic [woollen]. We were detained with our friend Mo'in for some years by this passage and finally we read here two Arabic words [lihba shu'mithuh] that come from a source that Suhrawardi was familiar with and that, when inscribed into the Persian version, followed a line that made the following Persian syntax feasible: "lihba sdat mitu'ah"-i maks. The author provides the meaning of these words in his own statement. Literally: "This shrouded Grail (i.e. hidden treasure) is our "burning flame (or burning thirst) that will make it die". Suhrawardi means to say here: "the ardent or thirst that is ended by dying" is to be understood by me as the Grail hidden in me, which I am myself. Or, as we attempted to translate (fr): this ardor, in consuming our life, nourishes itself on our death. This is why the Grail symbol is connected here with the symbol of the Phoenix, as the symbol of the religio mentis.

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object, but of a reality of objects in the suprasensible world. A real event, although it does not happen in our world and although it does deconstruct history; hence, so real that it never "ages", since it always summons "to fade away". What makes the Word true is not to have been "of its own time", as historical consciousness understands this, but to be the time of each adept believer in whom the Event occurs.

Similarly, the ta‘wil that we see Suhrawardi activate in his Grail recital, as well as in his other mystical recitals, is in perfect agreement with his own ta‘wil of the sacred writings. It is an expression of the rule that states: "Recite the Koran with ecstatic sentiment (wajd), with interior emotion and with subtle reflection. Recite the Koran as if it were revealed only for your very own case." By this same token we are now reunited with the "phenomenon of the Book", as seen by the 5th Imâm, Muhammad al-Bâqir (above, book 1): "If the verses of the Koran only meant something to the circumstances and the people to whom they were actually revealed, then the whole Koran has been dead a very long time!" However, the ta‘wil, the hermeneutics that makes the hikâyat the recital of each believer who recites it like Suhrawardi, keeps it a living thing "until the Day of the Resurrection".

The two mystical recitals that we now present are illustrations of this. In the "Recital of the Occidental Exile" the stages of the exile’s "return voyage" will be marked by as many Koranic verses that ta‘wil applies to the individual instance of the mystic and that plot the progress of his spiritual states until he arrives at the "Orient", at the "celestial pole". In the end we will again discover a figure whom Suhrawardi’s Hermetism has already shown us under the name of "Perfect Nature". Before this we will first examine the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel". Similarly, at two principal occasions that are bestowed by the Archangel on its terrestrial companion, we note the intervention of two episodes from Iranian mystical epics. Again we will see that the heroic gesture finds its renewal in the mystical gesture; the latter puts into operation the "Oriental" finality. This is the way Suhrawardi proceeds in all of his "Oriental Theosophy", leading the sages of ancient Persia to Islam itself and back to the "Oriental Source", thus reviving the Ishrâqûyn, the Islamic Persian Neoplatonists, as posterity of the Khusrawânîyûn of ancient Persia.

95 These are almost the last words in the final chapter of a treatise entitled Kalimat al-tasawwuf [still unpublished]. This Sufi work begins with a moving reference to those who have neglected the ma‘âni, the spiritual meanings, and those who have been done away with by literal exegesis.
Chapter 5

The Recital of the Crimson Archangel and the Iranian Mystical Gesture

Finality of the Recital

The Grail Recital has just shown us the "oriental" finality of "Oriental Theosophy" in act and deed. We were able to verify the tri-unity postulated by the hikâyat, the mystical recital, where the reciter, the recited gesture and the heroes about whom this is recited fuse into a coalescence that is each time like the birth of a species. The ishrâqi mystical theosopher speaks in the "first person" as a khusrâwâni theosopher; he is Kay Khusraw's Grail himself. In similar fashion the Ishrâqiyyûn present themselves as being the history, the hikâyat, of the Khusrawâniyyûn, those through whom the gesture of the latter is actualized, repeated in the present down to Islamic Persia, thanks to the ta'wil of Islamic spirituality, for which it generalized the secret. With the unveiling of the Grail, the granting of the knowledge of what the Grail is, the "oriental" adventure comes to a close in anticipation of the exitus. It satisfies the precept of the Prophet of Islam: "Seek to die spiritually before you are seized by physical death." Thereafter the anguish and darkness feared by death dissipate. The myst knows that this is a return "to oneself" and the way the return is taking place. "The Inexpressible has become reality." What was unfinished has become event, it has now been fulfilled.

For an ishrâqi the indescribable is exactly what the "Book of Oriental Theosophy" attempts to describe, as do the great works that prepare the way for this theosophy. However, Suhrawardi and the Ishrâqiyyûn also have repeated this: it is not enough to read books in order to belong to the family of "hieratics". The books will put readers on their way, guide them to the end, but books themselves are still only a virtuality. It is necessary to acquire the habitus of taking off the paraphernalia of the senses of the physical body like a tunic (the leather bag that envelops Kay Khusraw’s Grail) in order to penetrate into the "eighth clime", the "middle orient", the mundus imaginalis, threshold of the major orients. Certainly, for historians familiar with the usual categories of the exoteric history of religions, what is inconceivable is perhaps a sudden and necessary resurgence of figures from the Zoroastrian tradition of ancient Persia in the midst of the Sufism of Islamic Persia. However, this inconceivable is realized here as a spiritual fact that the person of the Shaykh al-Ishrâqi is the place and the "explanation" for. Antedating him we can no doubt look for vestiges that indicate a passage from Persia to the rest of the world; these do indeed exist,
and of course are discussed, just as traces are discussed in the absence of what caused them. Beginning with the *Shaykh al-Ishrâq* we are no longer dealing with gathering vestiges but with the imperative presence of a spiritual fact that itself will make its mark on everything that comes after it, namely the *ishrâqi* tradition of Islamic Iran.

The person of Kay Khusrav, the ecstatic sovereign, as seen in Suhrawardi’s vision, dominates the perspective of spiritual Iran. We know the hermeneutic principle that regulates the *ta’wil* of our Shaykh: "Recite the Koran as if it was revealed only for your very own case". However, his case is that of a Gnostic whose vision opens up to the perspective of a plurality of spiritual universes that gives him the "secret" to his own history, because it is there that he came from and there that he will return to. His own "history" is a *metahistory*, because it breaks the linear constraints of exoteric history, because his past and his future do not take place, do not have their place at the same level as the latter. To become a contemporary, to be *synchronized* with this past and that future "in the present" implies a critical analysis of *time* that will actively be conducted by others, notably by that great Shi‘ite thinker Qâzî Sa‘îd Qummî.

Suhrawardi was not only prepared to put into place the governing principle of his hermeneutics in his reading of the Koran, but also in his reading of the one book that was for Islamic Persia like a Bible, where the heroic gesture of ancient Iran had been preserved, namely the "Book of Kings", Firdawsi’s *Shâh-Nâmeh* (10th century). One can imagine that Suhrawardi read the *Shâh-Nâmeh* like we read the Bible, or he himself read the Koran, i.e., as if it had been written "for his very own case". We have just realized the nature of this case: the *Shâh-Nâmeh* could thus become the history or the metahistory of the soul, such as this is present in the heart of the Gnostic. Thus Suhrawardi is able to perceive the entire history of the soul and the world of the soul spontaneously in the drama of the *Shâh-Nâmeh*, reading it on a level where one is present to the thought of the totality of being and the worlds of being, i.e., like Proclus read the history of mysterious Atlantis as real history and also as "the image of a certain reality existing in the All".¹ A commentary on the *Shâh-Nâmeh* developed in this sense will be of great interest to us by showing us an interpretation of the sort that is analogous to the way Hellenic piety interpreted Homer’s *Odyssey*. Unfortunately the *Shaykh al-Ishrâq* only suggests a spiritual hermeneutics in the case of three of the heroes of the *Shâh-Nâmeh*, besides Kay Khusrav, namely Zâl, Rostam and Esfandyâr. However, even here there is a considerable amount of significant material.

We are now about to notice the appearance of the significance of these three heroes in the center of the recital translated here as the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel". This is the principal reason that we have chosen this particular recital over the others in the cycle.

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composed by Suhrawardi.\textsuperscript{23} Indeed, next to Kay Khusraw’s case, this recital allows us to better understand how Suhrawardian hermeneutics perceives the "oriental" finality of the heroic gesture, i.e., how the history of the soul is "encoded" in it and how it grants the Iranian heroic gesture its completion in a mystical gesture. This is certainly not a matter of abstract speculation, of tables with equivalencies permitting an automated transposition. The significance of Zâl’s and Rostam’s case is only suggested to us through the "conversation with the Angel". This conversation itself also takes place "between Heaven and Earth". If, following the outline of \textit{Shâh-Nâmeh}, the history of the descent of the Gnostic soul into this world and its ascent in an ecstatic \textit{exitus} brought about by the powers of higher worlds, this history finds itself divided between the two personalities of Zâl and Esfandîyâr, then this is no situation whose meaning is demonstrable through logical argumentation. The spiritual hermeneutics uncovered by the evidence is situated at a level other than that of the sensible perception of the exterior gesture of the heroes and different from that of rational understanding. Similarly, the hidden history of Zâl and Rostam is only revealed to us in very obscure terms, "in passing" so to say, while their relationship with the mystical bird \textit{Simurgh} tells us that this constitutes the secret of the entire recital, a secret that determines, if properly understood, that the Angel’s disciple is able to respond positively to the latter’s insinuation: "If you are Khâzr, you too can cross".

The "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" is put into immediate contact with the Iranian heroic gesture that is called upon to be unfolded into a mystical gesture through the dual episode of Zâl and Esfandîyâr. One of the \textit{Shaykh al-Ishrâq}’s other recitals is more particularly connected with ancient gnosis and Hermeticism, through the themes that he puts into place there. That is the "Recital of Occidental Exile". It is the second recital that we have selected for translation (fr), not only because these two recitals put into operation the dominant elements of "oriental theosophy", namely Neoplatonic Zoroastrianism and Hermeticism, but also because there is a special relationship between these two recitals by themselves. The first of the two is in the same relation to the other as the "Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân" is to the "Recital of the Bird" in the Avicennan cycle. The first is descriptive, it indicates the topography of the universe that the mystic must traverse in order to leave the "cosmic crypt". The "Recital of the Bird" is the effective place to take off from, guiding the travelers to the goal of their spiritual ascension.\textsuperscript{4} In similar fashion Suhrawardi’s two recitals trans-

\textsuperscript{2} Cf. \textit{Prélègements I}, p. 17. The cycle of mystical recitals or initiatory tales composed by Suhrawardi, as it is currently known to us, contains some ten titles. We list them here in the order that they appear in \textit{Op.Met.III}, S. 11. Nasr edition: 1) \textit{Risâlat al-Tagr} [The Recital of the Bird]. This is a Persian translation of a recital written in Arabic by Avicenna. 2) \textit{Ashâr-i Pârî-i Jibrâyel} [The Sound of Gabriel’s Wings]. Previously translated and published by us in collaboration with Paul Kraus in \textit{Journal asiatique}, July-Sept. 1933. 3) \textit{‘Aql-i sorkh} [The Crimson Archangel] This is translated (fr) here. 4) \textit{Rûsûl bâ javâbât-al-i Sûfijân} [A Certain Day in the company of Sufi...]. 5) \textit{Risâlat bi bijl al-lîfîfiya} [Epistle on the State of Infancy]. 6) \textit{Mu’ânis al-‘Oshshâq} [The Vademecum of the Mu’ânis al-‘Oshshâq]. Translated [fr] by us under the title of "Le familier des amants" in \textit{Recherches philosopphiques I}, Paris 1933. This work has a sub-title: \textit{Fi hayqul al-isbq} ["On the Essence of Love"]; The editor preferred to reverse the order of title and sub-title in \textit{Op.Met.III}, 7) \textit{Loghât-i Mîrân} [The Language of the Ants]. French translation appeared in the journal \textit{Hermès}, 3rd series, November 1939. 8) \textit{Safîr-i Simurgh} [The Incarnation of Simurgh]. French translation, \textit{ibid}. Both of these are originally in Persian. 9) Both in Arabic and in Persian the \textit{Qissâ-al-ghorbat al-ghorbatiya} [Recital of Occidental Exile]. Originally both of these were published by us in \textit{Op.Met.II}. Our translation [fr] appears below, page 181ff. Finally, only in Arabic, the \textit{Risâlat al-abrâj} [The Epistle of the High Towers]. Text was published in our appendix to \textit{Op.Met.III}. We hope that a French translation of this entire \textit{corpus} of recitals will appear next year ["Documents Spirituels", A. Färejard]. This will be an occasion for us to improve upon the already dated older translations, and to return to what was most important in them through connections with the rest of the present work.

\textsuperscript{3} These have been translated into English: W. M. Thackston, Jr., \textit{The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi}, London 1982. However, regarding this translation [eng] cf. especially Hermann Landolt, "Suhrawardi’s "Tales of Initiation"", \textit{Journal of the American Oriental Society} 107, 3, 1987. Specifically Thackston translates \textit{‘Aql-i sorkh} by "Red Intellect", \textit{ibid}, p. 476.

\textsuperscript{4} Both the "Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân" and the "Recital of the Bird" have been translated [eng] in our book \textit{Avicenna and the Visionary Recital}.  

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lated (fr) here complete one another, respond to one another in order to form one complete entity.

We have said before that the "eighth clime" can be observed only by those to whom it has been given to see, but they cannot in turn show it to others and are even unable to effectively indicate the signs along the road. Only an Angel can attempt to show those. The "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" shows the way, points into the direction that should be taken, suggests how it ought to be "traveled", to the one final invitation: "If you are Khezr...". In its turn the "Recital of Occidental Exile" takes matters back to their beginning, like the first recital does. Subsequently the one exiled gives a response to the invitation: to get underway. Various vicissitudes are encountered on the road that is followed and finally the traveler arrives at the "Emerald Rock". A return is necessary however, because until the moment of the final exitus all ecstasy is fleeting. At least henceforth the road is known and that is what matters. The author attempts to mark the stages of this route. He does that with the help of a "code" of Koranic verses that must be "decoded" with the help of the handrail of ta'wîl; in order to avail oneself of this it is necessary that one also personally gets underway.

Once again, and let us be very clear about this, the few indications that we gave in our introduction to these recitals in general are only valid provided that we always remember what was said before (chapter 4, § 4) about this sort of explanatory genre. It will be illusionary and contradictory to believe to give meaning to a mystical or an initiatory recital by leading its events, either concrete or recalled, back to the level of theoretical doctrines, no matter how sublime, that this recital has precisely the intent and the function of going beyond, in as much as it is a mystical recital. Certainly, the immediate commentators who attempted, in Arabic or in Persian, to provide a key to Suhrawardi's recitals, did precisely that. However, one notices that, having once read their lecture to the end, and if one leaves it at that, all the drama of the recital is allowed to escape. On the other hand, if one looks at them as "orientations", then these commentaries are very helpful. They are ductus lectionis, reading guides, nothing more. If it were enough for the recital to present a "literal meaning", then Suhrawardi would never have had to write his cycle of recitals in order to provide us with the "esoteric meaning" of an action! If he wrote them at all, it is because his great didactic treatises and the form that he was conned to in these remained well below what he had to say.

What he had to say was not merely the theosophic doctrine and its conceptual coherence, but that same doctrine become event of his soul; every stage of the doctrine become a stage, i.e. a state that was lived, realized by the soul accomplishing a journey in actuality by describing the doctrine. Didactic explanation become recital. The recital is therefore not a point of departure for doctrine; it does not speak of events that have a locality in the present world, the phenomenal world, the world of exoteric history. It is here and now a raising of doctrine to the level of events that happen in the world of the soul, in Malakût. That is why, if from a didactic point of view doctrine is the esoteric meaning of the recital, it remains nevertheless true that from the point of view of what happens, it is the recital that is the esoteric meaning of the doctrine. Thus every time that one of the phases of the event are used as reference, in order to "clarify" some point in cosmology, psychology or angelology, it should not be forgotten that, e.g., cosmological theory, is in no way the esoteric meaning of the recital as such. It is only such an esoteric meaning on condition of being raised to that level of the Recital where it undergoes a metamorphosis into an event. Yes, then is it the meaning of the recital, because then the recital is itself the event, it is what is happening. Only this "hermeneutical circuit" reflects Suhrawardi's fundamental doctrine: a philosophy that does not end in a mystical experience, in a "hieratic" ascension, is sterile and devoid of meaning. Inversely, a mystical experience that has no preliminary philosophical foundation can only be a strong risk to mislead and cause one to lose one's way. However, taken together they lead to a higher level than when taken separately.
We have already previously insisted on this point (chapter 4, § 4, levels A, B and C), because it seems to us that the worst mistakes mentioned by us in the preceding pages in hermeneutics can easily be made here. These remarks will again find their strict verification in the "Recital of Occidental Exile". In that recital certain stages of the "return" will be typified by Koranic verses. Thus it is the return journey that finds itself as the esoteric meaning of these Koranic verses. As a corollary, the happening of the event cannot be sought simply in the enunciation of the verses, but in the contents of the verses lived and realized, moved into the present by the act, thus conforming to Suhrawardî's hermeneutics and to that of the 5th Imam. The meaning of these Koranic verses is thus deployed along several levels of the universe; at each of these levels the literal meaning that corresponds to it is true and this is at the same time also the spiritual meaning; this literal-spiritual meaning is then also that of the esoteric relative to the level immediately below it. That is why the visionary countries that spread themselves out before the soul in the mundus imaginalis and the people that exist there are real in their suprasensible reality, but this reality far exceeds the reality of a sensus litteralis relative to the theoretical doctrine that will be its esoteric meaning.

One notices therefore that a theosophy being put into dramatic action goes beyond the level where it has to furnish "dialectical proofs", whose organ is theoretical reasoning. Such guarantees and proofs are essentially "sapiential proofs" (dhawq, Latin sapere, a knowledge that savors a flavor), and this particular knowledge, a salvific gnosis, is inseparable from the inspiration of faith, indeed it is this same inspiration. It is therefore appropriate to wonder greatly about certain summary and peremptory claims made nowadays against gnosis; e.g., when it is said that gnosis tends to "double" faith through truths that are evidence similar to the exact sciences. To say things like this means only that one lacks essential information concerning gnosis. We have indeed rejected any idea of "doubling". If one begins by separating (inân, fâdes) from gnosis (îrfân), then they are never put together again in the unity of a theosophia (hikmat ilâhîya).

Let us attempt therefore, following these indications, to proceed with a thematic analysis of the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel". First of all, the recital begins with an important preface and at its conclusion the seven themes are introduced that are then developed in the initiatory teaching that the Angel gives to her disciple.

The Preface of the Recital

This preface consists of several parts:

a) A question asked by a friend of the author forms the beginning of the subject matter: the opening theme is the pre-existence of the soul. The reader is presented with a magnificent mental image of the celestial procession of the souls behind the gods and the fall of some of them, just like in Plato's Phaedrus. The winged appearance of the soul spontaneously suggests the form of a bird. Hence, the first theme that is alluded to is the "language of the birds" (Mantiq al-tayr). Mention is made of this language in the Koran (27:16), because Solomon as prophet received the privilege of understanding it. Understanding the "language of the birds" is to understand the language of all created things, as they express their very being. As everything speaks and lives, so it gives up its secret. To understand that is to have the key to the symbols. This precious gift is also related to the state of the soul before its fall into the present world. Besides this, Mantiq al-tayr is the title of one of the most famous Persian mystical epics by Farîduddîn 'Attâr (12th century), an epic that has as theme the

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5 Indeed, there is a distinction between: dâll al-mujâdala, the dialectical proof; dâll al-maw'iza, the homiletic proof; dâll al-hikmat, the sapiential proof (Shaykh Ahmad Ashâ'i, Sharh al-Fawâ'id, introduction).

6 Phaedrus 246 a – d., where the soul is imagined in the likeness of an Energy whose nature is that of a pair of winged steeds driven from a chariot by a charioteer who is also winged. Cf. our Avicenna, p. 178.

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episode of Simurgh. This name Simurgh has already been mentioned here; it will reoccur below because it is of great importance in Suhrawardi’s recitals.

b) The theme of pre-existence now calls forth the development of the fall of the soul into captivity. This happens through hunters named "Decree and Destiny, stretching out the filet of predestination". In Proclus there also question of hunters "who chase souls together with the daimôns and lock them up in their bodies".7 The Suhrawardian theme is here more directly in agreement with that of Avicenna’s recitals. The "Recital of the Bird", written by Avicenna in Arabic and translated by Suhrawardi into Persian presents a similar beginning. Mention is made of a friend’s quest to whom a secret is given; a moving speech is addressed to the "Friends of Truth". Then the Recital begins: "When the hunters saw us, they drew our attention by whistling so delightfully that they made us doubt ourselves [...] and suddenly we fell into their snares."8

The theme is again developed by Suhrawardi in that mystical rhapsody entitled "The Language of the Ants", from where we previously extracted his "Grail Recital". In another place in this rhapsody (the eighth chapter) the Shaykh again takes up the theme of a bird that has fallen into captivity; here it is not a falcon but a bird whose plumage reflects the colors of paradise, the peacock. "A king had a garden that was never without sweet basil, greenery and wonderful places, in any of the four seasons [...] Every joy that can come to mind and every beauty imaginable existed in that garden. Aside from that, a flock of peacocks of a grace, of a beauty and of an extreme refinement had settled in that place that had become their home. One day the king took one of these peacocks and ordered that it be sewn into a skin so that none of the colors of its plumage showed and that it no longer saw any of its own beauty, despite all its efforts [...] The peacock lost all remembrance of itself; it forgot the king, the garden and the other peacocks." So the peacock had no other point of view than the slit of a little basket where its food was thrown, "and in its heart the conviction was planted that it could have no greater country than the bottom of that basket."9 Here again the theme of the peacock sewn into a sheath of skin agrees with that of the Grail hidden in a leather bag. For the Grail to appear and for the true form of the peacock to come out again, they must both be "unsheathed" from the skin that hides them. Their reappearance also means a reappearance to their own world, to the world from where they descended to be hidden from it by a skin that surrounds them. Reappearance to their own world is linked to the occultation from this present one. That is one of the dominant themes of ishrâqî Gnosis, as well as of gnosis in general. We will discover another variant of it at the beginning of the "Recital of Occidental Exile".

c) Associated with the theme of the fall into captivity is the escape or the flight. We find something similar in the other mystical recitals. Each time this is concerned with the author’s description of a state of "ligature of the senses", "eo ipso untying" the subject from servitude to the world of sensible perception. That state can be symbolized by "night" because night, in hiding the sensible world, coincides with the awakening of the noetic powers of the soul (as when the Grail is "unsheathed" from its envelope and hidden to the present world). Mysts are not schizophrenics; they are very well aware they find themselves before a partition; their liberation is not yet complete. The bird of our recitals says: "I hobbled in my chains as well I could, till I reached the desert road." The same feature occurs in Avicenna’s "Recital of the Bird".10 Regarding the "desert", the empty lands (the image of empty stretches of the Iranian high plateau where infinite diversity is concentrated in quintessential tonalities), this is every time the place where the initial flight from the tumult of perceptions of the exterior world emerges. The beginning scene of another recital, the

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7Proclus, op.cit. (above, note 317), pp. 204 ff.
8Cf. our Avicenna, pp. 180, 188 ff.
9This is chapter eight in "The Language of the Ants". See our first translation of this in the Journal Hermès 3, III, pp. 46-47.
10Cf. our Avicenna, p. 189.
"Epistle on the State of Infancy", likewise takes place in the desert.

d) Now follows the escape into the desert and as an immediate result the encounter with the Angel. Here the preface of another recital, the one named "The Sound of Gabriel's Wings",\footnote{Cf. our translation in *Journal asiatique*, July-Sept. 1935, pp. 64 ff., and our research on *Le Récit d'initiation et l'hermétisme en Iran* (Eranos-Jahrbuch XVII, 1949), pp. 130 ff. We formerly translated this by "The Sound of Gabriel's Wing". Meanwhile, the singular in Persian allows a translation into the plural, as is called for in this case by the contents of the recital.} shows us the *Infant*, the celestial human now extricated from the bonds that tie down these *children*, the people from Earth, i.e., freed from the bonds of sensible knowledge that enslave Terrestrials, plunged as they are into the slumber of their soul's death. This is the night of the senses; all liberty is given to the Active Imagination in order to perceive the realities of the *mundus imaginalis* that begins at the summit of Mount Qâf. At the rising of the mystical dawn (the Hour of *Ishrâq*), the visionary opens the gate of the *khângâh* ("lodge" or Sufi "monastery") overlooking the land. Stated in another way: at the threshold of one's most intimate consciousness, one's "transconsciousness", a door opens that looks out over still unexplored desert land, whose traversal brings one to the country from where one originally came before entry into this world. "It was night when... darkness... had fallen over the entire lower world... I took a torch... and walked until the rising of the dawn... I closed the gate to the town... I opened the gate that looked out over the land... I saw ten Sages in brilliant clothing..." These Sages are arranged in hierarchical steps and their beauty strikes the visionary with stupor. With deferential dread one starts on what comes next: initiation has begun.

This is not an initiation into cosmology That was explained by Suhrawardi in his other great works. Instead this is an initiation into angelology that is its esoterical meaning, namely the three orders of Angels: the *Karûbîyûn*, the Cherubim or cherubinic Intelligences, the *Logoi* or Major Words and the *Logoi* or Intermediate Words who are the Celestial Souls, the movers of the Spheres; finally, the *Logoi* or Minor Words who are the humans, potential angels or devils. Here again we are not dealing with angelological theory but with an event. The visionaries really stand in *actu* before the one Major Word who is most proximate to them. Who might that be? The text leaves no doubt: it is the Angel Gabriel or the Holy Spirit, the Tenth Intelligence in the order of Angelic Hierarchies, the Angel of Humanity for humans the hermeneutist of the higher worlds is, that without her only present them with eternal silence, because they are beyond their limit. The relationship of this Angel with each human being is individualized under the traits of the *Perfect Nature* to whom Suhrawardi has dedicated one of his most beautiful psalms (above, page 87). Finally it is this Perfect Nature who takes charge of the initiation, since Gabriel is now spoken of in the third person. Gabriel the Archangel has two wings: the right one is absolute and pure light; the left one has a shadow like the reddish dark brown color of the rising full moon. The world of illusion, of *genesis*, is the shadow cast by Gabriel's left wing, while souls of Light emanate from the right one. With the revelation of the "Celestial Self" the view is now opened up to human superexistence. The vision ceases when "day" begins with its sensible perception and evidence.

Let us keep this brief reference to Suhrawardi's preface of his "Sound of Gabriel's Wings" in mind because the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" places us before the same Figure with similar characteristics, since the circumstances of the soul are the same. After the journey into the desert the visionary notices a mysterious person approaching with an enchanting and very pleasing youthful appearance. The visionary is then given to understand that this youth is "the eldest of the Creator's children". The precise meaning of this saying ought to be seen as a function of a context already noted, dividing the worlds into "the world of the divine Imperative" ("âlam al-Amr) meaning the combination of Jabârût and Malakût, and "the world of creatures" ("âlam al-khalq) meaning all of the world of *genesis* that humans presently belong to. As the "Angel of Humanity" (Rabb al-nû' al-insânî), the
Angel Gabriel can be called the "elder" of the Creator's children.

This vision is characterized by a red or reddish color bringing about the recital's name as well as problems with an appropriate translation (fr) so that the title might "speak for itself". The Persian title is 'A[1]q-i surkh. The word 'aql (plural 'uqûl) is the traditional term for cherubic In intelligences, whose ten hierarchical degrees we have just noted (these are the Angeli intellectuales of the Latin Avicennan tradition, while the Angeli caelestes are the intermediate hierarchy of the Souls who move the Spheres). The last among them is Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, the Angel of Revelation and Knowledge for humans, the Active Intellect of the philosophers, Madonna Intelligenza of the Fedeli d'amore among Dante's companions.12 Surkh means red. If this were translated by "Red Intelligence" then we fear such a title might mislead the reader into thinking this had a particular meaning.13 On the other hand, in order to explain its own "color" to the disciple the Angel alludes to the purple of the dawn. So, since the 'uqûl are In intelligences who are also called Archangels, the present title immediately came to mind and we called it: Recital of the Crimson Archangel. From the Archangel's explanation, this "red purple" color comes from the mixture of light and dark, black and white. Let us recall that this is exactly what we have just noted was the meaning of Gabriel's "two wings". This can be a surprising explanation for the physics we are currently used to: experimentally we will have to think of a ray of light falling through a window in order to justify this explanation. However, it is not the optical phenomenon that must be thought of here. The color has essentially a suprasensible meaning and a symbolic function. The closer something is to the source of being, the more it tends towards whiteness; the closer it gets towards genesis, the more it tends towards blackness.

This is why this striking peculiarity of Suhrawardî's recitals ought to be related to the color symbolism of Islamic theosophy. Very little research has been done on this subject. Initially it is organized around the theme of the Throne (a theme from Islamic Gnosis that is similar to that of the Merkaba of the Hebrew Kabbala). To the four "columns" of the Throne, signifying the foundations of being, correspond the Archangelic Tetrad (Seraphiel, Michael, Gabriel and Azrael), who manifest themselves in their own colors. There are variants of this schematization among the various authors. Qâzî Sa'îd Qummî has done a particularly acute analysis of the metaphysical meaning of the "degradation" of white light, as it passes through yellow, then red and green in proportion to its descent towards the world of Darkness. At this moment we cannot go further into this.

Let us at least note one aspect of the same theme in several other great Iranian spirituals. In Najmuddîn Kubrâ (d. 618/1221), the color reddish purple as a perception of suprasensible light (aura) proclaims the Angel-Intelligence in its dual form: that of macrocosm as Angel-Logos, theophany of the Inaccessible, and that of microcosm, consciousness-light, the heart.14 The nomenclature of the seven subtle envelopes (latîfa) that constitute the subtle body of mystical physiology will be found (below, book 4) in Semnâni (d. 736/1336); each is shown by a particular color to the suprasensible perception of mystics and each is typified by a prophet. One of the seven latîfa is the heart, the "Abraham of your being" and the color red. It should also be noted that the color red dominates the visions of Rûzbehân of Shirâz (d. 606/1209) (below, book 3). "One night I saw something that engulfed the heavens. It was a red glittering light. I asked: What is this? I was told: This is the mantle of magnificence." Finally in the last century Shaykh Muh. Karîm Khân Kermânî, second successor to Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâ'î (below, book 6), wrote a lengthy treatise on the color red.

12For example, in Dino Compagni. Cf. our Avicenna, p. 267.
13Cf. note 3 on page 135.
14Cf. our book The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism, Boulder-London 1978, p. 93. Related to the color purple that the archangelic apparition is endowed with in Suhrawardian recitals, let us note again the observation made by J. Marx in La Légende arthurienne, p. 170, note 4, "...red or reddish hair and vermillion armor are frequent attributes of warriors from the Other World in Irish legend". Cf. above, note 284.
considered from optical phenomenon, its essence and nature, to its symbolic and mystical meanings, among many others.

We will retain from these various references, that could be extended further, the sign that connects the heart as the dwelling place of knowledge with the Angel Gabriel as the mediator of knowledge. As in other similar Suhrawardian recitals, the Angel assumes here a similar function as Poimandres does in the first treatise of the Corpus hermeticum. The Noûs, the Intelligence manifests itself to Hermes as his initiator. We have already traced this in ishrâqi tradition and in Suhrawardi’s "Perfect Nature". It is the Angel-Shepherd (poimên) of man, the "Shepherd of Hermes", from that lovely little book by the same title, so rich in symbolic visions, that was for a brief moment part of the canonical Scriptures. Hermas’ Shepherd is the one to whom he has been personally entrusted. In every case the epiphany of the personal Angel, the "Perfect Nature" of the Hermetists, occurs under similar circumstances. As Hermas’s Angel is sent by another more magnificent Angel, the "Most Holy Angel", who from the context is recognized as the Archangel Michael, so also "the Perfect Nature" marks for ishrâqi adepts the individuation of their relation with the Angel of Humanity. It should not be forgotten that the great Iranian poet from Herat, Hakim Sanâ’î (d. 545/1150, a few years before Suhrawardi’s birth) already composed a poem in recital format in the first person, entitled "Voyage of souls to the place of their return". It described a voyage across the Neoplatonist cosmos under the guidance of the "Active Intellect" appearing as an Angel or a personal Guide. However, the Suhrawardian recital written in prose remains unique in Persian literature. Finally it is appropriate to relate the Suhrawardian recitals to the gnosis developed by Shi’ite prophetology around the teachings of the Holy Imâms. This gnosis distinguishes several degrees: a true vision of the Angel in the waking state, a vision, or something heard without a vision, in a dream or in an intermediate state. It defines hierognosis as a function of these degrees, from prophetic revelation to mystical inspiration (above, book 1). Indeed we already noted that the accusation brought against Suhrawardi at the start of his trial saw implications of prophetology in all of his teachings.

e) Having identified the Angel as to its person, the disciple now wants to know more, where does it come from? It comes from beyond Mount Qâf, where its home is, where the disciple also was before falling into captivity in this present world although all memory has been eradicated thereof, because it now finds itself constricted by the limitations of a consciousness particular to this world where it is now captive. The entire purpose of the initiatory recital is to teach the recognition of the stages of the journey that will lead the exile to reach Mount Qâf, to leave the cosmic crypt that we have already paid enough attention to so there is no need to go into it further. We know that at the summit, or in the center of this mountain, the "eighth clime" begins, the "middle Orient", the mundus imaginalis, the Land of the Emerald Cities, the land of "Not-where" (Nâ-Kujâ-âbâd), because it is a "land" beyond the spatial coordinates contained under the Sphere of Spheres. It will only be pointed at from a distance by the Angel’s motion. The traveler will only get to it for a brief moment at the very end of the recital. In order to undertake the voyage it is now necessary to know its stages. These are pointed out by the Angel through the seven wonders that it learned through its perpetual wandering throughout the world. This theme of the everlasting wanderer is also exhibited by Hayy ibn Yaqzân in Avicenna’s recital by the same title. The nature of the seven wonders that form the seven themes of the recital hint at what the Angel means by this everlasting wandering: from an ordinary soul to a soul who is awakened from its stupor by the Angel’s illumination.

\footnote{\textit{Poimandrôs} \textsection \textsection 2-4 and 7-8 \textit{Corpus hermeticum}, transl. (fr) Festugière, I, pp. 7 and 9; M. Dibelius, \textit{Der Hirt des Hermas}, Tübingen 1923, pp. 491, 494 ff., and our \textit{Avicenna}, pp. 22.}

\footnote{Cf. our \textit{Avicenna}, pp. 138, 293, 294 note 4.}

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The Seven Themes of the Recital

I. The first of these "wonders" is Mount Qâf itself, mentioned first by the Angel when speaking of the place where it came from. We already know that this is both a cosmic and a psychocosmic mountain. According to traditional testimony that looks upon it in a literal sense, there is agreement that this refers to the mountain range that rings the world, called Alborz of old (in the Avesta: Haraiti Barez). Geographically it refers today to the mountain range that extends in northern Iran. However, it is not this fact from terrestrial orography that orientates visionary geography when speaking of the mountain that encircles the world and the marvelous race that populates its cities. Better said, this is a "visionary cartography" that locates and names places as a function of visionary experiences; in this manner the thrust of Alborz's true meaning lies on the level of its "visionary vocation". As cosmic mountain encircling our terrestrial earth Mount Qâf, Elburz, is in fact described by the Angel as composed of twelve mountains. These mountains, from summit to summit and valley to valley typify the nine celestial Spheres (from the heaven of the Moon to the Sphere of Spheres), plus the Spheres of the Elements (cold, the sphere of Water, hot, the sphere of Air and the sphere of Fire).

The complete attention of the Angel's listener is now focused on the question: how to get out? How does one get over these mountains in order to reach Mount Qâf. The most difficult part is to leave the first two mountains, typifying man's terrestrial condition of servitude to the Elements, to the physical body composed of these Elements and to the mode of perception imposed by this condition. The Angel proceeds through allusions and insinuations: "No matter how far and how long you go, you always end up in the same place that you left." That is because the "place of return" (ma'âd) of those following the spiritual path is also their place of origin (ma'âda'). This absolutely does not mean departing from oneself in order to simply arrive at oneself again; between the two a grandiose event will have changed everything; the Ego that will be found over there on mount Qâf is the higher Ego, the "Ego in the second person" whom the pilgrim from the "Recital of Occidental Exile" will meet face to face. Let us note well the Angel's discrete instructions in response to the question proposing grandiose physical means to get across these mountains: if you pour a drop of balsam in the palm of your hand and if you hold your hand up to the sun until it is very hot, the balsam passes to the other side thanks to the natural power that is in it. The same symbol will return at the end of the recital: those who have bathed in the Spring of Life, will have attained the capability to be like the drop of balsam when they emerge from the Spring of Life. That person is then Khezr and can pass. Only an instant is then necessary to get across those mountains.

Thus, we are dealing here with the dominant leitmotiv of the entire recital because it tells us in a [clus] language about the secret way to depart for the cosmic mountain. Many certainly never get to leave the first two mountains. Others will get to the third, the fourth or the fifth without going further. The third mountain esoterically typifies the Heaven of the Moon, counting from the elementary Spheres. This is already the beginning of "the desert" (hence the profound meaning of traditions that speak of the infant Zâl abandoned on Elburz; here the author says simply "in the desert"). At this limit the encounter with the Angel occurs. If adepts do not understand these allusions, they will in fact not get further than this third mountain. If they do understand they will pass over all of them to the Spring of Life and having become like the drop of balsam they will pass from the world of exterior or natural appearances to the world of interior and spiritual realities that envelop these appearances, like an almond is hidden in its shell. However, paradoxically, to pass to the inner world is to rediscover oneself again outside, or in the language of our authors

\footnote{17Cf. our book The Man of Light, pp. 43, 55, and Celestial Earth, index s.v. Qâf.}

\footnote{18The hadîth of the "White Cloud", so admirably commented upon by Qâzî Sa'id Qummî is a striking illustration of this; cf. below, Volume IV, Book V, Chapter III.}
"on the convex surface of the ninth Sphere", i.e., at the summit of Mount Qâf and eo ipso beyond all geographical systems. This is to depart from the space of sensible dimensions for the quarta dimensio without "drilling a tunnel", as the questioner naively believes initially. (One can imagine a theory of knots, a torsion having the effect of giving a circular loop the shape of an eight, even a mobile that only follows the inner surface of an eight, ending up on the outside no matter where it starts).

II. The second "wonder" introducing the second initiatory theme of the recital is the "Jewel that illumines the Night", a classical Persian metaphor designating the Moon. Neither this nor the following two themes have anything to do with astronomy. In order to better understand what we are dealing with, it is appropriate to keep in mind the stanza where Proclus makes one of the "Chaldean Oracles" happen while explaining why Timaeus calls himself "the better astronomer" in the Platonic dialogue named after him. Timaeus qualifies himself as one "not having scrutinized the times of celestial movements or measured the course of the Sun from an ephemeris...", but someone who studied the stars above Heaven itself from the [choriphée] that [Théétète] speaks of while contemplating invisible causes, the real stars."¹⁰ This is what Suhrawardi means by "real stars" when in his "Epistle of the High Towers" (Risâlat al-Abrâj) he speaks of Hallâj, Bastâmî and other Sufis as having been "Moons in the Heaven of the tawhîd". In this same epistle (written in Arabic and not in Persian), the Moon (qamar, masculine in Arabic) is presented to us as the Lover of the Queen of the Stars (= the sun, shams, feminine in Arabic). He never lingers; he hastens his course until he has risen from the nadir of the neomenia to the zenith of the full moon; then the rays of the "Queen Sun" are reflected on him at the apogee of the lunation cycle, setting his being aflame, who is only Darkness by himself. The lover, looking at himself and stripped of his own being, sees nothing in himself that is not completely filled with this light; he then cries out: "Anâ’l-Shams, I am the Sun!"²⁰

This is precisely what we are told in that mystical rhapsody named "The Language of the Ants" (chapter 9). Inquiring as to the reason for the increase and decrease of its light the Moon tells the prophet Idris, identified both with Enoch and Hermes Trismegistus:  

Know that my body is dark, but smooth and pure. By myself I have no light, but when I am in opposition to the Sun and depending on the degree of opposition, an image of its light falls on the mirror of my body, just like images of bodies are reflected in mirrors [...]. Finally, at the very moment of the encounter, I see in myself that it is the Sun that I see [...]. Then I notice that with every glance that I cast upon myself, everything is the Sun. Don’t you see that when you put a mirror in front of the Sun, the Sun appears there? If by secret divine decree a mirror had eyes, and looked at itself at the moment when it was facing the Sun, it would notice that everything in it was the Sun, although itself it was made out of metal. I am the Sun (Anâ’l-Shams) it will say, because it will not see anything else in itself than the Sun. If it goes as far as saying I am God (anâ’l-Haqq)... we certainly would understand.²¹

It seems these two citations render any other explanation superfluous about the episode of the "Jewel that illumines the Night" in the present recital. The Moon typifies the person of the mystic, revolving in the Heaven of the tawhîd. The phases of the Moon typify the phases and repetitions of the face to face encounters that bring the interior being of the mystic to a state of incandescence. At that moment, the totally engulfing Light becomes the mystic’s Active Subject. Absorption into this Light, the fanâ, does not signify an annihilation of

²¹ Loghât-i Mûrâd, Chapter IX [cf. above, page 135, note 2].
being, of the mystic's person, but a metamorphosis of consciousness, a transfiguration of the illusory I into the real I, subject of thoughts and acts. "When my servants are in intimate contact with me I am the eye that they see with, I am the ear that they hear with," etc.

The more the real I dominates, the more the inferior common consciousness I is hidden and obliterated. The inverse is also true. That is the meaning of the Angel’s teaching, illustrated by the phases of the Moon’s apparition, by the observation of the small sphere floating in the bowl and by the approach of the tree Tûbâ. As an extreme case, the second citation makes us understand al-Hallâj’s theopathic saying: Anâ l-Haqq. Does Suhrawardi merely repeat al-Hallâj’s profession?

Let us note the gradations in the two passages cited up to that final exclamation: "I am the Sun". Hallâj’s exclamation "I am God" is only uttered as a limit. No doubt the tree Tûbâ whose light illumines the Moon here typifies the Sun (see theme IV, below), not the incandescent mass visible in the astronomical heavens, but "the star in the true sense", the spiritual Sun. It is then fitting to note here the psalm dedicated to the archangel of the Sun (above, chapter 3, § 5), where the author qualifies the one who is the portico (pishgâh) of every ecstasy in the spiritual world as the Caliph of the Light of Lights, whose image he is because it sets him afire with its own Light. On the one hand we are even told which of the twelve mountains are his (the 5th Heaven, the Heaven of the Sun, in Jewish Gnosis the Heaven of Michael). On the other hand we are also told that "all familiar in Paradise contemplate that Tree every time they walk there". Now Suhrawardi professes, as does every spiritual in Islam, that there can be no communion of species between the Most High God and any creature, no matter at what level. This is precisely the problem for our spirituals. Must this be a hint then that this relation invariably implies either the Manichean idea of "mixture" or the Christian Incarnation, giving ground to the rationalistic theologians of Kalâm, professing the impossibility of a direct relation between the Divine Essence and human nature? That would mean forgetting the one issue that Shi’ite Imâmology raises and that has been overlooked more than once in the West. It is extremely significant that both the tree Tûbâ and Simurgh have been regarded in Twelve Imâmism and Ismailianism as symbols of the Imâm, because the Imâm is the symbol of the Sun, the Face, the Perfect Man, the epiphanic form () who can invest his faithful with the Light manifested in Him without volatilizing their creatural being. The walâyat of the faithful (their quality as "Friends of God") is a human walâyat through their relationship with the Imâm.\footnote{See above, Book I, the passage referring to note 331, as well as our study on the Imâm as Face of God and Face of Man, especially after the work of Qâzî Sa’îd Qummî in Eranos-Jahrbuc h XXXVI, Zürich 1968.}

Here the Imâm is not mentioned, but Tûbâ and Simurgh are. The Angel’s allusion is discrete through "hints". Without dwelling on these hints we will note that the situation typified by the relation between Sun and Moon in the Heaven of Malakât eo ipso states the conditions for the hikâyat that we alluded to previously, combining the reciter, the mystical gesture and the one about whom one recites in a tri-unity. At the very limit this situation is typified by the Anâ I-Shams (I am the Sun). Here, at the recital’s end, the initiates will be called upon to decide if they can say: "I am Khezr" and by that same token able to reach Mount Qâf.

III. The third "wonder" or initiatory theme brings about a particularly condensed, allusive and lengthy discussion that forms the center of the entire recital and links it with the previous subject matter. The Angel’s teachings are now concerned with the tree Tûbâ and Simurgh; the mention of the mysterious bird Simurgh causes a long digression itself about two heroes from Iranian epics: first Zâl and then Esfandyâr. We have just noted the situs of the tree Tûbâ: in the center of the mountains that make up Mount Qâf and, as a homologue, at the center and hence also at the summit of Malakât, of the world of the Soul or "Paradise". This symbol reappears in every mystical tradition. In Ismailian Gnosis, it typifies the Imâm as the act of unconditional being (wujûd mutlaq). A ray of the light of his knowledge is projected into the nature or substance of each inhabitant of paradise, each
of the Imâm’s faithful. Common tradition in all of Shi‘ism notes that the branches of the tree Ṭabā reach to the highest regions of paradise. This means that everything desired by those in paradise appears immediately as an apparition in its branches, because for them knowledge, desire and the effective power for it are simultaneous. Similarly, when it is said that the branches of this tree hang before the window of every oratory in paradise, then this means that all inhabitants partake of it according to the proportion of their desire. This simultaneity is also the norm in the mundus imaginis. It appears that this is the representation that our text refers to here, beyond the specification that makes the tree Ṭabā the symbol of the spiritual Sun in Malakūt.

Now the subject of Simurgh is elaborated upon, who "has her nest in the very top of the tree Ṭabā." We already know the name of this mysterious bird from the Avesta where it was Saena meregha, that finally ended up as the Persian Simurgh (the Avestic form was feminine and Persian does not differentiate between masculine and feminine, we prefer to keep the feminine form as in the Avesta). The Persian form allows 'Attar to make a genial play on words that he starts his great mystical epic with named Mantiq al-tayr, "The Language of the Birds." Since the name can also be read as Si-murgh (thirty birds), 'Attar "encodes" in this name the double secret of identity in difference, and difference in identity between the eternal Simurgh and the thirty birds, the only ones left from the thousands on this long and punishing quest. We have already referred to the mystical secret "encoded" in the name Simurgh (above, book 1, chapter 7, § 4).

Understandingly, the hermeneutics of the symbol varies with each author where it appears. E.g., in Shamsuddin Lahiji (d. 918/1506), a commentator on the "Rosary of Mystery" (Gulshan-i Râz), the famous poem of the celebrated Azerbaijani mystic Mahmûd Shabestari (d. 720/1317), Simurgh typifies the absolute divine Ipseity; Mount Qâf where her home is, is the spiritual reality of Man, Anthrопos. That is the perfect epiphanic form (mazhar) of the divine reality, the Form that the divine Being manifests its Names and Attributes in. For an Ismailian commentator on the same poem, Simurgh is the name of the Spirit and the mountain that is her home is the body. Simurgh is name of the Spirit and also the name of the Imâm because the Imâm is the Gnostic truth and the resurrection through opposition to the body is the letter of sharî‘at or the truth presently hidden.

'Attar’s conception allows us to better orientate ourselves in Suhrawardi’s difficult passages, where Simurgh begins by appearing as the eternal Simurgh who takes care of Zâl and whose image ravishes Esfandyâr in the supreme ecstasy (like the thirty birds struck with stupor after Simurgh’s revelation), while next we understand that Simurgh also means one Simurgh among many. This makes one think of the famous theologoumenon of the "members", such that the Soul of the world is at the same time identical to its members and different from them as an hypostasis.

In another of Suhrawardi’s mystical treatises, named precisely " The Incantation of

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24For further justification regarding the feminine gender used here, see Avicenna, p. 196.

25See the translation of this episode (in the final part of 'Attar’s Mantiq al-tayr) in our Avicenna, pp. 199-203.


27On the theologoumenon of the members, cf. Trilogie ismaélienne, general index s.v., notably the first part, pp. 114-117, regarding Abû Ya‘qûb Sejastânî’s commentary on Matthew 25:35-46, where eschatological discourse occurs as an address of the Soul of the world to its members, its "souls" ("I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink", etc.). This is in perfect agreement with the symbols of the tree Ṭabâ, the preserved Table (Lauh mahfûz) and lastly the concept of the Imâm as Soul of the world; cf. Shaykh Ahmad Alsa‘î’s commentary on the Ziyarat al-Jâmi’a [spiritual pilgrimage to the Twelve Imâms], p. 374. On the theologoumenon, cf. R. Reitzenstein, Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium, pp. 31 ff., 160 ff.
Simurgh, the preface describes the case of every hoopoe who leaves its nest during spring, takes flight to Mount Qâf and then strips itself of its plumage with its own beak. When the shadow of Mount Qâf has fallen on it for a certain amount of time that is figured by the author as a duration in Malakût (see 22:46, "A day for your Lord is like a thousand years in your reckoning"), then the hoopoe becomes a Simurgh whose incantation awakens those who have fallen asleep. Simurgh flies while immobile; she takes flight but covers no distance; she comes closer and yet there is no separation. She possesses every hue but has herself no color. Her nest is in the Orient but it is not absent from the Occident. She is involved in everything but not dependent on anyone. All knowledge is derived from the modulation of this bird, just like the sound of all musical instruments emanates from it. Her food is fire. (More than one trait of this bird has been taken by Christian theologians to describe the dove, the mystical symbol of the Holy Spirit. 

The text then shows us the theme of the hoopoe who becomes a Simurgh. The flight "in the spring" agrees with the moment when Kay Khusraw holds up the Grail to the rising Sun (the hour of Ishrâq). Regarding the circumstances marking the stripping of the inferior Ego, these correspond to the mystical meaning of the Moon's phase when it has the greatest amount of light, on the side of the tree Tûba (and this corresponds to the mystical taking the Grail out of its sheath of skin). Simurgh only feeds on fire (and this fire is the Grail, see above, chapter 4, § 5). Simurgh therefore assumes the traits of the phoenix, alluded to by Wolfram von Eschenbach (above, chapter 4, § 1). It is through the Grail that "the phoenix consumes itself and becomes ashes". However, these ashes give rebirth to life and after the phoenix has accomplished its change, it returns in all its splendor.

The indications just mentioned from the preface are crucial to an understanding, or at least to an awareness of the meaning of the Angel's answer in the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel", affirming that only the ignorant would dare say that there is only one Simurgh. Far from that, there is continually one Simurgh who descends from the tree Tûba to earth while the one who preceded her disappears. Without that coming and going nothing that exists here could last, because nothing that exists in the world of phenomena can last without such an influx from the spiritual world. This sign suggesting the plurality of Simurgh agrees with the plurality of the birds in 'Attâr's mystical epic, of the thirty birds (sî-murgh) that reach the presence of the eternal Simurgh. According to the Angel's explanation in Suhrawardi's current recital, what happens is that the eternal Simurgh is to this group what every Simurgh is to the human being whose Simurgh it is. This is indeed what is hinted at in theme IV. Simurgh is the mystical "Moon" in the human being whose face to face encounter with the Sun engulfs it like a mirror. It is the celestial Ego and the Angel protector, the imperishable Face of this being; it corresponds to the Perfect Nature who is father and child of the mystic at the same time because it feeds itself on the flame of its Grail, meaning that the human being dies to its inferior Ego. When combustion is complete, the human soul (the hoopoe) has become a phoenix-simurgh, who, rising from its ashes, takes flight "in the spring" to its Orient, the summit of Mount Qâf.

These matters are hinted at in such an allusive and delicate fashion that they cannot be pondered with dialectical clumsiness that only tends to reduce them to a rigorous system of concepts. It is necessary to think in images here (what we formulated above, pp. 124 ff.). However, if we retain the double aspect of Simurgh that we found in Suhrawardi and was exploited in 'Attâr, then it becomes possible to understand the episodes of Zâl and Esfandîyar that now take place in the recital, but always in "double words". For greater

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28Brightly colored European bird of the genus Upupa, with a long, curved beak and an erectile crest.


30Suhrawardi's allusions in the preface of Safr-i Simurgh do indeed reoccur as a literal concordance in the preface of Bar-Hebraeus's The Book of the Dove, transl. (eng) Wensinck, Leiden 1919, pp. 3-4. Understandably this does not deal with the mystical Simurgh, nor with the dove as Noah's messenger, but with the mystical symbol of the Holy Spirit.
From the birth of Zâl to the Death of Esfandyâr

Perhaps the present episode of the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" is both necessary for the meaning of the recital and also the one where the hermeneutics is the most difficult because it stays veiled and loaded with allusions, on purpose so it seems.

We appear to best decipher its purpose when we grasp the theme of the "descent" of the soul at the same time as that of the "tutelary Angel", the daimôn pâvredors or Agathos daimôn, from whom the soul separates itself in order to descend here below and with whom

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it is reunited after its exitus from this world, "when the hoopoe takes flight in the spring and becomes a Simurgh". This dual theme is of paramount importance with the Neoplatonists.

Here doctrine becomes recital and it is Suhrawardi's intention to show Simurgh's role and meaning. It is through the intervention of Simurgh that Iran's heroic epic is completed in a mystical epic and that the project that occupied the Shaykh al-Ishrāq his entire life realizes its perfection.

Thus his inspiration makes him select two particular incidents from Ferdawsi's Shāh-Nāmeh where Simurgh's intervention pre-eminently shows its enigma to mystical hermeneutics. The recital's questioner causes the Angel to "recite" the spiritual history of the soul from its beginning to the final phase in this world. However, the facts from the Iranian heroic epic have it that here the dramaturgy constituted by the dual event of descent into this world and final return to its own world is now divided between two persons: Zāl, the hero of the epic cycle from Seistan and Esfandyār, the hero from Zoroastrian faith, whose qualifications suited the plans of the Shaykh al-Ishrāq as "reviver of the theosophy of ancient Persia". From the birth of Zāl under the protection of Simurgh to the death of Esfandyār in supreme ecstasy, putting an end to his terrestrial struggle, Simurgh imposes her mysterious presence.

It is beyond the scope of the present work to gather every tradition about Zāl, in the Avesta, in Ferdawsi and the writers of the Islamic period, as well as in the various interpretations that these have given rise to. We only emphasize here the episode remembered by Suhrawardi about the birth of the father of Rostam, the famous hero from Seistan. In Ferdawsi, Zāl already appears as the wise councilor of Kayanian kings. We have mentioned him before (above, chapter 4, § 3) as one of the eight compatriots of Kay Khusrw after the latter's departure for "the high mountain". He was one of the three who listened to Kay Khusrw's advice to be prudent, and decided not to follow him in order to find their way back into this world. The extraordinary story of his birth mentioned by the author of our recital is well known to tradition. It seems Suhrawardi is the first to state the case for its esoteric significance.

The question that the disciple asks of the Angel occurs immediately following the mention of the tree Tûbā as "the tree where Simurgh has her nest in its top". We have seen how this incident happened to amplify the previous theme: the relation of the "Jewel that illumines the Night" and the same tree Tûbā, spiritual Sun and summit of Malakât. Let us also remember another passage of Suhrawardi that we quoted: "Continually a Simurgh descends to earth from the tree Tûbā, while at the same time the one that went before her disappears". Certainly, hermeneutics can be used here in several ways. We have already noted how the Shi'ite mystic is able to read in Simurgh an esoteric "code" for the Imam and the Imamate. The hermeneutics that we are proposing here appears to us to render the text readable [clus] and in agreement with Suhrawardi's entire design for his books and recitals.

Simurgh's descent to earth appears to us to accompany the descent of the human soul; it is the tutelary Angel, the Agathos daimôn who, according to Iamblicus, exists as its model and as its paradigm, previous to which these very souls do not descend in genesis. Plotinus (Enneads IV, 8, 8) already said that no soul is entirely submersed in the sensible, even our own: "There is something in it that always stays within the intelligible. Every soul has a lower side facing the body and a higher side that faces the Intelligence". At the extreme end, this higher soul is able to act in concert with the personal Angel who inspires our thoughts and governs our actions, to the point that, again according to Iamblicus, through "hieratic theurgy" we confide the protection and direction of our soul to a god, with the Angel acting as assistant. Briefly, this is the one whom earlier analysis revealed (above, chapter 3, § 1,
pp. 57 - 59) to be the personal guide of Hermes (*agathos daimôn*) and of the hermetist. On the one hand it is the "Perfect Nature" (at once "father" and "child" of the soul) to whom Suhrawardi dedicated his magnificent psalm, and on the other hand Daênâ, the hierophany of Yvarnah in Mazdean theosophy. It seems that in Suhrawardi Simurgh also fits into the situation that corresponds to that of a *fravarti* (*farûhar*), the celestial being of a terrestrial individuality, likewise from Mazdean theosophy. Simurgh, descending with each human soul, remains distinct, it is the soul's paradigm, its counterpart, its celestial partner; that is why it can be said that she watches over the soul and takes care of it. When the soul has been faithful to her, then the supreme instant, the magnificent vision of the *exitus* (the case of Esfandyâr as interpreted by Suhrawardi) is also its reunion with Simurgh, the unitive fusion of their bi-unity. "When the hoopoe becomes Simurgh", the Simurgh who "has her nest in the top of the tree Tûbâ", that totally engulfs it with its Light, also knows itself by knowing this Light. This hermeneutic will satisfy Suhrawardi's directions as well as those of 'Attâr's great epic: when the thirty birds, the *si-murgha*, realize that they are the eternal Simurgh.

The Angel answers by recalling the circumstances of Zâl's birth that touches upon every tradition about him, when asked by the disciple whether it is true that Simurgh brought up Zâl. The infant Zâl came into this world with hair that was completely white. Sâm, the father, was horrified and ordered the child abandoned in the desert; his mother, equally dismayed, couldn't or didn't know how to oppose this command. It was winter and no one thought that the child would last. Some time later, after the mother proved inconsolable and went looking for her son, she found him in this same desert. With amazement she discovered that the child had survived. During the day Simurgh kept it under her wings. At night it had been fed by a gazelle whose fawn was captured by hunters. What secret is hiding here? The Angel itself asked Simurgh about it. This was the answer: "Zâl came into this world under the protection of Tûbâ. We did not allow him to perish.".

We did not allow it: i.e., Simurgh and the "tree" Tûbâ where Simurgh has her nest in its top. Color symbolism allows us to immediately sense that the whiteness of Zâl's hair means that he comes from the world of Light-beings whose color is white. The "crimson" Archangel itself explains to the disciple that in its world everything is pure whiteness. Generally, in the color symbolism of Islamic theosophy (admirably explained by Qâzî Sa'îd Qummî, among others), the more the color of something tends towards white, the greater its proximity to the spiritual world of Light where it belongs. The more this is attenuated, the more hues change from white to yellow, then from yellow to orange, from orange to red, finally to green and then black, the more such a mutation shows its distance from that world. It is precisely the sign of origin marking Zâl's hair that so frightens and irritates the child's father, as if he is one of those who couldn't admit to such an origin or who is so frightened by the very idea alone because of the gravity of its consequences. The infant then is abandoned in the desert, like the traveler from the "Recital of Occidental Exile" is thrown into a pit. How can a being exiled from the world of Light survive in the desert and the solitude of the present world without dying the way a soul dies "through mixture with its opposite", as Plotinus expressed it? It survives nonetheless, thanks to the attentive vigilance of Simurgh. We are told that it is through Simurgh that all who live here are able to exist in this present world. Like in the "Recital of Exile" here we meet the symbolic alternation of day and night that can assume according to circumstances a symbolically reversed meaning (below, chapter

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35In fact, according to tradition, the child grew up in Simurgh's nest, becoming a very handsome adolescent whose fame spread throughout all of Iran by caravan. Sâm heard about this young man who lived in the solitude of Elburz, in Simurgh's nest and set out to find his son again. Warned by dreams, he starts the trip to Simurgh's nest which is inaccessible to humans. The marvelous Bird gives him back his son. Simurgh also gives the son one of his feathers. In case of danger he is to throw it into the fire and Simurgh will then appear. Sâm asks his son for forgiveness and they return together. Cf. F. Spiegel, *Eranische Alterthumskunde*, I, pp. 565-566. Note that this tradition isn't any less adaptable to mystical hermeneutics than any other. On the theme of white hair, cf. André Caquot, *Les enfants aux cheveux blancs* [Notes on Jubile 23:25], *Bulletin de la Société Ernest-Renan*, 1969, pp. 23-24.

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6). Here Simurgh watches over the infant during the day, because the day is the world of Light, the soul’s home, whose presentiment it keeps and that it will be conscious of later on through initiation. The world of night now is the world of perception limited to the sense faculties. If the symbolic meaning is reversed then the day will mark the coercive evidence of the senses while all awareness of the country that lies on the other side of mount Qäf presupposes sleep, the night of the sense faculties, like in the "Recital of Exile" or in the "Sound of Gabriel’s Wings". On the other hand, here night is the night of the intellect, so it is the gazelle that takes care of Zal, the gazelle typifying the vital soul, *anima sensitiva*.

The "history" told this way is something that people were able to tell themselves, or perhaps are still able to tell themselves, when their past does not appear as something made up from the remains (archaeological or paleontological) of external existence, but as leading them back in person to their origin, that today remains just as far away and removed as it was for their predecessors in the most distant historical past. The recital, the, is essentially a hermeneutic operation that every time leads each "recitor" back to the true meaning of the recital for themselves as individuals and *eo ipso* to the real meaning of their very being. It is the operation of a liturgical act, even better shown in the "Recital of Exile" where Koranic verses themselves are "recited" in this manner and now apparent to us if we observe the sympathetic vibrations with the ancient Greek romances whose enigmatic meaning Reinhold Merkelbach has managed to revive through painstaking thematic analysis. The theme of the descent and captivity of the soul in this world and its subsequent rescue is the theme of a literature so vast that if it were combined into one *corpus* it would constitute the monument and the witness of the "history" of the soul. Suhrawardi’s mystical recitals and the entire cycle of the Persian mystical epic with them takes the place of such a *corpus*. The "history" told in every recital is the only history that Gnostics, who know where they came from and where they are going, can tell (below, chapter 6, § 1). Perhaps this can nowadays only be understood by just a few, because it speaks of things that are inaccessible to what is today meant by the word "history". It is indeed in powerful contrast with the universe of *homo oeconomicus* that is spiritually devastated and depopulated, without "polar" dimensions, without origin or eschatology, but forever anxious to affirm itself in "a sense of history", but a history that is not its own.

We will only refer here to two examples that are particularly striking. First Longus’s pastoral romance of *Daphnis and Chloë*, related to the Dionysian mysteries. Daphnis is the myst, son of Dionysophanes (i.e., of the god himself); his human parents are only his adoptive or foster parents. The god has him "exposed" in this world but does not leave him abandoned and sets up a miraculous rescue. He gives a sign of recognition that one day will attest to his divine origin. Daphnis, also like Zal, is fed during his "exposure" by a goat. Even the little fawn, abandoned to the hunters in Suhrawardi’s recital, has its similarity in the romance of Longus in the ram who saves Daphnis and Chloë from disaster and is sacrificed as their ransom.36

A second example of the resonance between the Suhrawardian recital and the Greek romance is found in the romance of Heliodorus, probably an Arab living in the third century of our era. This time we are dealing with an initiatory romance related to the cult of Helios, a solar religion that recapitulated the other religions of the ancient world, like the romance itself recapitulates what the other romances had constructed in honor of Isis or Mithra. In this romance, Chariklea, daughter of the Ethiopian king Hydaspes, comes into the world with an entirely white complexion. The indication is the same as in the case of the white hair of the infant Zal. We are told that her mother had contemplated the image of Andromeda while...
she was pregnant and that the daughter was a perfect likeness of the Goddess. Meanwhile, the mother undergoes a dread similar to Sâm, the father of Zâl. Why is this child, whose complexion should be dark, not like the others? Won't this bring doubts on her legitimacy and bring the death sentence on her mother? That is why her mother, Persina, decides to "expose" the child (like Daphnis and Zâl were "exposed in the desert"). Meanwhile she does not forget to supply her with some jewelry, among which, cloth embroidered with hieroglyphs, i.e., a letter where the mother unveils to her daughter the secret of her origin and urges her never to forget this and live her life accordingly. We will return to this theme of the "letter" further down. Let us remember here that Andromeda, chained to the rock and apparently delivered without defense to the dragon, from where Perseus will save her, is the same symbol as Psyche, also chained to a rock. Thus Chariklea, the new Andromeda, typifies the lot of every human soul, bound and thrown into this world, where it forgets its divine ascendance but will become conscious of this again after initiation. Its true country is the mystic land of the Sun, the "Orient", and all its efforts will be spent in returning to this land.\footnote{R. Merkelbach, ibid., pp. 234, 236-237.} This is therefore indeed the "Orient" in the Suhrawardian sense of the word; it is also the goal given to the disciple in the "Crimson Archangel" and will be realized as well at the end of Suhrawardi’s "Recital of Occidental Exile", and at the end of the "Song of the Pearl" in the \textit{Acts of Thomas} (below, chapter 6).

No doubt there are other examples where Iranian heroes occur in Greek romances of initiation.\footnote{R. Merkelbach, ibid., p. 179-180, and p. 327, note 4, notes that the hero of Iamblicus’s Mithraic romance \textit{Rhodanes} can be identified with \textit{Thrantaona} from the Avesta (who, in the Persian form \textit{Fereydun}, occurs especially in the lineage of the mystical sages of ancient Persia in Suhrawardi), something already noted by Anquetil-Duperron.} The ones just noted in order to frame the episode of Zâl’s birth confirm the hidden meaning of the recital that Suhrawardi invites the Gnostic to decode. Similarly, we now prepare to understand the hidden meaning of Esfandyâr’s death, as it forms the other diptych of the work. The protection of the soul cast into this world and its deliverance are both the work of Simurgh. The first is clear from the episode of Zâl’s birth, however, the second, the deliverance, is not so obvious in the rest of his life, despite the protection promised by Simurgh. Or rather, for Suhrawardi’s aims, if it is true that Simurgh continues to assist Zâl then the beneficiaries of this protection are apparently Zâl and his son. In reality, in the \textit{true} sense, it will be someone else, namely young Esfandyâr, dying at the end of heroic combat, in a supreme vision of Simurgh that Simurgh herself will have arranged through Zâl’s intervention. Above all, let us not forget that in mystical terms, "to perish" is always relative to the other world. One does not "perish" to the present world because the present world means exactly to "perish" to the true world. Like Simurgh does not allow the child with the hair of Light to "perish", so she does not allow Esfandyâr to "perish" although it may seem so to the exoteric world. Indeed, it is Rostam who perishes. Such are the Suhrawardian hermeneutics from this episode from the \textit{Shâh-Nâmeh}.

In order to understand this a minimum of traditional facts must be brought to the foreground. On the one hand, Zâl safeguards Simurgh’s protection that was given him at the time of their separation, a feather from her plumage; in case of need or danger he only had to burn part of that feather "to see the splendorous being appear". However, on the other hand, Zoroastrian religious tradition has always shown reticence regarding Zâl and his son, the famous Rostam, because neither was overly eager to accept Zoroaster’s preaching. Yet young Esfandyâr is the type realized out of the knighthood of the Zoroastrian faith. According to epic tradition the causes leading to his death seem to cast a certain shadow on the character of his father, king Gushtasp (the Avestic Vishtasp). The latter had him perform more and more difficult tasks in order to put off the moment where he had to fulfill the promised transfer of royal power to his son.\footnote{On the details of Esfandyâr’s gesture, cf. A. Christensen, \textit{Les Kayanides}, pp. 121-123, 141, and F.} In this way Esfandyâr finally is
forced to place impossible conditions upon Rostam, the hero rebellious to the new faith (nothing less than letting himself be led back chained to the court of king Gushasp). After Rostam has searched for solutions by every conceivable means without Esfandiyar being able to consent to these, the two heroes agree at least to end the war through individual combat; the outcome can only be tragic. Although the valiant Rostam is desolate to have to fight a young hero whom he admires, feelings in both remain perfectly honorable. The battle goes badly for Rostam; he is unable to gain the upper hand. Seriously wounded he is at the point of succumbing. At that moment, according to epic tradition, his father asks for Simurgh’s help. The latter appears, cures Rostam of his wounds and declares that an arrangement will be best solution. Certainly, Simurgh is able to make Rostam the victor but he should know that whoever takes Esfandiyar’s life can have no happiness in either this life or the next. When Rostam does not attain the top prize, Simurgh takes Zal to the shores of China during the night after giving directions to change the branch of a tamarisk tree into an arrow with a dual point.

Suhrawardi knows these facts from epic tradition. However, his recital puts into place facts from other sources, that the Angel tells its questioner to get from Simurgh in person, that eo ipso are meant to effect a metamorphosis of the past, a “deconstruction of history”. Simurgh then appears to dispose of everything for Zal, her protege, except for when his son Rostam’s physical death occurs, and then guarantees Esfandiyar the triumph of a death caused by ecstasy, under the appearances of defeat, of the kind that a mystical resolution of the gesture of an Iranian hero prepares through Simurgh’s care. A simple comparison of the data allows us to grasp a "lifelike" anaphore realized by mystical hermeneutics. Heroic tradition has it that Esfandiyar was only vulnerable in his eyes. It was therefore in the eyes that Rostam could expect to inflict a mortal wound. Now however, the meaning of this vulnerability is raised to signify an interior vision, in the sense that he is now able to have an interior vision such that it tears him away from this life in one supreme ekstasis.

We now refer to the theory of mirrors and epiphanic forms of the "Oriental Theosophy", where the Shaykh al-Ishrâq describes what could be called the esoteric laws of optics, or the conditions of visionary perception. It is possible that a suprasensible form from the imaginal world will find a "place of apparition" (mazhar) on certain surfaces that have mirror-like properties. Certainly this form is not immanent in the mirror. Neither is it "incarnate" there or otherwise somehow in it. Indeed, it is present "in suspension", like the image of the person facing it is present in the mirror, moreover, not perceived by the external senses but the imaginative faculty. It is here that the same signs explaining Zal’s actions and told by the Angel in our recital become transparent. Simurgh has the power of striking every "eye" with bewilderment when a mirror or some other polished surface is held directly facing her (recall Kay Khusrav exposing the Grail, the mirror of the universe, to the sun at the spring equinox, the time when the hoopoe takes its flight to become a Simurgh). This is the reason that Zal dresses his son Rostam in mirrored armor and helmet and completely covers his horse with mirrors. During combat, when Esfandiyar necessarily has to stand in front of Rostam, Simurgh’s rays strike the armor and the mirrors and reflect back into Esfandiyar’s eyes, dazing him. The two points of the arrow made out of the tamarix tree mortally wound him in his eyes. He thinks that he has been wounded in the eyes because he saw the two points of the arrow. What Esfandiyar really sees with the eyes of interior vision, are Simurgh’s two wings.

As we previously did in terms of the "Grail Recital", and now in this recital where the author exclaims: "This history is about me!", we again find ourselves in a hikâyat situation, that of a mystical recital where the recited gesture, the hero about whom it is recited and the reciter form a tri-unity, a unique reality. More precisely, this tri-unity of the hikâyat is
formed at the end of the recital when the Angel says to its disciple: "If you are Khezr then you too can cross mount Qed." In this case the mysts themselves are the history that they speak of. They are one of the many Simurghs that our recital talks about, like one of the thirty birds, *si-murgh*, of Attar’s magnificent epic. That is what the mystical meaning of Esfandyar’s death refers to. Simurgh who has her nest in the tree Tubâ, at the summit of mount Qed, is the divine Face showing itself and at the same time man’s own imperishable Face, the Imam, the Angel of man’s being. In this face to face encounter the two Faces reflect and reciprocate each other. A human being can anticipate this vision. One cannot go to the beyond without crossing this threshold. There are certain apparitions that always signify the imminence of the beyond: "Who sees me bids farewell to the daylight of this life. Thou hast seen the fiery gaze of the Valkyrie; now thou must depart with her."\(^41\)

The change of the Iranian heroic gesture into the mystical epic in this central episode of the "recital of the Crimson Archangel" is in perfect accord with the design of the "oriental theosophy" of the *Shaykh al-Ishrâq*, i.e., not only with his life’s work but also with what the ishrâqî doctrine means for all of Islamic Iran. In the first chapters of this second book we described Suhrawardi’s efforts towards the repatriation of the so-called "Hellenized" Magi in their return to their original Iran, but an Iran that in the meantime had heard the call of the Prophet of Islam. So the completion of Iran’s heroic epic in the mystical epic is an aspect of a transmutation that the theosophy of the sages of ancient Persia passes through to rediscover itself in the Persia of Suhrawardi and his successors. For Zoroastrian tradition Esfandyar’s death was the work of Ahrimanic forces, acting through the mediation of rebels against the Zoroastrian faith. Spiritual hermeneutics, *ta’wil*, of an Iranian Islamic mystic, exorcises Ahriman’s demons, tears the heroes away from their powers and Esfandyar’s death then takes on the meaning that our recital suggests.

We have illustrated one of our previous publications with an extraordinary image published by Gaston Wiet some thirty years ago. The image, that is imprinted on silk cloth (found in 1925 in a tomb near Teheran in a state of perfect preservation), offers an extremely interesting motif. It is of a Sasanid style on material dating from the great Islamic period, where the iconography establishes a link between ancient Persia and Islamic Persia. An adolescent, with a royal hairdo like a halo, is carried off into space by a great fantastic bird that holds him enclosed in its breast and certain stylized details suggest that this bird be seen not merely as some two-headed eagle, but as an ‘Anqâ (the phoenix) or Simurgh. The theme of Zal, son of Sam, lifted up and fed by Simurgh comes to mind spontaneously. However, an icon is an icon and there are inexhaustible meanings for someone who meditates on it because they go beyond the conscious intentions of the artist who made it. It is in this way that we suggest to read here a certain theme of individual eschatology, familiar to the Islamic mystic. Similarly, Simurgh’s intervention in the outcome of Esfandyar’s terrestrial destiny can lead us to meditate on the hieratic ardor of a celestial assumption depicted by the Iranian artist, the destiny of the hero who Simurgh lifts to heaven in an ardor of apotheosis.\(^42\)

The purpose of the preceding pages was to enable us to offer the translation (fr) of the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" without any footnotes. Of course, our hermeneutics has not come close to exhausting every meaning of the recital. However, just as one does not "refute" symbols, they are either understood or they are not, so their hermeneutics and its variants can only situate itself on different levels of intelligibility. Readers should choose the level where they would like to be.

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\(^{41}\)Cf. our book on *The Man of Light*, p. 32.

\(^{42}\)A destiny that can equally well be expressed as the metamorphosis of the hoopoe into Simurgh. Regarding this motif, which is located amidst paintings decorating the ceiling of the Palatine chapel in Palermo, cf. *Celestial Earth*, p. XVII, and the article by Akbar Tajvidi "Influence of Iranian art on the paintings of the Palatine chapel in Sicily" [in Persian], in the journal *Hunar o mardom*, 44, Teheran, Khordâd 1345 h.s., pp. 2-10.
Translation of the Recital of the Crimson Archangel

Glory be to Him who disposes of the universes with sovereignty. Past Being of all that was existed through His existence. The present Being of all that now is, exists through His existence. Future Being of all that will be will exist through His existence. He is the First and the Last, the Revealed and the Hidden; He sees all things. Prayers and Salutations to His envoys and especially to Muhammad, the Chosen One, through whom the seal was affixed to prophecy. Salvation to his Companions and to the Doctors of Religion. May Divine Favor rest upon them all!

One of my best friends one day asked me the following question: "Do birds understand each other's language?"

- Certainly, I answered, they do.
- My friend replied: "How did you find out about that?"
- It so happened that in the beginning of things, when He who is the Maker in the real sense wanted to manifest my being that not yet was, He created me in the form of a falcon. However, in the land where I then was there were also other falcons; we talked to one another, we listened to the different words and we understood each other.
- Very good, said my friend, but how have things gotten the way they are now?
- Well, this is how: one day the hunters Decree and Destiny spread out the fillet of Predestination; they hid the grain of attraction in it as a bait and in this way successfully managed to take me prisoner. They kidnapped me from the homeland that had been my nest and took me away to a faraway country. My eyelids were sewn together and they fettered me with four different kinds of chains; finally, ten jailers were ordered to guard me: five faced me and had their backs to the outside, five others were back to back with me and faced the outside. The five who were facing me kept me so tightly in a world of confusion that I forgot everything: my own nest, the faraway homeland and everything that I had known over there. I now imagine that I have always been just like I am now.

When a certain time had passed this way, my eyes reopened a little bit and to the degree that they could see I began to look around. I began to see the things again that I had not seen for so very long and I admired them greatly. Gradually every day my eyes opened a little more and I looked at more things so I fell over with surprise. Finally my eyes reopened completely; the world showed itself to me just the way it was. I look at the chains that I was tied down with; I saw that I was a prisoner of the jailers. I said to myself: "Apparently I will never be extricated from these four fetters or from these jailers so that my wings can open and I can fly again, free and unhindered from all bonds."

More time passed. Suddenly, one day I noticed that my jailers had relaxed their attention. "I could not have found a better moment," I thought to myself. Secretly I slipped away and as well I could I hobbled in my chains till I ended up on the desert road. There, in the desert, I saw someone coming my way. I walked to meet the person, I stopped and spoke a greeting. Gracefully and considerately the person returned my greeting. Observing a crimson reflection on its face and hair I thought I had met an adolescent.

"Young person," I said, "where are you going?"

- Child! Came the reply, "You are wrong in calling me that! I myself am the eldest of the Creator's children, and you call me 'young person'?"
- But in that case, why aren't you like someone who is old?
- I really am one of the most ancient ones, a Sage whose essence is Light. The same person who made you a prisoner of the fillet, who put those chains around you and made these jailers guard you, also threw me into the pit of darkness a long time ago, that is the reason you see that crimson color around me. Otherwise I am completely white and luminous. Like anything white whose whiteness comes from solidarity with the Light, when it gets mixed with the night it appears sort of reddish. Watch at twilight and at dawn, both are white because they are connected with the light of the sun. However, twilight and
dawn are a moment between the two: one side is towards day which is white and the other is towards night which is black, hence the purple of the dawn in the morning and of the twilight in the evening. Watch the astral mass of the moon when it rises. Although its light is a light that it borrows, it is truly clothed in light, but one of its faces is turned towards day while the other is turned towards night. So the moon appears crimson. A simple lamp appears to have the same property; below, the flame is white, higher up it turns towards dark smoke; in between it appears reddish. Many other analogies or similarities can be given as an example of this law!

- O Sage, then where do you come from? I asked this time.
- I come from beyond Mount Qâf. That is where my home is. Your nest was there also. Alas! You have forgotten it!
- But what are you doing here?
- I am a perpetual pilgrim. Without letting up, I travel around the world and marvel at all its wonders.
- What sort of wonders have you seen in the world?
- Actually, seven wonders: the first one is Mount Qâf, our home, yours and mine. The second is the Jewel that illumines the Night. The third is the tree Tûbâ. Fourth are the twelve workshops. Fifth is David's coat of mail. Sixth is the Sword. Seventh is the Source of Life.
- I beg you to tell me the history of all that.
- All right, first there is Mount Qâf. It stands on top of the world that it completely surrounds; in fact, all together it is made up of twelve mountains. That is where you will go when you are freed from your chains, because that is where you were taken from and every being ultimately returns to the form it had initially.
- What road do I take to get there? I asked.
- The road is indeed very difficult. You first see two mountains that already are part of Mount Qâf. The one has a very cold climate and the other is very hot. The heat and the cold of these places knows no limits.
- Isn't that easy? I will go across the mountain with the hot climate in the winter and will travel over the mountain with the cold climate when it is summer.
- Unfortunately, you are wrong. There isn't any season that the weather on those mountains gets any better.
- How far is it to those mountains? I asked.
- No matter how long and how far you travel, you will keep getting back to the place from where you left. It's like a compass where one point is fixed at the center and the other is on its periphery: as long as it keeps turning it always keeps getting back to where it left from to begin with.
- May be it is possible to drill a tunnel through those mountains and then travel through the hole?
- Actually, it is impossible to drill a tunnel through them. On the other hand, those who have the aptitude can cross them in a single instant without having to dig at all. This is about a power that is similar to the one balsam has. If you hold the palm of your hand up to the sun long enough for it to become hot and if you then pour balsam drop by drop into your palm, the balsam passes through to the backside of your hand thanks to a natural power that it has. So also with you: if you realize the natural power in yourself to cross these mountains, then in an instant you will be across them.
- How can you realize this power in yourself?
- I will give you a hint, if you are capable of catching it.
- When I have crossed those first two mountains, is it then easy or not to cross the others?
- Easy, certainly, but on condition that you understand. Some people remain forever captive of those two mountains. Other cross to the third one and stay there. Still others
get to the fourth, to the fifth and so on, to the twelfth. The smarter the bird is, the further it will fly.

- Now that you have explained Mount Qâf to me, I said, I beg you to tell me the history of the Jewel that illumines the Night.

- The Jewel that illumines the night also exists on Mount Qâf; more precisely, it is located on the third mountain and the dark night becomes resplendent because of it. Nevertheless, it does not stay in the same state without any changes. Its light comes from the tree Tûbâ. Every time that it finds itself "in opposition" to the tree Tûbâ, relative to the place where you are at, the Jewel appears entirely luminous, like a resplendent globe. When it is no longer opposite, but in a place closer to the tree Tûbâ, part of its luminous disk is hidden relative to you, while the rest continues to shine. The closer it gets to the tree Tûbâ, the more the dark part gains on the luminous part, all the while, mind you, relative to the place where you are at, because in relation to the tree Tûbâ one hemisphere of the Jewel stays luminous. When it is the closest to the tree Tûbâ, it appears in relation to you as having gotten completely dark, while on the side of the tree Tûbâ it is completely light. Inversely, when it gets further away from the tree Tûbâ, it begins to shine in relation to you (that is, as seen from your side); the further it gets away from the tree Tûbâ, the stronger its light gets relative to you. The light itself never increases; the mass of the Jewel keeps the excess light for itself and the dark zone gets equally smaller. This goes on until the opposition of the tree Tûbâ happens again (that is, the greatest distance); then the mass of the Jewel keeps the light completely for itself.

An analogy will make you see this. Perforate a little ball completely along its diameter and draw a line over the marks. Then fill a bowl with water and put the little ball on the surface of the bowl so that half of it is in the water. Let us suppose that in ten turns at a given moment the water has covered every part of the little ball (while it revolves around itself). If someone has observed this, looking from under the bowl, then they will always see one half of the ball plunged into water. Now if the observer is then placed just below the middle of the bowl and keeps looking at it in a slanted direction in relation to this vertical middle, then the entire half of the ball in the water can no longer be seen because to the degree that the direction of one's view differs from the middle, one ceases to see that part of the ball that is no longer in opposition to this view. On the contrary, while looking this way, one will see part of the ball out of the water. The more obliquely one raises one's view towards the water level in the bowl, the smaller will be the part of the ball dipped into the water and the more one will see it out of the water. When one places oneself in order to see exactly level with the water in the bowl, one hemisphere will be seen in the water and the other out of it. Then if one's view is slanted more and more above the water level, more of one part of the ball will be seen, until one's view passes vertically through the middle of the
bowl and one sees the ball in its entirety, but also completely out of the water. Someone will perhaps object that while looking from below the bowl, they see neither the water nor the little ball. We answer that of course they can be seen, on condition that the bowl is made out of glass or some other transparent material. Now when we deal with the bowl and the little ball of our example, it is the observer who is moved around the bowl in order to look at them. However, when we are dealing with the Jewel that illuminates the Night and the tree Tûbâ, it is they themselves that rotate around a stationary observer.

- Then what is the tree Tûbâ? I then asked the Sage.
- The tree Tûbâ is an immense tree in Paradise. Everyone is familiar with this tree every time they walk there. In the very heart of the twelve mountains that I spoke about there is a certain mountain. On that mountain stands the tree Tûbâ.
- Does it bear fruit?
- All the fruit you see in the world is from this tree; the fruit you see before you all belongs to it. If the Tree did not exist there would be no fruit and no trees, no flowers or plants around you!
- Fruit, trees and flowers, what relation do they all have to this tree?
- Simurgh has her nest in the top of the tree Tûbâ. At sunrise she leaves her nest and spreads her wings over the earth. It is from the influence of those wings that fruit appears on trees and that plants germinate in the earth.
- I have heard it said that it was Simurgh who raised Zâl and that it was with Simurgh’s help that Rostam killed Esfandyâr.
- Yes, that’s true.
- How did that happen?

![Figure 5.2: Analogy of the Jewel that illumines the Night](image)

When Zâl made his entrance into existence from his mother’s womb, his hair and face where completely white. Sâm, his father, ordered that he be thrown out into the desert. His mother was just as profoundly disturbed at having brought him into the world. Seeing her son with such repulsive features, she consented to the order. So Zâl was abandoned in the desert. It was winter then and it was cold. No one imagined that the child would survive there. A few days passed; his mother lost her resentment and felt pity for the child. "I will go into the desert", she said to herself, "I must see what has happened to my child". After arriving in the desert she found him: the child was still alive, Simurgh had taken it under her wings. When mother and child saw each other he smiled at her and the mother took him to her breast and nursed him. She wanted to take him with her, but then said to herself: "No, because they won’t understand how he survived these days, I won’t take him back to the house." She then abandoned little Zâl in the same place, under Simurgh’s wings and hid herself in the vicinity. When night fell and Simurgh left the desert, a gazelle approached Zâl’s crib and placed its breast on the child’s lips. After the child was finished with her milk, the gazelle rocked it to sleep in its crib so Zâl would be safe from all trouble. Then the mother got up, moved the gazelle away from the crib and took the child home.
What secret is hidden here? I asked the Sage.

I myself have asked Simorgh about this and this is what she said: "Zâl came into the terrestrial world under the attention of Tûbâ. We did not allow him to perish. We abandoned the fawn to the power of the hunters and put our pity into the heart of the gazelle, its mother, so that she took pity on him and gave him her milk. During the day I myself took him under my wings."

And the case of Rostam and Esfandyâr?

This is what happened. Rostam did not have enough strength to defeat Esfandyâr and collapsed from fatigue. His father, Zâl, poured out supplications before Simûrgh. However, Simûrgh naturally had the power that when someone held a mirror directly in front of her, or some other thing like a mirror, every eye that looked into that mirror would be blinded. Zâl made a breastplate of iron with a perfectly polished surface and put that on Rostam. Likewise he put a perfectly polished helmet on Rostam's head and hung pieces of mirror from his horse. Then he directed Rostam to place himself directly in front of Simûrgh. Esfandyâr inevitably had to come at Rostam. The moment he came close, Simûrgh's rays that fell on the breastplate and the mirrors reflected back into Esfandyâr's eyes; he became dazed and couldn't see anything anymore. He imagined and believed that he was wounded in the eyes because he caught a glance of two sharp points. He fell from his horse and perished at the hands of Rostam. Consider that the two points from the arrow made out of a branch of the gâs tree of which the recitals speak, are Simûrgh's two wings.

Do you mean to say, I asked the Sage, that in the entire universe there has been only one Simûrgh?

No, those who don't know, erroneously think so. Unless a Simûrgh continuously descends down to earth from the tree Tûbâ while the one that went before her returns, that is, unless a new Simûrgh continually comes, nothing of what is here can stay alive. Like it comes to earth, so also a Simûrgh goes from the tree Tûbâ out to the twelve workshops.

O Sage! I cried out, What are these twelve workshops?

In the first place, realize that when our King wanted to organize his Kingdom, he organized our country first and then he put us to work. He instituted twelve workshops and in each workshop he put some students. Then he also put the students to work so that below the twelve workshops a new workshop appeared and our King put a Master (ustâd) in there. This Master he appointed to his own work so that under this first workshop again another workshop appeared. In turn he put a second Master to work there so that under the second workshop yet another workshop appeared, entrusted to a third Master, and so on, until there were seven workshops and a Master especially appointed over each one. Then to each of the students who were divided over twelve houses he gave a robe of honor. He also gave a robe of honor to the first Master and entrusted him two of the twelve higher workshops. To the second Master he also gave a robe of honor and of those twelve workshops equally entrusted him with two of them. Similarly with the third Master. To the fourth master he gave a robe that was the most beautiful of all; he did not entrust any of the twelve workshops to him but ordained him to exercise care over all twelve. To the fifth and sixth Masters he gave gifts just like he had done to the second and third Masters. When the turn came of the seventh Master only one workshop remained. This was given to him, but he was not given a robe of honor. The seventh Master then uttered loud cries: "Every Master has two workshops and I have only one! Everyone has been given a robe of honor and I have been given none!" He was told that under his workshop two workshops would be built that he would be given the greatest control over. Under all of those workshops fields were laid out to be sown and their care was equally given to the seventh Master. Besides this, it was determined that a lesser already used robe would continually be made from the beautiful robe of the third Master and that in this way at every moment the robe of one would also be the robe of the other, like I explained about Simûrgh.

O Sage, I insisted, what is woven in these workshops?
– Especially brocade, but they also weave things that no one has ever thought of weaving. David’s coat of mail is also woven there.
– O Sage, what is David’s coat of mail?
– That coat of mail is made up of the various ties that are woven around you.
– Why is it made?

Figure 5.3: The Twopointed Arrow

– In each of the four triads that make up the twelve higher workshops one link is made; from the work in these twelve workshops the result is therefore four links. But it does not end there. These four links are given to the seventh Master because he handles each of them. When they are placed under his control the seventh Master sends them to the field that he sows and there they remain for a certain amount of time in a state of rest. After that the four links are connected with each other and they form a rigid and firm fabric. Then they take a falcon like you prisoner and throw that coat of mail on it so that it is completely sown up.
– How many links are there in each coat of mail? I asked.
– If you could count the drops of water in lake Omân then you could also count how many links there are in each coat of mail.
– But is there a way to get rid of it?
– Through the Indian Sword.
– In our country there is an executioner; this Sword is in his hands. It has become a rule that when a coat of mail has rendered the services that it must provide for a certain time and its time is over that this executioner strikes it with his Sword. That blow is so hard that all the links break and scatter.
– For someone wearing that coat of mail are there differences in the way they receive that blow?
– Of course there are differences. For some the shock is so bad that had they lived a century and had they passed their entire life in meditation on the nature of the most intolerable suffering and what the greatest suffering is that can be imagined, they could still not imagine the violence of the blow that this Sword inflicts. One the other hand, for others the blow is much more easily received.
– O Sage, I beg of you, what do I have to do so this suffering is made easy for me?
– Find the Spring of Life. From this Spring streams of water run down over your head until this coat of mail (instead of hemming you in tightly) becomes a simple garment that hangs around you with ease. This way you are invulnerable to the blow from this Sword. It is as if this Water makes the coat of mail supple (see 34:10), and when it is completely loosened up, the shock from the Sword is no longer felt.
– O Sage, where is this Spring of Life?
– In the Darkness. If you want to take part in the Quest for this Spring, look for the same sandals that Khezr (Khadir) the Prophet wears and progress on the road of confident abandonmen t, till you arrive in the region of the Shadows.
– In what direction is that road?
– In whatever direction you go, if you are a real traveler then you will finish the journey.
– But what does the region of the Shadows mean?
It is the darkness of one’s awareness. Because you are in darkness yourself. You simply have no awareness. When they who take this road see themselves as being in darkness then they have understood that they are here and now in the night and that they have never yet reached the clarity of the light of day. That is the very first step of a real traveler. It is only possible to raise yourself up if you start there. If someone therefore reaches that station then it is possible to go on from there. The seeker for the Spring of Life passes through all sorts of stupors and distresses. However, if they are worthy to find the Spring then finally after the darkness they will contemplate the light. They must not take flight before this light because it is a splendor that descends from the high Heavens upon this Spring of Life. When they have finished the journey and bathed in the Spring of Life then they are invulnerable to the blow by the Sword. As these verses have it (by Sanâ’î):

*Let yourself be bruised by the Sword of Love
And find eternity,
Because the Sword of the Angel of Death,
Is never a sign that you are revived.*

Those who bathe themselves in this Spring will never be sullied. Those who have found the meaning of True Reality have arrived at the Spring. When they emerge from the Spring they have attained the Attitude that makes them like the drop of balsam that you pour into the hollow of your hand after holding it up to the sun and that then penetrates to the back of your hand. If you are Khezr, then you too can cross Mount Qâf.

... When I told these things to my best friend who had asked me about them, he cried out: "You really are a falcon who has been captured into the fillet and who now gives chase to the game. Well, catch me then! To the cords of the hunter’s saddle I will not be a bad prey."

*Yes, I am the falcon who the hunters of the world are in need of at every moment. My game are gazelles with dark eyes,
Because Wisdom is like tears that strain through the eyelids.
Before me the literal meaning of the words flees
Near me one knows how to catch the hidden meaning.*
Chapter 6

The Recital of the Occidental Exile and the Gnostic gesture

The History of the Gnostic

We have stated repeatedly that there is a close relationship between the recital we present in the current chapter and the one from the last chapter. The "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" ends on a conditional: "If you are Khezr, you too can cross mount Qâf", i.e. reach the Spring of Life. The "Recital of Occidental Exile" now resolves this doubt. The spiritual proves to be capable of rejoining Khezr at the Spring of Life, or rather, claims to resume Khezr’s quest "in the first person". Only now the scenography is entirely different. There are more references to the Iranian heroic gesture. We have just seen that these found their completion in a gesture of mystical gnosis. Here it is the Gnostics who "make" their own history. This also satisfies the conditions of the tri-unity of the hikâyât that have already been discussed. Everything that we are told during the course of this recital shows us the hero as the representative type of Islamic mystical Gnosis.

The title contains an intimation already: it refers to the basis of the "oriental theosophy" that is laid during the "Recital of Occidental Exile". The entire "history" of the Gnostic is contained in the bipolarity of these two attributes. It is really a "history" although not in the way that word is ordinarily used, when striving to contrast the Christian sentiment of the historicity of salvation with the view of the Greek philosophers. Precisely because it involves such a summary dichotomy, many false judgments are made against what is true gnosis. Sometimes it is said that the Gnostic "fees" from the world and hence will have a perverted "sense of history". Such an opinion only begs the question. To hold this is to presume the issue (similar to the "phenomenon of the world") and exactly what brings about the view that gnosis gives witness to already resolved. Those who awaken to an awareness that their origin and their final ending are elsewhere, do feel strangers to this world. To feel "comfortable" in this world is precisely the tragedy denounced by every gnosis. Whoever reproaches gnosis for fleeing this world frankly declares in this way that they for one do not believe in such an elsewhere. Whoever is reproached for having a perverted "sense of history" deliberately sides with the "history" of the Gnostic. Some also say that gnosis replaces the truths of faith with known truths. Suhrawardi’s "Recital of the Exile" suffices to correct that optical illusion. Previously we noted the triad: theoretical or scientific certainty ("ilm al-yaqîn"), certainty of the witness ("’ayn al-yaqîn") and lastly certainty of those who experience the known because it actually occurs in them ("haqq al-yaqîn"). The last of this triad typifies Gnostic truth. This is why Koranic verses carried by spiritual hermeneutics to the level of this haqq al-yaqîn will serve to mark the stages of this return journey and why
parallels can be established with the hermeneutics practiced by gnosis outside of Islam.

All this is very remote from the idea presented nowadays by the adversaries of gnosis and much closer to its true and essential notion. A systematic investigation of the affinities between the gnosis practiced by the "religions of the Book" (already alluded to, see above, book 1) will be indispensable after studies of the texts have sufficiently progressed. This should proceed exactly as if the traces of a lost continent were slowly coming into view. On a related matter we cannot emphasize enough the importance of the course abstracts of H.-C. Puech on "The Esoteric Doctrines and Gnostic Themes in the Gospel of Thomas".1 A certain number of themes emerge from these abstracts that exhibit an exceptional richness and complexity that we have no trouble finding a version or variant of in Islamic Gnosis, and it is the principle theme in the present "Recital of Exile". All these themes are polarized by the theme of the "Angel", referred to previously in reference to the Psalm of the Perfect Nature.

H.-C. Puech’s in-depth analysis leads us to the following summarization:

1) An analysis of the simple proposition: "I know myself", as found in Gnostic contexts, leads us to a fundamental distinction between the "I", the knowing subject, and the "myself", the known or acknowledged object. The former is the "ego" that I am in day to day experience, in the concrete, in the midst of the world of sensible perception. The "ego" open to the demands of the world of "phenomena" orients me for the most part and determines who I am. The latter is the "myself" as I am beyond phenomena, appearances and the contingencies of _genesis_. That is the real, authentic, essential, substantial and permanent me. It is no doubt perceived as within myself by interior knowledge. Simultaneously it is neither perceived as a phantasm but endowed with objective existence, as a "being that exists and lives in the self" (it is better to speak of the "self" than the "I"); it is our eternal archetype, "ourselves in our eternity."2 Its existence is so entirely objective that it is experienced as the "personal Angel", the "Man of Light", "personal Guide", or even typified as an original celestial garment, or an image or icon (_eikôn_), a Double or a "Celestial Jewel".

Several times we have encountered the phrase: "They who know themselves (the soul, _nafsah_) know their Lord", and its variants: "They who know themselves, know their Imâm," "They who know their Imâm know their Lord." The motto has been meditated on, "returned" to the infinite, by Islam’s spirituals and we gave examples of this. The relationship between the reflective _nafs_ (the self, the soul) and the subject pronoun _man_ (the one who knows) agrees perfectly with the relationship between the knowing "ego" and the known or recognized "self" as analyzed by H.-C. Puech, to such a degree that in Shi‘ite Gnosis it so happens that the Imâm is substituted for the "self" and assumes the function of the "personal Angel" of ancient Gnosis. In Suhrawardi this "self" is represented by the "Perfect Nature", or even by the Angel initiator whom we met during his recitals. We already noted that with him and with the _Ishrâqîyân_ the vision of this "Perfect Nature" is associated with the mystical gesture of Hermes. In the other Sufi masters, e.g. Najmuddîn Kubrâ, it is the "Heavenly Witness", the Guide, the "invisible Master".3 The "Man of Light" (_photimos anthrôpōs_) of the Gospel of Thomas, the "Person of Light" and the "Living I" of the Manichean texts have their exact equivalent in Najmuddîn Kubrâ and Qâzî Sa‘îd Qummi: _shaks min nûr, shaks nûr ânî_.4 The Ismailians know that a "Form of Light" comes to meet the adept at the moment of initiation.5 The "Perfect Man" (_Anthrôpōs teleios_) is _‘Insân al-Kâmil_, etc.

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4Ibid., p. 85.
5Cf. our _Trilogie ismaélienne_, general index s.v. _forme de lumière_.

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2) Knowledge of the self ends in a union, or rather in a reunion of the apparent self and the transcendent self (the eternal archetype, the "ego" that knows) and again becomes "what I am in myself and have never ceased to be". Yet this is not dealing with the fusion of a mixture and the union does not presume to be a simple reflection, but a return. The celestial "self" keeps its objective reality, like that of a mirror that I look into and that I know and recognize myself in.

The mirror is what makes me recognize my real "face", breaking the mirror will destroy the union itself and there will be no more "face", no more "face to face" knowledge. In the gnosis associated with the Imām, this is what the theme of the Imām as Face of God for man and Face of Man for God results in. The theme of the "return" is essentially the theme of the voyage of the birds in 'Attār, the theme of the exile in Suhrawardī and in general the theme of the "four spiritual voyages" in Islamic Gnosis. The theme of the mirror is seen in the entire mystery of Simurgh and the dual emphasis of the eternal Simurgh and the sī-murgh. The hoopoe itself can become a Simurgh while the eternal Simurgh still remains.

It is apparent that the relation between the Light-Self and the inferior ego is preeminently typified in Suhrawardi’s recital of the "Wings of Gabriel": one wing made of Light and a wing not exactly made of darkness, but a rather darkened one, with the reflections of the reddish gleam of the evening twilight on it. Every human entity is in the image of the Angel of Humanity. To darken the "left wing" is not to destroy that wing but to remake it into a wing of Light, having it also reflect the right wing of Light. The theme of the image of the soul, the icon of the Angel and the Angel as icon of the soul is well known in Valentinian Gnosis. In Suhrawardi the Perfect Nature is at once "father" and "child" in the spiritual world. The initial relationship that the "oriental theosophy" institutes between the First Lover and the First Beloved affects the fundamental law of being and of every being. As we saw, that is the meaning of ishrāqī gnosis as it is written in the Koran: "Of everything we have created pairs" (51:49).

3) There is also the theme of the personal pleroma: for all spirituals their "Angel", or the ideal reality that corresponds to their transcendent self is their "pleroma", particular to them and the form of all that they are and it individually defines them in the plenitude of their own being. Everyone of these individual pleromas is immanent in the Universal Pleroma. "To know the pleroma in oneself" and "to know oneself in the heart of the pleroma" amount to the same thing. The Angel is our pleroma, our being in plenitude.

This idea of the individual pleroma also corresponds to what results from the relation between Gnostics and their Perfect Nature. Their relation immanates into the pleroma of the Angel Gabriel as the Angel of Humanity (rābī’ al-‘ār’ al-insānī) of whom the Perfect Nature is in turn the Angel for each individual. This is the resolution of a hesitation sometimes noted in the commentators, between the Angel of Humanity and the Perfect Nature. Furthermore, the discussion between Constantin son of Luke (Qusta ibn Lūka) and his disciple 'Amālaq the Greek (above, chapter 3, § 5) ought to be seen here as an illustration of this relationship (see below, § 5, the "Personal City").

4) Together with the theme that we have just noted, that of the spiritual ascendance immediately comes to mind. Gnoecis is salvic knowledge in the sense that it saves those in whom it unveils their origin. There is a connection between knowing what or who you are and knowing where you are from, through whom you exist. To know one’s race, one’s roots, one’s family, means for Gnostics to know their real country, to know how and where they

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7Cf. Le Bruissement des ailes de Gabriel, p. 78 of our translation (fr). The same symbolism is found again, but applied to the Angel Seraphiel, in the hadîth of the "White Cloud". § 26 [personal ms, pagination added], on which Qâzî Sa’īd Qummi commented: "Our names (those of the Imāms) are written on the front of the Angel Seraphiel, one of whose wings is in the Orient and the other in the Occident".
9H.-C Puech, loc. cit., 63rd year, p. 201; 65th year, p. 249.
existed, to know the category of being that they belong to. In the "Gospel of Thomas" to know oneself means eo ipso also to know that you are "a son of the living Father".\textsuperscript{10}

In Islamic Gnosis we rediscover all of this verbatim. Limiting ourselves here to the one example of the "Recital of Occidental Exile", the disclosure of the spiritual ascendance and the force behind the entire dramaturgy of the recital takes place at the very beginning and then solemnly reappears in the conclusion. The exile is the son of Shaykh al-Hâdî ibn al-Khayr the Yemenite; we will see further down that this title refers to the Active Intellect, the Holy Spirit, the Angel of Humanity. In the recital's ending this Angel will reveal their shared "ancestral" line to her "son" the exile, none other than the hierarchy of Angels or Intelligences of Islamic Neoplatonism and Ismailian Gnosis. Here we also again rediscover the Neoplatonist idea of the series or "chain" of souls that come from the gods. We know that Proclus considered himself as belonging to the "chain" of Hermes.\textsuperscript{11} The other family members who appear to the exile of the Suhrawardian recital are typified as "fishes" frolicking in the Spring of Life after having passed the test now undertaken by the exile.

5) This test is an uprooting from one's origin and a rediscovery of one's purpose by a return to that origin, a return to "myself". \textit{Logion 49} of the "Gospel of Thomas" says: "You will find the Kingdom because you came from there and you will return there again." This implies that they who know their \textit{principle} know their \textit{end}, because "the discovery of the beginning only comes with that of the end", "because there where the beginning is, is the end" (\textit{Logion 18}). Gnosis is precisely what reveals the identity of beginning and end, joined into a unique point.\textsuperscript{12}

This is the main theme of Suhrawardi's "Recital of the Exile". "This history is about me, a disaster has befallen me". Fallen from the world of Light, from the world on high or of the Beyond, the exile is now a prisoner at the bottom of a pit, in the Occidental city of Qayrawân, chained with iron fetters. The place to be returned to is the place of origin. We have already cited this injunction from the "Epistle of the High Towers" (\textit{Risâlat al-abrâj}):

\begin{quote}
"When it is said: Go back! This implies a place where you were previously. How unfortunate for you if you understand by that place, Damas or Baghdad, or some other earthly city!"
\end{quote}

Furthermore, this concerns the same theme as that of Islamic Gnosis and is typified by the "two arcs" of the descent (\textit{nuzûl}) and return (\textit{su'ûd}), by the place of origin (\textit{mabda'}) and return (\textit{ma'âd}). As to the idea that the ultimate place comes about from a return to the origin (as in the movement of a compass that Suhrawardi referred to in the last recital), this also corresponds to the representation of the cycle of prophecy (as the cycle of the descent) and the cycle of the Imamate (as that of the ascent) in Shi’ite theosophy (see above in book 1). It speaks for itself that this idea of a cyclical history closing in upon itself, altogether granting access to a metahistory, is in complete conformity with the notion of pre-existence. It is a guarantee of salvation because it is a guarantee of the permanence of being at a level higher than that of the world of exile and that of the fall.

6) The theme of certainty: gnostiics assures spirituals that they will be saved from the present situation and that they are only to be saved from it because in a true sense they are saved here and now and always, because their origin and their return are in fact identical.\textsuperscript{13}

This is exactly the double certainty of salvation that the Angel gives the exile, who now has found the return road through her, at the end of the "Recital of the Exile". The exile is now saved and in such a way that henceforth mystical Sinai can be revisited anytime, carried along by the ecstatic meditation of celestial symbols until the moment of the final return.

7) The theme of pre-existence is through its relation with the theme of the Angel, or the

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, 65\textsuperscript{th} year, pp. 252-253.
\textsuperscript{12} H.-C Puech, loc.cit., 65\textsuperscript{th} year, p. 253.
\textsuperscript{13} H.-C Puech, loc.cit., 65\textsuperscript{th} year, p. 254.
knowledge of the Self, in some way like what the so-called "response" (or consequent) is to the "subject" (or antecedent) in the musical technique of the fugue. In turn it also receives the response of certainty. *Logion 19* of the "Gospel of Thomas" that says: "Happy are they who were before having been", finds its response in the Gospel of Philip as: "Because they who are, have been and will be". These *Logia* from the Gnostic Gospels can be inscribed in golden letters in the ideal "Book" that all Gnoses of the "religions of the Book" have in common. "Pre-existence implies perpetuity of existence, permanence in Being". "Certainty of being is based on pre-existence, on having existed before coming into this world, into the flesh, into chronological time, of never having ceased and beyond time never being able to cease being oneself."\(^\text{14}\) It is a certainty of being a history oneself that *deconstructs* history in the ordinary sense of the word, because it is a metahistory.

The idea of pre-existence is explicit in Suhrawardi's mystical recitals. It is affirmed at the very beginning of the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" and at the beginning and the end of the "Recital of the Exile". It is indeed true that Suhrawardi's major treatises sometimes show a certain ambiguity in the matter, something that irritated Mullâ Sadrâ Shirazi. Some of the ending pages in the "Book of Paths and Havens" (al-Mašā'ir wa-l-Mutârahât) will leave us in such a doubt. However, we note that these are precisely the exoteric works; on the other hand, the esoteric treatises, written as similitudes, do not leave us in any doubt at all. The theme of pre-existence and all of its resonances should be added in its entirety to Islamic Gnosis. As was noted, pre-existence is generally admitted by Shi'ite thinkers as taught by the Holy Imâms themselves. It is presumed by the hermeneutics of the mysterious verse of the "Covenant" or *pre-existential* pact, when the question is posed: "Am I not your Lord?" (7:71). That question keeps the believer's perspective opened up beyond a birth into this world. Again: our mystical theosophers (Mullâ Sadrâ, Qâzi Sa'îd Qummi, Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâ'î) know full well that this question is repeated from world to world, at every level of the epiphany of being, in everyone of the 40,000 universes that certain *hadîths* of the Imâms speak of, and of which this present world, the world of the Adamites, is the very last. In their answer to this question human beings that pre-existed their becoming have both decided on the meaning of their passage in this world and the final return to their origin.

8) This is why it can also be said that our temporal existence is only an episode "between two equalities", or rather one that stretches from eternity to eternity.\(^\text{15}\) In Arabic we say: between *azal* and *abad*. The theme of the return is that of the "encounter of the Gnostic and the Angel". The numerous variants that illustrate this theme will be the more striking if we note them following the translation (fr) of the "Recital of the Occidental Exile", where Suhrawardi mobilizes all the major themes of his theosophy.

Let us now turn to the strong affinity between Suhrawardi's "Recital of the Exile" and the "Song of the Pearl", also called the "Hymn of the Soul" in the *Acts of Thomas*, a text that pre-eminently formulates the leitmotiv of Iranian spirituality and that of the *ishrâqi* school. Certainly such a comparison could lead us too far afield, since Merkelsbach has already analyzed the "Song of the Pearl" theme by theme, comparing it with Heliodorus's romance *Chariklea* (above, chapter 5, § 4) and noting parallel passages with Synesius and the emperor Julian.\(^\text{16}\) If the "Song of the Pearl" is considered a Gnostic hymn then the "Recital of the Exile" presents itself in the same light. They will both be represented in the *corpus* that perhaps will someday reunite all the *disjuncta membra* of the immense family of gnosia. The "Recital of the Exile" cannot be taken otherwise, as if Suhrawardi himself had read the history of the young Iranian prince who was sent by his parents from the Orient to Egypt to conquer the *Pearl* of great price. Around this theme of the *Pearl* other resonances propagate themselves again in Shi'ite Gnosis. We have in mind the tradition (*hadîth*) going

\(^{14}\) Ibid., pp. 254-255.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., pp. 256.

\(^{16}\) R. Merkelsbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike*, pp. 299-320; on the parallel texts with Synesius and Julian, ibid., pp. 320-325.
back to Imâm Ja'far, that says that the "Black Stone" enclosed in one corner of the Ka'ba was formerly the "White Pearl" in paradise, "Adam's Angel", subsequently sent to Earth to help the same Adam. The entire recital of the Imâm has the form and the importance of an initiatory recital, an initiation into the "spiritual Temple" that we have studied elsewhere. 17

Let us restrict ourselves here to noting that in the "Song of the Pearl" 18 we are dealing with a young prince whose parents, both sovereigns from the "Orient" where he is from, send him to Egypt to conquer the priceless Pearl. He takes off his robe made of Light that his parents have lovingly woven for him and arrives in the earth of exile; he is a Stranger here; he tries to remain unnoticed but is recognized anyway; he is forced to eat things that obliterate the memory of where he is from; he forgets that he is "royalty". Then one day a message arrives carried by an eagle, signed by his father and mother and all the nobles of Parthia, i.e., all the princes of the celestial pleroma. Such an Imman qualification marking their situs in the "Orient" is in perfect agreement with the meaning that Suhrawardi gives to the word "Orient" in all of his oriental theosophy. Then the prince remembers where he is from and the pearl that he was sent to find. That is the "return from Egypt", the exodus, the grand return to the Orient. Like in all of gnosis and also in Suhrawardi, the Occident (maghrib) typifies the world of genesis. Here it is Egypt; in Suhrawardi it is the village of Qayrawân (when the prophet Mani died, he also left from Egypt, Misrân). 19 The return to the Orient is made by putting the robe of Light that the prince had to take off while still an infant, on again. We note below (§ 4) that this is one of the variants on the theme of the "Gnostic and the encounter with the Angel". 20

Both the "Recital of Occidental Exile" and the "Song of the Pearl" proceed along similar lines. The inherent necessity of his destiny requires that the youth from the "Orient" is sent into exile, 21 towards an "Occident" symbolized by the village of Qayrawân (situated to the west of Maghrib, perhaps because its etymology (caravan) brings to mind the life of the soul as a prisoner in this world and of being on a long journey). It is a city "whose inhabitants are oppressors". The young prince is tied up and thrown into a pit. He wakes up at night but during the day falls back into the pit again. Will he stay there? Forget everything? Suddenly one night a message arrives from the family in the Beyond, carried by a hoopoe; in the message he is asked why he is no longer en route and it urges him to proceed with haste. Thus begins the journey to this Orient that is not on our maps; it is

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20 Cf. our Avicenna, pp. 157 ff. and The Man of Light, pp. 22 ff.

21 On this fundamental theme, cf. also Laghâl-i Mârûn [The Language of the Ants, above, page 135, note 2], Chapter VIII, pp. 46-48 [The History of the Peacock]; cf. also below, § 5 of the present chapter. Regarding the spiritual meaning that the word caravan takes on here [as applied to the descent and the soul's pilgrimage in this world], we also note that this word was formerly used in the sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem to designate those knights who had the duty of guarding a fortress, as well as to indicate sea voyages that everyone had to undertake in the service of the Order. Everyone who aspired to a command position had to undertake four caravans, cf. Migne, Encyclopédie théologique, Vol. XXI: Dictionnaire des Ordres religieux, Paris 1846, vol. II, p. 844.

22 We note here some references contained in an interesting note in R. Merkelbach, op. cit., p. 316 [end of note 2 on page 315]. In the Secret Book of John [Apokryphon Johannis] an apparition of Light says: "May all who understand wake up from deep sleep... remember yourself... return to your roots" [from J. Dorese, Les Livres secrets des gnostiques d'Egypte, p. 277 ff.]. Besides the alchemical epistle of Cleopatra to the philosophers, the author also notes the name of the myst Gregori(us), which can also be read in the imperative (wake up), on a sarcophagus in Ravenna. However, the Greek egrôgoros = watcher, is the exact equivalent of the Arabic yaqzân, in the Avicennan Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân. Cf. our Avicenna, pp. 63 ff.
the ascension of Mount Qâf that we already know as a cosmic or psycho-cosmic mountain, of the mystical Sinai, where the one lives who is here the Angel of Humanity, designated by the Neoplatonists as Noûs patrikos (see also the little spiritual romance noted below [§ 5] under the theme of the "Personal City" that thematically reproduces verbatim the mystical drama just described). We could equally well refer here to the admirable hermeneutics of the "history" of Phaethon by Proclus. Neoplatonist hermeneutics has several levels of comprehension, like in the ta'wil of our spirituals. There is an explanation called "historical" that only touches upon the exoteric, the zâhir; there is one that is called "physical" that deals with symbols, and then there is an explanation called "philosophical" that is the one of "spiritual realism", because the history of Phaethon is the history of a soul, of an entire category of souls. It is an authentic history, not at the level of exterior history, that of my empirical ego in the daily humdrum, but precisely at the level of that "Self" to whom I am going back when "I" recognize myself.

It is precisely when "I" make that return that "I" become the reciter of the mystical recital, of the hikâyat as our authors described it for us themselves. I tell my own history. "This recital is about me," affirms the author of the "Recital of the Exile" in the end. This history is not part of profane history, the "thread of history" forming itself from the "thread of days", but the reciter's own sacred history or hierohistory. Again the question is formed that unceasingly reappears here page after page: what is history in the true sense, the true history that deconstructs history in the ordinary sense of the word, because that one can only get to the "I" of the phenomenal world, appearance among appearances? That is the problem at the very heart of the hermeneutics of the "religions of the Book". Indeed, because the spirituals have lived it themselves do we find a gnosis that unveils the metahistorical meaning of real history in the "religions of the Book". We find ourselves in perfect agreement here with some of Gilbert Durand's most recent writings, where he responds with such lucidity and philosophical courage to one such question cloaked in modern terms, already betraying imminent resignation.

In the light of the hikâyat that constitutes the previously described tri-unity it is radically false to describe hierohistory, "Sacred History", as if it were merely a "historical and finished" preface to profane history. Durand writes:

The term and notion of Sacred History signifies above all a "recital" and not a process of reconstituted archaeology [...], because its liturgy is the actual reading, exegetical and hermeneutical, of the Sacred "Recital"; it is anti-historical in the same sense that a work of art is "anti-destiny" according to Malraux. Anti-historical because it urges precisely the "recitation" and a redundant "putting into practice" of the recital. It recovers its "meaning" in every instant, for every temporal cycle, for every soul and for every moment of that soul. It does so against the "thread" of history, against the positive determinism of historical facts and misleading events, that lead men and empires upwards to power, or downwards to decline and death.

Perfectly expressed in modern philosophical terms we notice here the hermeneutical principle that was also stated by both the 5th Imâm and Suhrawardi. The power of this history that deconstructs history is lastingly preserved in the "phenomenon of the Sacred

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24 Cf. Gilbert Durand, Le Statut du symbole et de l'imaginaire aujourd'hui [in Lumière et Vie, 81, Lyon, May 1967, pp. 41-72]. This strongly worded article (where the word imaginary in the title takes the place of what we call imaginal in this book) responds with pertinence to a twofold question: "Does the contemporary scientific and technical mentality allow us to authentically live a symbolic experience? Under what conditions?".
25 Ibid., p. 61, compare pp. 56, 67, 69.
Book", at the source of every spirituality of the "religions of the Book", be it Bible or Koran. Durand writes again: "If the Book is a renewing recital rather than a narrative history and an objective pretension, then a refusal of the historical and archaeological thread is forced upon us, in favor of an eschatological meaning." Those who recite the "Book" eo ipso create their own Book: these are the Koranic verses that for Suhrawardi's hermeneutics constitute the thread of his "Recital of the Exile" and make it a liturgical recital. "Recite the Koran," he says, "as if it was only written for yourself." The eschatological perspective of his recital, of all his recitals, results from the practice of that hermeneutic. That constitutes the understanding of "sacred history"; to consent to the truth of the imaginal world, to lead the truth of the "phenomenon" back to it, against the grain of time and against death. On the other hand, those who speak nowadays of "making the lives of the saints conform to the truth of history", have probably lost all sense of such a leading back, that is none other than a liturgical recurrence, without which no spirituality is able to keep living the "Book".

Analysis of the Recital

We propose to divide this recital, as it can now be read in the original Arabic text with Persian paraphrasing, into a prelude, three major acts and a postlude or epilogue.

Prelude. A short introduction gives the Shaykh al-Ishrâq occasion to position himself in relation to Avicenna. We noted previously how he places his own "oriental" philosophy relative to the one that Avicenna planned under the same name (above, chapter 1, § 2). This is a new specification but this time at the level of a mystical recital. Suhrawardi makes references to two of the recitals in the Avicennan trilogy: the "Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân" and the "Recital of Salamân and Absâl".

We had occasion elsewhere to discuss Avicenna's recitals at length and will not return to them at this point. We only note that Suhrawardi's reference confirms that there indeed was a "Recital of Salamân and Absâl" written by Avicenna. Unfortunately, we are only in possession of a summary provided by Nasiruddin Tusi in his commentary on Avicenna's Ishârât. Twenty years later Nasir Tusi commented on the hermetist version of this same recital, the one that the famous poet Jami (d. 898/1492) was to orchestrate into one of the principal works of Persian mysticism. We compared the hermetist and Avicennan versions of the "Recital of Salamân and Absâl" elsewhere. Suhrawardi explicitly states that the mystical secret "confided in trust to the symbols of the sages" is found here. Despite the flatterin...
Analysis of the Recital

It is for the disciple to decide (like at the end of the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel") to actually embark on the way (like Avicenna does in the "Recital of the Bird"). There is an explicit allusion to this in the final lines of the "Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân". We can also read the passage quoted by Suhravardi at the end of Avicenna's text. "Sometimes certain solitaries among men emigrate toward Him..." These lines may serve as a point of departure into the Suhrawardian recital. The *Shaykh al-Ishrâq* was perfectly well aware of Avicenna's intention, rejected by others. He is now comfortable to say his own recital that he calls "The Recital of the Occidental Exile".

**I.** The first part of the recital (containing the strophes that we have numbered 1 to 14) could be entitled: "fall into captivity and escape". It is the beginning of the Gnostic's history in this world. This history, spanning the episode "between two eternities", begins with the exile from the world of the Light, the *Orient*, and captivity into the world of material *physis*, the *Occident*. The recital's hero, the "reciter" himself, parts company with his brother 'Asim. This word means "one who guarantees, preserves, immunizes", but also in the passive sense of "protégé, one who is safe and sound". Right away this suggests that it must be the "Celestial Double", "Light-Self", Perfect Nature, personal Angel. It can therefore be compared with the brother of the young prince in the "Song of the Pearl" from the *Acts of Thomas* 31 All the same, this brother stays in the Kingdom while the second brother is sent into the darkness of Egypt to win back the *Pearl*. We have already seen (chapter 4, § 4) that a Simurgh descends every moment, accompanying the descent of a human soul. Here there is something doubly remarkable: from the very beginning this "invisible" brother is himself also a captive of the inhabitants of Qāyrāwān. Afterwards he is mentioned in strophe 12, where he is also named in the message from the Beyond and is equally urged to set himself free and start his journey.

The Persian commentator suggests that we see in him "the contemplative faculty" that is a property of the soul without any participation of the body. 'Asim is immunized against every injurious and destructive force. No doubt, but this is also the kind of commentary that we have previously warned against (chapter 4, § 4). We are suggesting something else here, because the hermeneutics of the recital does not consist of a redescend to a level of logical and philosophical evidence, performed as if what was symbolized need only disappear now that the symbol has been fully explained. This is the major mystification that comports with today's "de-mythicization". What is seen here is the following: the hero and his brother come from "the land across the river" to the land of the Occident to hunt birds from the Green Sea. This could be translated as: they come from the higher world into the world of darkness, to actualize sensible and intellectual matters in order to realize perfection consisting of the soul's elevation to a state of *Noûs*, Intelligence. Indeed, but if we confound ourselves with this kind of understanding and substitute this in the recital then we miss the metaphysical meaning of the epic: now it is no more gnosis, no more hikâyat, but a simple lesson in philosophy.

The two brothers get to the farthest city in this "Occident", marking the extreme vesperal decline of the soul, *Ishrāq*'s antipode, the exact opposite of *illumination matutina*: here the city of Qāyrāwān is what is meant by Egypt in the "song of the Pearl". They are seized and tied up by the inhabitants when the latter discover that these are children from the world of Light, the children of Shaykh al-Hādî ibn al-Khayr the Yemenite. Since they are his "children" it is indeed their "father" whom the exiles rejoin at the recital's end, the mystical Sinai that is at the summit of Mount Qâf. This therefore deals with three expressions designating the Intelligence who is the Angel of Humanity, namely the Holy Spirit, who is...
Noûs patrikos for humans, the Active Intellect of the Avicennan philosophers and the Tenth of the Archangelic Hierarchy.\textsuperscript{32}

The name al-Hâdî means "guide"; let us remember this word because we will meet it again (§ 4) to compare the meaning it has in other contexts that illustrate the eschatological intent of our recital. Ibn al-Khayr means literally "son of the Good" and the Neoplatonist reference is obvious here. Islamic philosophers were familiar with one of Proclus's works on "the Pure Good".\textsuperscript{33} In the end of the recital there is question of the "Supreme Forebear", the Light of Light to whom all angelic hierarchies lead and who is itself (like Melchisedech) without any forebears. Al-Hâdî comes from this Pure Good, source of the epiphany of being, and is its "son". Why is he called a "Yemenite"? That is because southern Arabia, Yemen, the land of Sheba, plays an important role in the mystical symbolism of the visionary geography of our authors. Yemen is the "right side" of the valley where the divine voice spoke to Moses from inside the Burning Bush (28:30). Numerous hadîth illustrating this meaning could be quoted here. Mir Dâmâd, the theological master from the school of Ispahan liked to quote this one: "Faith comes from Yemen, theosophy is Yemenite."\textsuperscript{34} Yemen is therefore the equivalent of the "Orient" in the ishrâqî sense of this word; hence, "Yemenite philosophy" is placed in the same contrast with Peripatetic philosophy as "oriental" philosophy is. Visionary experience agrees here with the geographical data because Yemen is indeed east of Qayrawân. We note with interest that the biographer of Christian Rosenkreutz, an eponym of "Rose Cross", leads his hero on a search for knowledge as far as the "sages of Yemen".\textsuperscript{35}

Above the deep pit where the captives are thrown rises a fortified castle with many towers, the castle formed by the celestial Spheres and dominated by the Heaven of Fixed Stars with the constellations (the abrâj, plural of burj, castle, high towers) of the Zodiac. The captives are allowed to climb up to this castle, to attempt the spiritual ascent of the Spheres, but only at night. Here again we meet the symbolism of the night, previously noted for its ambiguity (above, chapter 4, § 4). Indeed, we found it also in the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel". There the child Zâl was accompanied by Simurgh during the day, i.e., present to the world of Light, while at night he was left in the care of the anima sensitiva. In the epistle of "The Sound of Gabriel's Wings" (above, page 139) the prologue shows us the Infant, the celestial person, who unites the children who are the people of the earth, when night has fallen, i.e. the bonds of sensible perception keeping terrestrials captive and plunged into the sleep of unawareness of the soul. This is the night of the senses: all liberty is given to the Active Imagination and imaginative perception. This night of the senses is inversely the rising of the mystical dawn, Ishrâq the visionary opens the gate of the khanqâh (Sufi lodge), in other words: opens the secret door at the threshold of the transconscious that opens up to the unexplored desert; it is the entrance to the world of the suprasensible, of mystery (ghoṣâb), the beginning of the way that leads to the spiritual and angelic world. When day dawns again, i.e., the world of normal consciousness, the gate that opens up to the outside, i.e., the free space of the spiritual world, is closed and the other gate is opened that faces the city.\textsuperscript{36} Qayrawân, whose citizens go about their business and the captives

\textsuperscript{32} And who is typified at the beginning (§ 3) of the recital as the Yemenite shaykh, al-Hâdî ibn al-Khayr (the Guide, son of the Good). I have already pointed out in Prolégomènes II, p. 91, that the commentator certainly made a mistake (about this and other matters too) when he identified al-Hâdî with the First Emanation, or First Intelligence. It is al-Hâdî who appears at the end of the recital as the "father" of the exiles, on mystical Sinai, and who himself alludes to the "forebears" who precede him, i.e., to the Hierarchical Intelligences who are beyond him.

\textsuperscript{33} Text published by Abdorrahman Badawi, Procli Liber de expositione Bonitatis purae (Liber de causa), in a work entitled Neoplatonici apud Arabes, Calıhre 1955.

\textsuperscript{34} Inna t-mân û maidân (or min al-Yaman) wa t-hâmat û maidân, cf. Saffatat Bibîr al-anwâr, II, p. 735.

\textsuperscript{35} Kienast, Johann Valentin Andreae und die vier echten Rosen-Kreutzer-Schriften (Palestra 152), Leipzig 1920, pp. 133 ff.

\textsuperscript{36} Cf. Le Bruissement des ailes de Gabriel, pp. 68 and 81 of our introduction.
among them can only escape during the inacognito of the "night". All this is told by strophes 6 to 9 of the "Recital of Exile".  

According to this symbolism either day can appear as night or night can appear as day, depending on whether they are seen from the "oriental" or the "occidental" side.  

Such ambivalence is often found within esoteric hermeneutics, whether it be Sufism, Ismailism or Shi'ism. The hidden meaning (bâtin) is at the same time the night of esotericism and the day of the spiritual meaning and its truth; the exoteric (zâhir) is at once the day of the letter of religious Law and the night enslaving bodies, spirits and souls. Thus the exile and his brother "ascend during the night and descend during the day" (str. 9). The day is the bottom of the pit where "darkness piles upon darkness". The night is the vision of the lights shining over Yemen, the forbidden region, the Angel's "Orient".

From this forbidden region a "message appears one night. It is carried by a hoopoe on a night of the full moon. The commentator sees in the hoopoe "the inspiration of the heart" and in the night of the full moon "purification of the stains and impurities exuded by the material body". We don't object to this, provided that one doesn't stay here. We note that the "night of the full moon" was a theme that was already apparent in the last recital; it will reappear at the end of this recital. We remember the passage that talked about the hoopoe taking flight in the spring to become a Simurgh (above, chapter 5, § 3). Now the liturgical part begins in the "Recital of the Exile". To identify itself and to deliver its message the hoopoe "recites" the Koranic verses where the hoopoe who came from the land of Sheba, i.e. from the direction of Yemen, greets Solomon to tell him who [Belqis], the queen of Sheba is. The message has a content similar to the one we noted was sent to the young Parthian prince in the "Song of the Pearl".

Other familiar images are also noticeable: "Hold on to our cable", it says in the message. That is exactly the answer that Hermes got from his "father" when he called out for help to him during the dangers of his ecstatic vision (below, § 4, II). There the cable was the "ray of Light", the illumination from the hieratic world. Here it means something similar but the "code" is more difficult to read: it is the "Dragon from the Heaven of the Moon in the spiritual world governing the ends of the ecliptic". We believe this can be "decoded" as follows. First of all, what are called the head and tail of the dragon (Arabic tannîn, Persian jawzâhar) are the "nodes of the moon" in astronomy, i.e., the points where the orbits of the sun and the moon intersect (the moments of the ecliptic). The rising node is the one where the moon begins its path north of the ecliptic; it is the "dragon's head" (ra's al-tannîn), the North Node. The descending node is the one where the moon begins its path south of the ecliptic; it is the "dragon's tail" (dhânab al-tannîn), the South Node.

But here we are not dealing with astronomy. The mention of the dragon is associated with the idea of the ecliptic, but as it passes "through the Heaven of the Moon in the spiritual world". However, the Moon in the spiritual world is none other than the person of the mystic himself. What

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37 Let us cite a few lines from the Persian commentary on these strophes: "The author means that during the night, thanks to sleep, you can raise yourself to the higher world and contemplate the intelligible forms; because during sleep the senses are dormant and their functions no longer reign. During the day, in the waking state, this is impossible because of the tyranny of the senses that you then give free reign to. Said in another way: the world of Intelligibles can be reached through death, but sleep is a second death. The Koran alludes to this: "God receives the souls at the moment of death and He also receives those who are asleep without dying..." During sleep, thanks to the resignation of the senses, we can contemplate something from the world of the Angel... So we prove the nostalgia for our country, because we belong to that world too."

38 Compare Lughât-i mûrâd (The Language of the Ants), Chapter VII, pp. 44-45 of our translation (fr). The hoopoe, fallen captive among the fairies, wants to start off during the day. Before such foolishness the fairies beat it until the hoopoe in order to escape them pretends to be blind and not to be able to see during the day.

we have been told before about the "Jewel that illumines the Night" (above, chapter 5, § 3) now finally allows us also to decipher this "code". When the Moon is closest to the Tree Tûbâ (i.e., the Sun) it appears to us as completely dark (we can't see it any longer, like we can no longer see the Grail liberated from its sheath of skin), while in relation to the Sun it is all light. That is the return of the occidental Exile: this eclipse or occultation in the eyes of the city of oppressors happens in the same way as the mystic, totally occulted to his visible "I", is now completely invested with the Light from the spiritual Sun. The entire "imagery" is now completely coherent; this is why the Dragon (str. 33) will be mentioned again at an important moment of the return.

The two strophes that end the first part of the recital contain the last part of the message received from the "Orient" and give directions concerning the stages of the journey. These are "codes" written in Koranic verses. In the "valley of the ants" (27:18) the pious anonymous commentator only sees an allusion to lust. On the other hand, if we refer to the first chapter of Suhrawardi's "The Language of the Ants" (Lughât-i mârân) we get an entirely different meaning. Leaving the darkness of their nests at sunrise, the ants are surprised to find drops of dew left on the leaves of plants. They are at a loss to explain what these are, but gradually, as the heat of the sun makes itself felt, the dew evaporates into the air because everything returns to where it comes from. The Koranic verses cited in that epistle are echoed in the ones "recited" here. From the moment that you get into the valley of the ants, "shake the hem of your robe", i.e., renounce useless discussions and recite: "To Him all shall return at the Resurrection" (67:15). The injunctions are urgent: leave your kinfolk and your wife to perish, i.e., everything having to do with the desires of the flesh. Here the Koranic verses are those that tell of the misfortune that overcame Lot's wife, who could not be helped because she was one of the ones who stayed behind (29:31), while the people of Sodom are destroyed by a tempest at sunrise (15:51-73). One must find one's place in Noah's ark, here and in Shi'ite Gnosis the mystical vessel of salvation. "It sails on the waters and makes port in the name of the Lord" (11:43).

II.(str. 15 to 36). The travelers, the exile and his brother 'Asim, start their journey and arrive at the farthest end of the darkness where they embark on Noah's ark. The reciter says that at that moment "the Sun was just above our heads". If we refer to what Suhrawardi told us about the "quest for the Orient" and the "hieratic experience" (above, chapter 2, § 2) this is a transparent symbolism. To reach the edge of darkness is to reach the limit of the sublunar world, the limit of the "Occident", there where the "middle Orient" begins, i.e., the imaginal world that is the proper place for recitals and visionary dreams, the world where the activities that liberate the soul from the physiological apparel of the material body have their meaning; such activities do not fall under sensible perceptions and are, like the consequences that follow from them, contrary to the laws of the physical world (walking on water, reaching the heavens, reversal of time and space, etc.). In short, this is the arrival in a world experienced by certain mystical travelers (sâlikûn), where in certain cities of the middle Orient the light that surrounds them "is directly from above", as the Shaykh al-Ishrâq tells us elsewhere, i.e., in the "eighth clime", intermediate between the Occident of the physical world and the Orient of higher Malakût.

We have gathered other converging signs elsewhere about the meaning of the "noon hour", when the Sun's position is on the meridian. For example, Qâzi Sa'id Qummi explains at the end of his commentary on the "hadîth of the White Cloud" that the noon hour, when the extraordinary journey of the travelers accompanying the Imam in Malakût ends,
signifies that henceforth they have attained the spiritual maturity of those who are capable of penetrating into Malakût, because they have reached the "equator of human reality", the perfect equilibrium of the walâyat of the one who is the "Seal of the walâyat". It is also appropriate to note here the vision of Zosimus the alchemist, when behind the sword bearer coming from the Orient another beautiful and brilliantly shining figure appeared, who carried a spherical object and who was called "Position of the Sun in the Mid heaven". This is exactly what the "Recital of the Exile" alludes to. Only its reciter tells us that he and his brother make their escape from their prison "during the night". This confirms the fact that this is an inversion of night and day occurring when one passes from the sensible to the suprasensible world; through the "midnight sun" this inversion preludes in this way everything that follows.

What follows is a rapid triumph of a liturgical recital of the Koran realizing in a few strophes the conditions for the perfect hikâyat, defined before as a tri-unity realized in the act of the recital: a tri-unity of reciter, recited gesture and hero about whom this is recited (above, chapter 4, § 5 and chapter 6, § 1). The reciter of the "Recital of the Exile" does not reconstitute the historical and archaeological meaning of the Koran. Suhrawardi puts his own precept into effect here: "Recite the Koran as if it was revealed just for yourself". As a Neoplatonist himself it was for the Shaykh al-Ishrâq enough to show that there is no incompatibility between the spatial schematization of the Platonic Beyond and its temporal schematization by Biblical or Koranic anthropology. Indeed it is that very space that opens up an arena for the very history that always allows him to always need and repeat it, in short, not as a chronicle but as a liturgy and a liturgy realizing the reversibility of time in the space engendered by this time itself. Through a liturgical recital of Koranic verses the reciter revives the drama of the prophets; his journey to the mystical Sinai will follow the route of the prophets of his own being and he will rise from heaven to heaven in his own being, to the astrum in homine.

Successively the reciter is Noah, Lot, Moses, Zûl-Qarnayn (Alexander), and Solomon... He is the Noah whom the floods separate from his son, because this son did not really belong to his family (str. 16). The commentator sees in this son the vital spirit (rûh haywânî) and in the nurse thrown into the sea (str. 19) the physical spirit (rûh tabî‘î). The reciter is Lot who knows that his people, delivered over to turpitude, will be destroyed by the arrival of the dawn (the hour of Ishrâq, str. 18). He is Moses traveling in the company of the mysterious prophet Khezr (Khadir) who is his initiator (str. 20). Noah's vessel sails so intrepid that it here spans the hiatus separating the episode of Moses from Alexander's in sura 18 and now the traveler reaches mount al-Jûdî (where Noah's ark landed) in front of the people of Gôg and Mâgôg (Ya'ûj and Ma'yâj), str. 21). There he is Alexander constructing a dike that protects the human microcosm from the assaults of the sub-humans (str. 22). Because he is Solomon himself, he makes things with molten copper, hand-crafted by artisans in his service. These are obscure allusions, possibly alchemical references to the "resurrection body". They could be viewed in an awkward light, but consider how often the example of the incandescent piece of iron occurs in multiple contexts, forming an argument for the power of fire (and also suggesting the secret of the unio mystica as the secret of the Imam's person). Reference is also made to the cities of 'A'd and Thamûd, two peoples from the ancient Arabic world who refused the calls from the prophets that were sent to them (str.

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42 "Hadîth of the White Cloud", § 29 (according to our own enumeration, following the pericopes of the text commented on by Qâzî Sa'îd Qummî).
44 On the "midnight sun" as primordial image of the interior light, cf. our book on The Man of Light, pp. 45-48. In this same work we gave part of the Suhrawardian recital of the ecstasy of Hermes during the "night of the Sun".
Then there occurs a sequence of events that gives a very incoherent impression when viewed literally. The commentator is no doubt ingenious here, or perhaps very persistent, and puts together a detailed account of various relationships, so trite that they are not very convincing since among the numerous faculties of the soul that ancient psychology was accustomed to there were always some that lend themselves to comparisons like this. On the other hand, it seems that what is needed here is a meditation on a succession of images that suggest the interiorization of the firmament and the Spheres, in fact the passage from the astronomical heavens to the heavens of the microcosm and through those to the heavens of the world of the soul, of Malakât. It is the same as leaving the world of the physis and making the ascension of Mount Qâf. The event can only be suggested with violent images. The darkness that is imposed by the quest for the "Spring of Life" is transversed. The "round bottle with circular designs on it" suggests that this is the brain. Here the pilgrim locks up the Spheres in it (str. 25). So we allow strophes 26-28 to suggest the violence they want to suggest: the interruption of "normal" functions in order to cross the threshold of the transconscious and of hierognosis, of pure imaginative perception independent of the faculties of sensible perception. That is what is important rather than detailed relationships: the fourteen coffins and the ten tombs can support various correspondences since they represent for the Gnostic the gehenna of the world of physis. This is what the pilgrim escapes from, drawn towards God, like the darkness that God withdraws from him while giving him the sun as a guide (str. 29). From then on "the road is straight" (str. 30). The pilgrim alludes to his sister, asleep and clothed in darkness. The commentator sees here a reference to the matter of the body and the cosmos.

The dragon who has already been mentioned in strophe 12, in the message that called upon the exile to "hold on to our cable" in order make sure of the return, reappears in strophe 32. What we said before about the "Jewel that illumines the Night", i.e. the mystic as the "Moon in the spiritual Heaven", allows us now to understand that the advise in the message has been wisely observed. To put the "lamp" in the "beak of the Dragon", is to put what is astrum in homine (keeping the expression of Paracelsus) in the "knot" that from our perspective causes the Moon to be invisible, while from the perspective of the tree Tûbâ it is illuminated by its light (str. 32-33). Strophe 34 describes the position of certain signs of the zodiac. Their multiple meanings, known from astrology, can be used as a commentary on their relations to the heaven of the microcosm and that of Malakât. At this precise moment the "star of Yemen" makes its appearance. The commentator sees in this star the "Soul of the World" (Nafs Kolliya), i.e., the first in the hierarchy of the Animae caelestes, but also directly below the Tenth Intelligence of the superior hierarchy of the Angeli intellectuales. More to the point, we have in mind the symbolic meaning of "Yemen" that was noted previously. Is there still some fear and timidity left in the pilgrim? That is the meaning of the sheep (or the ock) in strophe 35, according to the commentator. Their disappearance is caused by a flash of lightning that wipes them out.

Then we get to the great strophe 36, introduced with an alchemical reference (athanor, the furnace that is here the heart), meant to provide a consistent ending on a note of a similar

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45 The Persian commentator strains himself to keep his relationships lined up: the ten tombs are the five external and the five internal senses. The fourteen coffins are the ten faculties of the physical organism and the four humors. Perhaps Suhrawardi had something else in mind.

46 Here the commentator wins the prize. Cf. our Prolegomenes II, p. 91. It is impossible to see in this lamp the Active Intellect, for the principal reason that this is who the pilgrim joins next on mystical Sinai. The gesture that "deposits this lamp" will now be meaningless from the point of view of the commentator. Besides this, the latter seems to completely forget that the hierarchy of the Angeli intellectuales resides in Nâ-kujâ-abât, beyond mount Qâf, i.e. the system of the Spheres. Regarding the water wheel mentioned in strophe 32, this is one way of indicating the orbit of the Moon; however, the mystic is precisely the Moon in the "heaven of Tawhîd" (remember here the Manichaean imagery of the cosmic Wheel, fetching and saving the particles of light that are immersed in darkness).
kind: the bursting of the membrane that has until then enveloped the filius Sapientiae, Puer aeternus, enclosing the Work (see what is noted about alchemical symbolism further down). This birth that liberates the celestial child is accompanied by the great sounds of the music of the Spheres. Attention must be paid to the effects of musical experience as they were noted elsewhere by Suhrawardi, and to the explanation by Iamblicus on the effects of music. We might be surprised by the comparison made here by Suhrawardi, although it was done before by Iamblicus (clattering vibrations made by the contact of a chain and a rock). No doubt he liked its description of the intensity (the "outburst") of the formidable effects of that cosmic symphony, as all manifestations of beauty are. It seemed to him that his whole body was dislocated by the effects of the sonorous incantations of those cosmic harmonies.

III (str. 37-43). The sound dies down. The recital's "third act" opens on a peaceful and quiet scene at the foot of the Sublime Mountain, where the Spring of Life and Immortality gushes forth. Thus the goal that has been sought after by every mystic since Khezr has been attained. The symbolism of the fishes living happily in this Spring has no other meaning than that given in the recital itself (str. 37-38). First a short interruption by a Koranic verse (18:60) demands clarification. In the Koranic context Moses says to his servant that they must walk to where the two seas meet, i.e., to the border of the Spring of Life, where they lose their fish "that chooses for its way a certain current of the sea" (18:60) and escapes. However, according to tradition, that is the same moment that Moses must meet Khezr. It therefore seems that the "fish" who answers the questions of the pilgrim (str. 38) is none other than Khezr himself. It gets even better. To pursue here the symbolism of certain alchemical aspects, Khezr appears at this moment precisely as the pilgrim's "self". In that case, this episode of the "Recital of the Exile" gives just as striking a reply as the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" does when the Angel says to her disciple: "If you are Khezr, you too can pass".

The foot of mount Sinai, where the pilgrim now stands, is the foot of a mystical Sinai culminating in the summit of Mount Qâf and at the summit of mount Sinai itself there stands the Great Rock. Mount Qâf has already been mentioned several times. But what is this Great Rock on top of Sinai, itself on the summit of Mount Qâf? A tradition of the 10th Imam of the Shi'ites, Imam 'Ali al-Naqi, has it that beyond the belt formed by the Sphere of Spheres (i.e., Mount Qâf), God has a green Emerald whose color is reflected across the entire sky (note that for our optical perception it will rather tend to be azure, but in fact this is here not a matter of optical perception but an ontological significance of colors; the color green means the world closest to our own, whose color is black or "black light", nûr-i siyâh). This visio smaragdina is Malakût, the universe of the Soul of 70,000 worlds, the "Celestial Earth with its emerald cities" (Jâbalqâ, Jâbarsâ, Hûrqâlyâ). In some traditions

47 On the effects of music, cf. Iamblicus, Les Mystères d’égypte, edited and translated (fr) by E. Des Places, Paris 1966, pp. 308-110. These passages are in remarkable agreement with what Suhrawardi has also mentioned about the effects of listening to music, in Safîr-i Sîmurgh [1st part, Chapter II, pp. 27-28 of our translation] and at the end of R. al-Tîfûlîyat (Episode on the State of Infancy, above, page 135, note 2). Suhrawardi uses the words seemt sîlsîla (sound of a chain) here, which we have translated (fr) by "humming" because the Greek word rhoïzês "is the technical term for the sound of the stars in their orbit" (H. Lewy, Chaldæan Oracles, p. 19, note 46, on verse 10), and this what this is in reference to. It is also appropriate to keep in mind here the following lines from the life of Pythagoras [XV, 65] by Iamblicus, in reference to strophe 36 of Suhrawardi’s recital: "Pythagoras was the only one to notice the harmonious concord between the spheres and the stars that move in them, as he has explained himself, whose music expresses its full range of distinctiveness and variety of vibrations, rhoïzès, so much better than ours" (cited in Jamblique, ibid., p. 109, note 2).


49 A tradition also cited by Qâzî Sa‘îd Qummî in his commentary on the "hadith of the White Cloud" (I 25). It is similarly determined that the malakût of the Earth, the twelve veils of light typifying the universe constituted by the pleroma of the twelve Imâms, or the "Muhammadan Light" (Nûr muhammadî), travels for twelve millennia before manifesting itself on Earth. The "Spring of Life" is found in the first one, the spring of the walîyat.

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all of Mount Qâf is one entire emerald formation. In others it is the Rock (sakhra) forming the key to the celestial vault that is an Emerald whose color is reflected against the whole sky.

Thus in this episode of the "Recital of the Exile" (str. 37-38) all of mystical Sinai on whose peak the Great Rock stands is now the oratory of the Angel, the key to the vault of the world of the Spheres, the "heavenly gate" and at the same time the passage to the Beyond, to Nā-Kuṭā-abâd (the "land of Not-where"; the "Eighth Clime" is shown as the convex surface of the Sphere of Spheres; understandably it is only there "in a manner of speaking"). It is the reason why the pilgrim can now start the ascension. This is the border between the visible world and the suprasensible world and at this border (like at the entrance to the Chinvat Bridge in the post mortem of the soul in Mazdean dramaturgy) the meeting occurs between the terrestrial self and the Celestial Self, the "Angel". It is only possible to get there after bathing in the Spring of Life and that is why this ascension, like the anagogê of the "Chaldean Oracles", has the value of a sacrament of immortality. There are other examples of the visio smaragdina, notably in the visions of the aura or the aural light of Najmuddin Kubrâ.  

Strophe 39 describes the bewilderment before the beauty of this vision. The following strophes develop a dual theme: 1) Who is the Great Sage whose radiance is such that the foundations of heaven and earth tremble under the intensity of his epiphany? What is his ascendance and eo ipso what is that of the exile whom he welcomes? (str. 42-43). 2) The certainty of definitive salvation that he announces to the captive who is now temporarily liberated (str. 40-41).

1) Another of Suhrawardi's recitals, "The Sound of Gabriel's Wings", responds more explicitly to this question referred to earlier. This is the one who is the Angel of Knowledge and Revelation, the Holy Spirit whom the Koran identifies with the Angel Gabriel and the philosophers with the Active Intellect, whom the Ishrâqiyyûn call "the Angel of Humanity". Here the Angel also clearly identifies itself in alluding to the hierarchy of those who precede it. There are other Sinais beyond it: of Intelligence upon Intelligence, of Angel upon Angel, of Sinai upon Sinai, their ascendance leading to the One who has no Father or forebear and who is the Light of Lights. The words used in the epistle of "The Sound" referring to this hierarchy speak of it somewhat like an initiatory community (master and pupil, initiation, the investiture of the mantle), as if the khasrawâdî reciter of the "Recital of the Grail" wants us to think of the "celestial" origin of the Grail community. This hierarchy finally ends in the exiled youth, who is now successfully reunited with his "father", the Noûs pătrikos, the Tenth Angel of the hierarchy of Islamic Neoplatonism. Yet in his Psalm on the Perfect Nature Suhrawardi (above, chapter 3, § 5) greeted it as both his "father" and his "child". Who then is this Angel of the Gnostic?

2) This ascendance that the Angel and the one who is its "child" have in common is revealed in the second part of the discussion taking place on the summit of the mystical

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50 On the theme of the "Emerald Rock", cf. ibid., with the tradition attributed to the 10th Imâm: "God has created that belt of green emerald. From that green the sky becomes green. It is the veil. Beyond that veil God has 70,000 worlds with more inhabitants than the number of humans and other species. [Celestial Earth, p. 74, our book on The Man of Light, pp. 57 ff. [the cosmic North], p. 109 [the green light]].

51 Cf. Bruissemant... pp. 66 and 70 of our translation.

52 Cf. R. Merkellbach, op. cit., p. 319
Sinai, the Emerald Rock. Regarding the first part of it (str. 40-41), this illustrates very well the theme of certainty that we analyzed a while back (above, page 166). No doubt the exile is not yet definitively liberated, he is able to redescend at least temporarily into the "occidental" prison of Qayrawân. He will also understand that henceforth he can return anytime he wants to before that moment fixed for his definitive return. In other words, he is here and now saved and can only be saved since he has found his origin again (above, page 167), what he once was and can never cease being. That is what the Angel shows him when it shows him his ascendance. We may recall the passage of the hieratic ascension of the soul, the anagôgê, that was the principal mystery of the sacramental community for whom the Oracula chaldaïca was the Sacred Scripture (above, chapter 2, § 1). The ascension of mystical Sinai, preceded by the passage through the Spring of Life, has a similar meaning in the Suhrawardîan Recital of the Occidental Exile. Similarly in the "Recital of the White Cloud", the companions of the Imam who are his retinue in Malakât and to whom he is shown in his celestial form (malakûtî) now have attained perfect spiritual maturity.53

Postlude. The last two strophes form the epilogue. "This recital is about me" (or literally: It is I who am in the recital). There is hardly more to say, since the whole recital is in the first person. The final remarks confirm everything that was noted before about the tri-unity or Ohikâyât that is formed in the act of the mystical recital.

What was said above calls for a few additional remarks. On several occasions we have now pointed to the trace of an alchemical symbolism. It is remarkable that the note carried by the hoopoe from the land of Sheba (str. 11) agrees exactly with the invitation addressed to the philosophers by the "Stone of the Sages" in the "Book of the Twelve Chapters" attributed to Ostanes the Persian Magus: "This stone challenges you and you don't understand it; it calls you and you don't answer. Oh wonder! What deafness plugs your ears? What ecstasy chokes your hearts?"54 We don't mean to say that the "Recital of the Exile" is essentially and expressly a hermeneutic of the alchemical Work (see below, page 200.), but rather that there is a latent parallelism here, like the one that Shaykh Ahmad Ahsâ'î explicitly extricates between the formation of the "resurrection body" and the Alchemical Work.55 Indeed we also note what a famous Iranian Sufi master of the 14th century, Shâh Ni'matullah Wali Kermâni, annotates in his own hand on his own copy of a work by the alchemist Jîldâkî.56 In the 18th and 19th centuries the masters of the renaissance of Iranian Sufism, Nûr 'Alî-Shâh and Muzaîfâr 'Alî-Shâh, themselves expressed the phases of the mystery of the unio mystica in alchemical notations.57 We just made mention of the gnosis of the Shaikhî school. Thus there is a persistent Iranian tradition, since the time when Zosimus the alchemist spoke of "that Stone that is no stone... that no one can give except God Himself!", a tradition of the fundamental secret of alchemy "as identical to that of the most hidden mystery of the religion of Mithra".58 In Iranian Shi'ism the tradition is connected with Imam Ja'Tar al-Sâdîq, posing in his role of initiator by the corpus of the works of Jâbir ibn Hayyân.59

Understandably the perception of this correspondence between the alchemical Work and mystical transmutation is a function of the "Active Imagination", in as much as it is Imagination in the true sense, capable of producing a world in the same manner as all of creation is part of the Divine Imagination (as meant by an Ibn 'Arabi, a Boehme or a Novalis). This Imaginatio vera is the organ for penetration into the imaginal world, because it is the world where these relationships are verified, where "one world is symbolized by another". It is

53 Hadîth of the White Cloud", § 29.
55 See the text translated in our book Celestial Earth, p 397.
56 Ms. Teheran, Ma'jlis, Tabataba'i Foundation., 1105.
59 Cf. our study on Le Livre du Glorieux de Jâbir ibn Hayyân (Eranos-Jahrbuch XVIII, 1950)
astrum in homine itself, a subtle body that is an organ and the product of its own theurgy at the same time. The birth of the spiritual psychic body is also the birth of spiritual man (see the reference in str. 36). The organ and the world that belongs to it are represented here by the hoopoe and the land of Sheba or Yemen, and ultimately by the Emerald Rock. The hierurgical process is an active, prolonged and creative meditation that finally takes on the form of a dialogue with the alter ego (colloquium internum) on the "Sinai of one’s being"; its fruit can be designated as the sublimation of the volatilized Stone, "the ascension of Sinai".

One additional striking illustration. In the mass of still unpublished Arabic and Persian alchemical material we happened to find a very abstruse treatise attributed to the famous mystic al-Hallâj some twenty years ago, luckily appended by a commentary attributed to Ghazâlî, entitled "The Unveiling of the mystery of the Gold Flakes". The two attributions are doubtful, but that does not change anything to the contents of the treatises and that is what we are interested in here. In the first part of the work and in the same order, there are some of the same symbols as occur in the "Recital of the Exile". We are told how the mystical Stone is separated from the impure Earth, that is Noah’s son swallowed up by the Flood (cf. strophe 16). The phases of the alchemical Work (nigredo, albedo, rubedo) are given in the same order as in the Suhrawardîan recital: the puncture of the vessel, the passage through the island of Gôg and Mâgôg, the work of the artisans with the Fire, and the same Koranic reference (18:98) as the one given in strophe 23 of the "Recital of the Exile". Zûl-Qarnayn ("the one with the horns", a traditional surname for Alexander) is here the body treated by the alchemical master: one of his "horns" is white, the Lunar Elixir, and the other is red, the Solar Elixir. The text reads: "When you know this with certainty, then you know the resurrection from the dead." Four mountains must be crossed: those of Sûd and Nûn (two Arabic characters that are "code" for the Elements), then Mount Qâf and thereafter Mount Sinai. There is also question of the land of the Queen of Sheba as the Holy Land, where the seed of the "subtle body" of the Resurrection grows. These references are all important to understand the various resonances, especially the alchemical ones, of the symbolism used by Suhrawardi.

We will merely point out the anthropological characteristics of the second part of the alchemical work by Hallâj, or the pseudo-Hallâj. There is only one and the same mystery and that is the one of Anthropos, in the sense that the humano-divine world from the summit of Divine Unity to the sublunar world of elements is at every level symbolized by the alchemical world of the Stone. There is a minor human reality (Īnsâniyat sughrâ) and a major human reality (Īnsâniyat kubrâ). The minor human reality is the aptitude to gradually receive gnosis. The major human reality has two degrees: 1) One degree is the minor divinity (Ilâhiyat sughrâ), the first theomorphic participation, the aptitude to receive all of the Divine Names, that alchemically is the moment of the rupture of the vessel, the dissolution by Water and Fire, when the Stone becomes capable of receiving the effusion of the Lunar Elixir. 2) The second degree proclaims the ability to receive the Solar Elixir, that is the alchemical designation of divinity or major divinity (Ilâhiyat kubrâ). Then all the hierosophic and hierurgical treasures are made available to the double Adam (minor and major)\(^1\) the treasures of the Light of Lights, because "the Lunar Elixir is Light and the Solar Elixir is Light upon Light". The mystery of the Resurrection says of the alchemical transmutation that it is essentially something eschatological ("Tu es ejus minera et de te extrahitur," says Rosarium philosophorum about the Stone). The personal eschatology is also the encounter with the Angel on top of Sinai, as well as the face to face encounter with the "Celestial Self". That is also why the Prologue of the "Recital of the Exile" contains eschatological references, as we have pointed out.

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\(^{60}\)Kashf asrâr al-shodîr, Teheran, Jâvâd Kamâlian Collection, majmû‘a, 5, fol. 78-92.

\(^{61}\)The words used are al-ma‘ârif al-qodsîya wa taqaddûr al-‘ilm al-ilâhî.

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Having clarified matters as much as possible, we now present the translation (fr) of the "Recital of the Occidental Exile", as the preceding recital without any footnotes. As Suhrawardî intended it, this leaves the reader of this kind of a recital with something to do...

**Translation of the Recital of Occidental Exile**

*(Prelude).* When I became familiar with the "Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân" I found it lacking in that certain illumination specific to the supreme experience of the Great Overwhelming (79:34), despite the admirable phrases and the profound suggestions that are contained in it. This experience is guarded like a treasure in the Holy Scriptures, confided in trust to the symbols of the sages and hidden in the "Recital of Salâmân and Absâl", also written by the author of the "Recital of Hayy Ibn Yaqzân" (Avicenna). This is the Secret confirmed by the spiritual stations of the Sufis and of those who possess visionary intuition. No reference is made to it in the "Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân" except at the very end where it says: "Sometimes certain solitaries among men migrate towards Him..." Then I wanted to tell of a few things myself, in the form of a recital that I have called the "Recital of Occidental Exile", dedicated to certain of our noble brethren. As for what is of my own design, I offer this to God.

**I**

1. *Beginning of the Recital.* Once upon a time, my brother 'Asim and I undertook a journey to the land of the Occident, being from the land across the river, to hunt certain shore birds from the Green Sea.

2. Suddenly we came upon "the city whose inhabitants are oppressors" (4:77), I mean the city of Qayrawân.

3. The inhabitants noticed our sudden arrival and gathered that we were the children of a Shaykh known as al-Hâdi ibn al-Khayr the Yemenite.

4. They surrounded us, tied us up in chains and a yoke of iron, and threw us as prisoners into an infinitely deep pit.

5. A high castle fortified with many towers stood over the empty pit into which we had been thrown.

6. We were told: "You commit no offense if you climb up to the castle when night falls and you have no clothes on. But at daybreak you absolutely must return to the bottom of the pit."

7. In the bottom of the pit there certainly was "darkness upon darkness" (24:40). When we extended our hands we could scarcely see them.

8. But during the hours of night we climbed up to the castle that stood over the immensity of space and we looked in through one of its windows. Often doves came to us from the forests of Yemen and told us how things were in that forbidden region. Sometimes a bright light from Yemen visited us, whose bright flash from the "right side" (28:30), from the "oriental" side, told us about the family living in the Najd. A breeze filled with the aromatic scent of the *arâk* awakened in us ecstasy after ecstasy. Then we gasped from desire and nostalgia for our homeland.

9. Thus we climbed up at night and got back down during the day. Then, one night when the moon was full, we saw a hoopoe (27:20), it came through the window and greeted us. In its beak there was a message that came "from a blessed spot on the right side of the valley, from inside a bush" (28:30).
10. It said to us: "I have seen (27:20) the means of your delivery and bring both of you 'truthful news from the Kingdom of Sheba' (27:22). All is explained in this message from your father."

11. We took cognizance of the message. This is what it said: "You are being addressed by al-Hādi your father. In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We long for you, but you feel no nostalgia. We call you, but you don't start your journey. We give you signs, but you don't understand them".

12. Then the writer gave me directions in the message, like this: "You there, if you want to save yourself at the same time as your brother, don't wait with resuming your journey. Grab a hold of our cable, that is, of (the nodes of) the Dragon of the Heaven of the Moon over the spiritual world that rules the ends of the ecliptic."

13. When you have arrived in the "valley of the ants" (27:18) shake the hem of your robe and say: "Glory be to God who has brought me back to life after having cut my body to pieces." (2:244 and 261) "To Him we shall return who is our Resurrection." (67:15) Then be finished with your relatives.

14. Be no longer concerned with your wife, "because she is among those who stay behind." (15:60 and 29:31) "Go where you are commanded," (15:62) "for these people will be utterly destroyed by tomorrow morning." (15:66) Get into the boat and say: "In the Name of God, may it sail and arrive at a port!" (11:43)

II

15. Everything that would happen en route was explained in the letter. The hoopoe went ahead and the sun was just above our heads when we arrived at the edge of darkness. We took our places in the vessel and it carried us "to the wilderness in the mountains." (11:44) Our plan was to climb mount Sinai and then to visit the oratory of our father.

16. Then "the floods rose" separating me from my brother and "he was among those who were swallowed up." (11:45)

17. Then I understood that the time of the occurrence of the threat that was the concern of my people was the morning. "Isn't morning near?" (11:83)

18. I knew that "the city that surrenders itself to wickedness" (21:74) will be turned upside down "from top to bottom" (11:84) and that it would rain "bricks of clay upon them." (11:84)

19. When we came to the place where the floods dashed against each other and the waves rolled, I took the nurse who had nursed me and threw her into the sea.

20. But we traveled on a ship "made of planks and nails." (54:13) Thus we voluntarily damaged it (18:78) in the belief that there was a king behind us who "took every ship by force." (18:78)

21. And the "laden ship" (the ark, 26:119) carried us past the island of Gôg and Mâgôg (18:93 ff.) on the left side of mount al-Jûdî (11:46).

22. However, there were artisans with me who worked for me and I had at my disposition the source of molten copper. I told the artisans: "Blow on the iron until it becomes like fire!" (that I may throw the molten copper on it, 18:95). Next I erected a barricade so that I was separated from Gôg and Mâgôg (18:94).

23. Then I truly realized that "the promise of your Lord is true" (18:98).

24. During the journey I saw the pits of 'Ad and Thamûd; I crossed the region and "it was desolate and in ruins" (2:261 and 22:44).

25. Then I took the two burdens and the spheres and put them and the artisans in a bottle that I had made into a round shape, with lines like circles on it.

26. I cut off the currents of living water from the realm of the heavens.
27. When the flow of water was cut off to the mill, the building collapsed and the air supply disappeared.

28. I flung the Sphere of Spheres against the heavens so that it pulverized the sun moon and stars.

29. Then I escaped from the fourteen coffins and the ten tombs where the shadow of God comes to life again, the kind that is "drawn little by little" (25:48) to the hieratic world after "the sun has been given as a guide" (25:47).

30. I found God's way. Then I understood: "This is my Path and it is straight." (6:154)

31. During the night my sister "was overtaken by the divine scourge." (12:107) she remained wrapped in darkness for a small part of the night and from fever and nightmares fell into a state of complete collapse.

32. I saw a lamp with oil in it; a light shot out of it into the different parts of the house. There even the lamp niche was set on fire and the inhabitants were illuminated from the effect of the light of the sun rising above them.

33. I placed the lamp in the mouth of the Dragon that lived in the castle of the water wheel; under it was a certain Red Sea; above it were stars of whom no one knew the places of irradiation except their Creator and "those who have a lot of experience of the Knowledge." (3:5)

34. I noticed that both Leo and Taurus had disappeared; Sagittarius and Cancer were both [involvés] involuted in the folding caused by the rotation of the Sphere of Spheres. Libra stayed in equilibrium when the Star of Yemen (Suhail, Canopus) rose from behind some slender clouds, composed by what the cobweb of the angles of the elementary World drew in the world of generation and dissolution.

35. There was still a sheep with us; we left it in the desert where it perished from the trembling of the earth while lightening fell upon it.

36. Then, when the entire distance had been traveled and the road had come to an end, while the "water welled out from the furnace" (al-tanner, athamor, 11:42 and 23:27) in a conical shape (of the heart), I saw the celestial bodies; I united myself with them and heard their music and their melodies. I was initiated into their recital; their sounds struck my ears like that of a bell-like sound produced by a chain drawn over hard rock. My muscles were at the point of tearing, my joints felt like breaking, so vivid was the pleasure that I experienced. This did not cease happening in me until the white cloud went away by dissipating and the membrane was broken.

III

37. I left the caverns and the caves and was finished with the vestibules: I went straight to the Spring of Life. Then I saw the Great Rock at the summit of a mountain that looked like the Sublime Mountain. I asked the fishes that were frolicking in the Spring of Life, enjoying the quiet and the gentleness of the shade of the Lofty Peak. "What is that high mountain," I asked, "and what is that Great Rock?"

38. Then one of the fishes "chose a certain current for its way in the sea." (18:60) It told me: "That is what you so ardently desire; that mountain is Mount Sinai and that Rock is the oratory of your father." "But who are these fishes?" I asked. "These are your equals. You are sons of the same father. They have passed a test similar to yours. They are your brothers."

39. When I heard that answer and experienced the truth, I embraced them. I rejoiced in seeing them like they rejoiced in seeing me. Thereafter I ascended the mountain. Behold, I saw our father as a Great Sage, so great that Heaven and Earth were about to split asunder from the epiphany of his Light. I stayed amazed, stupefied. I came close to him and behold,
like a leader he greeted me. I bowed to the ground before him and was left speechless in the Light that radiated from him.

40. I cried for a moment when I lamented to him about Qayrawân’s prison. He told me: "Have courage! You are saved now! It is still absolutely necessary that you return to the occidental prison because the fetters have not yet completely unclothed you". When I heard those words my reason left me. I wept and cried like one who is at the verge of dying and I called out to him.

41. He said to me: "It is unavoidable that you return there for the moment. However, I have two good things to tell you. First, once returned to your prison, it will be possible for you to return again to us here and easily climb up to our paradise, whenever you want to. Secondly, you will be totally free; you will be joined to us and leave the Occidental land behind you completely and forever."

42. His words filled me with joy again. He also said: "Know that this mountain is Mount Sinai (23:30, Tûr Saynâ'); but above this mountain there is another one: The Sinai (95:2, Tûr Sînîna), of the One who is my Father and your Grandfather, to whom I am related just like you are to me.

43. "We have still other ancestors and our ascendance finally ends at a King who is the Supreme Forebear, who Himself has no ancestors and no father. We are His servants; we owe Him our Light and we borrow our Fire from His Fire. He possesses a beauty more imposing than any other beauty, the most sublime majesty and the most subjugating Light. He is beyond all Beyond. He is the Light of Light, beyond Light and Eternity for all eternity. He is the Epiphany for all things and "all things perish except His Face." (28:88)

44. Postlude. This recital is about me, because I have lived through a disaster. From the higher space I fell into the abyss of hell, among people who are not believers; I am a prisoner in the land of the Occident. Nevertheless I keep feeling a certain sweetness that is impossible to describe. I am sobbing, I am imploring, I am gasping with regret about this separation. This passing stand-off was one of the dreams that quickly faded.

45. From the prison of Nature and the impediment of Matter save me, oh my God! "And say: Praise be to God, who shall soon show you His Signs so you shall know them, and your Lord is not unmindful of all that you do." (27:93) "Say: Glory to God! But most of them do not understand." (31:25)

The Gnostic at the Meeting with the Angel

I. Who is the Personal Angel? Anyone who has read, indeed anyone who has meditated attentively upon this recital by Suhrawardi, will increasingly have found and identified all the themes that we noted at the beginning of this chapter as belonging to the "history of the Gnostic". The theme of the self implicated as an "objective reality" in the knowledge of the self, in the act of the subject knowing itself, found its final resolution (in the musical sense of this word) in the encounter with the Angel on mystical Sinai. Stated more precisely, from that moment on the self, in so far as it is our authentic and essential self, appears to us as an "I" in the second person, as an alter ego, so real that the terrestrial self who is its reflection and its exiled image, enters into a dialogue with it. Just like the Angel is the "child" of the one who precedes it so the statements of the Angel are its testimony to its "child", who has completed the passage through the Spring of Life and the stages of the necessary quest that were shown in Suhrawardi’s recital. This quest for a knowledge of the Self is a quest for the knowledge that this Self is the Gnostic’s eternal archetype, that it reveals his origin to him and what he was before being manifested, projected and exiled into this world, that it must be rediscovered again and that he must rejoin himself to it. The most characteristic terms that identify it in Islamic Gnosis in general are the equivalents of other concise terms used
for the Angel: essential, real man (al-insân al-haqîqî = ho ontôs anthrôpos), perfect man
(al-insân al-kâmil = anthrôpos teleios), Perfect Nature, Light-Self, Man of Light (shâkhs
nârâni), etc. We have already noted the very close affinity between the Form of Light that
unites itself with the Ismailian initiate and the Light-self of Manichean Gnosis. Briefly,
what we are led back to through multiple aspects and variations, is a notion of the Angel
that is very close to the angelos of Valentinian Gnosis, the Angel "of whom we are a part",
just as the Angel on mount Sinai, in the "Recital of the Exile", says that the Gnostic is
its child, and just as it itself belongs to the Angel who precedes it. In so far as it is the
Gnostic’s celestial counterpart, it expresses integral being, fullness of being, the pleroma.

A commentary amplifying the cycle of all the Suhrawardîan recitals could be centered
around such a theme. Precisely at this point do the variations on this theme in Suhrawardi’s
work form a final difficulty that cannot be glossed over. Without yet another examination
we would leave this theme of the Angel in ishrâqi Gnosis incomplete. This difficulty can
be stated as follows. A few pages back (chapter 3, § 5) we read that most beautiful poem
that Suhrawardi dedicated to his "Perfect Nature", whom he greets as his personal Angel
and whom he addresses on the level of the spiritual world at the same time as his "father"
and his "child". This reminds us of the qualifications of Fâtima, the Prophet’s daughter,
greeted as "mother of her father" (Umm abi-hâ). Similarly, the soul of the Gnostic will
also be the "mother" of the one who in the spiritual reality of Light is its "child". On
the other hand, we have also just read about the initiation that the exile received from
the encounter of the Angel on mount Sinai. We have discovered who this Angel is. The
Gnostic designates it here as his "father", but not as being at the same time also its "child".
Suhrawardi’s commentators also faced this problem and did not resolve it. Dawwânî tends
to identify the angel Gabriel, who is the Angel of the human species (Rabb al-nû’), with the
Perfect Nature from the vision of Hermes and Suhrawardi’s Psalm, while his pupil Maybudî
inversely elevates the Perfect Nature to the rank of an Angel-archetype in person. Frankly
they don’t even seem to question it, bringing about this convergence through an inverse
progression and we will see why this is so. We are not dealing here with a dilemma in terms
of logical concepts and dialectical ponderousness ought to be avoided. At the same time
the question cannot be sidestepped: must the Gnostic’s Perfect Nature and the Angel of
Humanity be separated? If the personal Angel is manifested under the characteristics of
the Perfect Nature, then how can it be the Perfect Nature, who is the personal Angel through
its relationship with the individual soul, on the one hand, and on the other hand, also be
the Angel of mount Sinai and the Angel of Humanity? This amounts to asking: what is the
relationship between the dyad created by the Perfect Nature and the terrestrial self, whose
Angel it is, and the Angel-archetype of mankind or the human reality?

It does seem that Suhrawardi himself offers us the pieces of the answer. When we examine
passages where he explains the nature of the Angel Gabriel as the Angel of Humanity,
passages which have a Hermetist imprint on them, and similar passages of the Hermetist
tradition about the Perfect Nature, then we notice the formation of a coherent concept.
After listening attentively to "the sound of Gabriel’s wings", in the initiatory recital by the
same name, one notices how Suhrawardi guides the unfolding of Avicennan angelology into
its ishrâqi shape and in so doing extracts the same symbol of bi-unity (Gabriel’s two wings)
from it, formed by the Perfect Nature as Light-self and the soul or the darkened terrestrial
self. Their bi-unity is the "icon" of the Angel-archetype; this is the Angel of their bi-unity,
because from its right and left wings proceed respectively Noûs and Psyche, ‘aql and nafs,
Perfect Nature and terrestrial soul; it is the Angel of their syzygy, of their bi-unity, as the
Perfect Nature is the Angel of the terrestrial self (remember Esfandyâr’s dying vision here:
the two wings of Simurgh).

63 Cf. our Trilogie ismaélienne, general index s.v. forme de lumière.
So when we speak here of "the Angel" then this is no longer a simple representation of a tutelary angel but of the Gnostic notion of a "celestial Self" pertaining to the world of the Angel. Better said yet: the way in which Suhrawardi expresses himself confirms the fact that the tutelary angel is derived from the representation of a celestial Double.\(^{64}\) It can be stated as follows: "The Angel-spirit has fallen and has been imprisoned. It is this Angel who is man's soul. There is therefore a divine element inside humans and another one outside of them. In the beginning they formed one unity that has since become separated by the fall. Because of this original unity, one part can be designated by the other."\(^{65}\) Precisely because the Perfect Nature is at once "father" and "child", it so happens that Hermes is finally called the Perfect Nature himself. The conjunction of Avicennan angelological tradition and Suhrawardian Hermetist tradition aims at a comprehension of this convertible relationship. These passages reunite all the elements of an anthropology that has angelology as its source and foundation; at a deeper level it has to do with a structure of being, with an ontology, that is the result of such a dyadic structure that we rediscover in all related Gnooses; finally we point out its presence in Mandeism, Mazdaism and Manicheism.

II. The Perfect Nature as Hermetist notion of the Personal Angel. The angelology in the recital of the "Sound" presents three hierarchies that also occur in Avicennan angelology, but the Shaykh al-Ishâq prefers to use the word Kalimât, "Utterance", "Word" (the Greek Logoi).\(^{66}\) There are the Major or Perfect Words; these are the pure Cherubinic Intelligences (Angeli intellectuales), of whom Gabriel is the tenth; this is the Holy Spirit who was sent to Mary, the Angel of the Revelation that was communicated to the prophets and whom the philosophers know as their Active Intellect; lastly, this is the Angel whom the mystic meets on mount Sinai. Then there are Intermediary Words; this is the hierarchy of the movers of the Spheres (Angeli caelestes). Finally there are the Minor Words, the Light-Souls. As it is said: "I have created from my Light those who burn with desire." This Light is the Holy Spirit, the Archangel Gabriel.

Now this Archangel has been invested with two wings (among others): the right wing consists of pure Light, and the left wing is not made of any Ahrimanian darkness, but there is a "reddish hue" in it, like the one that the moon has during certain phases (and this reminds us again of the explanation of the "crimson" Archangel, referring to the reddish reflection of twilight). We are told that the Archangel has indeed a dual aspect, two intelligible "dimensions": in respect to its act of existence through its Principle, its existence is necessary without any part of non-being. That is what the right wing of pure Light means. Regarding its essence, its quiddity, what it is in itself, it is contingent upon and has some virtual non-being; that is what the left wing means, a reddish obscurity. In Avicenna each Archangel exhibits a triple "dimensionality", according to a triple act of contemplation (contemplation of its Principle, necessary being from its Principle and being that is purely possible in itself), whence proceed respectively a new Intelligence, a Soul and a Heaven of subtle matter.\(^{67}\)

Here only two "dimensions" are retained, as they exist in the Archangel Gabriel, the tenth in the hierarchy of perfect Words. These dimensions exist also in the Intelligences that precede it (in its encounter with the visionary, the Angel of Sinai refers to these as occupying other Sinai beyond this one). These are the "two dimensions" from which each new Intelligence ('aql) proceeds with a new Soul (nafs), respectively Noûs and Psyche. When this procession arrives at the level of the Tenth Archangel, it breaks up so to say into a multiplicity, that of human intelligences and souls. Suhrawardi's visionary perception accentuates the dramatic and soteriological aspects of this angelology. The Angel Gabriel as the angel-archetype of humanity typifies with its "two wings" the dyadic structure of


\(^{65}\)Hans Söderberg, ibid., pp. 128-129 and 129 note 1.

\(^{66}\)Cf. Bruissement..., pp. 76-81.

\(^{67}\)Cf. our Avicenna, pp. 60 ff.
the human being, at least that of the Gnostic, a dyad whose adventure has separated its members. The Noûs, the Perfect Nature, proceeds from its right wing. The soul which descends into and becomes emersed into the inferior world proceeds from its left wing. The "celestial Jewel" of which Manichean Gnosis speaks and the "terrestrial jewel" are best typified by these two twin wings, as is the relationship between this fallen angel and its celestial counterpart, who is its messenger and savior, whom its "terrestrial jewel" knows or recognizes again when it knows itself.

One could speak here of a "sophianic couple" since the Angel of the Active Intellect is greeted by some of the "fedeli d'amore" as *Madonna Intelligenza* (celestial Sophia) and since the image thus presented by the Angel is the reconstituted unity of the sophianic couple. Its two wings are the image, the "icon", of the couple Noûs-Psyche, just as this couple is its image. There are as many images of Gabriel as there are of the Noûs-Psyche couple. Even so, the *imaginai vision* introduces the dramaturgical element. To reconstitute this couple is to do away with that "reddish shadow" that tarnishes the left wing, because each time the exiled self rediscovers its Perfect Nature, it rediscovers its Light-being that was its origin. The two wings are therefore two wings of Light, irradiating to and reflecting one another. Thus ends the "return of the Angel" of which Ismailian dramaturgy has formulated the origin and finality with such profundity.68

All of this, although stated in very summary fashion, allows us to grasp how *ishrâq* Gnosis can put into place a schema of Avicennan origin and connect it with an entirely different Gnostic tradition, that of Hermetism, in order to formulate what it has to say. We will already note such a transition in a philosopher who preceded Suhrawardi, Abû'l-Barakât Baghdâdi (d. about 560/1164), and who meditated especially on the theme of the Active Intellect. Why is there only one for all of humanity, as was professed by the Avicennan philosophers (as well as by the Averroeists, although they mean it entirely different)? The answer will depend on whether one holds that human souls are all identical regarding species and quiddity, or whether each one differs specifically from the other, or finally whether they are grouped into spiritual families that form as many different species. In the last two cases one has to admit a plurality of Active Intelligences. Abû'l-Barakât writes:

> That is why the ancient sages [...], initiated into things that the sensory faculties do not perceive, had it that for each individual soul, or perhaps for several together that have the same nature and affinity, there is a being from the spiritual world who assumes a solicitude and a special tenderness towards it or them during their entire life; it is this being who initiates them into knowledge, protects them, guides them, defends and comforts them and brings them to triumph. This being is the one whom they called the Perfect Nature. It is this friend, defender and protector who in theological language is called the *Angel*.

Then there is this other statement that is so charged with spiritual meaning:

> Certain souls learn only from human teachers, but there are others who learn only from invisible guides, who are known by them alone.69

This remarkable passage leads us immediately to the transition: the Active Intellect of the philosophers becomes the Personal Angel of the Gnostic and this Angel is the one

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68Cf. our *Trilogie ismaélienne*, general index s.v. "Intelligence (la III e), devenue la X e".
Hermetism calls Perfect Nature (al-Tibāʿ al-tamm). This is precisely what happened in
Suhrawardi’s mental development and left its imprint on all of his spirituality. Instead of
a collective and anonymous relationship between humans and the Active Intellect, unique
to each one of them, the Perfect Nature determines the individualization of the relationship
between the Gnostic and the Angel; their bi-unity constitutes their being in plenitude, their
very own pleroma. From this point of view Suhrawardi’s hermetist texts and those of
the Islamic Hermetist tradition mutually corroborate each other.

We are not only thinking here of those passages where Suhrawardi exalts Hermes to
the rank of "Father of all Sages", but also of those where Hermes appears as the hero of
echatological ecstasy, to whom the secret of the Perfect Nature is revealed. Nearly every
one of these texts has been cited during the course of this book. Let us go over them again:
first there is the invocation of that vision when Hermes asks that mysterious and beautiful
Light-being who has appeared to him: "Who are you?" "I am your Perfect Nature," is the
answer.70 This passage has been quoted by every one of the Ishråiqūn. Next, there is the
recital of Hermes’s ecstasy, at night, in the Temple of Light (chapter 2, § 3 and chapter 4, §
2), where we noted a certain similarity with the "Recital of the Exile": the "midnight sun"
(the full day of the spiritual Imagination during the night of the senses) and the collapse of
"the city of oppressors". Hermes cries out: "Save me, you who are my father" and he hears
the answer: "Hold fast to the cable of the ray of Light and climb up to the battlements of the
Throne." He climbs up and behold, under his feet there is an Earth and (over his head) there
is a Heaven (the Heaven and Earth of Malakūt).71 We have quoted that beautiful psalm in
its entirety before, where Suhrawardi invokes his Perfect Nature as both his "father" and
his "child" (above, chapter 3, § 5). Elsewhere in the "Psalm of the Great Testament", as of
yet unpublished, he cries out: "I have borrowed the fire from the meteors and have set fire
to the coast. I have put the demons to flight, so that they could not see me climb up to the
cohorts of the Light. I called upon my Father, saying: 'Oh Angel of the perfect theurgy!
You who are so close to God, You that most holy One! Take me unto yourself, so that
my being may expand with a divine splendor!'" After a kind of mystical pilgrimage that
he visits the Temples of the Invisible in height upon height in, he concludes: "Such is the
divine command that the hierogram of Hermes has been engraved with."72

Let us now group together four Arabic texts of the Hermetist tradition, where mention is
made of the Perfect Nature. The first two witnesses are attributed to Hermes in person and
to Socrates. The next two are invocations. All of these passages occur in a famous theurgic
work known by the Latin name of Picatrix (a deformation of the name of Hippocrates)
and that is entitled Ghāyat al-Hakîm (The End of the Sage) in the original Arabic; it has
been unduly attributed to a Spanish scholar and mathematician Abîl-Qâsim Maslama de
Madrid (Magritî) who lived in the 4th/10th century. There is a long quotation in it from
a book named al- Istamâkhîs, where Aristotle is reputed to waste his advise on Alexander
and instruct him on how to invoke the Perfect Nature and pray it to appear. The passage
mentions in detail the famous vision to which the Ishråiqūn untiringly referred, following
Suhrawardi. One is given to understand that the Perfect Nature is the "secret hidden in
philosophy itself" and that the philosophers believed it only possible to show it to those
of their disciples who had reached a certain degree of wisdom. It is a spiritual entity
(rûhāniya) in whom the philosophers participate to varying degrees and whom they have
called by various names (so deformed by Arabic writing that no meaningful identification is
possible).

This is what Hermes is reported to have said: "When I wanted to shed light on

71 Tahshâhât, § 83, ibid., p. 108.
the science of mystery and the meaning of Creation, I withdrew into a vault where it was very dark and windy. I couldn't see anything because of the darkness and could not keep my lamp burning because of the strong wind. Then someone who looked very beautiful came to me while I was sleeping. He said to me: 'Take your lamp and put it under a glass to protect it from the wind, then it will cast its light despite of it. Then enter the subterranean chamber. Scoop out its center and dig up a certain therugic image, made according to the rules of Art. When you have dug up this image the winds will cease. Then dig in the four corners: you will bring to light the mysteries of Creation, the causes of Nature and the origin of everything and what it means.' Then I asked him: 'But who are you?' He said to me: 'I am your Perfect Nature. If you want to see me, call me by my name.'"\textsuperscript{73}

This recital that was also appropriated by Balinâs (Apollonius of Tyana) in an Arabic work attributed to him,\textsuperscript{74} presents us with all the characteristic themes of a visionary initiation: descent into the depths of an obscure psyche, brightness of a consciousness-light, sufficient to "break the fixation", secrets of Creation discovered at the roots of the very same projections of the soul that configure its own universe, all of this occurring under the inspiration of the Noûs, i.e., the Perfect Nature or the Angel. Regarding the typology of these recitals (the discovery of a book of revelation in a subterranean chamber or a vision accompanied by oral initiation),\textsuperscript{75} one is reminded of the introduction to Suhrawardî’s recitals, as well as of the preface to "Ptolemaids" in the Corpus hermeticum, of the "Shepherd of Hermas" and of Zoroaster's initiation to Agathos daimôn, mentioned in a scholium in Alcibiades I,\textsuperscript{76} and finally of the vision of Kay Khurraw as commented upon by Suhrwardi. The Noûs, the Angel or Perfect Nature, awakens in the knowing soul a succession of images (possibly those of a spiritual journey), where the soul, like Hermes put the candle under a glass, now contemplates the form-archetype that was there from the very beginning.

That the Angel or the Perfect Nature has this power and such a prerogative, is indeed shown by a second witness, this time attributed to Socrates, who in turn calls upon the testimony of Hermes, as follows:

It is said that the wise Socrates said the following: "The Perfect Nature is called the sun of the philosopher, his root and his bough. Hermes was asked: 'When does one arrive at the knowledge of wisdom?' (Variations: How does one participate in it? How does one make it descend down to here?) He answered: 'Through the Perfect Nature.' He was asked: 'What is the root of wisdom?' He answered: 'The Perfect Nature.' So then he was asked: 'What then is this Perfect Nature?' He answered: 'It is the spiritual (or celestial) entity (the Angel, rûhâniya) of the philosopher, the one who is conjoined to his star, the one who governs him and opens the ways of wisdom to him, who teaches him what is difficult, reveals what is just and suggests what the keys are to the gates, during sleep and while awake.' \textsuperscript{77}"


\textsuperscript{74}Cf. Julius Ruska, Tabula Smaragdina, Heidelberg 1926, pp. 132 ff.

\textsuperscript{75}Cf. R. Reitzenstein und H. H. Schaeder, Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland, p. 113.

\textsuperscript{76}Cited in A. V. W. Jackson, Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran, New York 1938, Appendix V, p. 231.

\textsuperscript{77}Pseudo-Magrîtî, op.cit., Arabic text, p. 194; German translation, p. 205. The attribute given to the
It will be superfluous to note that any interpretation of the Perfect Nature that reduces it to either an allegory or a metaphor will make utter nonsense of it. Its subtle personality, its beauty and light make it a very precise apparition. Above all, one does not call upon something with such fervor, regard it as such a recognized prerogative and look upon it as such a highly regarded revelation if it is experienced as an allegory. The two texts cited here are an appropriate framework for those of Suhrawardi. We rediscover the fervor shown by the Shaykh al-Ishrāq in his psalm on the Perfect Nature, in the conversation between Hermes and the Perfect Nature as told by the Arabic work of the Pseudo-Magrītī, especially in the part where the Perfect Nature itself teaches Hermes how to pray to it and invoke it. Far from being some theoretical notion, we note that the piety towards the Angel develops itself into a liturgy whose recurrence (at least twice yearly) assures its perpetual presence. It is in a real way the intimate celebration of an entirely personal religion with its very own ceremonies in the secret of an individual oratory (preparation of mystical nourishment followed by a final communion). Here is the central part of such a liturgy, addressing itself to the four Natures, visualized as hypostases of the Perfect Nature (likewise to the four Archangels of the cosmic Throne):

I call upon Thee, O Powers and sublime spiritual Angels, you who are the wisdom of sages, the sagacity of seers and the knowledge of the wise. Hearken to me, appear to me, bring me near to your magisterium, guide me with your wisdom and protect me with your powers. Make me understand that I do not understand, realize that I do not realize and see that I do not see. Turn away from me the dangers that lurk in the ignorance, the forgetfulness and the hardness of my heart, in order to have me attain to the ranks of the ancient sages, in whose hearts wisdom, insight, vigilance, discernment and comprehension made their dwelling. May Thou also live in my heart, and never, never separate Thyself from me!

Further down, in the chapter dedicated to the exposition of the astral liturgy practiced by the Sabians of Harran, we find a second invocation. In peculiar and characteristic fashion it addresses itself this time to Hermes, in order to request from him the gift of the energy of one’s own Perfect Nature, word for word repeating in this fashion a part of the invocation, where the Perfect Nature taught Hermes how to address himself to it. Here is that invocation addressing itself to Hermes:

Thou art so hidden that Thy nature is unknown, so subtle that Thou cannot be defined by any qualification, but... in men Thou art masculine and in women Thou art feminine, in the light of day Thou hast the nature of day and in the nocturnal darkness Thou hast the nature of Night. Thou competes with all their natures and Thou makes Thyself like them in their very modality of being. That is how Thou art. I invoke Thee in all Thy names: in Arabic, O 'Otāred! In Persian: O Tīr! In Romainc: O Hārūs! In Greek: O Hermes! In Indian: O Buddha! Send me the energy of Thy spiritual entity (i.e., of Thy Perfect Nature), that what I do may be fortified through it, who may guide me and facilitate the research of all that is known. Through Harakiel, the Angel who is in charge of Thy domain, hearken to my prayers, listen to my appeal...

Perfect Nature of "root and bough of the philosopher" corresponds perfectly to the one given it by Suhrawardi in the psalm where he greets it as being at once, spiritually speaking, his "father" and his "child", cf. above, chapter 3, § 5 and page 89, note 220.

78Ibid., Arabic text, pp. 189-190; German translation, pp. 200-201.
79On the name of this Angel, cf. Le Livre d’Hénoch, transl. [fr.] F. Martin, 1st part, XX, 6: Saraqiel, Araqiel, Sariel.
Then there appear formulas that correspond word for word with those that we found previously, but this time not in the plural but in the singular:

May Thou guide me through Thy wisdom and protect me through Thy power, make me understand what I [...]. Dwell in my heart through an energy emanating from Thy noble spiritual entity (i.e., from Thy Perfect Nature) who will not leave me, and through a Light that is my Guide in everything I do.  

When these two invocations are placed back to back, following the testimony that was quoted above, we find ourselves in the presence of a transition that leads from a Hermetic liturgy of the Perfect Nature (the liturgy taught to Hermes by his own Perfect Nature) to the liturgy of Hermes from Harran (addressed to Hermes in expressions through which he himself invokes his own Perfect Nature and asks for the gift of a spiritual energy emanating from it). All of this takes place as if there is a transition from the one liturgy to the other. The conjunction, the union or hierogamy between Hermes and his Perfect Nature, between the soul and its Angel, is already in effect, as if a *communicatio idiomatum* took place. It is an exchange of attributes between Hermes, who is the One Invoking, and the Perfect Nature who is the One Invoked and moreover, henceforth the One Invoking is the One Invoked. The prayer of Astrampsychos also bears witness to this *unio mystica* between the One Invoking and the One Invoked: "Come to me O Lord Hermes... I am Thee and Thou art me."  

Again we verify the situation that we observed above (page 190): by virtue of their original unity, or rather more precisely, their original bi-unity, each member of the couple can be designated by the other. This is what is happening when Hermes, invoked with the same expressions that he invokes his own Perfect Nature with himself, is substituted for the one who is invoked as disposing of him. Without a doubt this only illustrates a situation that is based upon what Suhrawardi says, when he invokes his Perfect Nature as being at the same time his "father" and his "child" (the "root" and the "bough", as it was called above), since under this dual aspect it is at once the One Invoked and the One Invoking. 

At the same time we note the "practical" importance of the symbolism of Gabriel's *two wings* that gives rise in Suhrawardi to the renewal of Avicennan angelology. What makes this symbol understandable in the being of the Angel-archetype, is a structure that is repeated in the beings whom it exemplifies, a dyad made up of the Perfect Nature and the soul dwelling in darkness. That is why this is the pre-eminent symbol of the Gnostic on the way to the "encounter with the Angel". Similarly, every Angel superior to Gabriel has its *two wings*, Intellect and Soul, *Noûs* and *Psyche* and *Psyche* that proceed from it. In every Angel higher than it, Gabriel in turn sees her own image. There is only one difference: in every one of the superior "Cherubim", the left wing is a unique celestial Soul, the mover of a heaven, while the shadow that darkens Gabriel's left wing disappears from degree to superior degree. 

The answer to questions that were noted above (page 189) and that were not asked by the commentators, now becomes immediately apparent. Regarding the relationship between the Perfect Nature and the Angel-archetype or Lord of the Species (*nubb al-nû῾*): the Perfect Nature is itself the Angel, as the Angel's right wing, the wing of Light. Regarding the self sent to earth, the one who recognizes its *"self"* as its Angel: this is also the Angel but as the left wing, the darkened wing of the Angel-archetype. Gabriel's "two wings" admirably typify the situation that was analyzed above, beginning with the "history of the Gnostic" (§ 1). In the very act of self recognition, the darkness begins to leave this "left wing". If in the act of self recognition the ""I"" recognizes the ""self", so also the invocation states that "I am you and you are me" and that you and me must be subsistent. The joy of the rediscovered

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80Pseudo=Magriti, *op.cit.*, Arabic text, pp. 222-223; German translation, pp. 234-235.  
bi-unity implies that there is no confusion (see the theme of the *robe* in the "Song of the Pearl"). When *two* make only *one*, the two are necessary to "make only one". Just as the Greek word *prosôpon* connotes the sense of a person, a countenance, a presence, so the word *wajh* implies *hażâr*, a presence (and all *ishrâqi* spirituality is a spirituality of that Presence, like all Shi'ite spirituality is a spirituality of the Face, the Imâm as the Divine Face shown to man). That is what differentiates this mysticism from all the intoxication of foundering in a caricature, or in an inflation of the solitary self and what typifies the reciprocal of the Begetting-Begotten, begetting who begot it. Here one is reminded of that distich of Angelus Silesius: "What are you telling me Gabriel when you salute Mary, if not that you have the very same message for me?" Further down we will see that alchemical symbolism lends itself best to the suggestions of such things.

Thus when the terrestrial self "meets" its Perfect Nature, its Angel, it *eo ipso* "sees" its own total being, its own pleroma. It therefore sees the Angel-archetype of this pleroma. This is why there is no logical dilemma here: is it the Angel Gabriel or is it the Perfect Nature? (see below, regarding the individual *Noûs* in Manichean Gnosis). The couple that is formed from the terrestrial self and the celestial Double or Perfect Nature is *eo ipso* the individuation of the self's relationship with the Angel; in this individuation the Angel is its Perfect Nature and it is the terrestrial self of this Perfect Nature. The self has the vision of the Angel "with the two wings" through the Perfect Nature who is known through self-knowledge, since it is the same vision as the one of them as a pair. They, as a pair, are the image, the icon of the Angel, just as the Angel is the image, the icon of them as a pair. The Angel of human nature, and its unity with it, becomes only visible in and for the oneness reconstituted by *Noûs* and *Psyche*, man and his Angel, just like love is only visible in the unity between the lover and the beloved. So the "two wings" reflect one another in the brightness of a single Light. Morally it means to pledge yourself to the Angel in the present world, while it is answerable to you in the world beyond. Eschatologically it means the definitive ascent of Mount Sinai, announced at the end of the "Recital of the Exile".

In summation we note that all of this is entirely based upon the fact that the soul's true being is not one of solitude but of *dualitude*: to be the other member of a dyadic entity of whom the Double or celestial "Jewel" is the first one. This also implies an ontology that explains that distance and distention that constitutes its presence in the terrestrial world and that is presently already resolved. It implies the "history of the Gnostic", namely that the soul did not begin existence by coming into this world, but has its origin elsewhere and "descended" to earth. Yet it is not enough merely to say that the soul is incarnated into this world following a fall or a preexistential choice. We emphasize that in Gnostic terms this descent is the result of a division into two, of the fissure of a primordial whole and the possibility that this fissure can be based originally on a permanent structure of this whole. We propose to designate this permanent structure as *dualitude*, in order to differentiate it from the *duality* imposed by force by the "occidental exile". The soul thus incarnated possesses a "companion", a celestial Double, the Angel, who comes to its aid and whom it is able to rejoin, or contrarily *post mortem* lose forever, according to whether its earthly life made a return to this "celestial" condition of their bi-unity possible, or contrarily impossible. Such an ontology of the soul is also well known outside of Iran's borders: a similar *sophianic* vision was held by the Neo-Manichean Cathars, as well as by a Novalis and a Boehme. It is perhaps the one fundamental idea, *ubique et semper*, of the Gnostic religion. This is also why the Suhrawardian recitals awaken such manifold resonances. These are already perceptible in the Gnostic Christian Gospels as well as in the Gnosis that carry an Iranian imprint (Mandeism, Mazdaism, Manicheism), up to very recently. Such are the stages of an ideal route of a *khusrawânî* Gnosticism that we have now outlined, beginning with the discussion of "Poimandres" to the "Recital of the Grail".

### III. Gnostic variations on the theme of the encounter a). Gnostic Gospels and Acts.

At the moment we will limit ourselves to a one single reference from Christian Gnostic
texts, including the Bible and sources from religions where the theme of the Angel is a fundamental one. Again we note the fundamental research that was done by H.-C. Puech, to whom everyone involved in the research of gnosis is indebted. The theme of the "Image" is stated precisely in the "Gospel of Thomas" (Logion 84): "When you see your image that existed before you did, that neither dies nor manifests itself, how much will you suffer." The text distinguishes two separate experiences: one that only concerns itself with "likenesses", entirely exterior appearances that are perceived while looking into a mirror, and another one in the future. This is concerned with the preexistent, eternal, non-manifested image, or more precisely with "the icon" (eikôn), in short, equal to the one for whom it is now the icon but before it was made manifest in an existence in this present world. The latter is its complete person and concerns the intelligible or celestial world (we would say with Malakût). It consists of Light and it is an image in whom "the Light of the Father is revealed", it is the "man of Light" (as we have noted, a literal equivalent of shaks nûrânî, shakhs min nûr).

In summary, everything that is called image or "icon" in the "Gospel of Thomas" corresponds to the notion of the angel among the Valentinian Gnostics, i.e., in combining the use of words that both are derived from the same vocabulary, one can equally as well say that Gnostics are the images, "icons" of their angels, as that their angels are their images, their "icons", "the beings, or realities in whose image we have been produced here below." (This also agrees with the notion of alâm al-mithâl, the "imaginal world", the mithâl being able to be the image that reproduces and the archetype that is reproduced. This has been suggested above, regarding the symbolism of Gabriel's two wings). Thus Gnostics go to an encounter of a concrete reality in order to meet the Angel, "who herself represents them and presents them to themselves as they are in themselves," who is their celestial Double, their alter ego, "more real and truer that they are in themselves or actually appear to be." (That also agrees with the encounter of the Angel on mystical Sinai beyond the narrow meaning of an encounter that occurs post mortem, but of an encounter that can happen to the mystic in this present life, in as much as an ecstatic vision or even a simple visionary meditation is the anticipation of the eschaton.)

In the "Acts of Andrew" (chapters 5-6), the apostle's disciple, Maxilla, is taught that "she will perceive her true countenance, the one that is hers... in an immaterial, luminous, diaphanous, pure, celestial manner, as Light, pure spirit, pure Noûs." "You have seen your countenance in your being, in your essence."

The "Acts of Thomas" (chapters 108-113) contain the gem that is currently known as the "Song of the Pearl" or the "Hymn of the Soul" that we have already often referred to. When the young prince from the Orient, after a celestial message wakes him up from his slumber of ignorance, seizes the pearl and returns to the kingdom of his Father, he suddenly sees coming towards him and held by two treasury officials a marvelously and splendidly colored robe of Light, especially made for him in the same place where he himself came from and one that he had to discard when he went on his mission into this present world. This robe looks exactly like him and is his mirror-image, "a mirror that renders an absolutely faithful image of himself." The robe is entirely in him and he sees himself entirely in this garment. They are at the same time distinct from one another and yet they exist only together (compare the symbolism of the two wings of the same angel). Better yet, the stature they have for one another is not merely identical, but it is at the same time, jointly and separately magnified (what is meant by the Perfect Nature being at the same time "father" and "child" of the one for whom it is the Perfect Nature). Finally that robe is not some inert thing, but the recital makes it "animated", run through with "the motions of gnosia". Both the prince and the robe embrace each other till they melt together. The robe spreads itself over the prince, entirely envelops him in itself and climbs up to the "Gate" of

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82 H.-C. Puech, in the Annuaire du Collège de France, 63rd year, pp. 201-204.
84 Ibid., pp. 206-207; cf. Celestial Earth, pp. 104 and 295, note 32, also our Avicenna, pp. 157-158.

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the palace of the "king of kings" (this is just as difficult as what Simurgh tried to say: unity in duality, duality in unity, the two remaining postulated through two that are only one). In addition to these, at least the interpretation of the passage of the Samaritan woman in the Gospel of John (chapter 4) by the Valentinian Heracleon should be mentioned, as Origen was familiar with it in his commentary on this same Gospel (book 13). The personal Angel of the Samaritan woman, i.e. her "spiritual nature", makes a couple, a "syzygy" with her and it is this "husband" that Jesus reveals to her, who is not "of this world", but "from beyond this world". It is her pleroma, the Samaritan Woman herself in the plenitude of her being, or more precisely, the eternal image of herself with whom she will be reunited in order to become again what she really is. Certain words from Mary Magdalen should also be mentioned from the book of Pistis Sophia, from the discussions about the resurrection, where her role is said to be very important. These words refer to "the power that has gone out of the Savior who is now the Man of Light who lives inside of us." "The man of Light inside of me has guided me, is extremely joyful and in a state of great excitement in me, as if he wants to leave me and go into you." 

b). Mande an Gnosis. We rediscover this very same theme of the Image in every detail in Mande an Gnosis "as the Image (dmutâ) that each of the faithful have of themselves in the beyond, in the Kingdom of Light and Life and with Whom their souls are reunited after death." It is the divine image, the celestial counterpart, the mystical archetype of every created or manifested thing, but especially of every human soul existing in the world of, the "Mande an Paradise". Through the witness of Shaykh Ahmad Alsâ'i we can state with certainty, at least in so far as the mystical city of Hûrqalyâ is concerned, that it is the equivalent of 'alâm al-mithâl or the mundus imaginalis. This celestial Double, the "guardian angel" plays the same role for the individual human being with whom it is associated, as the Fravarti or Daênâ does in Mazdaism (see below). The theme of the encounter is formulated here, just like it is in the "Song of the Pearl", as "the divestiture of the corporeal tunic and the reception of the vestment of Light," involving here also the intervention of the two "guides". There is this beautiful final verse from the Ginza:

I am going to meet my Image and my Image comes to meet me It speaks to me with such affection and showers me with kisses upon my return from captivity.

This recollection brings to mind many others. Simurgh is indeed present in Mande an legends, where we rediscover ancient Iranian themes that were also elaborated upon in the visionary meditations of a Suhrawardi and of an 'Attâr. We refer here especially to the

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87 Cf. The Secret Earth..., general index s.v. and especially pp. 144 and 190. Asked about the origin of the word "Hûrqalyâ", Shaykh Ahmad 'Ahsâ'i answered that this word was known among the Sabseans (Mandeans) of Iraq. Philologically the passage from Mshunia Kushtha to Hûrqalyâ cannot be readily explained, on the other hand there is no doubt that the two concepts do overlap. Moreover, the term Hûrqalyâ (whose original pronunciation is uncertain) was in use among the Ishrâ'iyûn before Shaykh Ahmad 'Ahsâ'i. Cf. also Kurt Rudolph, Die Mandeer, Götingen 1960-1961, general index s.v. Mshunia-Kushtha; E. S. Drower, The Secret Adam, A Study of Nasorean Gnosis, Oxford 1936, index s.v. Mshunia-Kushtha. We hope to return to this theme elsewhere.
exquisite legends recorded, among others, by E. S. Drower, that tell us of Hirmiz Shāh contemplating the bird Simurgh:

The spring was clear as a block of ice, the water soared up into the air in a single jet, transparent and pure, and then spread itself out like a tree. Hirmiz was seated before Simurgh and when he saw that she was fixedly contemplating the spring, he also rested his attention on it. Then he saw something in the water resembling a being of Light... ⁸⁹

In 'Attâr, Simurgh is essentially the mystery of divinity as a mirror. We note that already Zosimus of Panopolis (3rd century) mentions a mirror made out of electrum, apparently having been used in the rituals of certain Gnostic religious cults, as a representation of the Divine Spirit (to theion pneuma):

When the soul contemplates itself in the mirror, it sees the shameful things that are in it and it rejects them... When it is purified, it imitates the Holy Spirit and takes this as its model... What is the motto of the philosophers? Know Thyself. Thereby they point to a spiritual and intellectual mirror. What else can this mirror be if not the divine and primordial Spirit? ⁹⁰

c). Mithraic Liturgy. The name of Zosimus the Alchemist has already been mentioned (page 177) regarding the symbolism of the "position of the sun in the mid heaven" and the fundamental secret of alchemy "as being identical to the most hidden mystery of the religion of Mithra" (note 412 on page 183). What we have in mind here is the invocation of the "Perfect Body" that takes place at the beginning of the Mithraic ritual known as the "Liturgy of Mithra" (above, page 102). The ritual makes the myst say the following words: "O Primordial genesis of my genesis, Primordial origin of my origin!" Then the four primordial subtle Elements are mentioned, who are in turn personified: "Breath of breath, of the breath in my first breath. Fire... of the fire in my first fire. Water of water, of the water in my first water. Terrestrial Substance, prototype of the terrestrial substance that is in me. My Perfect Body fashioned by a glorious hand and of an imperishable handwork."

All these subtle elements constituting the Perfect Body are invoked as being the organs that the myst contemplates the immortal Principle through, after a temporary death that precedes the new birth typified by the initiation ritual. The Perfect Body is invoked in the same way as the Perfect Nature is and as such, like the robe of a "color of Light" in the Song of the Pearl, it is a typification of the primordial "self", the Celestial "I".

d). Alchemy. In order to complete the framework that we are again mentioning the name of Zosimus the Alchemist in, let us refer to the final chapter of an unpublished
little work by the alchemist Jildaki (14th century), because its title, "The Dream of the Priest", is such a clear reminiscence of one of Zosimus’s visions: that of the priest Ion, the priest of the most intimate and hidden sanctuaries, before the altar with the fifteen steps. An extremely interesting facet of this short chapter concerns the staging of the Perfect Nature and Hermes as the two principal characters in the Alchemical Work and in so doing, emphasizing their significance by means of a contrast with the ones whom Jildaki calls "the ignoramuses" (jâhilîyûn). The latter are pseudo-alchemists, who only manipulate material things, whose imagination has been crippled by such a radical disease, that it has lost its ability to know the existence and nature of symbols. Their tumult results in the murder of Hermes and even leads to the disappearance of the Perfect Nature, whom they first manage to separate from Hermes. Jildaki could not have done a better job in stating that alchemy’s purpose indeed consists of a transmutation of a psychic nature and that only an apprehensio aurea satisfies its liturgical conditions (see above, page 183).

This transmutation is the one that is perceived and tested in the mystical union of Hermes and the Perfect Nature, visualized in their alchemical substitutes as red and white sulfur. It is the conjunction of Eros and Logos that the priest, while turning away from the ignorantines, celebrates in the temple of Venus according to rules that are engraved on the statue in the temple. The mystery is shown in a new form that Jildaki calls the new Infant (al-walad al-Jadîd), Infant of Renewal (in Ismailism the last Imâm in a cycle who prepares for the resurrection is called al-walad al-tâmm, the Perfect Infant). Similarly, in the reunion of Hermes and the Perfect Nature in Jildaki, we notice the appearance of the symbol of the ultimate end of alchemy, whom the Latins call Infans noster, Filius sapientiae, filius philosophorum.

The image of the Infant, the Puer æternus, is most appropriate in order to show at once the unity of the new being and the two poles that make up its structure. This new form, more precisely stated, that of renovatum in novam infantiam, marks the ideal simultaneity of two opposite ends, the beginning and the end, preexistence and superexistence, the before and the no more. It combines in their unity the phases that the mystical Stone traverses, just like the Child-Hero does. Lapis exilis et vilis - servus rubens et fugitivus, to the apotheosis of Deus terrenus, Light beyond all Light, when the Stone becomes the corpus glorificatum. It is the birth of these phases and the anticipation of their final resolution that Jildaki suggests by using the same name that was given to the "Child of Renewal", that is he himself, the alchemist. He calls it 'Abd al-Karîm, servant of the Noble (Stone). Based on the premise of his new birth, he is indeed the servant of the Noble Stone whom he must serve until the triumphant end, that form of the filius regius of divine power. All of this belongs to that Aenigma regis, the hierogamy of Heaven and Earth, that must be accomplished in novissimo die hujus artis, on the Last Day, marking the ultimate accomplishment of the Work.

Transposed into expressions of mystical alchemy, the Suhrawardîan theme of Hermes and the Perfect Nature so develops to its very limit the meaning of the symbolism of the Archangel Gabriel’s "two wings", that we now have dwelt upon at length. Hermetism here...
prefigures the unitive reunion of the Lover and the Beloved, whose nostalgia overflows in all Persian poetry. When the Suhrawardian psalm greets the Perfect Nature as Begetting-Begotten then the meaning here is that it is the Perfect Nature herself who begets herself in Hermes, at the same time exactly as Hermes (or the priest in Zosimus's dream) is begotten to himself. Likewise the Beloved, a grammatically passive expression, is at the same time the one who quickens love in the Lover and begets herself in him as Beloved while begetting him precisely as the Lover. One could say that the alchemical notation of the secret of the Perfect Nature gives a better understanding than any other one, that for the Gnostic in this world there are two "guardian angels" (the "root," and the "bough"): the Angel who is the parent, the celestial parent before incarnation into this world and the Angel who is the child, i.e., the self in the future, begotten to its Perfect Nature for the "beyond" of this present world. When the Gnostic has totally turned into this "Infant" (when the hoopoe has become Simurgh), then the self "in this world" has been repatriated "to its world". There is only that pair of "two angels". In this manner the invocation of the Perfect Nature, as the one begetting and the one begotten is justified in Suhrawardi. This is why the Latin alchemists liked the symbol of the Virgin Mary so much. A distich by Angelius Silesius may be cited again here: "If the Spirit of God touches you in your essence, the Infant of Eternity is born in you."

e). Manichean and Mazdean Gnosis. Everything that the preceding pages have grouped around the theme of the Image or the Mirror as variants on the theme of the Angel culminates in a search for analogies or precendents in that spirituality of ancient Persia that the Shaykh al-Ishrâq wanted to revive. After a detour through mithraic and alchemy we return to the pre-eminent theme of the personal Angel in Suhrawardian theosophy, that of the Perfect Nature. Indeed, Manichean Gnosis was familiar with the theme of a primitive luminous Nature, a divine being that a fragment excavated at Turfan glorifies as "our father and mother, our magnificence, our Self of splendor", i.e., our Nature of Light and our primordial Self. "Hail Thee with whom our soul is identified from the primeval beginnings." 96

We now find ourselves again faced by the same questions that Suhrawardi's texts lead us to ask ourselves before (above, page 189): who is this personal Angel? What relationship is there between the Perfect Nature as personal Angel and the Angel who is encountered on Sinai, since both are the "father" of the myst? The manner in which both the real vision and the symbol in which it expresses itself eradicate the dilemma (is it the one? Or is it the other?) points in a direction that now opens up before us. Research has notably emphasized the nature and characteristics of that Light Being, who has the name of "Great Valman" in Manicheism, or "Great Manîhmêd" ("Manvahmêd") in Parthian, with the Avestic Vohu-Manah (Bahman in Persian) as origin for it. We have spoken of this name before (above, page 73) and it means the first of the "Holy Immortals" (Amahraspand) or Archangels in Mazdaism, its general meaning being Good Spirit, Luminous Thought, Noûs of Light. We also saw that it assumes a principal place in Suhrawardian angelology. What then is the relation between the Noûs of Light and the individual "Manvahmêd" or "Vahmanân"?

One could see the Perfect Man (Insân al-Kâmil) in the "Great Manvahmêd" and identify it with the "Column of Glory", that is the "Column of Light" made up of an ascending procession of all the souls that have been liberated from darkness and are now returning to the kingdom of Light, and conclude that these are all the Vahmanân who together constitute the Great Valman or the Great Manvahmêd. However, that simply reduces them to a collectivity and it also immediately abolishes their relationship and function. We refer to a relationship between the saving Angel and the individual soul whom it saves. Their bî-unity is not abolished by the fact that the salvation rendered it by this savior reconstitutes it in the way it was in the very beginning. The collective interpretation substitutes simple unities

96 Cf. the Traité manichéen written by Chavannes and Pelliot, in Journal asiatique, 1911, pp. 529, 561; Bang, Manichaïsche Hymnen, Muséon 1925, p. 14; Grêv hassenaîg, i spit hassenaîg (= the original Effulgence) in G. Widengren, The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God, Uppsala 1945, p. 18.
for such bi-unities. From the very beginning it must be the "Splendid Self" who was a captive of Darkness. However, it is precisely this "Splendid Self" who addresses herself to the captive as its Angel. So the situation is analogous to the one where the Perfect Nature is the Angel of the Gnoseism, because it is the being who individualizes the relationship of the Angel with each of those who make up the totality that it is the Angel for. This totality is the entirety of these bi-unities, each constituted by Gnoseists and their Perfect Nature.

This same solution with safeguards for the themes and analogies of the relationships between these expressions is aimed at through a lexicon that is used by the Neo-Manicheism of the Cathars. There is a terrestrial and captive human soul: Anima. There is also its Holy or Angelic Spirit (Spíritus sanctus, angelicus or parachitus). Each of the souls of the Elect has its own Holy Spirit. This is the "guardian angel" in the Gnoseistic sense of the word, i.e., the celestial Double, the Spirit who "remained in heaven", having the function of a protector. Finally there is the Spíritus principalis (the equivalent of the saving Primordial Man or the Noûs of Light), who is invoked through the three persons of the Trinity. The Spirit or cosmic Noûs is to the total Psyche what each individual Noûs, Spirit or Angel is to each Psyche. It is therefore a matter of an analogy of relationships between two sets of expressions and not simply that of a relationship between two terms.97

This means that the Great Vahman, the cosmic Noûs, comprises its own hypostatic reality, just as the Holy Spirits, the celestial Doubles do, who for each soul are what the former is for the totality of souls. It is not the Great Vahman as such, but each of the Holy Spirits who is the celestial Double of each soul. That also typifies the situation in Suhrawardi’s symbolism of the two wings: the Angel as hypostasis, in as much as the two wings are its "members", typifies the multitude of dyads as species, that it is the Angel or Lord (rabb) for, each constituted of a soul and its Noûs. One must keep in mind that according to the Iranian manner of reckoning, that looks upon the All as having its own unity over and beyond the unities that compose it that it is not simply the sum of, the Great Vahman must have a reality other than that of its parts and their sum.98 On their part the Ishráqiyûn have repeated that the universality of each Angel-archetype is no universality of a logical concept, but the metaphysical universality of an essence that is not subject to the conditions of a logical universal (the poorest kind), nor to the condition that permits its realization in singularibus, i.e., in the individuals of a sensible world. This absoluteness of essence, of what it is in its plenitude, is what is perceived in the "person" of the Angel-archetype as Lord of the Species that is its "theurgy" and who effects the salvation of this theurgy.

Mani himself was from the very beginning preeminently concerned with a mystery of salvation that derives all of its impact from the theme of the celestial Double in the development of Manicheism.99 When Mani is twenty-four years old it is the Angel who appears to him as his "double" or "Jewel" and tells him that it is now time to manifest himself and bid the people to follow his doctrine. "Greetings to Thee, O Mani, from me and from the Lord who has sent me to Thee..." Certain words of the dying Mani also allude to this celestial Double: "I contemplated my Double with my eyes of Light." Similarly, in a psalm glorifying the departure of the soul from terrestrial existence, mention is made of "thy Double who never fails Thee." Thus indeed every soul has its Double. If Mani’s celestial Double can be Christ (according to the Western tradition of Manicheism) or the Virgin of Light (according

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99 Ibn al-Nadîm, Fihrist, Fluegel edition, p. 328 [Hail to Thee O Mânî from me and from the Lord who sent me to Thee... Cf. Fluegel, Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften, Leipzig 1862, p. 84]. A Manîchæan Psalmbok, Part I, edited by C. R. C. Allberry, Stuttgart 1938, p. 19, lines 22-28 [I contemplated my Companion with my eyes of Light...]; p. 42, lines 22-23 [We bless your Companion, Christ, author of our well-being...]; p. 138, line 24 [the Companion of Him who has come from on High...].
to the Eastern tradition), then every soul has her as its very own syzygetic Double, as its Noûs, its celestial Double, who after its death on earth guides it towards the Kingdom of Light.

Thus it is the individual Noûs who appears to its soul or its terrestrial child, in order to fortify it, to guide it and to save it. It is the Noûs of that soul. In doing so, it brings about the entire salvation of that soul as a "member" of the cosmic Noûs, just as cosmic salvation is the total work of the Great Noûs. The individual Noûs is a member of this just as the individual soul is the member of it itself. Such an exemplification in two degrees of the famous theologoumenon of the "members" specifies that gradation noted by a beautiful hymn in the Parthian language:

\begin{quote}
Come, Soul, fear not!
I am your Manvahmêd, your pledge, your sanction.
You are my body, a robe I have put on to terrify the powers.
I am your Light, the original splendor,
the Great Manvahmêd, the perfect Pledge.  
\end{quote}

Thus the individual Noûs is also able to represent itself, singulatim, as the Great Manvahmêd. This possibility turns us to a particular and concise type of relationship, just like the one that is professed in the angelology of Valentinian Gnosis: Christ's Angels are recognized as being Christ himself, in the sense that each Angel lead or sent by Christ is Christ himself through its relation to each individual existence.  

It will be recalled that in the "Recital of the Exile", the Angel of Sinai reveals to the Chosen One that beyond it, on a yet higher Sinai, there is another Angel towards whom it has the same relationship as the Chosen One has towards it (and this Angel "contains" it just like it "contains" the Chosen One). Indeed the two intelligible dimensions repeat themselves from Angel to Angel (from the "right wing" proceeds a new Intelligence and from the "left wing" proceeds the soul from that Intelligence). Thus does the procession continue from Sinai to mystical Sinai. The drama that occurred to the Tenth Angel, the Angel of Humanity, is symbolized by its "left wing" as the wing that is darkened (i.e., the souls captive in this world), now reaching a level already far removed from the Principle and the procession of being. It no longer has the power of bringing forth a unique Intelligence and a unique Soul. It bursts forth, as we have seen, into a multitude of dyads and the unity that makes up each dyad is split up: there is a Light-Self or Perfect Nature and separated from it there is an "exiled" self. This is the Gnostic blueprint. Salvation is seen as their reunion, when the "exiled" self is delivered from its entombment. Simultaneously there is an individual form of this reunion in each dyad and also a collective form (the whole of these dyads with their respective Noûs). However, the second one is conditional upon the first one: the salvation of the whole occurs only through the salvation of each of its "members". The idea of a catastrophe and its continuation, both characteristic of the Suhrawardian recitals, are therefore indeed rooted in Iranian Gnosis that the Shaykh al-Ishrâq wanted to be the principal reviver of.

\footnote{Cited in G. Widengren, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 17-18. Compare the translation (fr) in E. Benveniste, \textit{Hymnes manichéens} (the journal \textit{Yggdrasil}, August 25th 1937), p. 10 (\textit{ibid.}, p. 11, Zarathustra speaks to his Soul: "Greeting it, Zarhush spoke this wish: Original Word, O my member - From the power of the living and of the highest worlds - May salvation reach Thee from they homeland"; \textit{ibid.}, pp. 13 ff., the dialog between Jesus and the youth, telling him: "I worry only that you may be taken up again - and I am left an orphan.").}

\footnote{\textit{Extraits de Théodote}, F. Sagnard edition, pp. 139, 187. Cf. Söderberg, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 249: "The union between Christ and Sophia is the prototype of the individual union [...]. The Savior represents the collectivity of souls or spírits and Sophia is identical to the community. Thus there is a correspondence between the union of the Savior and Sophia and that of the spirit and the angel."}
In the preceding discussion there has already been occasion to note what in Mazdaism are the \textit{Fravrarti} (\textit{Frâhar} in Persian). These are celestial beings, archetypes of each creature that appears in Ohrmazd's world of Light. They preexist the manifested world in the spiritual subtle world. The relationship between the Fravrarti and the soul (\textit{urvân}, \textit{ravān}) will again be analogous to that between the celestial Double and the terrestrial self, the Perfect Nature and the exiled self, except for the fact that one has to keep in mind a dramatic episode that dominates Mazdean cosmology and eschatology: the Fravrarti ("those who are chosen") have agreed to descend to earth themselves, to be voluntarily exiled from the world of Light, in order to help Ohrmazd in the combat with Ahrimanian counter forces. Eschatologically this is why the reunion shows itself not simply as a reunion of the soul and its Fravrarti, but as the reunion of the Fravrarti-soul with its celestial Double who is the \textit{Daênâ}.

Whether this last word can mean both "religion" and "transcendental" or "celestial self" of man or whether it also connotes an individual or collective aspect, are two points that have been discussed at length elsewhere. In fact, in the subject under discussion we are able to recognize a kind of a pseudo-dilemma that Suhrawardi allowed us to overcome in the preceding pages. Daênâ as "religion" of Ohrmazd, the "Lord Wisdom", is what the Fravrarti has indeed preexistentially chosen and as such this is perfectly able to represent the preexistential celestial or transcendent Self of a Light-being (Shi'ite Gnosis also professes that the religion (\textit{Dîn}) of a being is the imperishable Face of that being). Such is the living presence in the heart of the believer that inspires those beautiful texts that exist in Mazdean theology, where the eschatological encounter with the Angel Daênâ is described. On the third day following the \textit{exitus}, the Chosen One sees a dazzling figure approaching, at the entrance to the Chinvat Bridge, who is recognized immediately as a very beautiful young woman who resides in every beauty that exists in the terrestrial world. In response to the question: "Who are you?", she answers: "I am your Daênâ... (your religion and your very self), the One that your thoughts, your words and your actions have made. I was lovely, but you made me more so, I was beautiful, but you made me more beautiful."

Here we will recall that Hermes also asked that mysterious presence of Light who revealed the High Sciences to him: "But who are you?" and he heard the answer: "I am your Perfect Nature." Suhrawardi attests to this in that psalm that he addresses to his preexistential Perfect Nature, since this is the One who begot him in the spiritual world, but he also knows that at the same time it is he who begets his Perfect Nature. Similarly Daênâ preexisted, since she was chosen by the believer before the entrance into this world, but at the same time it is she who was made by the believer's thoughts, actions and words. Thus there is a simultaneous growth of these two facets, like there is of the "robe of Light" in the "Song of the Pearl" in the "Acts of Thomas". If there are as many variations on the theme of the encounter, then it can also be said that the encounter with Daênâ is no different from the one with the Image, the "icon", that is spoken of in the "Gospel of Thomas", in Manichean Gnosis and especially in the eschatology of Manichean Gnosis.

Indeed, the Manichean vision greatly contributes to a refinement of the characteristics of this subject matter. Here two pages out of Mani's \textit{Kephalaia} must be referred to. One mentions the Form of Light who is shown to every one of the Elect who take leave of their bodies, in the company of three magnificent and grandiose Angels who accompany it: the First one holds the Prize, the Second one holds the robe made of Light and the Third one

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102 Cf. our \textit{Celestial Earth}, general index s.v. \textit{Fravrarti} and \textit{The Man of Light}, pp. 31 ff. (Favrarti and \textit{Walkyrie}).

103 Avesta: \textit{Hâdokht Nash}, Fargard II, strophe 14 (= Yasht XXII). This theme follows Mazdean tradition up through later Persian tradition. It is the theme of "the Soul at the beginning of the Way" i.e. of the Way leading to the \textit{post mortem} Chinvat Bridge. "We have two souls: the one inside the body and the one that is called the Soul at the beginning of the Way" \textit{(Ravân-i râh)}, Saddar Bundehesh, chap. 10 in \textit{The Persian Rituals of Hornayzar Framars and others}, Bombay 1932, p. 511. On more details regarding Daênâ's person, like the meaning of her name and her appearance at the entrance to the way over the Chinvat Bridge, cf. our book \textit{Celestial Earth}, p. 41 ff.
\end{flushright}
holds the crown made of Light.\textsuperscript{104} The other page describes "the moment of their departure from this world, when the Form of Light comes before their eyes and takes them away from Darkness into the Light... The Form of Light appeases the Elect with a kiss and with the ease that it exhibits it frees them from the fear inspired by the devils who are overwhelming their bodies. The hearts of the Elect who have left their bodies are appeased by the sight and the image (icon, eikôn) of the Form of Light. Then the Angel who holds the Prize of Victory takes them by their right hand and greets them with kisses and with love. After that this soul will render homage to the One who saved it, who is this Form of Light."\textsuperscript{106}

This Form of Light is therefore indeed the Angel who meets the soul post mortem and on the other hand it is also the Angel who, in Ibn al-Nadîm’s \textit{Fihrist},\textsuperscript{106} is described as a divinity of Light sent to the soul by the primordial \textit{Anthròpos} under the guise of a "wise guide\textsuperscript{.} Three other divinities of Light accompany it just like the "young maiden who looks like the soul does\textsuperscript{.} They all come to rescue the soul from the demons who are assailing it. Who then is this "wise guide" whose appearance is the more striking here because this name in Arabic (al-Ḥâdî al-Hakîm) is literally the same as the one that occurs in the beginning of the "Recital of Occidental Exile"? There it also means "wise guide", the one who appears at the end of the recital as the Angel on Mount Sinai.

A Sogdian Manichean treatise is able to give us the answer to this question that is asked in the context of the \textit{Fihrist}. The \textit{Fihrist} text divides the Form of Light from the preceding passage into that of the wise guide and that of the one who resembles the soul. However, the Sogdian text describes the descent of the Angels who meet the soul of the elect and who reassure and protect it as follows: "Have no fear, O just soul... come forward... rise up to the paradise of Light and receive the Joy." "And its own Action, a marvelous and divine Princess, immortal and with flowers around her head, will come to meet it... She herself will place it on its way to the paradise of Light." Confirmed by other texts in the Coptic language that describe this young woman who is the soul’s guide, the Sogdian fragment that we have just cited attests better than any other, according to Henning, that "the Manicheans shared the Zoroastrian idea of the Daênâ of a person, who meets it post mortem in the form of a young woman."\textsuperscript{107}

So it is said expressly of her that it is she who is the guide, "putting the elect on their way". At the same time also, since she is the Action of the soul, she indeed resembles the soul, like it also does resemble her. The notions of Guide and Image are henceforth combined in one and the same "person" of the Angel Daênâ. She is indeed the Light Double whom we have met in the dialog with her terrestrial soul. It is this syzygetic relationship that was discussed earlier that imposes upon the members of this bi-unity a reciprocal responsibility. To the degree that a person responds to Daênâ in the present life will she respond to this person post mortem. Again we note the absence of any metaphor or allegory here. If Daênâ is the Action of terrestrial man then the latter will have existed precisely in her likeness. The mystery of the eschatological hierogamy, whose preparation or anticipation presupposes

\textsuperscript{104} Kephalaia I, Stuttgart 1940, chapter 8, p. 36, lines 12-21.

\textsuperscript{105}\textit{Ibid.}, chapter 9, p. 41, lines 11-21.


\textsuperscript{107}W. Henning, \textit{Sogdian Tales}, in the \textit{Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies} XI, 3, 1945, pp. 476-477, and \textit{Kephalaia II}, bearbeitet von A. Böhlig, Stuttgart 1966, p. 249, lines 16 ff., and especially chapter 114, pp. 269-270: On the three forms (eikôn) that the just or elect appear in. The first one is the spiritual form (pneumatikon eikôn), which is the New Man in whom the Light-Now is forms and dwells. The second one is the residue of the old man in the New Man, the psychic form (psichikon eikôn) who is bound to the flesh (sôra). The third one is the bodily form (sômataikon eikôn). The Virgin of Light reveals to the elect their spiritual form which is the New Man, by making herself the guide and leading the elect on high. She invades this spiritual form and she structures and ordains it inside of the New Man, like this form is sealed under the imprint of the members of the Virgin of Light who now lives in the New Man. She is "the one who is called the Hour of life, the first Hour, but also the very last one". We have already noted the close affinity between Manichean and Ismaelian concepts in these matters, cf. our \textit{Trilogie ismaélienne}, general index s.v. \textit{Forme de la Lumière}. 

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The Recital of the Occidental Exile and the Gnostic gesture

In the human soul as its action, is simultaneously the begetting of this soul in and through the Angel Daēnā acting in it. Similarly and in the very same sense we have previously suggested the symbolism of the "two wings" of the Angel, who was addressed by Suhrawardi as his Perfect Nature.

We stated a few pages ago that all of Persian mysticism is filled with a nostalgia for this unitive reunion. The heights of this nostalgia can readily be seen in Rûzbâhan's mysticism of love (below, book 3). Every time this reunion marks or announces the new birth of the beloved. These reoccurring images that are used by our mystics ought not to be disparaged, since any logical contradiction only occurs at the level of their conceptual understanding. Beyond logical concepts, there are realities here that can only be expressed in images. The syzygetic relation can be expressed and felt as an uxoriousness (a relationship between lovers), it can also be said to be one of filiation (a relationship between father and son).

What the image always expresses, is the process of a new birth that the role of each of the two terms of the pair is fully reciprocated in. The figures of the Perfect Nature, the Angel of Sinai, the Form of Light and the Angel Daēnā contend with one another and can also be exchanged for one another. What remains is the idea of an eschatological hierogamy taking place in novissimo die - the mystery of a new birth where a being is engendered in the image of a celestial Double, an image actually brought about by this Double and that it actualizes itself in - the idea of mystical conformation and co-responsibility that bring about the dawn of the resurrection. These themes are found every time the scission of a primordial celestial-terrestrial pair expresses the mystery of the Beginning. The restoration of its bi-unity, of its duality, is meant to bring about a normative interior morality whose sanction will precisely be the encounter between the human being and its Angel. This is the event that completely dominates the outlook of Iranian eschatology and of gnosis, not only from Mazdaism and Manicheism, but of Christian Gnosis and of Ishrāq as well. "May Thou manifest Thyself to me at the time of the supreme epiphany," says Suhrawardi's psalm.

Finally, all these investigations regarding the celestial Double and the Angel converge into a sophiology. We have shown elsewhere how and under what aspects Daēnā and Sophia can be identified with one another. The vision granted to Hermes of his Perfect Nature is in one respect also a vision of Sophia in person. Previously we have indeed noted that according to Hermes, the Perfect Nature is the one who makes wisdom come down to earth. She is the "Angel of the philosopher", the one who governs and guides him and who is his "wise guide". Thus these investigations lead to a sophiology of the kind professed by Jacob Boehme and his school, notably Gottfried Arnold and many others, up to Vladimir Soloviev. This is not the place for such an effort and it must be the subject of a new book. The fluid and plastic symbols that are experienced and formed during visionary meditations must be gathered into an entire family of images that has the power to form that duality that was restored through the transmutation of the member that was thrown into "occidental exile" and through the transfer to "the generation exempt from death". We have defined duality as a unity of essence without confusion of persons. Suhrawardi's symbolism of the Angel’s "two wings" possesses such a visionary power: The Angel of human nature and its integrity can only be made visible through the unity that is formed by Noûs and Psyche, by the Perfect Nature and the Soul, terrestrial man and the Angel Sophia-Daēnā. The reality of "celestial" love is only visible in and by the unity of beloved and lover, it is a unity that is a duality, not a confusion, because there must always be two to taste the joy of being only one.

The reverberations of this theme are propagated in unending arpeggios and we cannot stop here. The name of Swedenborg cannot be passed over in silence, because it is a fact that the doctrines of that great Swedish visionary theosopher, and the influence that he exerted

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108Cf. our book *Celestial Earth*, general index s.v. Daēnā, Sophia.
over a family of kindred spirits by means of them, form the occidental side of a diptych that we have just shown the oriental side of. Here are a few lines by way of a brief summary.

f). Swedenborgiana. In one of his Memorabilia, Swedenborg recounts how during one of his visions he saw a chariot coming from the high heavens with a magnificently robed Angel in it. When the chariot came closer he noticed that what had appeared from a distance as a single Angel, was in fact two celestial beings, like a pair of celestial lovers. Understandably, this vision only makes sense in the context of all of Swedenborg’s angelology and his doctrine of celestial love. Unfortunately we cannot expand upon this at the moment.

We will remain within Swedenborg’s sphere of influence and cite another instance of it, that of Balzac. We know what a profound influence the writings of Swedenborg and L.-C. de Saint-Martin had on Balzac. So, in November 1833 Balzac visited the sculptor Théophile Bra (1797-1863) who was also very much influenced by Swedenborg’s doctrines and who fashioned one of the most noble and sacred effigies of the "Guardian Angel" in stone. During the course of his visit, Balzac admired a piece that represented the Virgin holding the Infant, adored by two Angels, in the sculptor's studio. The figures were exquisitely beautiful. During his prolonged contemplation, the image of the two angels took possession of the interior world of Balzac’s imagination. The two angels became the image of two natures and one being, someone who has arrived at a final transformation and who, breaking apart the sheath that contains it, reveals to men and women that it is the one whom they have loved with the love that united them. This gave rise to the idea for a book that was to be Balzac’s greatest mystical novel, the idea of Seraphitus-Seraphita, itself an angel, but a double being, masculine and feminine, born from the union of lover and beloved. Liberating "the angelic creature imprisoned in the flesh" of each of them, this angel is the dualitude of their love. The book is named "Seraphita" and it does forever homage to Swedenborg and his teachings.

The variants that occur in the fluid representations of the Angel are in some way reminiscent of the variations on the theme of the encounter between the Gnostic and the Angel. What could only be touched upon here must be studied much more thoroughly. In summary we can say the following about what the texts that were examined here tell us about the meaning of the human being and the human adventure. What takes place in both is a Gnostic experience of self-knowledge that discovers the self as the alter ego, as the "angel", certainly not in the darkness of the unconscious, but in the "super-Light" of the transconscious. Gnostics eo ipso experience that they are delivered from exile, i.e., from solitude, because their integral being is a dualitude that their ego is liberated in from solitary egoism, since they form a plenary totality, a pleroma with their celestial alter ego, of whom they are the terrestrial counterpart. This pleroma is strong enough to triumph over opposing forces, whether these are called demonic or social and collective, the ones from "the city whose inhabitants are oppressors" (4:77).

The ultimate meaning of this reconstituted dualitude is proclaimed in recurrent eschatological visions within the different forms of gnosis that we have referred to here: it is the begotten Image or the ecstatic vision that is formed by all in this world and it will be for everyone the experience of death. What each person wants and anticipates in this present life will be the vision and the supreme revelation when crossing the threshold. No one can expect to have in the other world a vision of what was either refused or profaned in this present life. The world of the Angel will not be able to respond to a person who has refused to respond to it. Dānā-Sophia will be no more than an abolished celestial past for the one who has denied her. That horrible vision that Mazdean texts describe as being shown to demonic man (his own Action), is no more than Dānā’s caricature. It is for that person the vision of his own self handed over to the nothingness of his loneliness through his own

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109 Swedenborg, Delitiae Sapientiae de amore conjugiari, art. 42.
denial, a denial that bars him from his celestial Double and marks a person whose essence is "parity" and celestial dualitude, with the mutilation of an infernal "impurity". That is how an anthropology appears to us that is derived in its remote origins from the very same sources as Iranian spirituality.

The Secret of the Personal City

The preceding analyses have brought out a number of fundamental themes, among others: the theme of the mirror, the theme of the image and that of the pleroma of the human soul as Minor Logos. The "Recital of the Exile" and the epistle of "The Sound of Gabriel’s Wings" tell us the "history" of this Minor Logos. It is the "history" of the Gnostic that we have just outlined the various aspects of. There is more. If the Gnostic descending into this world is taken captive in the city that it is said of: "O Lord! Make us depart from this city whose inhabitants are oppressors," (4:77) then symmetrically the Gnostic’s own person is also visualized in the imagery of a city. The "city of oppressors" is the world of illusion, at present the residence of the Minor Logos. This Minor Logos is also a city, of which "God the Most High has said: We have recounted for you the misfortune of those cities; some have survived, while others have ceased to exist." (7:99 and 11:102) It is the "temple" or habitation of this Minor Logos that is devastated, but all Logoi, or Words of God, Major and Minor, "have survived". These are the cities that remain, since they are beyond time and sensible space.111 The "history" of the Gnostic is therefore the history of a personal city that remains, while the "city of oppressors" is finally destroyed. Hence the importance that this theme assumes in others beside Suhrawardi, while its vision is not only responsible for the "Epistle of the High Towers" (Risālat al-ţabrāj), but also for all of the imagery structured around the theme of the "Recital of the Exile". Something essential will escape us if we don’t insist on completing this imagery of the Personal City.

This is why it seems important to us to dwell on a small treatise that is particularly representative of Indo-Persian mystical literature and, while not the work of Suhrawardi himself, nevertheless is closely associated with the cycle of his recitals. Furthermore, not only does this treatise orchestrate in this manner the principal theme of the "recital of the Exile", but it also contains a number of pages that incorporate a chapter from two of Suhrawardi’s recitals: the "Epistle of the High Towers" and the one called "Vade-mecum of the Fideli d’amore" (Mu’nis al-'ushshâq). The entire Indo-Persian treatise puts into perfect operation the themes of the Gnostic gesture. It recounts for us in particularly striking symbols the "history" of Gnostic in search of himself, up to the encounter with his alter ego.

By way of introduction to this little spiritual romance, let us point out that it contains a combination of two themes: the theme of the mirror and the theme of the labyrinth. Of course, these two terms are not explicitly mentioned in the text, but what they mean is readily apparent and that is what counts. It is a permanent feature of Gnostic sentiments concerning this world that the terrestrial world is like a tomb, where the beings belonging to the higher worlds are buried. We find this stated anew as recently as the Shaikhī Gnosis of Sarkâr Aghâ (below, book 6). However, here the idea of the tomb is more complicated and it is amplified by that of the labyrinth. From the start, the meaning of the human adventure is that of a being belonging to the higher worlds, who is sent into this tomb in order to learn how to get out of it, like a type of labyrinth (see also the "Recital of the Exile", strophe 37). One leaves after having penetrated into the heart of the labyrinth, where the "Spring of Life" is found. However, this exodus can only be carried out on condition that it is understood how the eternal Forms of Malakūt are present in this perishable world. They do not "materialize" into this world and are not immanent, e.g., like the color black is immanent in a black body. They enter like forms and images "enter" into a mirror. From the start,

111Cf. Le Bruissement des ailes de Gabriel, p. 81 of our introduction.

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to understand what we are looking at in this world and to understand how we look at it, is to understand what we look at when we look in a mirror. What effects the conjunction between the esoterical meaning of the tomb as labyrinth and the phenomenon of the mirror is the human adventure experienced in its entirety as an "experience of initiation". This concerns a conjunction that is so essential, that we rediscover the symbol of the mirror at the "initiation center" of the meaning of life, when life itself is formed into the symbol of a labyrinth of sinuosities and aberrant vicissitudes.

We will focus our attention with greater ease on the meaning contained in the connection between the themes of mirror and labyrinth if we refer to one of the more ingenious devices from among Leonardo da Vinci's astonishing machines, as has been admirably pointed out by Marcel Brion. In the myth from antiquity, Theseus confronted the Minotaur, a human bull and the monstrous double of man, in the middle of the labyrinth and, having immolated it, left the labyrinth as the spiritual hero of a purified humanity. The initiates of the mystery religions encountered its high-priest in the central chamber of the labyrinth and were instructed into the symbolic meaning of the vicissitudes and forms that had been encountered and were consequently renewed anew. In certain Christian churches the labyrinth drawn on the floor (called the place of Jerusalem) allowed those who couldn't materially perform the pilgrimage, to perform the sacred voyage in their souls and in their imagination and ritually follow the contours drawn on the floor of the church, there to face the dangers represented by symbolic monsters (perhaps they achieved their goal more directly, since this goal was not the geographical Jerusalem, but of course the heavenly Jerusalem). This is where Leonardo da Vinci constructed his own labyrinth: a labyrinth where, after having been lead around interminably over torturous footpaths, the initiate penetrated into a central sanctuary for the supreme revelation. However, the sanctuary consisted of "an octagonal chamber of mirrors that infinitely multiplied the image of the one who stood in the center."

This central sanctuary is not at all the place of combat with the monstrous Minotaur. It is no longer the place of divine contemplation for the medieval traveler in search of the celestial Jerusalem. Instead it is the place for the contemplation of oneself. How far can the differentiation between these forms of contemplation be carried out? To place them in opposition amounts to missing the real meaning of this "self". Then one runs the risk of missing the meaning of the initiation proposed by the "chamber of mirrors". We can spare ourselves this risk, if together with our spirituals we rediscover precisely in the vision of the mirror the answer to the question that dominates all of gnoseology, i.e., the entire question of the genesis of the forms of knowledge and of awareness: Who is the "Giver of Forms", the Dator formarum? To know the giver is to cease being enslaved by the gifts. To know the giver is to put into practice that fundamental maxim, so often cited during the course of this book: "They who know themselves know their Lord."

How do we make the connection between the "self" who knows the one who knows himself and the "Giver of Forms"? This name of "Giver of Forms" was attached, in the Latin metaphysical tradition (Dator formarum) as well as in the Arabic one (Wâhib al-Sowar), to that spiritual being who is called the Active Intellect by the philosophers and who Suhrawardi allowed us to recognize in the Angel of Mount Sinai, in the finale of his "Recital of the Exile". Again we find ourselves at the heart of the problems and considerations that have been developed at length in the preceding pages. In this sense the little Indo-Persian spiritual romance that tells us somehow about the secret of the "personal City", can only describe that itinerary with its own scenographic variations, that the "Recital of the Exile" provided us with the various stages of.

We are dealing here with a text that has been preserved both in Arabic and in Persian and

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112 For the following refer to Marcel Brion's work, Léonard de Vinci, Paris 1932, pp. 201-208.

113 Because of the date of the manuscript on which the design is drawn, Brion thinks, op.cit., p. 206, that "the invention of this chamber of mirrors, and the creation of the most famous labyrinth imaginable, dates from 1490".
presents itself as having been translated from Sanskrit. Compilation took place certainly not later than the 14th century, but there are elements in it that are already present in Suhrawardî in the 12th century.\textsuperscript{114} It is possible that we are dealing here with a text of Iranian origin, returning to Iran after a migration into India. Whatever might be the history of the text, the entire document represents a characteristic example of Hindi Sufism. The reputed speaker is a sage from India, who is composing his spiritual autobiography in a symbolic form, one that has a striking similarity both with Suhrawardî’s "Recital of Occidental Exile" and the gesture of the hero from the "Song of the Pearl", that young Parthean prince from the Gnostic book of the "Acts of Thomas". In the preceding pages we noted the similarities between these two gestures.

The entire treatise takes on the form of a recital that relates the stages and the vicissitudes of initiation with the hidden meaning of that phrase that we just cited again: "They who know themselves know their Lord." Between these two acts of knowledge the entire drama of the origin and the return (\textit{mabda'} and \textit{ma'\textsuperscript{ad}}) takes place. The unraveling of this drama unveils the \textit{why} of the "descent" of the spiritual Forms into the "labyrinth". When they arrive in the center of the labyrinth, they discover in a dazzling vision in a mirror the answer to the question: \textit{Who am I?}

This quest is described by the sage as follows:

I lived in a country where my parents and my forebears lived. The king of this country called upon me and said: "It is fitting that you only dwell in these lofty dwellings of my kingdom after you have traveled to the lands tilled by us, alongside the farthest borders of my kingdom. Do not forget our pact of fidelity, because only then will you find me again in that faraway land. Have my minister in charge of my Threshold describe the knowledge to you, a threshold that no one can cross without such a knowledge and that can only be crossed with my permission." When I arrived at the Threshold (\textit{b\textsuperscript{ab}}) I found the minister there. I greeted him and he returned my greeting. "My Lord and my King," I said, "has ordered me to leave for the land that is tilled by us." He said: "For this voyage and in order to reach your goal, you must overcome obstacles and steep mountains and your return trip will be worse. I am afraid that because of the distance and the difficulties you might end up forgetting our pact." "Yet it is necessary that I leave," I said. "Describe that country for me and describe the way to get there."

What the "minister" describes are all the pitfalls of the journey that the soul undertakes in order to "descend" into this world and its representation is common to all forms of gnosticism.

\textsuperscript{114} The only Arabic text has been published by Yusuf Husain: \textit{Hauz al-Hay\textsuperscript{at}} (La citerne de l’Eau de la Vie), \textit{la version arabe de l’Aranykhund}, in \textit{Journal asiatique}, vol. 213, . 2, October-December 1928, pp. 291-344. Ruknuddin Samarqandi (d. 1217) is supposed to have translated it first into Persian, thereafter into Arabic. Perhaps so, although this does not agree with the overall tenor of the preserved text, where other names are mentioned. The entire question will have to be taken up again in a study which includes the Persian version. The following should also be noted. In the \textit{Essai de bibliographie avicennienne} published by R. P. G. -C. Anawati on the occasion of the millennium of Avicenna’s birth (Cairo 1950), there is mentioned as number 197, on page 254, a \textit{Ris\textsuperscript{ala} f\textsuperscript{i}l-mab\textsuperscript{da}’ wa\textsuperscript{-}ma\textsuperscript{a}d}, as contained in the mss. Esad 1239 and 1234. Osman Yahiya, after a stay in Istanbul, has kindly provided me with a copy. A comparison of the texts had as result that we are dealing here with none other than the Arabic text of the introduction to the treatise that we are studying here \textit{Journal asiatique}, ibid., pp. 313-316. The title leaves no doubt as to this fact: \textit{Ris\textsuperscript{ala} f\textsuperscript{i}l-mab\textsuperscript{da}’ wa\textsuperscript{-}ma\textsuperscript{a}d ayyan ‘al\textsuperscript{a}d tar\textsuperscript{iq} al-r\textsuperscript{am}n li-be\textsuperscript{a}z Ah\textsuperscript{l} al-Hind} (Treatise on the origin and the return, likewise in the form of a symbolic history, by a certain Indian author). I am the first to regret that this interesting \textit{Ris\textsuperscript{ala}} cannot be the work of Avicenna. Such an attribution by the scholarly author of the bibliography must be the result of an oversight, easily explained if the \textit{majm\textsuperscript{u}’a} contains authentic works by Avicenna elsewhere.
These are the regions of the cosmos, the Spheres and the Elements, who are presented here as a cosmic labyrinth, that the celestial being, here the traveler, penetrates through into the narrow ravines of the microcosm. This microcosm is represented here as a city with a labyrinth. The external and the internal senses are described as personalities, with attributes that are symbolic of their function. They reside at the "knots" of the labyrinth, none other than the "personal city" of the traveler. It is here that we literally find the symbolic descriptions given by Suhrawardi in two of his mystical treatises, as we indicated in our introduction. The various personalities play the same roles here as the symbolic figures did, who were encountered by the travelers that followed the labyrinths marked on the floors of the churches.

Turning and twisting, the traveler lingers and ends up forgetting his promises and the reasons for his journey (the young Parthean prince in the "Song of the Pearl" underwent similar misfortunes in Egypt). When he arrives in the heart of the city and also in the center of the labyrinth an extraordinary encounter takes place. The phenomenon of the mirror awakens the pilgrim to a knowledge of himself. He sees the Shaykh, the master of this city, who waits on the royal throne:

"I greet Thee," I said. He returned my greeting. I spoke to him and he spoke to me. Everything that I did, he did also. Everything that I said, he also said. I looked at him closely: that is me, I thought. That Shaykh is my reflected image ('aksî). At once I woke up. I remembered all my promises. While I was in this bewilderment, I met the minister of my Lord, who had instructed me. He took me by the hand and said: "Immerse yourself into the Water, because it is the Water of Life." When I had immersed myself I understood the symbols and the riddles of his person. He said to me: "Welcome! You are now one of us!" (anta minnâ). He announced my return to my original home.

This passage is in perfect accord with the one that we read at the end of the "Recital of Occidental Exile".

Thanks to similar recitals, especially those of Suhrawardi, it will certainly not be difficult to come up with several identifications for the dramatis personae. The king can be the Lord God. The "minister" will be the Active Intellect, the one whom philosophers traditionally call Dator formarum, and whom the "oriental" theosophers, Suhrawardi's Ishriqiyyân, identify with the Holy Spirit and the Angel of Humanity, who is both the Angel of Revelation and the Angel of Knowledge, the Angel of Sinai in the "Recital of the Exile". Finally, the Shaykh in the middle of the city is then the Perfect Nature, the celestial alter ego of the traveler. Again, always in terms of Suhrawardian theosophy, these three figures respectively assume the role of Active Intellect, who is the Dator formarum, the role of the Perfect Nature, who is the personal Angel of the Gnostic, and finally the role of the soul-self descended into this world whom Suhrawardi, borrowing as we have seen a term from ancient Iranian chivalry, called by the name of Espalbad Light (in a certain sense like the hegemónikon of the Stoics). However, a Shi'ite mystic can equally well see in the king and the minister who waits upon his "threshold", the figures of the Imam and his replacement (his nâ'îb or his bâb, "threshold").

There is no urgency to make a choice between the various explanations, because what is interesting is that they in no way exclude one another. They, as well as other ones

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115 A nta minnâ! These are also the words that occur in the formula which consecrates Salman the Persian as one of the members of the House of the Prophet (anta minnâ Ahl al-bayât) The formula seems to have taken on a ritual meaning in Shi'ite esoterism. Within the present context the two words have definitively a meaning similar to that of initiation.
Besides them, are all possible and if this is so, then it is because the identity of the same dramatic element is kept, while the functional properties of each of the figures are able to vary. That element consists in the following: the Dator formarum, the same one from whom our souls and our knowledge emanate, will be present at the agreed upon meeting place, and this since before the departure of the traveler who was sent into the terrestrial world, exactly to rediscover himself, a rediscovery in the bewilderment of the mirror reflecting his own image. Regarding the meeting place, we could say that this is a perfect illustration of the correspondence between the various perspectives, the same ones that permitted a Swedenborg to direct the plans for his spiritual hermeneutics. The law of this correspondence is the following: whatever is on high and at the beginning is rediscovered in the center and in the heart, once it has come and has assumed dimensions (see above, book 1, chapter 4, § 2).

The end of the mystical journey, in the tenth and last chapter of our treatise, unveils the ultimate secret. It is important to be observant concerning the development of the various stages of this unveiling, here typified by the phenomenon of the mirror. The first time, in the center of the city, the traveler discovers that the Shaykh who governs the city is himself. The Shaykh is his own reflected image. The shock of this discovery awakens the traveler to an awareness of himself. Thus awakened, he sees near him, faithful to the agreed upon meeting, the minister of his king. That the minister is at the rim of the Spring of Life and that it is he who invites the traveler to plunge into this spring are two facts that suffice to suggest that the minister is none other than Khezr. However, in the conclusion of the "Recital of the Crimson Archangel" we read: "If you are Khezr", you too can cross the narrow gorges (the labyrinth) of Mount Qâf. Then, in our Indo-Persian recital, the traveler has indeed truly become Khezr and he discovers that the minister of his king is also the reflection of his own image.

The bewilderment of the phenomenon in the mirror takes place a second time for the traveler. Like the first time, under the shock of this bewilderment he discovers a presence. This time it is that of the king himself, who also is faithful to the agreed upon meeting, since its condition is now fulfilled. Only now an important reversal takes place. While the traveler discovered the last time that the Shaykh of his personal city, and subsequently the wise minister of his king, were both reflections of his own image, now in the last phase of his discovery, it is apparent that he himself is the reflected image of his king. He is now the mirror itself. His soul, his self (we refer here to what was analyzed in chapter 6, § 1 and § 4), i.e., this self who knows the "I" who knows itself, is this king. Previously the personal Angel of the Gnostic, and this self, the "I" who knows itself, was the reflected image of the king. Now it will be readily apparent why we drew attention to the ultimate discovery of the initiate, who now emerges from Leonardi da Vinci’s labyrinth with its octagonal chamber and its mirrors that infinitely multiply the image of whoever stands in its center. Finally, it is the phenomenon of the mirrors that allows us to understand the secret of esoterical tawhid.

The following is the conclusion of our Indo-Persian recital:

When I became aware of all these questions, I discovered that the minister of my king who was very near me, was myself. The minister was my reflected image. I was utterly amazed. In this bewilderment I met the king himself. He commanded me to take a thread woven by a spider. He took the thread and split it in two, then he put it back together into one thread again and said to me: "The one multiplied by the one is the One (1 x 1 = 1)." Then I understood what he meant: I discovered that he is my soul (nafsî, my "self") and that I myself am his reflected image.
Into this symbol $1 \times 1 = 1$, something is formulated for us that is no pseudo-mystical monotheism. Neither is it an abstract monotheism that isolates the personal divinity of the one of whom and through whom it reveals itself as a person. For want of understanding this, its contrary meanings in Sufism’s theosophy and the experience that it will lead to must be thoroughly understood. The mystic first discovers the images that return the soul’s image (the Shaykh of the personal city and the minister of the king). Finally, what is discovered is that the mystic is the mirror that reflects the image of the king. The situation can be compared with the thirty birds (simurgh) in the presence of the eternal Simurgh. Here the eternal Simurgh is the Dator formarum. There is no confusion of indifferentiation, nor is there opposition or confrontation of the one and the other, but $1 \times 1$. This symbol is preeminently the formula for dualitude, that safeguards a unity of essences without a confusion of persons, or without a confusion of "images" in the present context. Never two onenesses that are added ($1 + 1$) in order to make two, but two onenesses that are multiplied by one another ($1 \times 1$) exactly forming only one Oneness. This is the "cipher" of the esoteric, tawhid that we will rediscover once more further down (below, book 3) in Rûzbehân Shirâzi. That is also the secret of the Dator formarum that was rediscovered in the middle of the "personal city" and it is also the secret of the forms and their metamorphoses that was found this way by the mystical traveler.

It is without a doubt not before the attainment of such a spiritual awareness that what is truly an audacity of metamorphoses can be conceived of, an audacity that precisely keeps it from that catastrophe and that decomposition of forms, from that sterile turbulence of the unformed, that we are nowadays witnessing in so many areas. This audacity spreads itself into those single souls whom Sufism designates by various names as souls of desire. Since the history of a soul of desire very much begins before its entrance into this world, and our little Indo-Iranian spiritual romance has just shown us one example of this from among many others, it is towards this very origin that an interior norm takes root within the soul. This norm is absolutely its very own, and with it also the presentiment of a new form that did and will pertain forever only to the soul itself. One cannot but ask whether our world, now in such a breach with faith and hope, can still understand that for every one of us, for every oneness, the only new being is the one that guides us, and that only because it preexists. Does it understand that only this being, at once new and pre-eternal, "if we confide ourselves in it, will ultimately bring our innermost secret that we rather feel than think, never before formulated, to fruition, that what lives in us is identical with love itself?"¹¹⁶

6 The Recital of the Occidental Exile and the Gnostic gesture
Chapter 7

The Oriental Tradition

The Spiritual Legacy of the Royal Way

The preceding chapters have shown us the production of Suhrawardi’s "grandiose idea": the foundation of a spiritual culture that wholly embraces the totality of philosophical knowledge and aims at the same time at an integral spiritual realization of the person itself. The way of Ishråq, of "oriental" theosophy, revived out of ancient Persia, does not deviate either to the right or to the left. Travelers who set out on this way have as their vocation to be neither theoretical philosophers, forgetting the true finality, nor adventurers in mysticism, ignorant of the dangers that are incurred by those whom philosophy has not awakened to an awareness of themselves, and not forewarned against mirages of all kinds. That is why this way can be called "the royal way" (hê basilîkê hodôs). The term is borrowed from the mystical theosophy of Philo of Alexandria, whose work lends itself to many comparisons with our "oriental" theosophers, although it was ignored by them. Such comparisons will only extend those that others have already drawn between Philo’s idea of the divine "Energies" and the Amahraspands or Archangels of the Avesta. The name of the royal way comes from the Book of Numbers: "We will keep to the royal way without turning right or left, until we have crossed your land" (20:17, 21:22). This "royal way" is the one of gnosis. It leads the traveler to knowledge through direct vision, because it is the way of the "race of seers". The latter travel it to the very end, the apotheosis that is called ta’allohu y Suhrawardi. This is the way traveled by the "exile" to the summit of mystical Sinai, where the "eighth clime" is entered.

This royal way is also the one that the Islamic Gnostics designated as the "right way" (sirdî musta’qîm), that neither deviates to the right or to the left, the high road where the efficacies gathered from both sides culminate. Suhrawardi’s grandiose idea has made a profound impact upon the spiritual culture of Iran. Certainly, there have been theoretical philosophers and also Sufis that looked down on philosophy. Neither of them are typical of this culture in its totality. We already know of Mullâ Sadra Shirâzî’s testimony (below, book 5, chapter 2):

It is most fitting that the traveler towards God perform a synthesis of both methods. May one’s interior life never be devoid of philosophical meditation and inversely, may one’s philosophical meditation never occur without an effort of spiritual purification. Or said in another way: may one’s spiritual method be a barzakh (partition) linking the two methods, like the way followed by the inkama’ishråqiyyân, the "oriental" theosophers (the "Persian Platonists").

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Thus the spiritual pedagogy sought by Suhrawardi is carried out from century to century. The label of "the Royal Way" is so very fitting, because its hero was Kay Khusraw, that wise and visionary king, who in traveling this road perfects Iran's heroic epic into a mystical epic. A [ép on yme] hero, since every sage from ancient Persia who follows him on this "royal road" now carries his name: Khusravânîyûn, in Suhrawardi's thought synonymous with that of the Ishráqîyun.

We now realize how important Suhrawardi considers both this name and Kay Khusraw's role. The meaning that he gives to the example of Kay Khusraw and to the qualification of khusravânîyûn confirm for us his most explicit statements about his intentions concerning the revival of the mystical theosophy of the ancient Persian Sages. If the latter were "Oriental" (in the sense of the word Ishráqîyun) then this is because they were khusravânîyûn. Such is the meaning and the importance of what we could call Suhrawardi's Iranianism. The entirely spiritual character and the "hieratics" of this Iranianism are in plain view. This is the first time that we have used the expression Iranianism more or less explicitly. We are of the opinion that it would have figured in any great system of "philosophy of history" that flourished in the West, had it been known. In fact there is one where it does indeed figure, raised to the height of a metaphysical principle. However, the philosophical system where this is the case is itself the product of a school that is generally only known by specialists. We have in mind those who were called "Slavophiles" in the old Russia of the first half of the 19th century. Perhaps it is no geographical coincidence that this is where Iranianism grew into a philosophy. Unfortunately, it does not seem that Iranian philosophers of the period were in a position to know anything about it and beyond that, circumstances were not very favorable to have their attention drawn to a school mainly because of its Iranianism. We have had the occasion elsewhere to suggest affinities and contrasts between the Iranianism of an Alexis Khomiakov and a Suhrawardi. We realize that an entire book is necessary for this since it concerns an area of comparisons that is again totally unexplored. We will only summarize the principal suggestions here that have been made elsewhere.

According to the grandiose philosophy of history constructed by Alexis Khomiakov that is totally unrelated to the Hegelian dialectic, two principles oppose one another, two types of civilization that originate from the very beginning of human history: the one is the principle of liberty that expresses itself through creation, the other is the principle of necessity that is expressed through generation. These two principles are personified by the names that Khomiakov gave them: Iranianism is the spiritual creative principle, the religion of moral freedom; (Kousch is the biblical name for Ethiopia) is the religion of physical and logical necessity. Kouschism only knows the necessary bond of logical reasoning; in this sense it founds its greatest expression in Hegel's system. Iranianism, Iranian thought, "is founded on tradition and never builds itself up through purely logical actions, because the concept of its creative liberty is not enclosed within formulas and cannot be deduced from any. It can only be deduced by a higher intuition that goes beyond the narrow limits of reasoning, where all the degrees of negation have run their course through the travail of the ages."

Can it be said that in Suhrawardi Kouschism is represented by Peripatetic philosophy, the "land of logic", the necessity of the laws of rational understanding? What Hegel was in the eyes of Khomiakov, was typified by Peripateticism in Suhrawardi's mind, although Aristotle himself was excluded. It is this land of logical necessity that finds itself breached by the visionary theosophy of the Khusravânîyûn from Iran, by the free impulse of a configurative vision, a "higher intuition" that penetrates spiritual universes that a logical dialectic is unable to trespass into. The affirmation of the mundus imaginalis is therefore a paradox that is able to overcome their antagonism, daring to "depart" from the constraints of empiricism.

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2 Cf. our study De l'épopée héroïque à l'épopée mystique (Emnnos-Jahrbuch XXXV), Zürich 1967, pp. 227 ff.

and the proofs of rational logic. "Where every degree of negation has run its course," says Khomiakov. On his part, Suhrawardi nevertheless requires that disciples have first mastered every stage of Peripatetic philosophy, of the domain of logic, although he very much objected to Peripateticism itself (he did the same thing himself in the first part of his "Oriental Theosophy", but under the inspiration of Stoicism, where hermeneutics dominates the dialectic, in a way now leaving logic simplified and broken up, and the book ends in visionary metaphysics). The koushite principle cannot be overcome by ignoring it and leaving it behind. Perhaps Khomiakov’s genius-like foresight will have an unintended effect when it is confronted by the detailed proposals of Suhrawardi, the "reviver" of the theosophical wisdom of ancient Iran.

Indeed what mattered to Khomiakov was neither geography nor history, or even ethnic origin, but religious principles, or rather the struggle between the two principles that constitute the drama of the spiritual history of humanity. His philosophy is concerned with the elevation of what is hidden in the very roots of the life of a people, the Russian race in particular, to the rank of universal value. For him, as for the Slavophiles, this concerns mainly the vocation of the Russian people to Orthodoxy, and perhaps there is also a latent preoccupation here with a temporal ideal, what might be called a fundamental "populism". Such a concern is completely foreign to Suhrawardi’s Iranianism. He has shown us that it is not the Iranian people who merited the qualification of "Orientals" as such, in the sense that he intended this expression. The knowledge of his ancient sages is not "oriental" simply because of their ethnic origin. Inversely, it is "oriental" knowledge that has made pre-eminent "Orientals" of these Iranians. The Light of this "orient" is the Light of Glory (Xvarnah) that can inhabit a person and also withdraw itself again. The "oriental" ascendancy that Suhrawardi claims for himself and his followers does not arise from ethnic principles but from a hieratic ascendancy (in the Neoplatonic sense of this word). It surmounts causal relationships between people and state. The titles in support of such an ascendancy pertain to a history that deconstructs what we call common history.

This is the reason that our comparative search will have to consider the choice of another term. What comes to mind is the work of Constantin Leontiev, who put his faith not in Russia or its people, but in the sacral and the hieratics of the Byzantine world. Any concern about a mystical foundation for a temporal theocratic order was completely foreign to him. To the degree that Byzantine hieratics takes upon itself the heritage of the Neoplatonists and their "hieratic" wisdom, referred to in the beginning, Suhrawardi’s intentions lend themselves to a comparison with what Leontiev had in mind, something entirely spiritual and ascetic. What matters for him is not a people, but the sacred principles that inhabit and dominate them. What the idea of the Byzantine sacred is for the one that the idea of the theosophic wisdom of ancient Iran is for the other. Similarly, the principle of liberty that typified Khomiakov’s Iranianism and his historicosophic dramaturgy can be seen at work here. However, there is no one who is more revolutionary and also more traditionalist at the same time than Suhrawardi, since insofar as he claimed to have had no predecessor it is through him and beginning with him that there is an "oriental" tradition, the ishrâqi tradition, connecting the spirituality of ancient Iran with that of Islamic Iran.

Consequently it was not without irony that we recently came upon an objection voiced against a colleague of ours, for having classified Suhrawardi as a Sufi. It maintained that he obviously was a hellenizing philosopher unconnected with any "regularly constituted" Sufi twïqat, as one would have it. However, the name "hellenizing philosopher" was generally given to those who Suhrawardi excluded from the "royal way", because they were mere philosophers. Thus he himself could not have been one of these "hellenizing philosophers". Such a reliance on Sufi membership, that there existed no diplomas or investitures for,
amounts to a western mania for canonical and bureaucratic concepts that Suhrawardi’s "Orientals" were total strangers to. Suhrawardi continually showed that he did not want to belong to a "regularly constituted" tradition and what it stood for: he gave his life for it. Spiritual ascendance is a witness; it cannot be proven through documents from archives, but only through a mode of existence, of living and thinking, that is used as a model. There was, and still is in Iran today, a Sufism outside of Sufism, that doesn’t carry its name and even refuses it, preferring the terms ‘irfân and ‘orafî. There are also Shi’ite Sufi tarîqat that are "regularly constituted". Similarly there are some that did not leave and will not leave any traces in historical archives. That does not keep their "members" from being Sufis in the real sense of the word. The spiritual legacy that was left by Suhrawardi was received by him in an instant at an immeasurable height, where "regularly constituted" tarîqat don’t matter. In turn, the tarîqat of the Ishraqîyûn have no archives. Suhrawardi left it up to his followers to discover his spiritual legacy while on the "royal way", the only task that they are engaged in. This engagement does not depend upon external formalities, but on a hidden vocation that Suhrawardi expressly makes reference to at the conclusion of his "Oriental Theosophy", in the "testament" that he addresses to his followers.

This testament is composed in the final pages of his work, that we will now present a brief summary of. These pages confirm that the "Oriental Theosophy" was not written as a theoretical treatise, but was in fact meant to be a treatise on angelology. It is aimed at practical matters and as such can be used as an instrument of meditation and spiritual realization. Instead of theological and theosophical "theorems", there are psycho-spiritual energies capable of reaching realization and enabling the reception of such a gift. There is a correlation between angelic epiphanies and the degree of spiritual intensity resulting in experiential individualization in the mystic. The second to last chapter of book 5, preceding the testament, presents an experimental verification of the other prior books. There is an introduction of two "psalms" that suspend the logical progression of the final part of the book. The author notes that in order to understand the secret meaning of these psalms, it will be necessary to be more familiar with someone called the "Keeper of the Book", who is again mentioned in the final lines of the testament. Their secret is similar to that of the "Book of Hours" (wâridât wa taqdîsât) that we gave two translations (fr) from and that we have commented upon (above, chapter 3, § 5). The eschatological resonance announces ecstatic events that are urged to take place soon. It has a Manichean flavor similar to Suhrawardi’s other psalms: "Draw the litany of the Light from on high, deliver the people of the Light, lead the Light towards the Light."

This is the beginning of the first of the two psalms or "improvisations" (wâridât) occurring at the end of the book of "Oriental Theosophy". "Behold, God’s Angels come to meet the wanderers who knock at the gate of the high mansions of Light, full of righteousness and resolve, and they draw them to the Orient of Lights; they greet them with salutations from the world of Malakût; they pour out over them the Water that gushes from the Spring of Beauty, to cleanse them completely." When this lyrical outburst subsides, the discussion continues with a description of the experiences of the spirituals (§ 272). Appropriately, the commentators (Qub Shirazi and Shahrizuri) remind us7 that not all of the theoretical problems that are dealt with in this book were personally verified by the author, but that all of the truly illuminative states that are mentioned, refer to experiences truly verified and experienced by him: the fifteen kinds of lights and fulgurations that overawe the mystic, following a period of apprenticeship, occurring at a time of average advancement, up to the moment when the first degree of perfection is reached; the secondary phenomena (e.g.,

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6Ibid., § 261, pp. 244 ff., and Prolegomenes II, pp. 56 ff. The text of the commentaries is given in a footnote.

7Ibid., in a note to line 5.
sounds) that accompany these; their apparently contradictory nature (both sadness and delight); the visualization of the interior being as it is brought to incandescence, etc., all of these things are described with a detail and a descriptive language proper to experiential knowledge. A comparison comes to mind with similar experiences (visualizations of the Lights) recorded by Najmuddin Kubra (d. 1220), 'Ala'uddawleh Semnani (d. 1336), and Sayyed Muh. Nurbakhsh (d. 1464).

"When the Divine Lights have multiplied on a human being, they clothe it like a robe of power and majesty, and souls allow themselves to be led by it" (§ 277). The word Xvarnah is not mentioned here, but we have already remarked about these lines and how they are expressions used elsewhere by Suhrawardi for the investiture of Royal Xvarnah upon the mystical life of the pilgrim who swoons under the assault of the Archangelic Lights and rises up again crowned in royalty. This transmutation of being by the fulgurations of Xvarnah, the Light of Glory, corresponds to an Event that is personally experienced by the mystic in Malakat; we have witnessed the importance that was accorded by Suhrawardi to the person and ecstasy of Hermes; these lines are very reminiscent of the Ars regia of the Hermetists.

Finally the solemn lines of the spiritual testament occur (above, chapters 1 and 2), reminding us before the gathering silence that this is not a book that can be studied like any other book, since it does not merely deal with the communication of knowledge but with the provocation of a true event of the soul, the same one that Suhrawardi describes for us in his initiatory recitals: the crossing of Mount Qaf, access to mystical Sinai, in short, the traveling of the "Royal Way".

Brothers, I leave you in testament the safeguarding of God's commands, the denunciation of things that are forbidden and the orientation of your entire being towards God, who is our Lord and the Light of Lights. I leave you the denunciation of every word and deed that do not concern you and a breach with every suggestion of the demon. I entrust you with the safeguarding of this book. Watch over it, preserve it from the profane that is unworthy of it. May it take my place (my "caliph") among you before God! I have finished writing it at the end of the month of Jumada II (September 16, 1186), in the year 582 of the Hegira, the day when the seven planets were in conjunction in the sign of the Balance, towards the end of the day. Only give it to those who are worthy of it and who have given proof of a solid knowledge of Peripatetic philosophy, and whose hearts are full of love for the Divine Light. When these conditions are fulfilled and before one applies oneself to the study of this book, it is also necessary that the aspirant undertake a retreat of forty days, abstain from all meat, only take a minimum of food and drink, and let go of every care other than the meditation of God's Light and the following of everything that the Keeper of the Book prescribes. When the waiting period for the study of this book has thus passed, one can be totally absorbed in its study (§§ 278-280).

The one concern that preoccupied the Shaykh al-Ishraq when he finished his book was therefore that it would only fall into the hands of an aspirant of the "royal way", i.e., someone who had completed the entire cycle of Peripatetic philosophy, but who was also in the possession of a love that could lead beyond it and liberate someone from the chain of exoteric and theoretical evidence. The commentators say that only someone who aspired to be engaged on the experimental way leading to the Orient of Lights could be admitted to the "community of the book of Oriental Theosophy" (ahl hadhâ'l-kitâb). These words appear in strict agreement with the Koranic expression Ahl al-Kitâb, the people of the Book, and

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8Concerning the passages that are mentioned here and Yanbû' al-bahâ' (Source of Beauty and Splendor) as the equivalent of Yanâbî' al-Khurrâh, cf. above, notes 139, 140, 149 and 156.
the Ishrâqīyūn considered the Book of Oriental Theosophy just like it, as a book that had "descended from Heaven". Again, the "Keeper of the Book" is mentioned; this will reoccur before the end.

The commentators enter into detail concerning the program of the forty day retreat, only mentioned in a few words by the Shaykh and that prepares for the study of the book: the observation of a preliminary bodily hygiene; the choice of a hermitage that is sheltered from the rumors and preoccupations of mankind, an oratory that only receives indirect light; the observation of a vegetarian regimen; no breaking of the fast after evening prayers, food that is only taken in small quantities but that is prepared delicately (white bread, cereal, seasoning herbs, almonds, nuts, sesame oil). The retreatant has to use scents both for personal use and in the oratory. Through the dhâkr, either mentally or spoken, the mind must be preoccupied night and day with the presence of God, the Angels and the Archangels of the higher celestial hierarchies. Elsewhere, in the "Symbol of Faith of philosophers", the Shaykh suggests that meditation can be aided by melodies that are sung in a low voice and the contemplation of appropriate images, etc. All this to consecrate extended periods in the consideration of themselves and "their souls" as already having left sensible space and time, already having recovered the immateriality (tajarrud) of their pure essence. Suhrawardi had many visions that lead him to justify the noetic validity of the Imagination and the ontological ranking of the mundus imaginalis: visions of beings from the spiritual world in forms whose beauty surpasses every other beauty. Qutbuddîn Shirâzi recapitulates this in words that are identical to those of Shahrazûri:

Behold, a flash of light will fulgurate upon the soul if it persists long enough in such contemplation of itself. This is a light that emanates upon the soul from the Archangelic Intelligence, a most exquisite light that takes place in a flash of ecstasy. The Shaykh (Suhrawardi) described the various suprasensible lights in detail: next comes a light that envelops the physical organism (to the interior vision); then a light that effaces and abolishes all other awareness from the soul except that of its eternal Lover. This is the ultimate mystical degree.

This degree is presented in another context as the third of these kinds of mystical states of awareness, where there is first you and I, then I and no you, finally you and no I. The pilgrim on the royal way is aiming at this ultimate degree and with it in mind Suhrawardi concludes his "Symbol of Faith of Philosophers":

These are the ones who have the superabundant part and the highest rank, both in this world and in the one beyond. Happy are they who have known themselves like this before death and who have realized in themselves in the present world a degree that, having been its happiness in the period of its decrepitude, will be its joy in the period of its eternity.

The last testament of the "Oriental Theosophy" ends with the following words:

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9 Cf. I'Itiqâd al-hukamâ' (the Symbol of Faith of Philosophers), Ÿ 15, in Op.Met.II, p. 271. Concerning this work, see Prolegomenes II, pp. 79-85; despite certain theoretical variants it already expresses the essential preoccupation of the "Oriental Theosophy".

10 Ibid., Ÿ 15, p. 271.

11 Hikmat al-Ishrâq, pp. 252-254, p. 258 (the commentary refers to line 10), pp. 298-299, second gloss.

12 I'Itiqâd, Ÿ 15, the last lines.
Those who do a serious study of this book will recognize that others from long ago and also from more recent times were lacking something that God has granted my tongue to express. This book was inspired in my heart by the Holy Spirit in a single instant, at the time of a marvelous journey, although I could only carry out the task of writing it during several months because of the difficulties caused by my traveling. It is a treatise that concerns matters of the utmost gravity. Divine wrath will not escape anyone who denies what it says, because God is powerful and has the power to retaliate (3:3). May no one desire to know the secrets of this book without having recourse to the person who was a caliph possessing the knowledge of the Book (13:43 and 27:40).

These lines are charged with meanings that the commentators help us unravel. What people long ago and more recently were lacking was the way of the "oriental" theosophers, or Ishráqíyûn. This was the royal way, the partition that combined and reunited the exoteric and theoretical knowledge of the philosophers with spiritual esoteric realization. It was something that neither the Islamic philosophers (al-Fârâbî, Avicenna and others) were able to achieve with their philosophy alone, nor the Sufis attained merely with their ascetics. That is what made this book such a serious matter and what made anyone who denied its importance or the author's claims the subject of divine wrath. This testament is in complete agreement with the concept of the hierarchy of sages that is established by its preface (above, chapter 2, § 3), when it makes reference to an uninterrupted and secret hierarchy of sages; this hierarchy culminates in the mysterious figure of the mystical pole, who is always present in this world, even when he is totally ignored by people, and of which we noted that nothing had to be changed in order for Shi'ites to be able to recognize the Twelfth Imam here, "invisible to the eyes of the flesh but present in the hearts of his faithful." Indeed, this testament of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq again refers his followers to the mysterious "Keeper of the Book". Let us note that this is the pre-eminent qualification that was claimed by the Shi'ite Imams themselves: they are the "Keepers of the Book", because they possess the exoteric and the esoteric at the same time, that integral hermeneutics that makes the Imam the "Speaking Koran".

This coincidence between the Shi'ite and ishrâq lexicons was no chance event. Indeed, Sufism that was not Shi'ite also recognized an esoteric succession of poles. For example, according to Semnâni, the lineage that antedated the prophet of Islam passed through Muhammad and subsequently through the Imams up to the 12th, and thereafter it continued through everyone that Sufism has known from age to age as the "Pole of poles". This lineage, quite different from the Shi'ite concept of the cycle of the walyât, differs radically with it in that it does not recognize the 12th Imam as always present in this world and does not consider the latter as a type of permanent "pole of poles" (Qutb al-aqtâb). It is no less different from the lineage that Suhrawardi recognizes, that only retains some of the "poles" of Sufism, since its ascendency is elsewhere. We also know that everyone agrees with the dictum: Ishráq is to philosophy what Sufism is to the kalâm (dialectical, rational and exoteric theology). There is an analogous relationship, but no identity, between Ishráq and Sufism. It remains true that the qualification of "Keeper of the Book" given by Suhrawardi to his successors is literally that of the Shi'ite Imam as he relates to the Koran, with the difference that here the relationship is with the book of "Oriental Theosophy". Let us also note the structure that the Shaykh al-Ishrâq outlined the ascendency of the Ishráqíyûn in (above, chapters 1 and 2). There is indeed the concept of succession, but not something that is documented in the archives of a "regularly constituted" association, because it deals with "matters too grave" to be reduced to something like that. It is likely that Suhrawardi's project was meant to be continued after his death. Already the idea of an Ishráq community has been suggested, with its own "inspired writings", gathered around the one who is the Qâ'im, who "possesses the knowledge of the book". This concept is modeled after the Shi'ite one. As far as we
know, up to now only Shamsuddîn Shahrazûrî claimed the qualification of "Keeper of the knowledge of the Book" towards the end of his commentary. Have there been others since him? Should the lineage of the "Keepers of the Book of Ishrāq" be considered to also be withdrawn into the ghayb, into occultation? In any case we are at least able to discover the lineage of some of the great personages who illustrate the ulterior destiny of the "Oriental Theosophy" and its considerable influence in Iran.

Oriental Posterity in Iran and India

Current status of our knowledge and of the inventory of texts necessitates that we considerably limit ourselves to only a certain number of reference points. These are most certainly of significance; however, it is impossible to appreciate the influence of the ishrāqi concept in all of Iranian thought when so many of the texts are still only accessible in manuscript form. The Anthology that is now in preparation will greatly contribute to this knowledge.

The first name that must be inscribed on the Suhrawardîan lineage of Ishrāq, the lineage of the "Persian Platonists", is that of Shamsuddîn Shahrazûrî. Strangely enough, we know almost nothing about the biography of this philosopher who himself wrote an entire book on the lives of other philosophers, both from before and since the coming of Islam. He identifies so completely with his work that it alone gives us a few details concerning his person. In addition to this work, there are the two huge commentaries on two of Suhrawardî's works: the "Book of Intimations inspired by the Tablet and the Throne" (Talwîhât) and the "Book of Oriental Theosophy". We certainly do know that there was a young disciple named Shams who shared the Shaykh al-Ishrāq's captivity in Aleppo. It would be nice if this was the same Shamsuddin Shahrazûrî who was his enthusiastic biographer and commentator. However, it is not possible to affirm that the latter was in personal contact with Suhrawardî; otherwise, why are there noticeable uncertainties in the Shaykh's biography, especially regarding the date of his death? Aside from that, it also makes it necessary to give him exceptional longevity. Among his other works there is a monumental encyclopedia entitled "Treatises on the Divine Tree and on Theosophical Secrets". It is a summary of every philosophy that had occurred in Islam up to the author and we look forward to the moment that he is definitely found to be its editor. This was completed in 680/1282. No doubt this monument, the work of a lifetime, was completed close to the end of his life. A notation of a copyist who transcribed the author's original permits us to assume that he was still alive in 687/1288, a century after Suhrawardî's death. It therefore seems that Shahrazûrî was able to be in contact with the immediate disciples; his adherence to Suhrawardî's Ishrāq was the more profound because it was the result of a conversion, following an attitude of reticence; in another of his works (Hill al-rumûz, Solution of the Enigmas) there doesn't seem to be a trace of Ishrāq.

We have already described the style and the structure of the two vast commentaries dedicated to the works of Suhrawardî elsewhere, and also why it appears to us that Shahrazûrî...
takes chronological precedence over the other commentators, despite the silence of the others on this matter. There is no dedication in the preface to the commentary on the "Oriental Theosophy"; there isn't any eulogy to some prince or other famous person who might have caused the redaction of the commentary. Thus there is no need for concern about complacency. The commentary seems to be entirely inspired by fidelity and faithfulness, by a devotion without reliance on a cult of an idealized figure. The sole eulogy is Suhrawardi’s panegyric following the lamentation on the destruction of the high sciences and the effacement of the paths along the way of the ancient sages, the ones who truly experienced theurgic wisdom. When the Shaykh al-Ishrāq appeared, so says Shahrazuri, "he took it upon himself to renew what the course of time had corrupted, to cause to reappear what it had been effaced... to revive what had been dead and abolished." Philosophy had been totally eclipsed by Peripateticism. The intent of this book is something other; it is addressed to the "ones who stand alone", to individuals separated from the masses and that is why it was neglected at first. "Yet the hour of high noon arrives for this eminent person." Behold, after journeys and displacements, after encounters between persons who had the aptitude to comprehend it, after having banished from their heart all vulgar philosophy, now the interest and the attraction to this unique work grows, "because neither ourselves nor any others have ever read a book that covers the theosophical and mystagogical sciences so completely." Such is Shahrazuri's most honorable motive for composing his commentary.

One last important and significant detail. In the preceding pages we already noted Suhrawardi’s mysterious allusions to the one who will be the "Keeper of the Book", or the "Keeper of the Knowledge of the Book", i.e. the book of "Oriental Theosophy". This "Keeper" will be his representative among those who will make up something like the Order of Ishrāqīyūn in the future. We also noted a similar qualification in Shi‘ite terminology regarding the Imam as the "Keeper of the Book". Unlike the other commentators, Shahrazuri does not hesitate to claim the qualification foreseen by Suhrawardi. The commentary ends on this solemn declaration: "The Keeper of the Knowledge of the Book for the present epoch declares: this is the end of what we have been able to bring to a successful conclusion of the commentary of this sublime book, with the help of divine assistance." The responsibility and qualification thus claimed by Shahrazuri seems to implicate an investiture whose origin and importance still seem shrouded in mystery.

The person of Qutbuddin Shirāzi, another great commentator on the book of "Oriental Theosophy", presents a much more precise bibliographic silhouette. He was from Fārs, born in Shirāz in 634/1237. His father, Ziyāuddîn Mas‘ud ibn Maslak, originally from Kazerūn, was both a Sufi Shaykh and a physician. Thus the future "eminent scholar" (‘allāmeh) was from infancy in contact with matters of science and the spiritual life. He made numerous voyages, always in search of spiritual and scientific information; he is seen in Khurasan, in Anatolia, in Syria and in Iraq. Other famous masters knew him, like Nasiruddin Tusi, the famous Shi‘ite astronomer and philosopher, and the great mystic Sadrudin Qunawi, Ibn ‘Arabi’s son in law and disciple. All of his work is of an encyclopedic nature. Just as Shahrazuri composed an encyclopedia, so Qutb Shirāzi also composed one, inclusive of the system of sciences that we noted above and that is still unpublished. One incident reported by Mirkhond tarnishes the image that we have of this man. He harbored a senseless and tenacious grudge against his master Nasir Tusi, to the point of participating in a plot to ruin the reputation of this eminent philosopher and astronomer with the Mongol Hūlagū sovereign. (The conspiracy did not succeed, the construction of the observatory that

18Prélégomènes II, pp. 66-69.
19Publication of this encyclopedia, which carries the title Durrat al-Tāj [The Pearl of the Crown], is currently in process in Teheran. A first volume contains philosophy and is being edited by Meshkât, who has included a lengthy biography and bibliography [Teheran 1320 h.s.]. A second volume contains mathematics and music [teheran 1324 h.s.]. Cf. Khwânsârî, Rawzât al-jannât, Teheran 1306, pp. 532-533.
was prized by the sovereign was not terminated). It is better to doubt what happened to Qutbuddin, as the good Khwânsârî does, although he adds: "It is true that this was not the first bottle that was broken in Islam." Our Qutbuddin died in Tabrîz, Ramazan, in 710 (January 1311, at the age of 76 (Lunar) years.

His great commentary on the book of "Oriental Theosophy" begins with a eulogy of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq that is just as warm as the one that was written by Shahrazûrî. He also notes that it was the mystical theosophy (hikmat dhawaqqiya) of the ancient sages that contained the knowledge of the mundus imaginialis that the resurrection of the body takes place through. This is a gnosis of divine mysteries and of eternally subsisting lights that cannot be attained through "philosophical babbling" but only through a sublimation of the transconscious (taltīf al-sirr). Likewise, declares Qutbuddin, this is what Avicenna stated in certain pages of his book on the Ishârât. Then, after deploring the dialectical excesses of the Peripatetics, similar to both Suhrawardi and Shahrazûrî, Qutbuddin alludes to the theosophical wisdom that leads to interior vision, to contemplative visualization (mushâhada). This is not gathered either from definitions or from syllogisms, but through the lights that rise in the Orient of the soul (Anwâr ishrâqîya) and penetrate it with their image like a mirror, seizing it like fire seizes iron that is being heated. Such is the state of souls who "have searched for the Orient and the illumination of the divine Light". The book of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq remains a hidden treasure. Qutbuddin intends to facilitate the way for the soul who aspires to put this book into practice. This intent leads him to write a magisterial commentary that was completed in 694/1295 when he was sixty years old. We noted above that the great encyclopedia that Shahrazûrî incorporated into the substance of his own Suhrawardian commentaries was completed in 680/1282. That seems conclusive enough for the chronological precedence of Shahrazûrî’s commentary. Aside from this, Qutbuddin’s commentary consists of long passages that are nothing but a literal reproduction of Shahrazûrî’s text. Nonetheless, it also contains numerous developments that are not present in the latter, and his commentary is structured entirely different. Shahrazûrî proceeds through lemmata and inserts his own personal contributions among them. Qutbuddin, aware of the difficulty of Suhrawardi’s very concise writing, inserts his commentary in the author’s phraseology and explains the latter’s complexities, before giving his own commentary, full of notes, citations and comparisons, explaining the implied meanings, gradually clearing up all obscurity. In short, he is the better of the guides. This is also the reason that the edition of the "Book of Oriental Theosophy" with his commentary became the text-book for generations of Ishrâqûn. Manuscripts of these are much more numerous than for those of Shahrazûrî that seemed to have been relegated to the background, somewhat like the work of Mullâ Sadrâ Shirazi eclipsed that of his master Mir Dâmâd at a later time.

Among the great commentators of Suhrawardi’s works, special mention should be made of Ibn Kammûna (d. 683/1284). He is the author of a vast commentary on a work that has already been cited here and whose complexity makes it particularly difficult: "The Book of Intimations inspired by the Tablet and the Throne". This work consists of three parts: logic, physics and metaphysics. It forms the first part of a trilogy that in Suhrawardi’s mind had to be an indispensable introduction to the study of his great book of "Oriental Theosophy". Ibn Kammûna does not hide the difficulties that he encountered and he

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20 Ibid., p. 610, lines 34-35.
21 Proélégomènes II, pp. 67-68; Tehran Lithograph 1315, p. 6. The soul who looks for the Orient (shârîq) is a mustashriqûn soul. Even today orientalists are called mustashriqûn in Arabic. Faced with the meaning that is given to this by the Ishrâqûn, this designation is not without a certain humor.
22 Cf. Proélégomènes II, p. 69.
23 Cf. above, p. 9, note 3: the trilogy is formed by works that are respectively entitled Talâwîhât [Intimations] Muqâwamat [Opposites] and Mutârâhât [Paths and Havens], each consisting of three parts: logic, physics and metaphysics. These three works are an introduction to the "Book of Oriental Theosophy". With the latter, this whole forms a great systematic tetralogy.
would have stopped the effort were it not for fear of disappointing the people who had asked him to write the commentary. He finished his work in 667/1268. In its turn, this commentary contains numerous passages that are exactly alike to the one that Shahrazûrî wrote on the same treatise of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq. Again we are faced with the same question as before: who came first? We have stated elsewhere in a description of this work that went into greater detail, why it again seems to us to have to decide in favor of Shahrazûrî. This in no way diminishes the importance of Ibn Kammûna’s work; his commentary remains an indispensable instrument for a detailed study of the "Book of Intimations", and reveals through its citations a perfect knowledge of Suhrawardi’s other works. At the time of our edition of Suhrawardi’s texts some twenty years ago, we ourselves made use of the example of Ibn Kammûna’s commentary that rightly belonged to Qutbuddin Shirâzî, the commentator on the "Oriental Theosophy".

We must now contend ourselves with mentioning some names that deserve to be cited as reference points. The philosopher Athiruddin Abhari (d. 663/1265) prepares the way for those who are of the opinion, like Shahrazûrî, that the name "metaphysics" (mâ ba’d al-tabî’a) is only true for ourselves, because man first perceives sensible things; the anteriority of the "physics" of the Naturâlia is therefore only an anteriority of collection and not one of essence; it concerns a pedagogical necessity. In reality the principles of the Naturâlia are ontologically and causally anterior to those of the Naturâlia themselves; these must be established first and should therefore be called prephysics rather than metaphysics. Abhari wrote an entire treatise concerning this (Kashf al-haqâ’iq), where prephysics faithfully reproduces the ishrâqi philosophy of human posthumous development, as described by Suhrawardi.

It would be interesting to investigate the ishrâqi influence in the work of the great Shi’ite philosopher Nasiruddin Tusî, cited above. Relative to angelology and the procession of Intelligences, Mullâ Sadrâ noted very correctly what Nasir Tusî owed to the esoteric application of physical laws and of optics, as practiced by Suhrawardi, putting into question the famous principle ex uno non fit nisi unum. Among the commentators and disciples of Ibn ’Arabi, especially ’Abdurrazzâq Kâshânî (d. about 730/1330) pays particular attention to the Hermetist origins of the Ishráqîyân. Ishráqî influence is also notable in the great work of Ibn Abî Jumhûr (the K. al-Mujâh, composed in 895/1490, hardly ten years before the coming of Shâh Isma’îl), a work that together with the Summary of Haydar Amuli (8th/14th century) definitely forms the junction between Shi’ite theosophy and that of Ibn ’Arabi. The connections with Suhrawardi’s Ishráq should also be investigated in all of Ibn ’Arabi’s work itself. There will again be occasion (below, book 4) to show how an eminent Shi’ite philosopher from the 15th century, Sânîuddin Turkeh Ispahání (d. 830/1426 or 836/1432), who was himself a commentator on the Fusûs of Ibn ’Arabi, situates the Ishráqîyân. All of his work, extremely important for the metaphysics of being, remains to be studied.

Jalâduddîn Dawwânî (d. 907/1501), who was converted to Shi’ism as the result of a dream, was also an assiduous commentator of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq. The main contribution of this prolific writer is a commentary on the "Book of the Temples of Light" that Ghiyâthuddin Mansûr Shirâzî (d. 949/1542) responded to with a counter-commentary.  

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24 Prélègomenes II, pp. 64-65 and 70-73.
25 Ibid., p. 21 and note 20 giving an analysis of Aya Sophia manuscript 2453.
26 Mullâ Sadrâ calls special attention to this debt of Nasiruddin Tusi in his commentary on another work by Abhari, Shârî al-’Idâ’id, Tehran 1313, pp. 366-367.
28 Prélègomenes I, p. 48. This name brings up a dynasty of philosophers all from Iran. The father, Sadruddin Dastakhi Shirâzî (not to be confused with Mullâ Sadrâ who is also a Sadruddin Shirâzî), surnamed Amir Sadruddin or Sadruddin Kabîr (the Great), was one of the most eminent Imamite Iranian scholars of the 9th century of the Hegira; assassinated by the Turkomans in 903/1497, he was buried in Shirâz (Râyhanât II, p. 461, 847). His son, Ghiyâthuddin Mansîr, to whom certain biographers give the somewhat pompous
Two personages from Tabrîz must especially be mentioned: Wadûd Tabrîzî wrote a systematic commentary on the "Book of Tablets dedicated to 'Imâduddîn", the Seljukid emir of Anatolia (Alwâh Imâdîyâ). We have already referred here to the passages of this work that concern Xvarnah. The commentary was completed in 930/1524. A certain Najmuddîn Mahmûd Tabrîzî, a contemporary of Wadûd, wrote concerning the "glosses of the book of "Oriental Theosophy". We repeat that none of these commentaries can be disregarded; they are similar to something that we publish nowadays in specialized journals.

This enumeration that may have seemed a bit dry leads us to the point where doctrine and spiritual experience of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq show themselves as truly having the power of a well-spring of thought, a meeting place of spiritual universes that communicate with each other on the level of gnosis. Already the "Book of Intimations" (Talwîhât) had been translated into Hebrew. In the 16th century Suhrawardi's work extends its influence towards India, while in Iran it contributes to the philosophical renaissance of the Safavid period. It exerts a strong influence over the circle of scholars around the emperor Akbar (1556-1605), the Mongol sovereign of India, and on his noble project of an ecumenical religion (din-i ilâhî, religio divina). Ishrâqî theosophy was one of the sources of this "ecumenism" as it looked for direction. A period began of intense spiritual exchanges between Iran and India, with many comings and goings of philosophers and Sufis. We will restrict ourselves to two witnesses of the fructification of Suhrawardi's work in the Persian language, since it also was the cultural language of northwestern India. Of these two witnesses one is related to the movement that grew around the initiative of Shâh Akbar. The other is made up entirely of Zoroastrian ishrâqî literature that grew at the same time out of the same spiritual environment.

We stated that the Shaykh al-Ishrâq wrote part of his works in Persian; some he translated himself from Arabic into Persian. The great trilogy and the "Book of Oriental Theosophy", that the former served as an introduction to, had been written in Arabic. The great commentaries mentioned above, that ascertained its penetration into Islamic thought, were equally written in Arabic. The first witness we meet after their changeover in to Persian is Muhammad Sharîf ibn Harawi, to whom we owe a sizable elaboration in Persian on the preface of the second part of the "Book of Oriental Theosophy". It is also with good reason that this translator restricted himself to the first five books of the second part of the work, because that is where the ishrâqî doctrine is explained. He did not limit his work to the author's texts alone; he translated a large part of Qutb Shirâzî's commentary into Persian and also added personal clarifications. Little is known elsewhere concerning this translator. He ended his work in 1008/1600. On the one hand, he is the contemporary of Mir Dâmâd (d. 1040/1630), the master of theology around whom gathered what we have called the School of Isfahan. On the other hand, Muhammad Sharîf's preface permits us to conclude that he had direct knowledge of Indian Sufism and that he spent time in that area. His translation work can therefore be linked to the interests that were aroused because of the religious reforms of Shâh Akbar.

The second witness who comes to mind, points out a Persian ishrâqî literature that was produced by a group of Zoroastrians who emigrated from Iran to India during this same period. It has been some 40 years ago that a Parsi scholar, J. J. Modi, did an important study on the Zoroastrian high priest Azar Kayvân, who emigrated from around Shiraz to surname of "Twelfth Intelligence", left a philosophical and theosophical work in both Arabic and Persian that contains some thirty titles. He died between 940/1533 and 949/1542-1543 (Bayâhârdât III, p. 166, 276). Finally there is a grandson, Amir Sadrûddîn II; one of his books is dated from 961/1553-1554, but the exact date of his death is not known (Bayâhârdât II, p. 465, 848). The polemic with Dawûnî, sometimes over Suhrawardi and at other times over glosses on Nasîrîn Tûsî, seems to be a legacy handed down from "Sadrûddîn the Great" to his son. Each of these personalities definitely deserves a monograph. Cf. Broeckmann, op.cit., II, 217 and 414, Supplement, 306 and 593.

29 On Wadûd Tabrîzî and Najmuddîn Mahmûd, cf. Prolégémènes II, pp. 59-60. 30 Ibid., pp. 60-61. It remains our intention to publish the unicum of this Persian version in the "Bibliotheque Iranienne".
India with his disciples during the 16th and 17th centuries.\textsuperscript{31} Since Suhrawardi’s work had fervent admirers in the midst of this group, its history is of particular significance for the "oriental posterity" of the \textit{Shaykh al-Ishrāq}. We have previously shown here something like a repatriation of Hellenized Magi into Iran, but Islamic Iran, as the result of his grand plan; with Azar Kayvān’s group this repatriation is extended further into the Zoroastrian environment; thus the circuit is complete. At the same time, there is significance in the books that were produced by this group, or around them. The Indian Parsees regarded these books as "partially Parsi" and looked upon them with enough favor to take the initiative in their edition. Let us state immediately that these books are only moderately interesting to philological specialists in Avestic and Pahlavi. On the other hand, they are of enormous interest to religious philosophical research and show us Suhrawardi’s work reinterpreted with the aid of what these Zoroastrians knew of the Avesta and Pahlavi texts. To what degree did these Zoroastrian interpreters agree with the contents of traditional Zoroastrian faith? We have just noted the term "partially Parsi". Modi was better qualified than anyone to make such an observation. It remains true that there certainly is a Zoroastrian content to these books, and while it cannot be said that the rest is Suhrawardian (there are also many things that are of Manichean, Buddhist, Sufi origin), readers who are familiar with the works of the \textit{Shaykh al-Ishrāq} find themselves on familiar territory on nearly every page. In short, these books have great importance in showing us the reception that was accorded the work of Suhrawardi, who wanted to be the "reviver of the theosophy of the ancient Persians", by a group of Zoroastrian mystics in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Only a few works appear to have been preserved from a literature that seems once to have been abundant; again their scarcity renders them difficult to access. All of this literature was itself a part of the \textit{Dabestān al-Madhāhib} (something like "The School of Religious Sciences"\textsuperscript{32}), a work that contains a veritable wealth of information on the status of religion in India during this epoch.\textsuperscript{33} Its author was Mōbed-Shāh who was in contact with Azar Kayvān’s group of disciples. It is no surprise that he reserves a prominent place to the different branches of Parsiism during that period (this also is our only source regarding this matter). In chapter 11 of his book, where he discusses the religion of the philosophers, the author explains that the latter are composed of two large groups: those of the \textit{Ishrāqīyūn} and those of the Peripatetics. With good reason, he comes to the conclusion that the doctrines and practices of the \textit{Ishrāqīyūn} are in perfect agreement with those that were discussed in the first chapter of the same work, concerning the "ancient religion of the Iranians".\textsuperscript{33} When he tells us in the same place that this ancient theosophic Iranian wisdom had been that of the ancient Greeks up to Plato himself, then this is what we also read in Suhrawardi and his commentators.

The principal authoritative work for the author of the \textit{Dabestān} probably came itself from the school of Azar Kayvān or from its followers. It has as title \textit{Dasāṭīr-Nāmeh} ("Anthology of Sacred Writings", attributed to ancient Iranian prophets). The few orientalists who did examine it in the past, generally gave it a negative criticism because it did not match their philological expectations. Indeed if one expects to find some text surviving from the Avesta,
or from Pahlavi literature, then one will be disappointed. However, let us ask from this book what it really wants to give us: a meditation of meditating Zoroastrians, in the spirit of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq, and a certain number of traditions whose systematic study still remains to be made. The work is arranged like a "Bible of Iranian Prophets" (sixteen books of sixteen prophets). It is written in two languages. It matters little that one is common jargon, or an encoded language, since it is accompanied by a good and readable Persian Parsi "translation". That the author of this translation was Sâsân V, who lived in Iran at the time of Khusraw Parwiz and whose name often occurs in this literature, is another matter; that this is historically "impossible" is putting it mildly. It remains true that the contents remains very appealing to research in the traces of Ishrâq. The "Book of Mah Ahbid" and the "Book of Sâsân I", for example, offer us an exact reflection of Suhrawardian metaphysics, even with additions that were derived from the theosophy of Iranian Sufism.\(^{34}\)

These remarks can also be applied to another important work from the school of Azar Kayvân. Among the members of the community of the Zoroastrian high priest, who was known personally by the author of the Dâbestân, especially the figure of Farzâneh Bahrâm ibn Farehâd, called "Bahram Junior" (Kuchak Bahram), stands out. Môbâd-Shâh met him in Lahore in 1048/1638 and tells us that he finished writing the entire cycle of philosophical and theological sciences, and that he not only knew Persian, Arabic and Hindi, but also at least one occidental language and finally, that he translated the works of Suhrawardi into Persian.\(^{35}\) Unfortunately we have never found a trace of these translations in any manuscript; on the other hand, a voluminous work by Farzâneh Bahram, the Shâr estân-i chahâr chaman ("The City with the Four Gardens"), was published as a lithograph in Bombay through the care of four Môbâd Zoroastrians in 1279/1862. The Persian work is composed like the Dasâtîr-Nâmeh and consists of four parts. The first three deal with cosmogony, from the hiero-history of the prophet-kings of ancient Iran and Hûshang to the last Sasanid ruler. The last part ("the Fourth Garden") treats of astronomy, cosmography and geography.\(^{36}\) One notes that a lengthy discussion on ishrâq theosophy takes place at the end of the chapter on Zoroaster, not at all because of an anachronistic lack of knowledge, but because for Zoroastrian ishrâq this chapter is the best "moment" to take stock of the Islamic sects and schools of their time.

We note still another work that originated from the same school. It is called Agîn Hûshang (the "Religion of Hûshang", an Iranian protoprophet) and was published as a lithograph in Bombay in 1269/1879 by a Parsi scholar, Mirzâ Bahram Rustam Nasrâbâdi, who supplied it with a long preface. It deals with an important anthology of four treatises in

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\(^{34}\) The Desatir, or Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets in the Original Tongue, together with the Ancient Persian Version and Commentary of the Fifth Sasan. Published by Mulla Firuz Bin Qaus. An English Translation. Bombay 1818, 2 vols. There is also a lithograph edition of the text without any other notation other than "under the reign of Nasiruddîn Shah Qâdjâr".

\(^{35}\) Dâbestân, p. 41; see the Persian text cited in Prêlégomènes I, p. 57, note 92.

\(^{36}\) The Shâr estân-i chahâr chaman was published in Bombay in 1279/1862-1863 (according to the title page, but the last page contains the year 1867) through the care of four Môbâd Zoroastrians. This important work from the "ishrâq Zoroastrian" literature and written by Farzâneh Bahrâm contains the following: 1. Cosmogony (Suhrawardi is already cited on page 4). History of the King-Prophets of Iran, from Hûshang to Kay Qubad (pp. 1-110). II. The Kayanians. From Kay Râhs ibn Kay Qubad to Lohrasp. The prophet Zoroaster. The Ishrâqî theosophers. Esfândîyâr to Dârâb (Darius) and Alexander (pp. 111-574). III. The Arsacids (Ashêlânîyân) and the Sasanids (pp. 574-663). IV. Cosmography and geography (pp. 664-798). This is the type of work where the inclusion of Ishrâq into the hiero-history of the prophets of ancient Iran is an accepted fact; similarly, the Avesta and tradition are interpreted in the light of the teaching of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq. This is because the author did not know how to isolate the presentation of the teachings and life of Zoroaster from the presentation of ishrâq theosophy. This long presentation (pp. 230 ff.) notes from the very beginning that the ishrâq way is a barzakh (screen) between speculative theological reflection and Sufism; it is what the Persians (Pârsiyân) call gashasb (=ishrâq, illumination, splendor). The author notes many times the quality of the student Azar Kayvân, whom he greets as Qubâ-i a'zam, Ghawth-i 'alâm wa Imâm-i zamân (Supreme Pole, helper of the world and Imam of these times).
Persian,\textsuperscript{37} whose manuscripts came from the Imperial Library. A perusal suffices to detect the ishrâq\textsuperscript{i} influence in these treatises. We can do no more than noting the works that are not so well known. This ishrâq\textsuperscript{i} Zoroastrian literature calls for an entire study that we intend to bring to fruition elsewhere. Other Zoroastrian sages, originally from Shirâz, are also mentioned by the author of the \textit{Dâb estân}, who knew them personally. Among others, there are Hakîm Ilâhi Herbad and Hakîm Mirzâ, who are both called Ishrâqîyûn. Both have a perfect knowledge of the works of the \textit{Shaykh al-Ishrâq} and they have assimilated his doctrine so well that they have made his "Book of Hours" (from which we have translated two psalms, chapter 3, § 5) the liturgical ritual of their personal religion.\textsuperscript{38}

In short, the structure that is formed by Zoroastrian ishrâq\textsuperscript{i} during the period of Shâh Akbar is a philosophy of Iranian origin in two forms: \textit{ecstatic (ishrâq\textsuperscript{i})} and \textit{dialectic (Peri-patetic)}, through the work of translators who diffuse the knowledge preserved in the treasure of the kings of ancient Persia similar to that of ancient traditions preserved in authentic Pahlavi literature. In much the same vein Suhrawardi’s concept of the Iranian sage as Platonist was no personal invention. Already the historian Mas'ûdi (d. 346/957) when discussing Tansar, the chaplain of Ardashîr and the reviver of the Mazdean "church" in the Sasanid empire of the 3rd century of our era, tells us that this important person was a \textit{Platonist}, what according to our texts amounts to saying an ishrâq\textsuperscript{i}. The words that Tansar himself uses in his famous epistle when he justifies his way of life are no formulas or chance happenings; they correspond exactly with the gradations that will be used by Suhrawardian discipline.\textsuperscript{39}

The author of the \textit{Dâb estân} himself finally takes us back to Iran, through the intermediacy of eminent spiritual personalities whom he met in India. He tells us that he has been informed by Farzânéh Bahrâm himself, that no less one of the most notable personalities from Iranian Shī’ism, Bahâ’uddîn ‘Amîlî, the venerable mutjahe\textsuperscript{d} who was one of Mullâ Sadrâ’s masters in Isfahan, belonged to the familiars of the group of Azar Kayvân and was one of those who had conversed with the master.\textsuperscript{40} Thus we set foot again on Iranian soil, on the footsteps of the "members of the community of the book of Oriental Theosophy". We have just seen that this mystical community swarmed to India. Although distinct from Sufism, it is nevertheless involved in its history, no doubt more directly with the Order of the Nûrbakhshiyya, since these had a distant great-grand-nephew of the \textit{Shaykh al-Ishrâq} as successor to Sayyed Muhammad Nûrbakhsh (d. 1464) as head of the order.\textsuperscript{41} In reference to Shī’ism we noted that there was more than one point of contact between ishrâq\textsuperscript{i} theosophy and Imamite theosophy, in fact there were more than simple points of contact. Similarly, we noted previously that this mutual influence becomes more narrowed down when the Shī’ite theosophers recuperate their own intellectual goods from the theosophy of Ibn ‘Arabî. The coalescence of these elements marks the great intellectual and spiritual treasury of Iran during the Safavid period, while simultaneously the effects of the reforms of Shâh Akbar are

\textsuperscript{37}The \textit{Aṣfîn Hûshang}, a work that is also very representative of "ishrâq\textsuperscript{i} Zoroastrianism", consists of the following parts in the Bombay edition of 1296/1879. First there is a long introduction of 21 pages in which the author describes the accession of Shâh Akbar, the spiritual movement that was fostered by him, and his following where every religious school was represented. \textit{Dâb estân} and \textit{Shârestân} were also published as manuscripts of the Imperial Library. Then there are four parts that form the \textit{Aṣfîn Hûshang}: I. The \textit{Khûshâhîb} (p. 2). II. The treatise \textit{(risâla)} of Zardoshit Aftshâr (p. 32). III. The \textit{Zâyendeh-Rûd} (p. 149). IV. The \textit{Zawreh} (p. 178). Conclusion (pp. 178-202).

\textsuperscript{38}Dâb estân, p. 289; \textit{Prélèvementes I}, p. 57, note 91 [Persian text].

\textsuperscript{39}Cf. J. Darmesteter, \textit{Lettre de Tansar au roi du Tabaristân} (\textit{Journal asiatique}, 1894), p. 186. The terms \textit{rây, kashî, yaqṭî} (ibid. p. 208) do not express mere edifying nonsense, as the translation (p. 510) might have us believe; these are very precise technical terms that mark a very rigorous gradation in the formation of the \textit{hakîm muta‘allaθî} [the "hieratic" sages], similar to what the teaching of the \textit{Shaykh al-Ishrâq} suggests, as we noted previously.

\textsuperscript{40}Dâb estân, p. 47; \textit{Prélèvementes I}, p. 57, and note 93.

felt in India, in which a large number of Iranian scholars take part.

The first name that comes to mind is that of Mîr Dâmâd (d. 1040/1630), because he was the leading scholar of the School of Isfahan, whose influence is still felt in Iran today. Let us note some of its most notable characteristics, without going into detail to what degree his books agree with the Suhrawardian theses. Mîr Dâmâd answers a questioner who asks him about a difficult passage in the Book of "Oriental Theosophy" in terms that reflect profound comprehension.42 We have already noted elsewhere the existence of a manuscript, copied by Mîr Dâmâd himself, of the "Symbol of Faith of Philosophers" that ends with the most laudatory words for the Shaykh al-Ishriq.43 Finally Mîr Dâmâd chooses as "pen name" (takhallus) the name Ishriq itself. As noted with the "Ecstatic Confessions" translated below (book 5, chapter 1), there is an appreciable affinity between the two Shaykhs. Aside from this, let us recall that one of Mîr Dâmâd’s pupils, Qutbuddîn Ashkevârî, will recognize in the 12th Imam the characteristics of the reviver whom Zoroastrian eschatology calls the "Saoshyant".

The true breadth and scope of Suhrawardi’s thought is no doubt exhibited in the work of Mîr Dâmâd’s most famous pupil, Mullâ Sadrâ Shirâzî. Mullâ Sadrâ’s work is immense; it occupies many in-folio volumes. An entire book will be necessary to determine the place that the thought of the Shaykh al-Ishriq occupies in it. We merely note the Glosses that he has written for the "Oriental Theosophy" that alone constitute an entire work all by themselves, both very complex and original, without which Suhrawardi’s book is deprived of a great deal of its resonance. Further down we will give an example of these Glosses, after having established the importance of Mullâ Sadrâ’s work in the spiritual culture of Iran (below, book 5, chapter 2). Mullâ Sadrâ makes great use of the terms mashriq (orient) and mashriqi (oriental) and it is a great pleasure to see how the commentators, e.g., from Mirzâ Ahmad Ardašâr Shirûzî and Mullâ Ismâ’il Ispâhâni, to Shaykh Ahmad Alâ’î, minutely analyze the meaning of these words, since one always ends up with the acceptance of Suhrawardi’s meaning.44 Similarly we speak (book 5, chapter 3) a few pages on the work of another eminent master, Qâzî Sa’d Qumnû, who has the greatest interest in a philosophical investigation of how the Shi’ite idea of the Imam relates to certain of the basic ishriqi concepts.

After naming the works of two other eminent masters, Mullâ Hâdî Salzâvârî and Mullâ ’Abdullâh Zumûzî, witnesses to the philosophy of Ishriq in the 19th century, it is still necessary to investigate the traces of Ishriq in the works of some forty or fifty other scholars who have been the mainstay of philosophy in Iran during the last four centuries. Alas! The work of analysis, with the presumption of a critical edition of the texts, has hardly begun.

The Religion of the Transfigured Eros

The title given to this last section seems to us to better define the point of convergence of the doctrines and intentions of the Shaykh al-Ishriq, in order to form a transition to book 3 that follows it and that treats of Rûzbehân and the "Fedeli d’amore". This concept recapitulates

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42 Tehran ms., Majlîs, Tabataba’î Foundation, , 1284. An anthology of 128 single page writings, at the head of which appears the letter from Mîr Dâmâd where he comments, first on the passage in question (§ 268) of the Hikmat al-Ishriq and secondly on certain symbols in the "Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzân" by Avicenna.

43 On this copy made by Mîr Dâmâd, see ibid., pp. 84-85.

44 Cf. the texts gathered in Prélégomènes I, pp. 53-54. [Let us take this opportunity to correct a lapsus that was committed ibid., p. 53, note 84. Mahmûd Shabestârî’s commentator is not Muh. Lâhîjî, Mullâ Sadrâ’s pupil and relative, but Shamsuddîn Muh. Lâhîjî, of whom one will find a few pages translated in our Celestial Earth, pp. 100 ff. Similarly, the date of 869/1465 is that of the composition of his comments; the date of his death is 918/1506.]
the connections that we have pointed out more or less allusive in the "history" of the Gnostic, the terrestrial self and its celestial alter ego, the Hermetist figure of the Perfect Nature and the Mazdean or Manichean vision of the Angel Daênâ, the concept of Sophia in Jacob Boehme, the Active Intellect of the philosophers and the Madonna Intelligenza of the Fedeli d'amore, the growth of the mystical epic, etc. One of the initiatory recitals shows us precisely how the austerity of the metaphysical theme of the Active Intellect evolves imaginatively into a mystical epic of love, and in conclusion we must say a few words about this because everything that we have thus far attempted to analyze finds itself allusive contained in its scenography. We find so many resonances here with the cycle of mystical poetry in Iran throughout the centuries, that we would have an unending task if we wanted to synthesize the Suhrawardian themes in all their variations. Only the metaphysical foundation that the religion and mysticism of love is based on, as presented by this last recital, matters to us here. Every theme that has been encountered in this book and the problems that have been raised by them is thus recapitulated in a few brief remarks.

It is no coincidence that the title of this section is inspired by the work of a Russian philosopher, Boris Vycheslavtsev, who is not widely known because of a lack of available translations. We are dealing here with one of his books that is entitled "The Ethos of the transfigured Eros", of primary importance for all research in the role of the imagination in the spiritual life.\footnote{On Boris Vycheslavtsev, see B. Zenkovsky, \textit{Histoire de la philosophie russe}, transl. (fr) C. Andronikof, Paris 1954, vol. 2, pp. 375 ff.} This philosopher in effect seeks to base the spiritual life on the fact that "the images of the imagination have the power to transform". This research belongs to a preoccupation that aims at everything that concerns the \textit{transcensus}, that absolute transcendent reality that makes it "impossible to remain within the limits of pure immanentism", but only reaches its goal "in the sphere of the beyond, of metaphysical being". Accepting the conclusions of "depth psychology", the philosopher assesses that only the imagination provides a key to the subconsciousness, since it "elevates psychic energy to a higher level". The process of \textit{sublimation} corresponds to this transfiguration of man through the spiritual life, that divinization that the Christian mystics speak of. In granting to sublimation the moving force of the soul, Vycheslavtsev is in a position to speak of a new ethics that surpasses moralism: "The real ethics of grace is that which is able to transform and to sublimate."\footnote{Ibid., pp. 377-378.}

We are evidently very far removed from the pious but ineffective differentiation between \textit{eros} and \textit{agapê} that so many moral theologians are unable to get away from. On the other hand, we are well within reach of the theosophic line of thought of Russian Orthodoxy, that already in Vladimir Soloviev linked itself to the sacred meaning of Eros. However, the following is also true: when the Imagination is given the power to transform, we are altogether at a level very familiar to an Ibn 'Arabi.\footnote{Cf. our book, \textit{Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi}.} An ethics of transformation and divinization amounts to the concept of \textit{ta'alluh}, familiar to the philosophy of Ishrâq. We will see that the transfiguration of the human Eros into a divine Eros is indeed the same ethics of Rûzbehân Baqî Shirâzî (below, book 3). Regarding the metaphysical source of an Eros that postulates such a transfiguration in order to be what it is in essence and truth, that is what Suhrawardi has attempted to describe in the little mystical romance that we refer to below in order to conclude these pages, since it appears to us as a finale that everything converges towards what we have thus far discussed. While putting all the resources of the metaphysical Imagination into operation, the Suhrawardian religion of Eros transfigured leads us at the same time once more to an ontology proper of the \textit{mundus imaginalis}. The metaphysical basis for the transfigurator and the transfigured Eros can be "visualized" interiorly in the \textit{imaginal} world, but such a visualization that real persons animate their own reality through and for is also necessary, otherwise everything remains on a level of theoretical possibility. In
the final analysis, this is where the link between the Suhrawardian metaphysics of essences and the scenography of his mystical recitals is established.

We will only outline the connection in a few lines, otherwise an entire volume is necessary. At least these remarks belong here, since they are motivated by the structure of the mystical romance that Suhrawardi named *Mu'nis al-'ushshâq*, something that is best translated as "Vade-mecum of the Fedeli d'amore". Unlike the two recitals that were translated above (chapters 5 and 6), this recital is not in the first person but in the third. It is comprised of *dramatis personæ* who are judged by current literature, completely ignorant of the reality of the *mundus imaginalis*, as "personified abstractions", or "allegories". Against such a degradation and confusion it will be seen in the wrong light. We must take the concept of essences in the metaphysics of Avicenna as a point of departure. An essence is unconditionally what something is in itself in an absolute way; it is not the logical universal of a concept, nor the singular concrete as it exists in the sensible world. The former requires a negative condition, namely it excludes everything that will hinder the universal predication of being in the abstract concept of an essence. The latter requires a positive condition and determines what must be added to the essence in order for it to be realized in singularibus, i.e., in the individuals of the empirical world. An essence is no logical universal; it is a metaphysical universal. It is a spiritual form and as such there is nothing like it among the essences of the individual. For example, one could speak of the "socraticity" of Socrates, that is neither a logical universal that others can participate in, nor the individual Socrates from the sensible world. *Socraticity* is not one of the logical universals; it is the spiritual form of an individual being, a principle of individuation that is not matter, as in Aristotelian Thomism, but the *form*. Thus socraticity is not something abstract in the sense of a logical concept, but something separate (*khôristos, mujarrad* in Arabic) from the sensible concrete. However, it is wrong to limit the notion of *concrete* to the sensible world; there is also a spiritual concrete, and eminently so. This is what the metaphysical position of Suhrawardi's angelology maintains. This absolute essence, neither a logical universal nor a singular sensible, but something that possesses its own unity from itself, a unity of an individuation *sui generis* and its own specific "concrete" determination, is what the *Shaykh al-Ishrâq* calls an *Angel*. Hence the problems that were stated above in order to determine in what sense the universality of every angelic hypostasis, lord of a species, must be understood (above, chapter 3, § 3, p. 76 ff. and chapter 6, § 4, p. 203).

From the very start we find ourselves in the presence of the following: what is the mode of existence of this essence transcending both logical universal and singular sensible? Under what form is it "concretely" shown once it is defined? Can it be apprehended by us in some other way than the abstract intellectual universal logical concept? Once we limit ourselves to these, we remain in the rut of universals. If it only belongs to the purely possible then it has no actual being. If it is an actual being - otherwise how do we speak of what it is - it must be that every barrier between being and existence that reserves existence only to individuals of the sensible world radically falls away. An entire scale of *real existences* has to be admitted above what is commonly called "reality", beginning with mental existence (*wujûd dhinî*) in the plenary sense of the word (and this is why the metaphysics of existence according to Mullâ Sadrâ can finally appear as the safeguard of the metaphysics of essences rather than its downfall).

Thus, under what spiritual concrete form can an essence manifest itself, perceived by Suhrawardi as an angelic hypostasis containing only its very self, excluding everything foreign, an individuation that forms one essence in respect to that other essence? Neither at the level of a concept, nor at the level of the sensible concrete. Its apparitional form, the "theater" of its apparition (*mażhar*), can only be the *mundus imaginalis*, there where the Angel manifests itself, perhaps in a dream or in a waking state in contemplation. It appears

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48See above, p. 136, note 318. We will shortly publish a new translation in the announced corpus.
in the form of persons who animate, for example Suhrawardī's 
*Vade-mecum* drama, rediscovered in all the Persian mystical epics: 
Intelligence, Beauty, Love, Sadness. They can also carry the 
names of familiar persons (Adam, Joseph, Zôlaykhâ). These are 
*proper* names in every respect. Their action, their typical 
activity, shows something other than logical concepts and 
the "theater" of that activity is not the sensible world. It does 
not mean anything once they are explained as "personified 
abstractions". An abstraction that is personified is no abstraction. 
In what realm of being does a personification of *facere* or *fieri* 
stand out? It is a real tragedy when a culture can only 
perceive of an essence as part of the universal logic of the concept. Yet 
Giordano Bruno says: *Intelligere est phantasmata speculandi*.

"To intellectualize means to observe (or speculate with) images". 
Let us state it as follows: with logical universals theoretical 
philosophical treatises are written. With concrete singulars 
history or novels are written or made. With metaphysical universals, 
i.e. with pure essences manifesting themselves in their 
own concreteness, in the *mundus imaginalis*, mystical epics, 
visionary or initiatory recitals, etc. are written.

The same can be said for "romances" where the characters have 
singular names or where they have names that apparently refer to 
concepts but instead of concepts are real beings from the *mundus imaginalis*. 
This can be true for the Niebelungen Ring, the Grail cycle 
to which we now have referred more than once, the visions of the 
"Shepherd of Hermas", the "Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz", 
the "Romance of the Rose" and many other writings of a similar kind, 
that can always be reread, like initiatory romances, with 
new eyes, eyes that were shut for so long in the philosophy and civilization of the West, 
and which for the "oriental" theosophers remained open to the *mundus imaginalis*. 
Now it will be understood why the question cannot be settled by agreeing to "allegories".

We will only point out one more example, that of the characters that animate a 
book by Raymond Lulle, both exquisite and sublime: *The Tree of the Philosophy of Love*. In 
its preface the author speaks of walking in a "beautiful forest not far from Paris that was 
dense and full of springs"; near a beautiful meadow was a huge tree; in the shade of the tree 
was a very beautiful and richly adorned lady; when he got there she told him her name: 
"Philosophy of Love". After the author tells us the purpose of his book, we understand 
that during it "queens of love" will appear - the roots of the tree: goodness, magnificence, 
etc. (there are eighteen of them) - as well as "ladies of love", who are what bonifies and 
magnifies, and so forth, in other words, they are each time the transitive action, the *energeia* 
which emanates from the essence signified by the noun. Every time it is an essence in its 
rightful "objective" reality who is manifested to the author as a "queen of love"; this essence 
is never defined through another genus and associated specific difference, because that would 
reduce it to a logical concept. However, we are not dealing here with logical concepts, nor 
with concrete persons from the sensible world. Each essence is noted by what it does; it 
"essencies" what it is (in German one could say *es west sein Wesen*). So goodness is that 
through which the good bonifies; magnificence is that through which the great magnifies, 
etc. In short, in order to intimate each essence, the noun by which it is designated must be 
suffixed by an element drawn from the verb *facere*. This is how phenomenology produces 
a manifestation in the author's interior vision like "queen of love" of this energetic (in the 
Greek sense of the word) aspect. This is why one notes that in the book the "ladies of love" 
behave, act and speak like real and concrete people, truly having their reality in this *mundus imaginalis*, 
without which this entire "history" is reduced to an "allegory", which it isn't.

Now it is fitting to again be reminded of the Amahraypsands, or Zoroastrian Archangels 
(above, chapter 3, § 3), because their names also connote the action that they respectively 
perform; these are the "Holy Immortals", but of an sanctity that is a transitive Energy 
("hierurgical", the *spanta* of each Amahraypad), an Energy that communicates being and

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40See Lulle, *[L'Arbre de Philosophie d'amour... et choix de textes philosophiques et mystiques]*, introd., 
the growth of being in making what it "essencies". These are definitely not conceptual abstractions, neither are they simple "aspects" of a supreme divinity,\footnote{Cf. our book  	extit{Celestial Earth}, pp. 31 ff.} but they are hypostases and energies at the same time. Suhrawardi took great care to express this by making his metaphysics of essences into an \textit{angelology}. In Raymond Lulle the connection between hypostasis and energy, between the connotations of noun and action, is the link between the "queens of love" and the "ladies of love". An essence manifests itself in a person who typifies it, it is an integral part of what it is; neither logical concept nor sensible singular from the sensible world are \textit{typifications}. One is only concerned with logical concepts of essences and not essences themselves if these are not precisely manifested as "queens of love" and "ladies of love" like the \textit{dramatis personae} of Suhrawardi's \textit{Vade-mecum}. This is why we must refer again to what we previously have attempted to analyze (above, chapter 4, § 4, pp. 127 ff.) concerning the moment when doctrine, the theory, becomes the narration of an event (levels \(A\), \(B\) and \(C\) of the hermeneutics). When Raymond Lulle uses the term \textit{metaphor}, it is important not to be mistaken about its meaning, the "direction" this is taking. A \textit{transsumptio} is a transposition, a transfer; the accuracy, the "truth" of a melody transferred to a higher tone does not consist in a return to a previous tonality; it resides in the structural conservation, in the \textit{isomorphism} of the one and the other, to use a comparison that was used before (book 1, chapter 4, § 2). The true meaning of the concrete figures of the \textit{mundus imaginatis} does not consist in a redescend to the level of the logical concept; inversely, it is the real meaning of the logical concept that shows itself at the only level where the essence can manifest itself, i.e. in the \textit{image} which is its \textit{mazhar}, its "theater", the apparitional form at the level whose perceptive organ is the metaphysical Imagination. That is why a few pages ago we cited passages from a Russian philosopher, where the concept of the \textit{transcensus} was put in the context of the power of transformation of the images from the Imagination.

In short, what is at stake here is the concept of a spatialization proper to the spiritual world (away from the sensible "place") and similarly an imaginative "visualization" of the spiritual world in the space that is proper to its manifestation, the one that is its \textit{mazhar}, since that Arabo-Persian word in comnoting the concept of the form or place of manifestation also takes on the present meaning of \textit{theater}. That space corresponds to the proper time of the \textit{hikâyat} in the recitals that are in the first person, something we have noted repeatedly, when the \textit{hikâyat} shows us how to overcome the impotency of our dilemma: is it myth or is it history? It is the space that spatializes the proper time of the recital. The interior vision is itself the witness of what it sees (like the sura of the Star says: "The heart will not deny what it has seen", 53:11). This is why we will have to show again the relation of the \textit{idam al-mithâl} or \textit{mundus imaginatis} with very interesting recent research, although we will have to limit ourselves again to summary outlines.

We have in mind here Frances Yates's beautiful book, \textit{The Art of Memory}, where the texts studied are rich in inexhaustible potential for our purposes, especially since our "oriental" theosophers have with good reason up to now remained outside of the scope of investigation. \textit{Ars memorativa} consists originally of places and images (\textit{lo ci} and \textit{imagines}) as organs of operation. Its technique consists in a mental - and even an \textit{in corpore} - walk-through of a building, for example a palace, a church, an abbey and its annexes, and a mental arrangement of striking images from place to place, so that the speaker unfailingly follows the thread of the discourse by visualizing these images on a mental level.\footnote{See Frances A. Yates, \textit{The Art of Memory}, London 1966. We intend to return to this important research elsewhere, since the author is following a path similar to what we are proposing as the "diagrammatic art", in which Isma'ilian scholars and certain Islamic theosophers in particular excelled, e.g. Sayyed Haydar Anbuli.} This implies that what is hidden in the depths of the human spirit can be made manifest through certain spatial arrangements. We note immediately that what is contemplated is never the material image itself, like the building or the landscape framing the arrangement, since the images
never occur materially in a place like this; thus we are not dealing here with sensible exterior perception but with an imaginative interior perception. The contents of the memory itself consists of interior and spiritual forms for which it is the treasury; it is the treasury of the Imagination. The premises implied here are the reason that *Ars memorativa* developed (between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) into a metaphysics of memory, in solidarity with a *metaphysics of the image* and of the Imagination. Implicitly or explicitly it therefore has to be an ontology of the *mundus imaginallis*.

From among the representations of this metaphysics we note a certain number of presuppositions that are both Hermetist and Neoplatonic. First of all, there is somehow the idea of the soul's pre-existence and subsequent fall from a celestial angelic state into the world of darkness and demonic oppression (cf. Suhrawardi's recitals). The basic act of self-knowledge is thus an *awakening*, provoking the *reminiscence* of who the Gnostic was before coming into this world (cf. the "Song of the Pearl", the "Recital of the Exile", etc.). This presupposes a memory with a power that is infinitely greater than what psychology normally has in mind. This also presupposes that the Image which provokes this awakening does not adhere to the absurd theory granting human frailty a faculty of clothing sensible appearances in higher realities in order to grasp them this way. Here a concept must be mentioned which somehow implies in Jacob Boehme the reconciliation of *Imago* and *Magia*, so that *ars memorativa* finally extols *ars hieratica*, in the sense that it was noted above in the Neoplatonists (chapter 2, § 1). In microcosm as reflection of macrocosm memory becomes that of the "theurgic sage", divine man in an intimate association with the divine powers and energies of the universe. *Ex ipso* confers upon the Images a theurgic and "transfigurative" power. Similarly we noted that in Suhrawardi every species is the theurgy (the "talsman") of its Angel. Now we rediscover this notion among the Hermetists of the Renaissance. This is what is created by Giulio Camillo's extraordinary *Theatrum mundi* and what Frances Yates has cast in such a remarkable new light. Reproducing a reduced architecture of the classical theater (according to the proportions defined by Vitruvius), this theater (we would say *mazhar*) unifies the contents of the memory in basing this unification on images drawn from the celestial world. Through an inversion of the *situs*, the "spectacle" is where in the amphitheater the images are arranged according to seven degrees divided over seven "columns" (the seven columns of the House of Wisdom), while the spectator who is mentally present on the scene (*fons scena*) is able to grasp the contents of the universe in one glance through the contemplation of the images. From the very start we are dealing here with something much more important than a "mnemo-technique". Like Frances Yates says, "the secret or one of the secrets of this theater is that the planetary images are supposed to be talismen or have a talismanic power."

These talismanic images are understandably interior images, i.e. images which reproduce the celestial world in the interior world of the imagination; they enable the imagination to receive celestial influences. That is the case in Marsilio Ficino as well as Giordiano Bruno. In the latter the images from the sidereal world are *Umbrae idearum*, much closer to true reality than the physical shadows of the inferior world (these *Umbrae idearum* partially correspond to the *'âlam al-mithâl*), and this is the way Giordiano Bruno interprets the *Ars* of Raymond Lulle. What was *ars memorativa* is thus transformed into a mystery cult of the interior of the soul; there are interior images, indeed interior statues. On our part we would say that *ars memorativa* is perfected into *ars interiorativa*. At present philosophy is at a crossroads. In fact now when the total noetic validity of the image and the Imagination is disowned and a dialectical and mnemonotechnical order of concepts is substituted in place of it, an interior *iconoclasm* becomes imminent that can only precede an exterior iconoclasm (the iconoclasts were the primary adversaries of the Hermetists and the Neoplatonists of the

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52 *Ibid.*, p. 155. See the plate opposite page 144 where Giulio Camillo's "theater of memory" is reconstructed, as well as plate 95 (p. 192), of the *Teatríco olimpíco* in Vicenza.
The Oriental Tradition

Renaissance, i.e. the logicians, humanist or not, who in an absolute dread of images would only acknowledge ars memorativa as a dialectical order of concepts). When one is inclined towards a metaphysics of the mundus imaginalis then spiritual realism orients itself towards the spiritual concrete and "transfigurations" brought about by imaginates agentes.

The name of imaginates agentes is important in itself, since it is similar to that of the Intelligencia agens. Just like the latter activates the human intellect, so the Imago agens activates the imaginative powers. The imaginates agentes are no "products" of the imagination, but manifestational forms of what the imagination is the apparitional place of, the theater (mazhar) of. This theater manifest both the differences and the similarities between the styles of the interior imagination and architecture. It can be concerned with the architecture of the universe (like in the two Suhrawardian recitals). It can also be concerned with a more limited architecture, like that of Vitruvius's classic theater just mentioned. It can also be about a city, a fortress, like was the case twice in Suhrawardi. Everything points to the fact that he imagined something which was like the Theatrum mundi at the level of a microcosm, when he imagined the "fortress of the soul" whose different floors or towers were places where he arranged mental images with mnemonic and theurgic powers. This "fortress of the soul" described in the "Epistle of the High Towers" (above, chapter 6, § 6) is now rediscovered during the course of the Vade-mecum of which we will now speak. We should note the mode of "spatialization" that arises from the Ars memorativa, from which the work of the Shaykh al-Ishâq captured all of its resonance, at least in order to be aware of the comparative studies that must still be pursued. Much remains to be done in order to know and situate this mundus imaginalis, the theater of his recitals, where the "transfigurations" take place, beginning with the transfiguration of Eros, as a brief explanation will show us.

The "Vade-mecum of the Fidelì d'amore" essentially stages a threesome of whom one is wont to say that they are "personified abstractions", although they are quite something else. Their appearance again refers us to Avicenna's metaphysics; through their manifestation and activities they are not shown as conceptual abstractions, nor evidently as concrete individualities from the sensible world. Their metaphysical individuality is clearly evident; these persons are concrete manifestations of pure essences, showing themselves as such at the only level that is compatible with what they are, namely the mundus imaginalis. The little treatise begins with an appeal to a well known tradition (hadith), which we have met already in the present work: "The first thing that God created was the Intelligence", i.e. the Noûs, an hypostasis. The philosophers of Islam had no difficulty exercising their Neoplatonic meditation on this tradition of the Prophet. There already has been occasion to know how in the Avicennan cosmogony this First Intelligence - designated by Suhrawardi under the name of Bahrām, the first of the Zoroastrian Archangels - performs a triple act of contemplation, directed respectively at its Principle; at its own existence rendered necessary through its Principle who is thus its dimension of Light; finally at its own essence which through separation from its Principle will remain non-being and thus its dimension of darkness. From these three acts of contemplation proceed respectively a second Intelligence, the first Soul (Anima mundi) and the first Heaven. The Soul aspires to be united with the Intelligence from whom it emanates through a surge of love. The first Heaven (of totally subtle matter) emanating from the dimension of darkness marks the ideal distance which separates the Intelligence and the Soul and it is this Heaven which involves in its movement the surge of love of the Soul towards its Intelligence. We already have an initial transfiguration of Eros on a cosmic scale in this archangelic cosmogony.

Here also the "Vade-mecum of the Fidelì d'amore" introduces a dramatic element on an anthropological level, to be exact. The three entities that issue from the contemplation of the Intelligence manifest themselves as three persons who not only have their own original cosmogenic names (Intelligence, Soul, Heaven), but also the names of their apparition (of their "phenomenon") in the interior world of man, at the level where the religion of the
transfigured Eros is based. These names are: Beauty, Love and Sadness. The entities that form this triad are therefore the respective homologues of the Intelligence, the Soul and its Heaven. Their names (no longer common names, but proper names) indeed designate three pure essences; these are not logical universals nor individualities from the empirical world. Essentially active essences, whose power is to "essencify", to make what they are, their Energeia concretizes itself into three other figures whose names are drawn from the Bible and the Koran: Joseph (Beauty), Zolaykhâ (Love), Jacob (Sadness). Understandably these three persons are not "visualized" at the level of anecdotal history but as three imagines agentes of the Active Imagination. It could be said that through the relation to the triad of entities whose energeia they respectively typify, they are ontologically what the "queens of love" are in relation to the "ladies of love" in Raymond Lulle.

The three entities of the first triad appear to the Shaykh al-Ishráq in their imaginal concrete reality (Persian has no grammatical gender, let us equally not concern ourselves with it) as three brothers. Beauty contemplates himself and reveals himself to himself as the most precious of all gifts; a great peacefulness fills his being; when Beauty smiles, thousands of angels appear, born out of this smile. His younger brother who is called Love, also contemplates Beauty; through this contemplation Love is seized with a delirium; he cannot separate himself from Beauty and remains at his service as his slave. When Love tries to separate himself in order to regain his liberty, the youngest brother, whose name is Sadness, clings to him. It is from this embrace of Sadness, now love in the dissatisfied nostalgia of beauty, that Heaven and Earth are born and exist. This separation, forbidden Beauty having become inaccessible to Love, is not only the secret of the "history" of the Gnostic, but of the entire human race, indeed of the entire universe. This theme will be taken up again by Rûzbêhân of Shiráz (below, book 3).

Let us now briefly resume this "history" according to the Shaykh al-Ishráq. The first episode touches upon an "event in Heaven", well known from the Koran and derived from one of the apocrypha of the Old Testament (Historia Adae et Evae): the order is given to the Angels to prostrate themselves before Adam. In terms of this very personal narrative epic, Beauty, upon learning of Adam’s existence, dashes forth on its steed of glory to towards the castle, the Burg (shahrestân) where Adam has come into being. Love and Sadness follow them. Beauty completely embraces the human form that thus becomes its mazhar, its pre-eminent apparitional form. Love rejoins it and again is struck with stupor. His companion Sadness sees all this; sees all the beings from the celestial world gathered around the one in order to make their submission, and from far away together they bow down to the earth at Beauty’s threshold. This is the meaning of that mysterious verse from the Koran: "All the Angels adored him" (15:30).

A second episode opens with the "history" of Joseph who in mystical Islamic literature traditionally typifies the perfect epiphany of beauty. Love and Sadness appear also but they are repelled by a sovereign indifference. Thus begins the "history" of the separation. Each of the two younger "brothers" follows his own way; each will now initiate its elect into its own secret, chosen to pre-eminently typify it before men. Sadness goes to the land of Canaan. Jacob is able to get into his oratory and discerns the mark of love upon him. He then asks and is given the secret by Sadness: "I am from Nâ-Kujâ-âbâd (the land of No-Where, the country that is not a place visible through sense perception, the "eighth clime"), from the City of the Pure Ones". Jacob then becomes his inseparable companion, he is Sadness. Love goes to Egypt and this episode retraces the origin of the pair of Joseph and Zolaykhâ, the archtypical couple of Islamic mystical epics. Zolaykhâ, who sees him pass from high up in his oratory, asks: "Where are you going? What is your name? - I come from the country of Egypt (Rûh ãbãd). Where my home is there Sadness is very close. I am a solitary Sufi; at every moment and in every direction I start my journey. Every day I cover a day’s journey; every night I rest. In the obscurity of exile I am called Love (‘ishq). In my kingdom I am called Mithr (Persian form of the name Mithra, meaning at the same time
"Sun" and "Love"). In the heavens I am known as the Prime Mover; on earth I appear as a mendicant. I look very old and yet my youth is eternal. Without glitter, I am nonetheless of high lineage. My history is ancient...

Thus Love initiates Zólaykhâ into its secret. First of all, where is its kingdom? A road with nine way-stations leads to it (the nine celestial Spheres). Beyond the vault with the nine cupolas rises the fortress or Burg of the soul (of course we know that one must leave the cosmic crypt in order to get to the eighth cline, to Nâ-kujâ-âbâd, the "place" of the castle of the Soul that is beyond the coordinates of sensible space). Now comes a description of this fortress that is taken literally from the "Epistle of the High Towers". The places and images are here arranged according to an architecture that illustrates the Suhrawardîan style of the Theatrum mundi, based on a perception of metaphysical imagination whose sources and implications were previously noted. At the center or at the summit of this castle is the Spring of Life and beyond this Burg there are tier upon tier of other castles, like there is another Sinai beyond each Sinai in the "Recital of the Exile".

Now comes the second part of the initiation, following Zólaykhâ's question: "Why has Love left its kingdom to come here?" The answer amplifies the "history" of the "three brothers" that we will briefly outline. Zólaykhâ leaves his dwelling entirely to the power of Love. When Joseph appears, Love embraces Zólaykhâ and the two of them begin a contemplation that marks the end of the separation. Zólaykhâ is Love and now Beauty and Love are reunited. On its part, Sadness guides Joseph to Egypt in order to witness Joseph and Zólaykhâ (Love and Beauty) on their throne. Thus have Sadness, Jacob and his sons now seen their Joseph, and they prostrate themselves and Joseph recites this verse: "Oh Father! This is the explanation of the dream that I told You about: I saw eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon and they all bowed down to adore me" (12:4). It is Beauty "personally" who is speaking through Joseph's lips.

The last chapters (10-13) of the Vade-me cum summarize the fundamental notions and the rules of ethics that the religion of Love imposes upon Beauty. We note the following lines, among others:

It is written: If God is beauty then beauty must necessarily be brought forth. If everything that exists, from the bodily states to the spiritual ones, searches for perfection, then likewise nothing is found without the desire for the beauty of forms. Meditate upon this with great care: Beauty is what frequents every one's desires and every effort is spent to be united with her. Alas! Access to this Beauty is very difficult indeed and the object of universal aspiration; to be united with her one needs to meditate and there is no meditation without Love. However, Love does not come first; it pays no attention to where it lives; it does not expose itself to every glance. Who present itself to it, prepared for such a happiness? It sends Sadness who is its faithful messenger, so that it will purify the dwelling and so that no one else than itself may cross the threshold (chapter 10).

We can say this: the sacramental that transfigures Eros in the sacrament of Love operates to the same degree that Eros loves Beauty, because Beauty is itself the origin of origins of the revelation of the Holy of Holies. Where Beauty no longer appears, where it is disowned, profaned and blasphemed, that is where there can be no question of a transfiguration of Eros, because Eros is itself a caricature, degraded and profaned. Here there is a rigorous connection that of course certain modern phenomena give witness to. As the preface of the Vade-mecum shows us, Love is essentially philokalia, a love of Beauty. As we know, the term philokalia refers to an anthology of ascetic texts famous in oriental Christianity. Thus in order to avoid confusion and in order to refer to what was noted at the beginning
concerning "hieratic" art and wisdom, we would like to propose the term *hierokalia*, in order to designate Beauty as consociated in its very essence with the concept of the sacred [and sacrality]. Without such a *hierokalia* it is impossible to speak of a religion of the transfigured Eros. As such, this religion is an eschatology. This is a profound truth from the sentiment of the Zoroastrian faith, for whom the manifestation of celestial Beauty in the person of the Angel Daēnē occurs when the *eschaton*, the limit of the *post mortem*, is broken. Even here and now is the irruption of absolute Beauty into terrestrial existence something eschatological, from the fact that the presence of its mystery is well known from the beauty of a human creature, for example; it is eschatological in the sense that it provokes in the one to whom it is manifested a surge of love, strong enough to break all bonds and norms of the terrestrial condition. Of course, in order for Beauty to be so recognized a tension of one's entire being towards this vision awaiting *post mortem* has to pre-exist in the person who recognizes her. The entire "history" of the Gnostic, the entire drama of the separation from the celestial *alter ego* enters into play here. That is why the manifestation of Beauty creates a "catastrophic" limit condition in the Gnostic, to the degree of anticipation of what is rightfully only attained *post mortem*. That is what we mean by the term *hierokalia*, suggested by Suhrawardi's *Vade-mecum* as well as by Rūzbēhān's "The Jasmine of the Fedeli d'amore", and something that means infinitely more than what is wrongly or rightly commonly referred to as the "romantic" sentiment.

We just referred to the *post mortem* vision that awaits the Mazdean faithful by speaking of the eschatological sentiment of Beauty that is also truly the conclusion of the Gnostic's history. This is no mere chance happening. The religion of the transfigured Eros confers a new power and a transformative force to certain images that were borrowed from the Zoroastrian religion by transmuting as many *imaginés agentes* into symbols throughout the entire mystical epic of Islamic Iran. This spiritual fact is so perfectly in conformity with the intentions of the *Shaykh al-Ishrâq* as reviver of the theosophy of ancient Iran that we know of no better way to conclude than by giving two examples.

The first is one that we find in one of the greatest of poets, Farīdūddīn 'Aṭṭâr (12th-13th century), already cited here and someone with the inspiration and fecundity of genius, giving birth to these immense mystical poems of Iranian genius in a striking illustration of one of Goethe's sayings: "Everything ephemeral can only be symbol". In a particularly audacious *ghazal* 'Aṭṭâr exclaims: "Those who are constantly familiars of the *Temple of the Magi* - What confession do they belong to? To what rites do they adhere? - I am beyond Good and Evil, beyond unbelief and religion, beyond theory and practice - Because beyond all those things there are still many more Stages."

Indeed, this attests to the Law as much as it does to its transgression, but even a transgression as such is a limit situation, something eschatological, and personal eschatologies are not a matter of public discussion. This is how Shaykh Fāfūddīn Ardabīlī (d. 735/1334), one of the masters of Iranian Sufism and the ancestor of the Safavid dynasty, commented on this *ghazal* of 'Aṭṭâr to his disciples:

The altar of Fire is truly "the altar of Fire" where the sacred flame burns from the very beginning. The *Temple of the Magi* and the altar of Fire both mean the world of Love. Like the sacred Flame, Love for the divine Being never ceases. What is the observance of a religious confession or of ritual, troubled by the impurity of aspirations

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53 We were led to make up this term *hierokalia* during a discussion on the "sacrality" of beauty, with our friends Paul Evdokimov and Olivier Clément [June 3, 1967]. We would like to make special mention of last work of the late Paul Evdokimov (+ 1970): *L'Art de l icône, théologie de la beauté*, Paris 1970.

54 This ghazal of 'Aṭṭâr and a commentary by Shaykh Fāfūddīn Ardabīlī in the latter's *Tabâqtāt*, in *Safwat al-Safâ*, Bombay 1329, p. 182 (corrected here from a ms. in the personal possession of the late Mahdi Bayânî).
after paradise, to someone who is immersed into this Love? If one is grateful or appears to conform exteriorly then this happens with the true sincerity of having rendered such service freely before God. Good or Evil, unbelief or religion, theory or practice, all these differences refer to the realm of the rational intellect. However, in the world of Love that is a world beyond the "place" of this world (see above, Nâ-Kujâ-abâd), that is where there are very many stages. There are the stages of the immaterializing separation (tajrîd), of the individualizing solitude (tajrîd), the stages of love ('îshq) and of affective emotion (mahâbbat), stages of renunciation (faqr), of contemplative gnosis (ma'rifah), of unifying unification (tafâhid). Neither do these things exist in spaces previously created or imposed, but they spatialize the domain of Love, the sanctuary where the sacred Flame is adored, in the Temple of the Magi, beyond every limit. That is where the mystical lovers, the "Templars" of the Transfigured Eros fulfill their service of Love; that is where their qibla (the orientational direction for prayer) is and they do not belong to any other cult...

Thus commented the Shaykh. In the two verses that he quoted during this "lecture" we hear an echo perpetuated of Iran's nostalgia for the celestial Vision of Light and Love that was announced in this world: "Our religion is the service of Love, our qibla is Love - The infidels are the ones who have no qibla and no Love."

This ghâzal of 'Attâr pertains to an entire family of passionate expressions from the work of the poet Neyshâpûr, where he makes use of a "mazdeanizing" lexicon. This ghâzal, from the commentary of Safûrdân Ardabîlî, borrows from the 'irfânî interpretation derived from the Mazdean lexicon; it deals with a spiritual phenomenon that is in close proximity to Suhrawardi's Ishrâq, a phenomenon to which our friend Muh. Mu'în has dedicated an entire study.55 Pre-eminent among the imaqaqes agentes is the "Grand Master" or the "Prior" of the Magi (pir-i Mughân); this is the Perfect Man, the Celestial Anthropos, the Shaykh as guide (murshid), more precisely the Imam himself in Shi'ite Gnosis. The "Priory of the Magi" is the world of the Divine Names. The "Magus" is the authentic witness to the One, the Unifying which unifies the One. A whole constellation of symbols take place here: The "Sons of the Magi", the "Temple of Fire", the Mîbâd, the cincture (kustî), etc., and dominating them all, the theme of the "wine of the Magi", that together with that of the Grail that Suhrawardi already gave us the occasion for a more thorough examination for, and that is perhaps the key to this entire 'irfânî lexicon56.

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55 Cf. Muh. Mu'în, Mazdayasnâ va ta'hîr-iân dar adabiyyât-i fârsî [Mazdaism and its Influence on Persian Literature], Tehran 1326 h.s., and also our French introduction to this same work, pp. 27-28.

56 The origin and function of this "mazdeanizing" lexicon demands a study all by itself; perhaps this is where we are at the heart of the problems that the religious destiny of Iran presents us with. Many Iranian authors have dealt with these matters in the past: Shaykh Azerî Tûsî, Muh. Dârâbî, Rezâ Qulî Khân (Hedâyât), cf. Mu'în op.cit., pp. 531 ff. and our introduction pp. 32 ff. The fact that the 'irfânî lexicon designates the Imam as the Pîr-i Mughân, the Grandmaster of the Magi, makes this similar to the vision shown us in Suhrawardi's work. Muh. Dârâbî, the commentator on the mystical lexicon of Hâfez of Shirâz and his poem on the Grail, defines this as "an intimate relish (dhaqw) that radiates from the Lights of celestial Realities throughout the heart of the mystic". We saw that Suhrawardi's recital referred to both Kay Khusraw's Grail and Jamshîd's Grail (Jam). Regarding the reasons that are mentioned for either one, sometimes the Grail is said to be "showing" the world and at other times it is "seeing" the world, under the double aspect of microcosm and Perfect Man. During his long poem Mahmûd Shabestarî asks: "When is the Sage given the gift of this Grail which-sees-the-world?" Answer: "The same day that he creates the cupola that adorns the heavens." Sanâ'î (12th century) uses the word to designate the heart. The burning Grail is here the illumination of the heart. Following Suhrawardi, Mahmûd Shabestarî also repeats that if "much has been said about the Grail", "only that soul is initiated into it whom the Perfect Man is born... Just like being human, the Gnostic (haqqaqat-dân) who has been initiated into the knowledge of self is also the Grail of Jamshîd." We also mention the following Persian poems on the Grail: Awhâdi of Marâgha completed a poem in 733/1332-1333 of about 5000 couplets on "The Grail of Jamshîd" (Jam-i Jam), which he dedicated to the reader "so that if you desire to contemplate the universe, you may be able to contemplate in this Grail..."
We borrow our second example from an area where this lexicon predominates. It deals with a tradition represented by an immense Persian mystical epic of the 19th century that contains no less than 76000 couplets (around three times the mathavî of Mawlânâ Rûmî). The poem is mixed in with prose and is named *Kanz al-Asrâr* (The Treasure of Esoteric Knowledge). This monument to the Shi‘ite Sufism of Iran consists of twelve books. In book 12 we read the following:

The *Temple of Fire* is none other than a form of the dominating, exclusive and all-consuming Love of the divine Being. Zoroaster gave visible form to it and erected the Altar of Fire. After the triumph of the armies of Islam and the Arabians over Iran this mystery became veiled on Earth and withdrew to the intimate depth of the heart and its emblem became the person of the royal princess (Shahrâbân, daughter of Yazdagard III), who became the mother of the 4th Imam, ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Abidîn; after having entered the family of the Immaculate Ones through her marriage [a Yathrib] to the Prince of Martyrs (the Imam Husayn). That is why we have heard this *hadîth* from the breast of the Prophet, prince of Arabians and Persians: ‘Say nothing irreverent about Zoroaster, because Zoroaster was the envoy to Iran of the Most High Lord’.

This long passage is given as a leitmotiv and is then commented upon by some sixty couplets. We are not going to give a historical critique here of the tradition that has it that whatever you wish?’ [you will know through this Grail where the King is, what the Dwelling is and what the Way is]. Already Awhadî of Kermân 7th/13th century composed a poem that was named *Mesbâh al- ‘Arwâh* (Torch of the Spirits), where he comments, after the example of Sana‘i, about his ascension into the eight ‘cities’ of the ‘Heavens’ of the Souls. The Zoroastrians are in the fourth Heaven, the Heaven of mystical lovers (*nafs-i ‘âshiqa*) whose description unites Mazdeans and Sufis as professing the same mystical religion of Love. Finally, Hâfiz Isphahânî (d. 1198/1784) finished the rest and wrote books 6 and 7 (cf. 3. His successor Rawnaq ‘Alî-Shâh finished book 3 and wrote books 4 and 5. In turn, Nezâm ‘Alî Shâh Kermânî (d. 1242/1826-1827) finished the rest and wrote books 6 and 7 (cf. *Rayhânât IV*, 428, p. 247). According to the *incipit* and *explicit* of each of the seven books as given in the catalog (pp. 2184-2188), one is able to come to the conclusion that there can only be two different works here. It is an urgent task, not only for the sake of our knowledge of Iranian Sufism, but also for that of Persian literature in general, that is able to come to the conclusion that there can only be two different works here. We believe that Michel de Miras has undertaken this difficult task.
a daughter of Yazdagard III, the last of the Sasanid rulers of Iran, became the spouse of the
3rd Imam of the Shi’ites, Imam Hussayn. This tradition pertains to Shi’ite consciousness,
to the awareness that Iranian Shi’ism has of its own history and to the form that this is
expressed in; we will have to phenomenologically accept it as such in order to observe and
allow it to have an impact as to how it makes explicit what is implicit; what this tradition
makes visible is in any case an irremissible event out of Iran’s religious awareness. The
representation of this event forms the keystone to the vault that guarantees this awareness
the architectural unity of the Iranian spiritual universe. At this time the importance of
feminine personalities among Shi’ite representations must be noted: Shining Fâtima is the
link between the Prophet and the Twelve Imams; a royal princess, daughter of Yazdagard III,
assures the continuity between Zoroastrian Iran and Shi’ite Iran, or in other words, between
the religion of Love as symbolized by the Flame of the Altar of Fire, and the religion of Love
as professed by the affirmation of the walâyat. For the moment we are unable to narrow
down the source of that passage from tradition, as reported by a 19th century Iranian Sufi;
however, it most certainly shares the cohesive characteristics of the Shaykh al-Ishrâq, in as
much as its attestation corroborates the conviction that he himself faced the great project
of his life with. The very long "theory" of the Iranian mystics, at the head of which appear
a Sanâ‘î, a Suhrawardî, an ‘Attâr, continues with the Shi’ite Sufis of the 19th century. This
is why the witness of the latter seems to us to be the best place to finish the first two books
of the present work that were devoted to Shi’ism and to the Shaykh al-Ishrâq.

In conclusion we will say of our Shaykh that, however great his work, it does appear
unfinished to us, interrupted as it was by his martyrdom at such a young age. The book
of "Oriental Theosophy" is by design a magnificent work; in sheer volume and style it is
perhaps even a compendium; however, most certainly the author would have amplified the
lines that were thrown in haste on the page during his journeys, if and when he found
the time. As such, the work has had a significant impact on eight centuries of Iranian
thought. It never ceased living among all the Ishrâqîyûn for whom Iran and India were their
terrestrial home. Let us not be deceived: life was not easy for them in this world. Even in
the Safavid period they all suffered great turmoil. These members of the "family of Ishrâq"
were recluses, hermits of the heart, expatriates who had heard "the call from the Bush on
the right side of the valley" (28:30), the call from the "oriental" side that arises from the
heart of the "Recital of the Exile" and that begins by waking up the awareness of the one
exiled concerning the memory of the exile. This is the most difficult of all tasks among
the tumult of this world. More than once have we cited this invocation from one of the
Suhrawardian psalms: "Deliver the people of the Light, guide the Light towards the Light."
It echoes the faith of those who know that "the Darkness has never received the Light"
(John 1:5), and also that of those who know that the Islam of the pure believers "began in
exile (gharîb) and will be exiled again. Happy are those who exile themselves!" This famous
saying of Imam Ja’far gives great meaning to a devotion to the Shi’ite cause that surpasses
every worldly perspective; it is addressed to all the "strangers" who dare to defy it: to exile
oneself from the exile. It refers especially to Salmân the Persian and to all those whom he
typifies. In turn the Shaykh al-Ishrâq deserves more than anyone else to guide the thoughts
of the pilgrims who visit the tomb of Salmân the Persian in spirit to read there: "That I
may live and die like you faithful friend, whom you have not betrayed."58

58 This pilgrim’s prayer from the sanctuary of Salmân the Persian (Pârsî) or the Pure (Pâk) occurs in
Ma’jîsî, Bihâr al-Anwâr, Tehran Lithograph 1303, vol. 22, p. 299; The context gives other very beautiful
Shi’ite pilgrim’s prayers from the tomb of Salmân.
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