CORBIN'S INTERPRETATION OF IMĀMOLOGY AND ŠÛFISM

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1. Imāmology

To Henry Corbin, the modern phenomenon par excellence is secularization — reduction of the spiritual and the sacred to the temporal and the profane. It is the will to perceive things no longer in the mundus imaginis ("between Heaven and Earth") but exclusively on the empirical level, in the exoteric history, which is believed to be the only "real" history. Secularization is "dis-orientation"; the loss of the Orient, the Alām al-rîthâl. In the case of the West, this loss is marked by a transition from eschatological Christianity to historical faith, fides historica — a gradual adaptation to the external historical condition and the replacement of the freedom of prophetic inspiration with the dogmatic magisterium of the Church. Fides historica is faith that measures the degree of reality of its object by documents attesting to its physical existence in the past; historical faith is concerned with the outer man only, and is denounced by all mystics as fides mortae. For a historically oriented faith, "there is no longer a question of practicing an apologetic of limits." The powers of man are unlimited, the powers of homo progressus lead homo sapiens toward socialization, collectivization, totalization of absolute empire of the technocracies... The great tragedy lies in the fact that the official Christianity has succumbed to the temptation which Christ had resisted.

For the gnostic, "historical meaning" refers not to an external event encapsulated in the past, but to the events that occur on the esoteric plane of history. The esoteric meaning of events does not depend on external historical circumstances, because these events are the events of the soul and belong to the history of the soul. Religious phenomena are essentially spiritual in nature, and as such, they can be understood only by a person who can see what the spiritual adepts saw. To understand spiritual facts, one has to become a spiritual host of a universe in which these facts take place. "If a religion exists, the first and last reason for this phenomenon is the existence of those who profess it." After all, "how scientific is it", asks Corbin, "to pretend explain to people who do see the reasons why they see precisely what one himself is incapable of seeing?"

Corbin is convinced that the process of secularization can be arrested only by rediscovering the polar dimension of man,
and by developing a gnoseology which culminates in the figure of the angel as the Dator formarum.  To discover who is the Donor of the data that are passively accepted by the ordinary natural consciousness (which is really "unconsciousness"), is to be liberated from the yoke of brute data; and this liberation "places the soul in the presence of a Self that, while suprapersonal or transpersonal to it, on its part asks...the most personal of relations." The Corinbian Self (the Angel) is a figure that "bears witness to the presence of the alone with the alone and for the alone..." In the esoteric Islam, the polar dimension of man is represented by the figure of the Imām, who is homologous to the Angelic Angel. Imām is not revelation of the divine Essence, but epiphany of God in his relation to man, i.e., relative to him who contemplates it. It must be also kept in mind that this kind of epiphanyization has nothing to do with the fragmentation of a species into individuals differing among themselves only numerically. As in Avicenna's angelology, "the individual person of the Imām is itself his entire species...his species is his person."

The central idea of imarnology is embodied in the word theoaendra, divino-human unity; the Imām is simultaneously the divine Face shown to man and the Face that man shows to God. In terms of Christian theocentrism, the decisive question therefore will be: on what level should the subjectum incarnationis be situated? Should it be on the level of the flesh (incarnation), or on the level of the spiritual body (theophany)? In answering this question, we must not forget that Shi'ite theology is essentially apathetic in nature, prohibiting attribution of any human characteristics to the divine Essence. At the same time, however, the Shi'ite hernaemegetics is perfectly at ease with the anthropomorphism of the Qur'ān. The reason for this is that the divine Names and Attributes are referred not to the divine Essence as such, but to the primordial theophany, the metahistorical pleroma of the "Fourteen Immaculate Ones" (the Prophet, his daughter Fatima, and the twelve Imāms), who are the supports of these anthropomorphic Names and Attributes. The faith of the believer is directed towards God as he presents himself, makes himself known, i.e., towards the Face that God shows to man. "God in the abyss of his essence is the unknowable—the unpredictable, the incommunicable. The Face that the Absonundium shows to man, the Deus revelatus, is necessarily a theophanic Figure who supports, as such, all the so-called 'anthropomorphic' attributes...As iron is not fire, the Imām is not God; but without the support of the iron, the fire does not appear; without the Face which is the Imām, God could not manifest himself." Reciprocally, Imām is the form of the believer's faith, the Face through which which in which he presents himself to God. It follows that the Face (i.e., the Imām), through which man knows God is ea ipso the Face through which God knows man. We find the same situation, the same reciprocity in Meister Eckhart: "The eye through which I know God is the same eye through which God knows me," Imām is the imperishable Face of God, the Face of which the Qur'ān says: "Everything perishes except his face" (28:38).

We must try now to understand as fully as possible the theophanic relation between the Vision (that which is shown), and person to whom the vision is vouchsafed. God shows himself to each believer in accordance with the degree of his spiritual development. This is to say that there is polarity between the Imām and the person to whom he shows himself: the Divine Face, just as there is polarity between the Deus absconditus and the Imām as his theophanic form: there is no polarity, however, between the Absconditum and the human person. In other words, it is the polar function of the Imām that safeguards the unicity of Divinity (Theotes), and at the same time makes possible the encounter between the individual and his God in the theophanic form of the Imām. Without the Imām, one would fall either into the abyss of ishābī (anthropomorphism) or into the abyss of ațīl (demonology, magicism). It is also to be noted that the Imāms are not divine epiphanies in their capacity of historical personalities; theophanies take place on the level of Ma’ānik, the world of concrete spiritual beings, and it is in this world that the encounter between the believer and his Imām takes place.

It must be emphasized that the mystical spirituality of Shi'ism "is not a mysticism that plunges the Spiritual into the undifferentiated night of being; it is essentially the meeting of a Face, of an intimate presence."12 According to the Islamic spirituals, every being has two faces: one represents its quiddity (essence), which is his indigence, obscurity and negativity; the other is directed towards his dimension of light, his perfection, his "true person" (prosopon), the Imām. The two faces mirror each other. The culmination of the spiritual experience consists in this "face to face", because "he who knows his Imām, knows his God."13 The person of the Imām is simultaneously the eye through which God sees man and man sees God; he is the intermediary, the link between heaven and earth.

In terms of Shi'ite eschatology, our present time is the time of the occultation of the Imām. We are in a world that no longer "needs" God, in the sense that for many people the question of God is irrelevant. This banal phrase, however, in the present context, has an ominous sound. "Yes", says Corbin, "God is no longer relevant, God no longer sees us, because we no longer see him. God is irrelevant to us, because we have become irrelevant to him: because we no longer see him, he no longer sees us."14 It remains however, that the Imām, seen or not seen, recognized or incognito, is the mystical pole (qotb) of the world; if he ceased to exist, the world of man would collapse. Man cannot survive as man if he loses his polar dimenson.

The theophanic relation between God and man is essentially bi-polar. Man can know, worship, love, only a God who is relative to him. God as the Absonundium "does not look" ("ne regarde pas"), is not concerned with man. Corbin has represented this relation by two intersecting ellipses with a common center. The common center is the Imām. The area of intersection is the only
place that is available for kataphatic (positive) theology.

Absconditum
theopanic figure of the Imām
man

It is possible, continues Corbin, to cut oneself off from one's polar dimension, to stop seeing it. But "this is et ipso to refuse to see oneself, to recognize oneself in this polar dimension: we have repeatedly stated that 'he who knows himself,' i.e., who knows his pole, his Imām, 'knows his God.' For him who does not know himself, i.e. his divine pole, there is only the unknown and unknowable God, the one who 'does not see us.' What happens then? Nothing more nor less than what Angelus Silesius said: 'God does not live without me.' Reciprocally, if God dies, man must die.\(^{15}\)

The idea of the Imām as the divino-human Face leads to the mystery of theomorphism, which is also the central Christological mystery. The question, then, is this: on what ontological level is situated the person of the Imām conceived as theopanic form? Or, more precisely: to what type of Christology corresponds imamology? Corbin's answer to this question is that from the viewpoint of divino-human bipolarity, the human pole cannot be on the level of the carnal man nor on the divine level. The subject of the incarnation is neither God nor man, but a middle term between the two, a "divine extradivine person [in Schelling's words: aussergöttlich-göttliche Personlichkeit] as well as a human extrahuman person."\(^{16}\) This means that the human nature of the Imām is that of a potential angel. In other words, the ontological level on which the incarnation takes place, has its place in the soul or caro spiritualis.

We may conclude with Corbin's observation that in esoteric Christianity there is the expectation of the Paraclete inaugurating a religion of spirit, which, far from being a new religion, would represent the fulfillment of Christianity. The function of the Paraclete, whom gnostics sometimes identify with the hidden Imām, is to reveal the spiritual meaning of all the prophetic religions. The basic characteristic of this religion of the spirit is that it will be not only revelation of God to man, but also a revelation of man to man. The final destiny of humanity is envisioned as a creative act which is both divine and human, a synergy, a co-

2. Šī'ism: a Religion of Beauty

Corbin's thesis is that the gnosis of Šī'ism\(^{18}\) is inseparable from the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabī, and the Shi'ite gnosis. The fusion between these two was effected by Ḥādīr Amūlī (d. 1320), whose project was to restore the tradition of "integral" Islam comprising zāhir and bātin, which is also the essential meaning of Shi'ism. Integral Islam is based simultaneously on shari'at (Law, positive religion), tarīqat (the spiritual, mystical way), and baqi'at (realization of spiritual truth). The essence of this integral vision is contained in the following words of Ibn 'Arabī: "From now on my heart has become capable of all forms -- it is meadow for the gazelles and a convent for the Christian monks -- a temple for the idols and the Ka'ba of the pilgrim -- the Tables of the Law (Torah) and the book of Qur'ān -- I profess the religion of love.\(^{19}\)"

Šī'ī spirituality, according to Corbin, has two characteristics. First, Šī'is are Muḥaqiqūn, "those who have understood," in the sense of a twofold personal verification: speculative and experimental. A Šī'ī is a "speculative," person who realizes that he himself is the speculum, the mirror in which he sees all things, and that the image appearing in this mirror is his own representation of things, i.e. a personal realization. Second, Šī'is are Ahl-i shuḥūd, eye witnesses or intimates admitted to the contemplation of the mysteries (epoptes in Greek).\(^{20}\) In addition, there is also the idea of epikhaney, denoting the state of being as Light as well as the epiphanic function of Light. Light illuminates at the very moment of its appearance. Something is revealed, i.e., becomes a phenomenon (zāhir) as soon as there is Light. Moreover, this illumination, in the Šī'ī view, is pre-emminently bound up with the human form. Speculative mysticism rests on the idea of "descents" from the primordial source of being. Creation is divine self-manifestation, and the fullness of this self-manifestation is reached in the human form, which the Šī'is designate as the celestial Adam (spiritual Anthropos), insofar as this figure recapitulates all the degrees of being.\(^{21}\) Spiritual Adam is divine epiphany, because through his human form there is "divine visibility."\(^{22}\) The perfection of the celestial Adam is considered here not as resulting from a divine decision, but as active function inherent in this state in such a way that the patient becomes the agent; the revealed is the revealing. The illuminated object is also the illuminating source. Action and passion however are simultaneous and reciprocal. The divinity reveals (shows) the human form by revealing itself in it, and the human form reveals (shows) the divinity by being revealed through it. Perfect theophany is divine anthropomorphism (not anthropomorphism). Corbin
emphasizes that this is not incarnation in the technical sense of the word but manifestation of divinity in the mirror of the human form, theomorphism of the human form. Anthropomorphosis and theomorphosis are simultaneous and reciprocal events. The concepts of theophany and incarnation can be reconciled only if we conceive of the latter as "incarnation in the form of the human body, in the perfect plastic beauty of the form, not in the matter, in the flesh." This of course has a docetic flavor, but to Corbin, it is nothing less than "spiritual realism." 24

Sufism is a mystical religion in the sense of a dialogal and reciprocal relationship between man and God. But the basic premise in such a relationship is that the individuality of the mystic, far from being confined to his empirical persona, is itself a universe, a microcosm. Hence, the mystical self-absorption is always accompanied by liberation from oneself, by an elan beyond oneself. The paradox of mystical experience is that the depth of man is more than human, and that it hides a mysterious bond with God and the world. In Corbin's words, "it is in oneself that an exit from oneself is found." 25 This is also why the divine element in man, according to the teachings of mystics, cannot be identical with the psychic element. The inmost (esoteric) man is the spiritual or pneumatic man.

The chief representative of the spirituality of the Iranian Sufism (besides Ibn 'Arabi), is Rūzbihān of Shīrāz (1218-1219), a contemporary of Suhrawardi, and the inām par excellence of the Fedeli d'amore - Dante's companions for whom "the experience of a cult of love dedicated to a beautiful being is the necessary initiation to divine life ...." 26 Love is essentially philokalia, love of beauty, or hierokalia, a term designating beauty as inseparable from the idea of the sacred and sanctity. As Corbin points out, we are indeed far removed here from the pious but ineffective differentiation made by some Christian theologians, between eros and agape. The Christian is the man of "unhappy consciousness," the man who is torn by the opposition between love of God and love of the creature, between mysticism and sensuality, between sin and justifying grace, between believing and knowing, between the truth of the historical facts and inner truth, between the object of faith incarnated in history and the timeless spiritual reality.

To be sure, says Corbin, there is in Sufism as well an opposition to be overcome, but the terms of the opposition are different from the ones we have just enumerated. The Sufi regards himself not as a sinner in need of "justification", but as a stranger, an exile. His aspiration is to return home and to meet a guide who will show the way of return. This, however, should not be construed as escapism from the so-called "real life." The idea of "exile" is inseparable from theophanic perception of what Corbin calls amphiboly, the two-fold meaning of every manifested being, simultaneously veiling and revealing the invisible. There is no theophany without amphiboly (both words are from the same Greek root). Theophanic vision, therefore, cannot consist in turning away from the visible. Beauty is not a demonic trap. "The visible must be perceived as a veil (image) and transformed into a mirror." 27 Thus, to be a "stranger" in this world means not to hate the world, but to be enslaved by the literally visible; and to return home is to see the invisible through the veil of the visible. "Return" is essentially an operation of tawāf, and it is rather of a secondary importance whether this operation is effected in this life or at the moment of exodus from it. "Home" and "exile" are not literal places, but conditions of the soul.

Eros in the Sufi context is transfigured and transfiguring Eros: love is not transferred from one object to another object, from a human object to a divine object; what occurs is a metamorphosis of the subject, who now becomes capable of seeing the divine face of human love. Beauty becomes a sacred sign (ayat), sacramentum. 28 Human love and the love for a being of beauty is the ecstasy of the soul in the presence of a theophany.

According to one of the preferred maxims of Sufism, "God is beautiful and he loves beauty." Beauty is not simply one divine attribute among others; it is the essential attribute. "This is why God himself is the source and reality of Eros, preventing us from a double descention: licentiousness which prophanizes [beauty] and asceticism which . . . negates [beauty]." In his Spiritual Diary Rūzbīhan relates a vision of his, a vision which was refused to Moses ("You shall not see my face"): "I have seen my God in the most beautiful form." Rūzbīhan is in effect saying that we can love only a personal being, a being with a "particular face." Of necessity, then, God, if he is to be loved, must assume the form of the Eternal Companion, the Witness in Heaven. This also means to discover the esoteric ruwād of identity (1 x 1=1), and to resolve the contradiction between divine transcendence and his personal individualizations in conformity with the aptitude and capacity of each loving soul. To discover ruwād is to be the eyes through which God sees himself: "I am you, you are me." It is to deliver God from jealousy. By contrast, the attitude of the exoteric believer (which is also that of the abstract monotheist), who posits a transcendent Deity to be glorified from outside, finally is not different from the attitude of the infidel, who allows himself to be caught in the visible and who confounds ḥullū and tajallī, incarnation and theophany. 29 Idolatry, in the final analysis, is worship of a God who is separate from and opposed to the worshipper, because what is worshipped is not seen through, and consequently remains veiled, opaque, a material thing. It makes no fundamental difference whether the "thing" in question is a stone, a tree, or the supreme being of the official theology. Idolatry is essentially liberalism, and as such, the opposite of symbolism, amphibolism, and theophanism.

In Christian apologetics, directed towards Islam, it is common to sneer at the sensual joys of the Qur'anic paradise. What these apologists fail to realize is that the description of paradisiacal joys must be seen in the context of the more general problem of tanzih (a negative operation depriving divinity of all attributes), and tashbih
as a diabolical temptation to be conquered, but as an Urphomen something which is as primary as perception of a sound or a colour. One is either capable of perceiving beauty as being fascinating and terrifying, awakening joyfulness and hopeless nostalgia, or, one is incapable of this kind of perception. The essential point is that the secret of the divinity (Lahit) is humanity (nasut). But again, it is unnecessary for the divinity to suffer the embarrassment of an incarnation, for the human beauty of the human creature is a direct reflection of the divine beauty. The divine beauty enters into beautiful forms as the image enters into a mirror. He who looks into the mirror sees himself by means of this image. He could not see himself without it. That is why the eye of the image is the eye through which he sees himself. Vision is to see the image. To see that the eye of the image is my own eye looking at me through this image, is Vision of the Vision.

Corbin summarizes the preceding as follows: "Let it be said: it is the incarnational materialization that leads astray love; it erects the first obstacle in the way of the fidele d’amour; it is absolutely necessary for the latter to go beyond this obstacle in order to attain theophanic consciousness of love; that is, it is necessary to perceive the Image that appears in the mirror, but not as incorporated into the material reality of the mirror. The divine anthropomorphism takes place in the human form, not in the materiality of the flesh. It is precisely by confusing ‘flesh’ with the human form (…) that one is led to confuse human Eros with the carnal sexuality."

In Shi‘ism, Ismā‘īlism, and in the theosophy of Sufism, the divine anthropomorphism (i.e., anthropomorphism on the plane of Makkūt), is the mystery of divine self-revelation; and this self-revelation is experienced and conceived by the mystic as the mystery of love. Both movements — the divine self-revelation and the experience of this self-revelation by the mystic — originate in one and the same Eros. And this is why the human form of love is seen here as the indispensable initiation into the mystery of the divine love, into the esoteric tawhid. We are witnessing, then, a paradoxical identity: the divine Being is himself love, lover, and beloved. Corbin calls it “intradivine mystery” or “intradivine drama.” But, as we already mentioned, this is a paradox only for the kind of religious or theological thinking that objectifies the Divine. If, however, God is his own object of love and knowledge, and if He reveals to Himself in His Image (the divine Anthropos or Celestial Adam) so as to know Himself precisely in this Form insofar as He is known by It, then it must be admitted that the love which this Image has for Him and the knowledge which it has of Him, is the same love which He himself has for this Image and the same knowledge which He himself has of this Image.

What Corbin calls “intradivine mystery” of love presupposes three forms or degrees of tawhid. The first degree is designated in Sufism as the common tawhid. It represents the naïve and dogmatic monotheism, satisfied with complete objectivization.
of the divine: an *Ens supremum*, a transcendent object is superimposed upon the totality of created beings. One constructs proofs and arguments, seeking shelter again: ravages of doubt, risk and negation. The common *tawhid* proceeds by divesting the deity from all attributes (*tanzih*), and is haunted by the twofold peril of anthropomorphism (*taṣbih*) and agnosticism. The objectivization of the divine results in "socialization" or in a sociomorphic" religion: all createdly beings are assembled on an egalitarian plane and maintained equidistant from the transcendent object \( n + 1 \). According to Sufism and Islamitism, the common *tawhid* cannot succeed in overcoming metaphysical idolatry.

The second is the *tawhid* of the elite: one proceeds from the affirmation of a transcendent object to the affirmation of the unity of being. The totality of beings is experienced as vanishing into the sublimity of the unique Being. Beings are seen as something purely negative in relation to divine Sovereignty. All existence is immersed in *res divina*. Rational consciousness, the property of the common run of men, is replaced by *intuitive vision*, the privilege of the initiates. The initiates undergo annihilation — *fanā* — in the divine Superexistence. The experience of *fanā*, in its baradized form, is expressed in the irritating and facile assertion that mystical experience consists in the dissolution of personality. According to Corthin, such a view is no less naïve than that of the common *tawhid*, for it replaces the formula \( n + 1 \) with something like the sterile \( 1 = 1 \). Moreover, the *tawhid* of the elite is incapable of valourizing the appearances and transforming them into apparitions (*images*), so that the kind of metaphysical identity which it conceives, turns out to be no less illusory than the metaphysical illusions which it denounces in the adherents of the common *tawhid*. For the Sufis, the second degree of *tawhid* is only a passage, a transition towards a third form effecting the annihilation of the annihilation.

The third degree is the *tawhid* of the elite of the elite. If the first *tawhid* proceeds from the visible world to God and the second *tawhid* from the personal "self" to God, the third represents a movement from God to God (intracrine mystery); i.e., it is accomplished in God himself. A "twofold negativity" is at work here: annihilation of the annihilation produced by the second degree of *tawhid*. In other words, it is resurrection and re-apparition of all the forms which previously have been immersed in the undifferentiated divine identity. A total reversal of perspective takes place: what was below is above, what is down is up, and vice versa. The mystic does not disappear; he sees God, and yet it is not he who sees, because it is God who sees through him. Essentially what happens here is transformation of the mystic's subjectivity: he becomes the eye through which God contemplates himself, and he knows now that he is divine knowledge, divine audition, etc. In the Sufi view, to see that your own eyes are the eyes through which the divine Being contemplates himself, is to have vision of the vision: the Image itself becomes mirror, and so reveals its secret to him who contemplates it because by contemplating it, the mystic "sees himself seeing himself outside himself", i.e. in the state of anelan beyond himself.\textsuperscript{46}

At this stage, the conflict between the unicity of pure divine Essence and the multiplicity of theophanies — the conflict which cannot be resolved on the levels of \( n - 1 \) and \( 1 + 1 \) is resolved in terms of \( 1 \times 1 \). \( 1 \times 1 \) represents a rigorous formulation of the relation between unicity and multiplicity of theophanies, a relation which is verified each time *kath nema*: the contemplated is each time the Contemplator's own eye, the same eye (regard), multiplied by itself, unity of unity, vision of the vision.

Put differently, you are God each time you contemplate God, because it is God who (each time) contemplates himself through you. You become God by becoming attentive to God because at that moment your attention to God is God's attention to you. Your attention to God is reciprocated by God in such a way that the "whole God", the wholeness of divinity is directed towards you, is "in" you, and you become the eye through which He sees himself.

The esoteric *tawhid* formulates a superior unity — a unity that unifies love lover and beloved in a moment of supreme lucidity, when human love becomes the hierophant of the divine love; i.e., when the transition from a metaphorical love (seeing only the external form), to love in the true sense (seeing the invisible), is accomplished. To have the vision of the vision \( (1 \times 1) \) then, means that the eye which the lover contemplates in the mirror is his own eye; simultaneously, it is not his own eye because it is the eye of the Other, and yet this Other is none other than he himself.\textsuperscript{41} Or again, God finds his pure mirror in the mystical lover and this mirror is at the same time the mystic's eye and God's eye. The mystic discovers that his contemplation is the contemplation of the divine Being contemplating himself through the mystic.

All this has nothing to do with solipsism which abolishes the spiritual tension inherent in the relation of subject and object. Rather, we have here real polarity: the polarity of bi-unity. The extremity of the object of love leads to the exhaustion of the spiritual energy of love, whereas this energy is multiplied by itself \( (1 \times 1) \) when it is polarized in the reciprocal relationship between the lover and the beloved. The moving force of love is ardent desire, which can grow only in the course of loving relationship, because it is love that makes see and because the vision is proportioned to love. To suggest, therefore that in these circumstances the lover loves himself (or that he is in love with love), is to confuse the two formulae, \( 1 = 1 \) and \( 1 \times 1 \). Love always means "to be two." It must be understood, however, that this "two" is not a duality, but a dualitude: a Unique and a Unique, multiplied by each other are one.\textsuperscript{42}

We said that the state of the lover is that of a mirror of God: his very being is now the eye through which God sees himself. It is in this state of ecstatic paroxysm that Hallaj exclaims: "I am
God.” Ruzbihan, however, gives the following instruction to the mystic. “When you have reached vision of the vision, every atom of your being proclaims: I am God.” This is so because then “every atom of the creation is an eye of God.” And that is precisely the meaning of the annihilation of the annihilation. What is annihilated is the opacity of things: every atom of the creation is resuscitated and becomes perfectly transparent, that is an eye-mirror through which God contemplates himself.

NOTES and REFERENCES

2. Ibid., p. 132. Adam’s trans.
4. Ibid., p. 10. Adam’s trans.
5. See Corbin, Avicenna, p. 264.
9. Ibid., p. 130; cf. p. 123.
11. Ibid., p. 172. Author’s trans.
12. Ibid., p. 174. Author’s trans.
13. Ibid., p. 178. Author’s trans.
15. Ibid., p. 182. Author’s trans.
16. Ibid., p. 196. Author’s trans.
17. See ibid., pp. 215–220.
18. The word “sufi” (from suf, the Arabic for “wool”) literally signifies “man who wears a wool.” According to this theory, a white wool garment was the distinguishing mark of the Sufis. Corbin speculates that “sufi” might be a transliteration of the Greek sophos, sage or sage-prophet (see Creative Imagination, p. 39, note 5). On the complex situation of Sufism within Islam, especially within Shi’ism, see Corbin, Histoire de la philosophie islamique, pp. 282–68; cf. En Islam iranien I pp. 83–84; II, 149–218; III, 149–218. Nasr, I德is and Reality of Islam (London: Unwin Paperbacks), 1979, pp. 121–44.
19. See Corbin, En Islam iranien III, p. 189. The dominant idea of Amuli is that Shi’ism of the Twelve Imams constitutes the esoteric Islam, the true sense of the Revelation, the gnosis of Islam. To the extent that Sufism professes the esoteric doctrine, it is Shi’ism incognito. Imanology that does not dare to pronounce its name (see Corbin, En Islam iranien III, pp. 10. 154. 198–99).
20. See ibid., p. 247.
21. See ibid., p. 246. The “Perfect Man” is he who has fully realized his essential oneness with God, in whose likeness he is made. The class of “perfect men” comprises not only the prophets from Adam to