

RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN LIQUID MODERNITY: POSTISLAM

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Abstract

Postislam has been regarded as a new concept in need of a dire delineation. Basically, a Postislamic tendency is a paradigm of thought (philosophical, scientific, mystical, religious, theological², etc.) that excessively transcends at least one of the three sources of Islam's juridical Canons (i.e. Quran, Sunna, Ijma' or consensus of Scholars). This paper provides a definition for the founding principles of Postislam. It shall examine this concept from a generic point of view. It will equally suggest a constellation of some central problems structuring an emergent system: Postislam. This tendency is positively inherent "in potentiality" (*dunamis*), in an Aristotelian sense, according to multiple forms of enunciations and semantic variations throughout the history of theology as well as the history of philosophy, theology, Islamic mystique and science. Postislam represents a potentiality devoid of a preexisting concept within Islam; it is an unnamed historical tenant, disseminated throughout a complex combination of theological and mystical first faltering steps.

I will examine some of these instantiations, expressed essentially in Islamic theology (Avicenna's Metaphysics of Emanation) and mystical tradition (i.e. Sufism in a general acceptance, and the nodal case of Al-Hallâj, in particular). Then, by isolating the essence of Islam's theological mystique (the structural duality between Shari'a and Haqīqa, Law and Truth), in order to construct a synthetic deconstruction identified to the concept of Postislam as pure mysticism, or the possibility of a permanent theophany, indefinitely experienced throughout ecstatic theopathy. We ought to, at this step, enunciate divers axioms based on this concept. As a sequel, I will discuss further philosophical counterpoints and limits to this construction.

Keywords: Postislam, Islam, theology, philosophy.

Résumé

Postislam a été considéré comme un nouveau concept nécessitant une délimitation précise. Fondamentalement, une tendance postislamique est un paradigme de pensée (philosophique, scientifique, mystique, religieux, théologique, etc.) qui transcende excessivement au moins l'une des trois sources des canons juridiques de l'Islam ou consensus des Savants). Cet article propose une définition des principes fondateurs de Postislam. Il examinera ce concept d'un point de vue générique. Il proposera également une constellation de quelques problèmes centraux structurant un système émergent : Postislam. Cette tendance est positivement inhérente « à la potentialité » (*dunamis*), au sens aristotélicien, selon de multiples formes d'énonciations et variations sémantiques

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² The Postislam, essentially exposed here, is a *theological excess*. Thus, it represents a special case of excess, a *genre* of tendency.

tout au long de l'histoire de la théologie comme de l'histoire de la philosophie, de la théologie, de la mystique islamique et de la science. Postislam représente une potentialité dépourvue d'un concept préexistant au sein de l'Islam; c'est un locataire historique sans nom, disséminé à travers une combinaison complexe de premiers pas hésitants théologiques et mystiques.

J'examinerai certaines de ces instanciations, exprimées essentiellement dans la théologie islamique (Métaphysique de l'émanation d'Avicenne) et la tradition mystique (c'est-à-dire le soufisme dans une acception générale, et le cas nodal d'Al-Hallâj, en particulier). Ensuite, en isolant l'essence de la mystique théologique de l'Islam (la dualité structurelle entre la Chari'a et la Haqîqa, la Loi et la Vérité), afin de construire une déconstruction synthétique identifiée au concept de Postislam comme pur mysticisme, ou la possibilité d'un d'une théophanie permanente, indéfiniment vécue à travers la théopathie extatique. Nous devons, à cette étape, énoncer divers axiomes basés sur ce concept. Dans la suite, je discuterai d'autres contrepoints philosophiques et des limites de cette construction.

Mots-clés : Postislam, Islam, théologie, philosophie.

Rezumat

Postislamul a fost privit ca un nou concept care are nevoie de o delimitare clară. Practic, o tendință postislamică este o paradigmă de gândire (filosofică, științifică, mistică, religioasă, teologică etc.) care transcende excesiv cel puțin una dintre cele trei surse ale canoanelor juridice ale islamului (adică Coran, Sunna, Ijma'). sau consensul savanților. Această lucrare oferă o definiție pentru principiile fondatoare ale Postislamului. Ea va examina acest concept dintr-un punct de vedere generic. De asemenea, va sugera o constelație a unor probleme centrale care structurează un sistem emergent: Postislam. Această tendință este inerentă în mod pozitiv "în potențialitate" (dunamis), într-un sens aristotelic, conform multiplelor forme de enunțuri și variații semantice de-a lungul istoriei teologiei, precum și a istoriei filosofiei, teologiei, misticii islamice și științei. Postislamul reprezintă o potențialitate lipsită de un concept preexistent în islam; este un chiriș istoric fără nume, răspândit printr-o combinație complexă de primii pași ezitanți teologici și mistici.

Voi examina unele dintre aceste instanțieri, exprimate în esență în teologia islamică (Metafizica emanației a lui Avicenna) și tradiția mistică (adică sufismul într-o acceptare generală și cazul nodal al lui Al-Hallâj, în special). Apoi, prin izolarea esenței misticii teologice a islamului (dualitatea structurală dintre Shari'a și Haqîqa, Legea și Adevărul), pentru a construi o deconstrucție sintetică identificată la conceptul de Postislam ca misticism pur, sau posibilitatea unei de o teofanie permanentă, trăită la nesfârșit de-a lungul teopatiei extatice. Ar trebui, la acest pas, să enunțăm diverse axiome bazate pe acest concept. Ca o continuare, voi discuta alte contrapuncte și limite filosofice ale acestei construcții.

Cuvinte cheie: postislam, islamteologie, filosofie

Introduction

In this presentation, I will attempt to lay the ground for a tentative definition, or should I say an assemblage of guiding Ideas towards what I designate as "Postislam". The endeavour will consist of a first overview of the constellation of some central problematics structuring an emergent system (i.e.

Postislam), positively remaining “in potency”, in an Aristotelian sense, in multiple forms of enunciations and semantic variations throughout the history of theology as well as the history of philosophy and science.

The main target of this work does not coincide with the *closure* of a theologico-philosophical system, namely Postislam, the consistency of which is, *in fine*, established³; it is, however, an enterprise of *naming*⁴ or *repairing* a mystical “unthought”⁵ within the Islamic tradition, which is able to be generalized, formally and objectively, in a special case of theology. This means that we are constructing a concept of Postislam from an ontological point of view, relatively to the fundamental question “What is X?” More precisely, the “unthought” in question takes more the form of a *retreat* in front of its own *systemization* – or implementation as a philosophical concept – in a satisficing manner, than an absolute blind spot never formulated as such in Islamic mystical history. It might have been localized as a *name* in the mystical *genre* of literature, but it remains a philosophically vacant syntagm, an object without a concept.

We use the term “unthought” as opposed to “experimented”: retroactively, Postislam was experimented in an intermittent way; it may be conceived as a singularity, or to use Deleuze’s terminology, “*une expérience-limite*”, (a limit-experience), isomorphic, for instance, to the poetical *oeuvre* of Antonin Artaud: a limpid case of “crowned anarchy” (anarchie couronnée⁶) (Lapoujade, 2014, p. 160). To spin the metaphor, and by the same means, to engage it literally, the

³ Since the enunciation of the “Incompleteness theorem” of Gödel, the consistency of a “formal system” cannot be proven within itself and according to its immanent resources.

⁴ Naming it is not contradictory with the fact that such an orientation is existing in potency without name or concept. For instance, as Ignaz Goldziher discusses it, the lack of nomination of the notion of *conscience* in Quran, is not, according to him, equivalent to a lack of “meaning”. As he argues, “a lack in language does not imply necessarily a lack in the heart” (Goldziher, 2005, pp. 14-15). The same situation is operant at the dawn of sufism: it was practiced without a concept or a name of it until the eighth century. It is the question of a system, baring, unnamed within it, its own negation (or ruin) that is apparently fundamental, from a logical point of view. This remains a crucial problem in axiomatic theories or formal systems. Gödel’s incompleteness theorems show that any sufficiently strong recursively enumerable theory of arithmetic cannot be both complete and consistent. The completeness means the closure of the theory with respect to its inferences. Consistency is the criterium that a theory is coherent i.e. does not imply, at once, the propositions ϕ and $\neg\phi$.

⁵ Unthought and not unthinkable as we will see, from an Islamic point of view.

⁶ “C’est une autre manière de définir l’univocité de l’inconscient dans la mesure où elle se confond chez Deleuze avec ‘l’anarchie couronnée’ comme affirmation des disjonctions incluses de *Différence et répétition*”. This is, roughly speaking, the main formal operator that will be convoked in this presentation. As we will discuss it in the last paragraph, the structural duality of Islam, deconstructed *via* a Deleuzian “disjunctive-synthesis-like” method, opens the horizon of Postislam. However, what will be mobilized concretely, is the Laruelien idea of an “unilateral duality”.

“usage” of this “unthought” is no more no less than a suspension of the “Law regime” or Shari’a, to render mystically practicable what remains from such a subversion, an anarchic residue, ontologically reduced to a transitory state, dedicated to being resorbed each time and instantaneously into the prosaic “state of affairs”, governed by Islam’s juridical canons. The Idea is to give the so-called residue the dignity of the concept, theologically speaking, i.e. *Postislam*.

As we will see, this “unthought state” remains, to a greater or lesser extent, inherent to the sphere of Islam. The possibility of its expansion or *genesis* into an independent concept, causally (historically) induced by Islam but ontologically separated from it, is the foremost posture of Postislam. In a word, Postislam represents a *potency without a concept* within Islam; it is an unnamed historical gesture, disseminated throughout a complex combination of theological and mystical first faltering steps.

I will examine some of these instantiations, expressed essentially in Islamic theology and mystical tradition (i.e. the Sūfism in a general acceptance, and the nodal case of Al-Hallāj, in particular). By isolating, then, the *essence* of Islam’s theological mystique (the *structural duality between Shari’a and Haqīqa*), we will be able to construct a synthesis identified with the concept of Postislam. We ought to, at that step, enunciate diverse axioms based on this concept. As a sequel, I will discuss further philosophical counterpoints to this construction.

I insist on the fact that this presentation be eminently a philosophical interpretation mobilizing philosophical tools; the claim is, in the last instance, theological. I will not dwell on the philosophy/theology⁷ dialectics, operant since the dawn of Greek philosophy; what I develop here is, at some point, a task of *philosophy applied to mystique*, which would lead to, I hope, a theological sketch, or, at least, will admit a theological implication. Thus, the rank of speculative thematisation will exceed the *stricto sensu* historical *démarche*.

Another remark concerning the references of this text: the main philosophical and mystical inspirations are written originally in French - for instance the monumental study of Louis Massignon, *La passion de Hallāj*, in four tomes (Massignon, 1975) - and Arabic. Thus, unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine. I would like to thank my colleague Mohamed Amine Khedhiri for proofreading this text and translating some quotes of Avicenna. Furthermore, I would like to thank my colleagues Quentin Morel-Mottet for his remarks on the perspectivism of Postislam, Douja Mamelouk and Lamia Benyoussef for their reading.

1. Postislam in general: excess and concordism

In its more general acceptance, a Postislamic tendency is a regime of thought (philosophical, scientific, mystical, religious, theological⁸, etc.) which

⁷ Mythe et philo thèse/ théologie et philosophie de la religion?

⁸ The Postislam essentially exposed here is a *theological excess*. Thus, it represents a special case of excess, a *genre* of tendency.

affirms an excess with respect to at least one of the three sources of Islam's juridical Canons (i.e. *Quran*, *Sunna*, authentic compilation of words and acts of Muhammad, and *Ijmā'* or consensus of Scholars). The excess in question simply reflects a tendency that, even though being grounded in the Islamic texts – as objectifying them, oriented “intentionally” towards them in the first instance –, does not incorporate, a priori, hermeneutical “soui” (concern) of coincidence or concordance with the canons listed above.

One might argue that a *Postislamic excess* might be recomposed as such within the Islamic matrix, by means of a precise hermeneutics⁹: thereby, its irreducibility would be apparently compromised; however, the *self-awareness* of Postislamic thought would be consciously or unconsciously conceived in the foremost original intimacy, not conducted teleologically¹⁰ by a concern for concordance in relation to Islamic Law (Shari'a) or Faith (*Aqīda*), regardless of the interpretative posture – as heterodox as it can be – adopted retroactively in order to reduce it to an occurrence of *Islam's horizons of possibilities*. *Stricto sensu*, from the Islamic point of view, the *Aqīda* is resorbed into the Shari'a in the sense that faith is prominently a legal prescription.

The Islamic concordism is a radical reductionism: when a problem (political, scientific, social, economic, theological, etc.) emerges with a fundamental novelty, its “resolution” from the philosophical point of view that we are applying is invariable within the Islamic framework: since the ontological closure of Islam is islamically insured (because this religion marks, supposedly, the end of the revealed Law and Faith “forever and ever”, the problem in question can be recomposed and annihilated by the means of Islamic dogma. A concordant interpretation will reduce any category of problematicity, through a chain of inferences rooted in the “axioms” of the three Canons, to a resolution, negatively or positively inherent to the Law.

Let us briefly study a concrete case. The Quran (chapter 4) stipulates that the brothers inherit the double share of their sisters from the property of a departed parent. Let us consider that a problem of some legislative reforms inducing a perfect equality emerges (last summer in Tunisia for instance). The “misery” of concordism takes here its full scale. In fact, the conflict of interpretations, between the literalist conservative (faithful to the “letter” of the Qur'ānic Law) and the progressive reformists (struggling for equal rights between man and woman) is *stricto sensu* epiphenomenal. *In fine*, both of them tend to

⁹ The duality of « التفسير و التأويل » (explanation and interpretation) is primary in the Islamic tradition (see *Quran* 2: 7). While the “tafssīr” is a formal explanation of terms, the “ta'awīl” is a semantical resorption of apparent (logical) contradictions. In the *Quran* 17:35, etymologically speaking, “ta'awīl” might be seen as equivalent to the “final cause” (see below) of a movement. A Postislamic tendency is beyond “tafssīr and ta'awīl” in the sense that it ignores the final (hermeneutical) cause of Islamic discourse if the latter aims to concord with Quran, Sunna, or Ijmā'.

¹⁰ In *Physics II*, 3, Aristotle defined four causes responding to the question “why?”. The final cause, or *telos*, is the aim or finality of a movement.

construct a hermeneutical concordant system of arguments for or against the equality. While the first group consider this as a profound subversion of the “sacred” revelation, the second group argues that equality is not contradictory with the Law under a certain exegesis. Both of them seem to be so far from each other but, in fact, they are so close insofar as they actualize the same structural position: a deep step in concordism. They share the same plan of reference to the Canons. Both of them are evolving within the same Islamic matrix.

Postislam is a radical abolition of this ground since it is indifferent to the sterile conflict of interpretations since it is *a force oriented to the elsewhere*; what it suggests remains a vital paradigm shift. From the invariant background of the “*becoming-same*” (progressive) or the “*same-resting*” (reactionary) of the Law, Postislam presents an alternative *conatus*: striving to persevere in its detachment from the concordist striving to persist under the realm of Law. We will discuss further hermeneutical problems in the fourth paragraph.

Since the main “cheval de bataille” of Islam’s reformists, let us say from the end of the nineteenth century¹¹, is eminently hermeneutical (i.e. centered on the “false problem”: what modern interpretation could or would Islam support with respect to its “essence”¹²?), a Postislamic *refonte* - A deconstruction in Derrida’s sense - (remoulding, recasting) is *fundamentally indifferent* to interpretational dilemmas insofar as its *final cause* in any way whatsoever is *concordist*.

Conversely, one might consider a thought experiment in which a system “demonstrates”, according to immanent Qur’anic interpretation, that, in fact, Islam represents a latent atheism (!)¹³. Roughly speaking, since this position assumes a singular (or paradoxical) concordism, it will not be considered as Postislamic. In the end, if the motion of thought is caused by a final canonic cause (Quran, Sunna, Ijmā’), and even though if this same motion will seem as incommensurable with the tradition, it would be rejected from the Postislam’s realm. We can call it sur-Islamic, hyper-Islamic or anti-Islamic but under no circumstances “Postislamic”: the latter is an excess beyond the concordism/anti-

¹¹ The axis al-Tahtawî-al-Afghani-Abdou is representative of what is called “Islamic Renaissance” (الصحوة الإسلامية): “It [the reform] means the liberation of thought from the mimetic tie, and the comprehension of religion according to the predecessors’ (*salaf*) understanding [...]. [My purpose] is *different* from those of the two great categories of our nation: religion scholars and defenders of modern arts [i.e. modern western thought and science]” (Abdou, 1993, pp. 183-184). It is evident that this self-proclaimed *third position* represents, *in fine*, and despite its importance, a *synthetical rebranding* of an essentialist posture, a modern reformulation of the old scholastic theme of “reason and faith complementarity”, declined in a hermeneutical concordism.

¹² Some traditional illustrations of Islam’s essence could be found in the jurisprudential study of “Maqāsid” i.e. the general *purposes* of the Law, such as the conservation of reason, of progeny, of wealth, etc. (Tahar Ibn Achour, 2001).

¹³ There is some echoes of *this inexistence* in the Jewish Kabbala. In fact, the retreat of God or his *contraction*, namely the *Tsimtsum*, is the condition of possibility of immanence (the result of Creation) “after” the absolute transcendence of the Creator.

concordism dialectics. Mathematically, the fundamental relation of Postislam to Islam should not be captured by *elementary set-theoretical* tools (\in, \notin, \subset , etc., namely the “in” operator) – which is the case for all concordist theories¹⁴ –, but precisely in virtue of a *differential* paradigm (a certain $\frac{dy}{dx}$, namely the “by” operator, functioning as a *tangent* to what would be the “Islam’s curve”). Basically, what I am reporting here is a fundamental Deleuzian construction – pursued since *Différence et répétition* (1969) – that aims at redefining the “problematicity” in philosophy beyond the model of identity, negation and recognition (Rabouin, 2012). More abstractly, or more geometrically, in relation to Islam, Postislam represents a sort of *tangent bundle* of the Islamic *manifold*.

2. An archetypal instantiation: Avicenna’s metaphysics

Before thematizing the Postislamic framework in the particular sense of referring to *mystical excess*, let us focus on the general case of the philosophical one; thus, I will try to briefly explore an archetypal posture of what could be considered as philosophically Postislamic: it is indeed the case of Avicenna’s metaphysics.

Avicenna (980-1037), “chief and prince of philosophers” according to Roger Bacon, is probably the most important philosopher in the history of Islamic thought. Eminent commentator of Aristotle, his book of *al-Shifa’ a* (*The Cure*) is a decisive masterpiece of medieval thought and culture. Indeed, the Middle Ages would not be the same without Avicenna. One could be easily convinced of such a statement by reviewing the rays of Avicenna’s influence through the eras (see figure 1). I will not present an exposé of Avicenna’s system. In fact, the literature is abundant on this question (McGinnis, 2010).

However, what I will briefly highlight is the Postislamic scope of Avicenna’s Metaphysics, its irreducible excess. Considering that “*Dicemus igitur quod ens et res et necesse, talia sunt quae statim imprimuntur in nima prima impressione, quae non acquiritur ex aliis notioribus se [...]*”¹⁵ (*Metaphysics of al-Shifâ*, tract.1, chap. 5), which represents, in fact, a fundamental invariant logged in the History of Philosophy, from Parmenides to Heidegger, Avicenna elaborates, earlier than Anselm of Canterbury, a proof of the existence of God (known as “the Proof of the truthful”, برهان الصديقين) based exclusively on the notions of existence, necessity and possibility (Adamson, 2013). The totality of Being *proceeds*, according to a “theory of emanation”, from the First Principle,

¹⁴ A theological proposition (for example the creation or the eternity of Quran), a faith act (in the Judgement Day, or in a special paradigm of paradisiac delights), a social phenomenon (heritage) is Islamic if it is *in the result of a (re)composition, throughout a hermeneutical precise procedure*; it is non-Islamic if it is not in it. It is *in* if it concords and *out* if it does not.

فنعقول : إن الموجود ، والشئ ، والضرورى ، معانيها ترتسم فى النفس

ارتساماً اولياً، ليس ذلك الارقسام مما يحتاج إلى أن يجلب بأشياء أعرف منها . 15

neither intentionally, nor purposely - i.e. not a temporal emanation -, but as a *necessity of its being qua being* (Rashed, 2002)¹⁶ (*wâjib al-wujûd*).

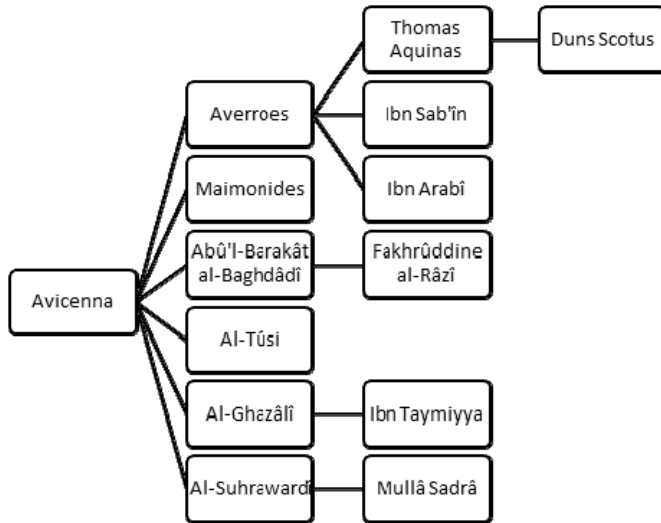


Figure 1. Rays of Avicenna's influence¹⁷

3. Hermeneutical problems

To what extent can we consider the foundational issues of this Metaphysics as a non-concordist Postislamic excess? The answer is, at the same time, simple and complex.

The first answer could be formulated as following: Avicenna's system has exclusive philosophical finalities. The essential *souci* of the theory of emanation, and of Avicenna's thought in general, is in excess with respect to the Canonic Texts, insofar as its means and purposes are purely philosophical; even though it may enter in conflict with the revealed *Law*¹⁸, the conception fluxes towards

¹⁶ It is important to consult the article of Rashed (2002) to have a clear idea on the Postislamic tendency of Mathematics. Rashed describes, according to al-Tûsi, the combinatory calculus that the latter mobilised to deduct the number of elements of the "third order of effects", obtained by adjoining the *intellects and celestial spheres* of the "second order of effects", emanating from the First Principle or the Pure Intellect, etc. Al-Tûsi used explicitly the summa $\sum_{k=1}^n \binom{n}{k}$. Rashed concludes that it is the foundation of combinatory calculus that is implied in al-Tûsi's work.

¹⁷ The influence is both positive and negative. For instance, Ghazâlî was a violent critique of Avicenna's thought. Nevertheless, in the history of philosophy, the notion of influence is deterministic: it would have been necessary that there was Avicenna so that Ghazali was (al-Rahim, 2003).

¹⁸ Clearly, for instance, Avicenna's eschatology is not concordant because it rejects the resurrection of bodies *and* souls together (Jaffer, 2003, p. 170).

some kind of “philosophical consistency”, obtained by logical inferences. As Adamson (2013, p. 177) stresses, commenting the Avicennian proof of uniqueness of God, that “[...] Avicenna signals the relation between his project and Islamic conceptions of God. But philosophical considerations also make it pressing to show that there is only one necessary existent”. We can easily see that this relation is secondary considering that the *final cause* of Avicenna’s thought movement is independent from the Revelation and therefore in *philosophical excess* according to it. Thus, the Avicennian theses are enounced regardless of their Islamic affinity; they are conducted *causally and not ontologically* by the Revelation - this distinction is central in John R. Searle’s philosophy. Moreover, a radical excess is expressed within the theory of emanation in the sense that the proceeding of Intellects and Celestial Spheres from the First Principle has, extensively, neither echo in Quran and Sunna. It is a metaphysical parallel and independent model, purely Hellenistic¹⁹ that might be, downstream, read as conform to the Islamic referential. Conversely, the major themes of *Mutakallimun* (Islamic Theologians) joined to their methods and above all their purposes, are essentially concordist. For instance, al-Mu’tazila corroborate their thesis of the “creation of the Quran” by... Quranic means or verses (39:62²⁰ and 43:3²¹). This posture is diametrically opposed to Avicenna’s program: the former purpose is to conceal theology and revealed Law, in the last instance, by revelation’s means while the latter starts and finishes his proof inside the theologico-philosophical framework²² regardless of the concordance with the Canonical Text. Thus, the former represents the Islamic thought²³ in its purest form (without any excess, see figure 2) while the latter, as it is indifferent to concordist issues, must be considered as Postislamic (with the excess that it engages, always tangential to Islam; see figure 3).

¹⁹ The resonances to a Plotinian systematic core are evident. The procession of the Hypostases is no more no less a form of emanation.

²⁰ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ الزمر: من الآية **God is the Creator of all beings.**

²¹ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا الزخرف: من الآية

²² The Plotinian One or Good is the supreme object of theology which is, for its turn, the highest category of science: Henology, the science of the One.

²³ I highlight the fact that I am not devaluating the subversive positions immanent to Islamic thought, as it is the case for the issue of the creation of Quran. Fortunately, there are multiple instantiations of Islamic subversion, that remain, in fact, according to our definition, pre-Postislamic. It is, furthermore, an excellent illustration of our method, purely speculative, that consists in separating the political contexts from the abstract theology synthesis. One might think that the orthodoxy is systematically correlated to the regimes. It is not so. In fact, under the Abbasside Caliph al-Ma’mūn, the heterodox (in relation to the three Canons of Islam’s jurisprudence) theses of Mu’tazila were adopted by the Regime. Thus, any form of concordism, no matter how subversive potential it may exhibit could always be incorporated and pacified. By cause of its *souci* of coincidence, Islamic postures (orthodox or heterodox) are condemned to stand still in the matrix.

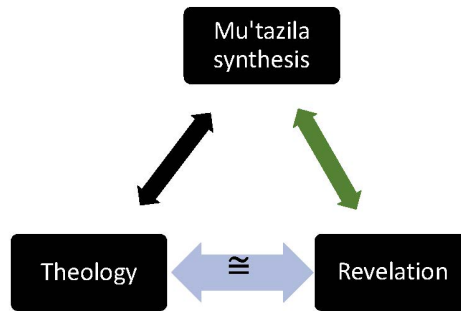


Figure 2. Example of Islamic archetype: Mu'tazila.

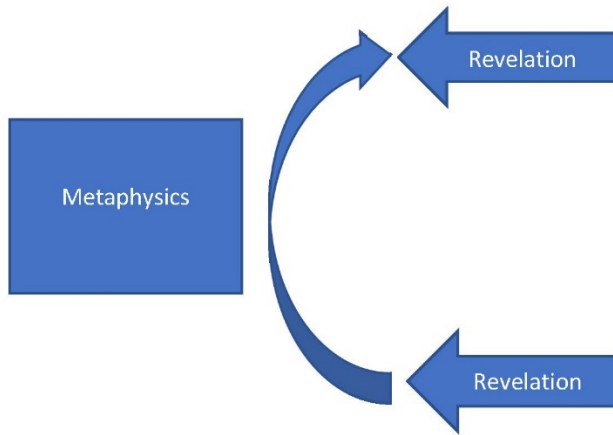


Figure 3. Example of Postislam archetype: Avicenna.

The previous discussion will lead us to the core problematic of this paper: to what extent one can rigorously assume that a philosophical system (the Avicennian for this first part), given as text, does not purposely intend to be concordist with the trinity Quran-Sunna-Ijmāʿ? In other words, by affirming that the hermeneutics that Avicenna affects spontaneously to the canonic text does not include the goal of coincidence with its *maqāsid* – which implies a certain “epistemology” of the author intentions, i.e. an extreme case of concordism –, wouldn’t we immediately apply to the author *one* possible interpretation, and, as a corollary, we are condemned to repeat a hermeneutic gesture that is, as discussed above, the pole of indifference in every Postislamic excess (i.e. to be, precisely, beyond any hermeneutics of concordance)? In the end, elucidating the meaning and the limits of the hermeneutical “method” will render the problematic more accessible. This leads us to the second point.

Now the second answer. With Paul Ricœur, hermeneutics occupies an ambiguous position, different, at the same time, from the structuralist effusion of impersonal meanings as well as from the classic position of intentional

signification, the tyrannical presence of the author. Ricoeur stresses that “what the text wants to say is to put us in its ‘meaning’, its own ‘direction’ To interpret is to take the path of thought opened by the text, to move towards the *east* (*l’Orient*) of the text” (Ricoeur, 1986, pp. 137-159, 156). A hermeneutic implies directly a *meta-hermeneutic* centered not on the investigation oriented towards the intentions of the author, but rather to the *pointed out* in the text considered as an independent entity, a *being qua being*. Avicenna would not have to say *meta-textually* a statement like: “my system is not concordist in its purpose”, so that we can affirm it, with him. The work of the hermeneut consists precisely in isolating the direction, in our case of the philosophical system, in what it conceals of the purest form. By this means, we can conclude that, in its structure, Avicenna’s Metaphysics is not oriented towards concordism; it points to pure philosophical motives, *by-Islamically* and therefore not *in-Islamically* constructed. In the end, Avicenna’s theory represents a form of *excess*. It is a postislamic model: a metaphysical postislamic archetype. Other indications of the peculiar non-concordism of Avicenna’s metaphysics is attested in one of his authenticated letters where he establishes a criterion for the “truthful religion”: That you enter into the realm of impiety, and that you quit the appearance of Islam; you must aim your intellectual gaze beyond the three objects (created, of vulgar belief: paradise, hell and traditions), and thus stop being Muslim and impious at the same time (= stop pronouncing the two terms, negation and affirmation, from the *shahāda* [creed] and renounce telling yourself you are ‘muslim’ or ‘ungodly’ (= enter into the pure and one being, without specification).

4. Directive ideas of Postislam *in particular*

Let us recall the general characterization of a Postislamic tendency: it is a tendency that, even though being grounded in the Islamic texts – as objectifying them, oriented “intentionally” towards them in the first instance –, does not incorporate, *a priori*, a hermeneutical purpose of concordance with the Revelation. This definition is applicable in philosophical, scientific and theological fields, as I illustrated it for Avicenna’s Metaphysics. What would be the Postislam in particular? Frugally, it will be the result of applying the main characterization to Mystical Theology. In its more general acceptance, Mystical Theology is the foundational theory of the dialectics between the Supreme Being (Allah, The Trinity, etc.) and ascetic, reflexive practices. In Islam, the mystical tendency is dominated by the history of Sūfism. I will not dwell on the complex development of this practice. In fact, the literature is abundant on this question²⁴.

²⁴ For the foundation and the directive ideas of Sūfism, see: al-Qūshayrī, A. 2007. *Al-risala al-qūshayrīya (Epistle on Sūfism)*. Garnet Publishing Limited. See also Massignon, L. 1997. *Essay on the origins of the technical language of Islamic mystique*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. For a sketch of history of Sūfism, see Goldziher, I. 2005. *Le dogme et la loi dans l’islam. Histoire du développement dogmatique et juridique de la religion musulmane*. Gale: Making of Modern Law (chapter IV, pp. 111-156).

I will directly develop a crucial theological discovery of Sūfism, i.e. the structural duality of Islam.

Roughly speaking, the essence of Islamic thought and theology is the synthesis of two opposite notions: Haqīqa (Truth, Reality) and Shari'a (Law) As Mark Soileau summarizes it, "the concept [of Haqīqa] has also been taken up by Sūfis, for whom Haqīqa is so important that it can be considered the ultimate purpose of the mystic path, which is attainment of true knowledge through experience of the divine mysteries. It usually refers to hidden, as opposed to manifest meaning, and is often used in contrast with Shari'a, the formal outward practices and laws of Islam. While Sūfis often focus on the inner meaning (Haqīqa) of a practice, most agree that the formal practice should not, however, be neglected. Shari'a and Haqīqa have, in fact, been compared to the body and spirit of religion and *are said to operate together as two sides of the same coin*. Other Sūfis have made these concepts stages in a series of mystical development, beginning with *Shari'a* (formal practices of Islam), moving through *Tariqa* (mystical practices of Sūfism), leading to *Ma'arifa* (divine knowledge, wisdom), and culminating in Haqīqa (immediate experience of the essential reality), though the exact order of these may vary for other Sūfis" (Soileau, 2009).

Schematically, Islam is no more no less than a fragile equilibrium inherited from Jewish Law and Christian Grace. Thus, its inner essence has been crystallized by this Sūfi duality. Islam is, *in fine*, the area of interference between these two opposed sides, and stands in virtue of their coexistence (see figure 4).



Figure 4. Structural duality of Islam

It is Mansûr al-Hallâj²⁵ (858-922) that was the first to break the structural duality of Islam, opening it to the horizon of excess, of Haqīqa upon Shari'a, of theopathy upon theology. In one word, *the transcendence of the ecstatic intuition of the Transcendent, in relation to the conceptual Law*. By his locution, "I am the Truth" or "I am the Real" (Anā Al-Haqq), through his extraordinary innovative *Kitab al-Tawasîn* (al-Hallâj, 1913)²⁶, and, in the end, by his tragical martyrdom, Hallâj was *the condition of possibility*, in a Kantian sense, of a coincidence between the Islamic heritage and Transcendent ecstatic experience. Since this "conversion" does not remain inherent to Islam in the sense that it resorbs it in a

²⁵ It is a hard task to summarize the life and the oeuvre of Hallâj. The ultimate reference is the four volumes of Massignon, L. 1972. *La passion de Hallâj*. Paris: Gallimard.

²⁶ See the annex for *Tasîn al-azal wa al-iltibess* (*Tasîn of Eternity and Ambiguity*) one of the most emblematic texts in the history of Islamic mystique.

pure Haqīqa (as we discussed it, *Islam = Sharia + ε.Haqīqa*) which leads to the radical subtraction of Shari'a. Postislam is the name of such a resultant. Thus, Hallāj is the first post-muslim in the particular meaning of Mystical Theology.

I will not find better than this magnificent passage of Louis Massigon, summarizing one the most emblematic of Hallāj's writings, *Tasīn of Eternity and Ambiguity*. This passage inscribes Hallāj's *evental* part in the history of Islam. There was indeed *a before and after Hallāj*:

Two beings, it is said, have been predestined to bear witness to the fact that the One essence of God is inaccessible (by law and in actual fact): Satan (= Iblis) before the Angels in Heaven, and Muhammad before Men on earth; they are heralds, the first of pure angelic nature, commanded to rule an "inferior" material world, the second of pure human nature, committed to a superhuman witnessing of the heart (over and beyond the intellect: *amana*). And this being accomplished, both stopped midway; they reversed the thrust of their zealous love of God's glory, their fondness for the pure idea of a simple Deity. Their proclamation of the *shahada* remained external, they did not assimilate it by uniting with the unifying will of God. At the first Covenant. Iblis refused to consider the idea of a divine Presence's wrapping itself in the lowly and material form of Adam (a prefigure, thus, of the Judgment). At the time of the Nocturnal Ascent, Muhammad, being too virile, stopped at the threshold of the divine fire, without passively "becoming" Moses' Burning Bush; and Hallaj, who served as a substitute for him after his third *waqfa* at 'Arafat, urges him to go further, beyond the *Qab Qawsayn*, to enter the divine Will's fire even to the point of dying, like the mystical butterfly, and "to fulfill himself in the Object of his love. Muhammad, on his last pilgrimage, at 'Arafat, restored the 'Umra in the hajj," renewed and cased the prohibiting Law; though he took pity on men not daring to impose on them the heroism of self-sacrifice, which fulfills the Law and Islam, he nevertheless decreed the abolition of the *diya* (and *riba*), and he knew (and said) that the symbolic Sacrifice of Abraham, which he reestablished, gains forgiveness for the multitude only through the intercession of self-sacrificing souls (from 9 *Hijja*, prior to the ritual sacrifice of 10 *Hijja*), who are the apotropaic pillars (*abdāl*) of his community. These souls, daring to take issue with the Merciful One (Who offers them for the admiration of His angels), would in the end bring about the unification of men's different forms of worship, not only in spirit, but in actual practice (Hallaj adhered to the material pillar of the rituals, the resurrection of the body), the fulfillment of Islam in a complete gathering together of forgiven humanity. By stopping to return. Iblis brought on the sins of men. And he presides over the disintegration of the material universe; and Muhammad delayed the hour of the destruction and Judgment of men that he was sent to announce.

And yet Iblis, by suffering the unpardonable damnation of his angelic legalism, arouses humanity to go beyond this threshold of supreme diselection to find Love (Hallaj understands that it is the Law of nature itself that stopped him; he admires its true beauty, which comes from God: that terrible ambiguity of grace, that divine temptation which the heart (not the intellect) must enter in order to find [Love]) (Massignon, 1994, p. 222).

5. Fragments of meditations on Postislam

5.1. First aphorism: Islam versus Postislam

What does it mean to be a Muslim? If it were necessary to condense the formula, one could argue that, symmetrically to the syntagm “to have faith” (*avoir la foi*), one would have to invent a “to have the law” (*avoir la Loi*), no more no less, where the only possible faith in Islam would solely be a legal prescription.

As a corollary, and contrary to a famous passage from the *Epistle to the Romans*, grace (*kharis*) ceases to be superabundant, given shari’al replacement, exhaustively prescriptive and coercive. Strikingly, a purely restorative counter-revolution. Saint Paul never took place, one would say. The massive psychoanalyses of the Muslim subject, seizing the terrorist horror, miss the essence of his/her mundane manifestation: a disintegration of the Muslim desire in a broad sense. For every theory of the subject engages a theory of desire; and every theory of desire is articulated, dialectically or anti-dialectically, with respect to the law (in this case, the Law = Shari’a). However, the alienation of the Muslim desire is hardly a phenomenal contingency. To be strictly under the yoke of the Law, fully under the Law, only under the Law – it is so for Islam – the Muslim evades the reign of grace – itself supposed to be subtractive, because *evental*, at least in the Paulinian sense, and generates at the same time the ruin of his/her desire (of his/her ‘concupiscence’).

Blunted, so it would be, the universalizable singularity of the resurrection of Christ; and restoring a strong form of so-called universal communitarianism: that Muslims have the Law simply implies that the knotting of the *Common* is no longer the race but the void repetition of the Law vis-à-vis its subjects. Here is very briefly the post-Islamic diagnosis. The deconstruction of Islam is nothing other than a reflection on the possibility of grace, or a prototype of grace, patent in the Islamic tradition as a *ε-state*. Postislam tends to expand this *ε-state* to a legitimate and sedimented theory and praxis. In addition, it is exactly the Hallajian point of no return, which is the systematisation and the deduction emanating from the concept of Haqīqa, which inscribes the solution. Grace, in Islam, is the Haqīqa.

5.2. Second aphorism: grace and haqīqa: a christo-hallajian synthesis

In the end, what is the essence of Postislam? A re-writing of grace from the standpoint of Haqīqa and *vice versa*. In fact, *the time of the Gospel* is an intermittent suspension of the reign of the Law. Symmetrically, Theopathy acting in the heart of the word springing ineluctably from the Haqīqa. Recall that the Haqīqa, the truth, is classically described (according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, for instance) as an *adequatio rei et intellectus*, that is, in the Sūfī context, the fulgurant divine presence over its dead “impresence” that the letter of the Law presents. This is an adequacy between the enunciated locution of sub-ecstasy (*shat'h*) and the “empirical” reality of the divine mysteries revealed in communion or illumination not mediated by the Law. Because when Hallāj pronounces his creed, “Ana-al-Haqq” (“I am the truth”), he announces the event, the occurrence of such a fragile *adequatio rei and intellectus*, once registered in potency and presentially and immediately effective in act. Grace (*kharis*) suspends the Law by completing it in the gift; the Haqīqa updates the *epoche* (in the Husserlian sense) of the Law by opening it onto the horizon of its closing always revived (by a resurgence of the Law), and whose sense takes shape only by a form of eclecticism or election that is reminiscent of the “free” gift of grace. The son of man becomes son of God in Christian grace; and the servant becomes master or God in the Islamic Haqīqa, as proclaimed by Ibn 'Arabī (2015, p. 58):

At one time the servant is a lord without a doubt/and at another he is really a servant without a lie.

If he is a servant, he encompasses the Real/and if he is a lord, he is in a poor state.

Through his being a servant, he beholds the essence of his self/and with no doubt hopes overflow from him.

Through his being a lord, he beholds the whole of creation/making demands on him through the domain of Ownership and Kingdom.

Because of his essence, he cannot answer their demands/for this reason, you see some gnostics weeping.

So be a servant of a lord and not a lord of his servant/lest you fall, melting in the Fire.

In either case, it is the erratic abrogation and abolition of the Law that initiates the possibility of grace or Haqīqa. Thus, that Jesus could have, *hic et nunc*, purified the paralytic of his sins, in a famous passage from the Gospel according to Mark (2: 1-12). This was considered a heresy by the contents of the Law (the scribes); whereas it was, ultimately, the illumination of grace eternally overhanging the regime of the Law and operating a paradigm shift, an “epistemological break” according to Bachelard / Althusser, or, should we say, a “theopathic break”:

And when he came into Capernaum again after some days, the news went about that he was in the house.

And a great number had come together, so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door: and he gave them teaching.

And four men came to him with one on a bed who had no power of moving.

And when they were unable to get near him because of all the people, they got the roof uncovered where he was: and when it was broken up, they let down the bed on which the man was.

And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to him, Son, you have forgiveness for your sins.

But there were certain of the scribes seated there, and reasoning in their hearts,

Why does this man say such things? he has no respect for God: from whom does forgiveness come but from God only?

And Jesus, having knowledge in his spirit of their thoughts, said to them, Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?

Which is the simpler, to say to a man who is ill, You have forgiveness for your sins, or, Get up, take up your bed, and go?

But so that you may see that the Son of man has authority for the forgiveness of sins on earth, (he said to the man,)

I say to you, get up, take up your bed, and go to your house.

And he got up, and straight away took up the bed and went out before them all, so that they were all full of wonder, and gave glory to God, saying, We have never seen anything like this.

It is in this sense, also, that in the *Epistle to the Romans* (3: 21-30), St. Paul subsumes the regime of the Law to that of universal grace:

But now without the law there is a revelation of the righteousness of God, to which witness is given by the law and the prophets;

That is, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all those who have faith; and one man is not different from another,

For all have done wrong and are far from the glory of God;

And they may have righteousness put to their credit, freely, by his grace, through the salvation which is in Christ Jesus:

Whom God has put forward as the sign of his mercy, through faith, by his blood, to make clear his righteousness when, in his pity, God let the sins of earlier times go without punishment;

And to make clear his righteousness now, so that he might himself be upright, and give righteousness to him who has faith in Jesus.

What reason, then, is there for pride? It is shut out. By what sort of law? of works? No, but by a law of faith.

For this reason, then, a man may get righteousness by faith without the works of the law.

Or is God the God of Jews only? is he not in the same way the God of Gentiles? Yes, of Gentiles:

If God is one; and he will give righteousness because of faith to those who have circumcision, and through faith to those who have not circumcision.

The same structure is manifest in the Haqīqa insofar as, contrary to the Law which is indefinitely attested (in the *shahāda*, testimony) within the Islamic creed (There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God), faith is lived in the intimacy of the burning presence, and that no *logos* can account for it, except, perhaps, in the form of *traces* that crystallise, on the lips of the Sūfi Alpha, the presence of God coupled with his legal absence. *Mysticism is none other than the theory of the practice of the illegal presence of God*. The universal monotheism and monism of Hallāj and Saint Paul echo this idea that the *regional* aspects of the Law lack the archetype of an absolute democratisation of the divine presence, which can potentially be experienced without mediation, rites or submission. This is how Alain Badiou, in his *Saint Paul. The Foundation of Universalism* summarises Paul's orientation, which is thoroughly consonant with that of Al Hallāj:

The ontological structure underlying this conviction (though Paul has no interest whatsoever in ontology) is that no eventual One can be the One of a particularity. The universal is the only possible correlate for the One. The general apparatus of a truth contains the One (divine transcendence, monotheism, according to the Pauline fable), the universal (the whole of humanity, both circumcised and uncircumcised), and the singular (the Christ-event). The particular, which pertains to opinion, custom, law, cannot be inscribed in it.

What can measure up to the universality of an address? Not legality, in any case. The law is always predicative, particular, and partial. Paul is perfectly aware of the laws unfailingly "statist" character. By "statist" I mean that which enumerates, names, and controls the parts of a situation. If a truth is to surge forth eventually, it must be nondenumerable, unpredictable, uncontrollable. This is precisely what Paul calls grace: that which occurs without being couched in any predicate, that which is translegal, that which happens to everyone without an assignable reason. Grace is the opposite of law insofar as it is what comes *without being due*.

This is a profound insight of Pauls, which, through its universal and illegal understanding of the One, undoes every particular or communitarian incorporation of the subject, as well as every juridical or contractual approach to its constitutive division. *That which founds a subject cannot be what is due to it*. For this foundation binds itself to that which is declared in a radical contingency. If one understands man's humanity in terms of his subjective capacity, there is, strictly speaking, nothing whatsoever like a "right" of man (Badiou, 2003, p. 76).

6. Critical horizons

Considering the equation: *Postislam = Islam – Law = Haqīqa*, the most difficult task consists in the elaboration of a *theory of praxis* of Haqīqa, unleashed from Law's injunctions, even though, practically speaking, they persist at funding the framework of faith. If Postislam is an integral mystique, based on the *possibility of a permanent theophany*, indefinitely experienced throughout ecstatic Theopathy, it might appear lightly strong to assume such a possibility without the establishment of a concrete *modus operandi* leading to theophany, especially in the case of mystical experience which is, by definition, fuzzy and ineffable. Briefly, the possibility of Postislam as a theory is conditioned by a rigorous formulation of an *epistemology of revelation and incarnation*. In fact, this coincides with some purposes of the innovative systematical project of Jean-Luc Marion (2008).

Furthermore, the *deconstruction* of Islam's structural duality promoted by the Postislamic project might reboot, formally and objectively, anti-immanent themes (the form of transcendence of the Sūfi's Theopathy, the dialectical definition of the problem, etc.). This fog could be overcome by *non-philosophical tools* developed by François Laruelle. The core of Postislam, i.e. the integral mystique, would have to formally define its machinery (isolating non-dialectically the Haqīqa) and, ontologically, to *dualyze* correctly its theology of the One. According to Laruelle, the dual – as it differentiates itself from the double –, is the “fundamental matrix of non-philosophy that defines a general order founded upon the being-foreclosed of the One; source of irreversibility and unilaterality between the experience of the immanence of the One and the object to which it is foreclosed, the World. Whereas the dual is still not unilateral duality (which sets cloning in play), it is opposed par excellence to philosophy's form as mixture founded upon reversibility and reciprocity” (Laruelle and al., 2013, p. 55.). Postislam must be an immanent theory of the possibility of non-dialectical – and thus subtracted to Shari'a – access to the One.

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