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PHILIPP VALENTINI

IBN 'ARABĪ'S ROLE IN IBRAHIM NIASSE'S THINKING

FROM THE UNITY OF BEING TO MUḤAMMAD'S NAMES-OF-THE-FATHER

Abstract

This article examines the role of Ibn 'Arabī in the thought of the Senegalese Sufi master Ibrāhīm Niasse (1900–1975), primarily through Niasse's Qur'anic commentary *Fī Riyāḍ al-Tafsīr*, his metaphysical treatise *Sirr al-Akbar*, and an account of a mystical vision from 1932. Rather than approaching Niasse as a straightforward representative of the Akbarian doctrine later known as *waḥdat al-wujūd*, I argue that Ibn 'Arabī occupies several distinct positions within Niasse's metaphysical dramaturgy. He provides Niasse with a vocabulary for thinking divine self-manifestation, Muḥammadan servitude, spiritual paternity, and the retrospective disclosure of meanings latent in the Adamic cycle. Yet Niasse simultaneously displaces the Akbarian emphasis on Being by foregrounding *jūd*, the generous act of the Real, which he situates beyond the opposition between Being and non-Being and identifies with the Aḥmadian reality from which the Muḥammadan form emanates. The resulting picture complicates genealogies that understand West African speculative Sufism primarily through the reception of *waḥdat al-wujūd*: Niasse inherits and transforms Akbarian metaphysics into a distinctively Tijāni account of emanation, paternity, and initiatory reintegration.

*The castle of the celestials,
As ancient opinion has it,
Yet where much what they must decide upon in secret
Still reaches men; and so
I conjured, but without suspecting,
A destiny for my own, for by then
as I was still conversing with myself about its occurrence,
In warm shadows I had barely
Drifted to Italy
And the far-away coasts of Morea.*

Hölderlin, The Rhine (trans. Philipp Valentini).

The aim of this article is to sketch a first understanding of the role Ibrāhīm Niasse attributes to the figure of Ibn 'Arabī in his thought. Ibrāhīm Niasse (1900-1975)¹ is a Senegalese Sufi master whose movement now has 60 million adherents, according to the Islamologist Zachary Wright. His movement is one of the largest muslim revivalist movements of the 20th^{ième} century.² He is one of the eminent masters of the Tijāniyya.³ This Sufi path is the fruit of an 18^{ième} century reform movement within Sunni Sufism which sought to link the spiritual and legal education of the aspiring Sufi to the immediate presence of the Prophet, as it appears both in the Sunni canon and in the mystical visions of Sufi masters and their pupils.⁴ I will foremost rely on his commentary of the Qur'an in Arabic and to a smaller extent his metaphysical treatise entitled the Greatest Secret (Ar. *Sirr al Akbar*) written in 1934 and one account of a mystical vision he had in 1932. Niasse orally expounded this commentary on the Qur'an in Mauritania in 1964 (1383 Hijri) during the month of Ramadan that year. Mauritania gained independence in 1958. In the post-colonial context of the new independence of many African states, Niasse's aim was to establish his religious and initiatory teachings in the historical trajectory of Sunni commentaries on the Qur'an. He was the first of the Tijāniyya Sufi path to fully expose the Qur'an's esoteric and exoteric meanings. As for Ibn 'Arabī (1165-1240), he was the one who built an intellectual edifice that founded later speculative Sufism as the combination of an intellectual path and a shari'atual practice with the aim of expressing the inextricable link between the reality of divine oneness and the mystery of the Muhammadan election that inhabits it.⁵ Much later after his death, scholars ascribed the doctrine of the unity of Being (Ar. *Waḥdat al-wujūd*) to him. Cécile de Bonmariage has brilliantly synthetized the core teaching of the akbarian 'school' when she writes: "To affirm the unity of being,- being as the reality that founds all that is - is to say that the reality of being is one and unique, that it is God alone, the Real, who is; the "rest" being

1. The two fundamental books on Niasse are Rüdiger Seesemann, *The divine flood, Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011) and Zachary Wright, *Living Knowledge in West African Islam: The Sufi Community of Ibrāhīm Niasse* (Leiden: Brill, 2015). Oludamini Ogunnaike heavily relies in his book *Deep Knowledge, Ways of Knowing in Sufism and Ifa Two West African Intellectual Traditions* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020) on a perennialist framework that often clouds his understanding of Niasse's teachings. For a critique of this perennialist framework see Gregory Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabī* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2018) as well as Philipp Valentini (PhD), *French Sufi Theopolitics : on the Appropriation of the Akbarian concepts of God's Unity, Law and Perfect Man by French Modern Perennialists*, Univ. Fribourg Switzerland (2020).

2. Rudolph Ware, Zachary Wright and Amir Syed, *Jihad of the Pen: The Sufi Literature of West Africa* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2018) 5.

3. The Tijāniyya Sufi path was initiated by Aḥmad Tijani (1737-1815) following a waking vision of the Prophet, who ordered him to abandon all previous initiations and follow only the Prophet's teachings. This Sufi path belongs to a wider movement which, in the 18^{ième}, seeks to place the presence of extinction in the Prophet's person, in order to obtain his daily guidance, at the center of the aspiring Sufi's attention.

4. Ruggero Vimercato Sanseverino, *Penser la voie muḥammadienne : Le renouveau soufi à Fès au XIIIe/XIXe siècle*, in *Studia Islamica* 111 (2016), 109-136.

5. It seems to me that the most accurate works in European languages on Ibn 'Arabī's teachings are : Michel Chodkiewicz *An Ocean without Shore* (New York : SUNY Press, 1993) as well as Gregory Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn 'Arabī* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2018). Finally, the *Journal of Ibn Arabi Society* has been the major vehicle for making Ibn 'Arabī's teachings known in the Euroamerican space.

the manifestations of His perfection, which do not participate in the same reality, but are a reflection of it.”⁶ If it is true that Niasse read Ibn 'Arabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* at first hand,⁷ it was mostly through Ismā'īl Ḥaqqī's (1653-1725) Qur'anic commentary, *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-musammā bi-rūḥ al-bayān*, that he gained access to passages by Ibn 'Arabī⁸ that he subsequently re-used in his own Qur'anic commentary. *What is the part that Ibn 'Arabī plays in Niasse's thought and how does this affect Niasse's transformation of the akbarian doctrine of the unity of Being?* I will show that Niasse's thinking turns arounds Muhammad's names-of-the-father. It is this presence of Muhammad's names-of-the-father that makes him transform Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of the unity of Being. I will therefore need to disorient Lacan's notion of the names-of-the-father from its original direction in order to come closer to what Niasse might well have had in mind when he gives an explanation on Muhammad's names-of-the-father.

Nevertheless, before beginning to present Niasse's use of Ibn 'Arabī in his Qur'anic commentary, it is worth briefly outlining the cosmological drama that informs Niasse's philosophical thinking. Since Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d.932), the Sufi's present situation is seen as unfolding in a time divided into three sequences: a pre-eternity in which spirits not yet clothed in their carnal bodies acquiesce to divine lordship, a perpetually pulsating instant and finally apocatastasis.⁹ Niasse writes on this subject:

The Arabic word 'khulūd' means to reside for a very long time in a dwelling and, as such, must be distinguished from the word eternal (Ar. *Abadan*). The people of paradise as well as the people of fire will remain for a very long time in paradise and in the fire (of hell). But in post-eternity there will be no more paradise and earth. So the people of paradise will remain in a state of bliss until they return to the state they were in in pre-eternity. Similarly, the people of the fire will remain in examination (of their errors) and punishment until they reach the state that was theirs in pre-eternity (Ar. *Azalan*). The appearance of Being that is referred to as the appearance of pre-eternity in post-eternity is not comparable to what is known in this world. The people of paradise will inevitably return to that state which was theirs in pre-eternity. Post-

6. Cécile de Bonmariage, *Le Réel et les Réalités. Mulla Sadra Shirazi et la Structure de la Réalité* (Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin : Paris, 2007), 135. A trace of this doctrine is found in the founding book of the Tijāniyya order. In fact, the affect that undergirds this philosophical vision is one in which the Sufi feels that he is overwhelmed with the presence of the Absolute to the extent that he is no more able to distinguish the difference between himself and that which is other than himself. See 'Alī Harāzīm al-Barrāda, *Jawāhir al-Ma'ānī wa Bulūgh al-Amānī fi Fayḍ Sidi Abi 'Abbās al-Tijānī*, Bilingual Arabic/French edition, trans. Ravane Mbaye (Dakar: Dar Albouiraq, 2011), 979-981.

7. Antonio De Diego González, La recepción del pensamiento de Ibn 'Arabī en las doctrinas de la tariqa Tijāniyya in *Revista Internacional de Filosofía* 27 (1):7-28 (2022).

8. Oludamini Ogunnaike, In the Gardens with Ibrahim: An Evaluation of *Fi riyaḍ al-tafsīr* by Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse, a Contemporary, Traditional Tafsīr, in *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*. 20 (2018), 28-46.

9. Geneviève Gobillot, Quelques stéréotypes cosmologiques d'origine pythagoricienne chez les penseurs musulmans au Moyen Âge (II), in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 219.2 (2002), 161-192.

eternity is a mirror of pre-eternity, and so only the Self of God remains, as it is said in the Qur'an: "*He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden*" (57:3).

Therefore, it is necessary for the appearance of the name "The Last" to appear so that it puts an end to all things, including the long duration of the permanence of people who belong to paradise who are in paradise and people who belong to fire in fire.¹⁰

Within the unfolding of these three sequences, both a happy fault and a catastrophe occur. The happy fault is that of Adam's fall, which places Adam in a situation of disarray. Niasse has the divine figure say to Adam – who is anxiously wandering through paradise after having eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree – "*What is happening with you, Adam?*"¹¹. The catastrophe is that of the fall of the individualities from the Muhammadan form. Caught up in incandescent passions and fanned by primordial matter,¹² individualities detach themselves from the Muhammadan form and fall into primordial matter. Niasse writes:

He took man's spirit out of the presence of holiness and his body out of the Muḥammadian form. This is the most perfect form. Then he who denies Allāh's name (in the undifferentiated primordial matter) does so because he follows the incandescence of his passions to the point of caring only for his belly and pleasures. The following then emerges from what is proper to man: he (i.e. the human who follows the passions) is the evil of all things; he thus identifies himself with the affect that leads him to cunning against others, with the affect that leads him to deceive others, and finally with the affect that leads him to betrayal. This is when the little satans truly emerge from human reality.¹³

Once fallen into the chaos of primordial matter, individualities aspire to reintegrate the Muḥammadian form that orders existing things within itself according to the order proper to the Muḥammadan form: "The existence of separate individualized beings is like shadow and smoke that demand and seek Being in the form of its completeness (i.e. the Muḥammadan form)." ¹⁴

The task of Muhammad's heirs is therefore to ensure that individualities can find their way back into the Muhammadan form. They do this by affirming divine victory over the dispersive force inherent to primordial matter. This battle between the army of the

10. Vol.3.152-153

11. Vol. 1.87. When only the volume and the page is written in a footnote, it refers to Niasse's commentary of the Qur'an, Ibrāhīm Niasse, *Fi Riyāḍ al-Tafsīr li'l-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, vol. 1-6 (Tunis: Majma' al-Yamāma li'l-Ḍibā'a wa'l Nashr, 2010).

12. Ibn 'Arabī, *La Production des Cercles*, trans. Paul Fenton and Maurice Gloton (Paris : Editions de l'Éclat, 1996), XXV.

13. Vol.6.340

14. Niasse, *Sirr al Akbar*, 436.

Prophet supported by the angels and the army of the devil is found in the Qur'an when it mentions the "**party of Satan**" (58:19-21). Here Niasse explains how divine dominance over the devil relates to the victory of the Prophet and his successors, the *khulafā'* over the devil's party: "Dominance is that of the khalīf-saint of God and the Prophet. This dominion has been written in the well-guarded heavenly book since pre-eternity."¹⁵

Asking what role Niasse attributes to Ibn 'Arabī in his Qur'anic commentary is tantamount to asking what place Ibn 'Arabī occupies in the dramaturgy I have just outlined. This role can be approached in three ways: explicit references to Ibn 'Arabī's name, implicit references to Ibn 'Arabī's school and, finally, the major discrepancies between Ibn 'Arabī's school and Niasse's teaching.

A. Explicit references to Ibn 'Arabī's name

The first explicit reference to Ibn 'Arabī's name comes in a passage in which Niasse expresses the idea that Muhammadan heirs are likely to understand what Adam could only dimly grasp: the reason for his fall into the world of primordial matter. This is the passage in which Niasse explains how Iblis was able to influence Eve even if he he was forbidden to enter the Garden of Paradise.

So Adam ate from the tree, and the form of this act is one of rebellion. However, the meaning and reality of this act is of the order of obedience to Adam's intrinsic truthfulness. This corresponds to the acts of disobedience proper to the elite of the Sufis who disobey in appearance but are obedient inwardly.¹⁶ In Adam's innermost being, Allāh said to him: "*I created Paradise and Hell, and I promised that these two places would be filled. Now, I can only fill them by creating a creature from which both the obedient will go to Paradise and the disobedient will go to Hell*". The Qur'an says on this subject: **"We had offered the heavens, the earth and the mountains the responsibility (of bearing the burdens of doing good and avoiding evil). They refused to bear it and were afraid of it, whereas man took it upon himself; for he is very unjust [to himself] and very ignorant."** (33 :72). Adam then replied "*if it finds Your approval, I*

15. vol 6.98.

16. Elliot Wolfson's notion of a « hypernomian » obedience to the Jewish Law by Kabbalists that describes how they first negate the Law to then abide to it more strongly, resonates well with this passage by Niasse. The passage between the apparent negation and the act of excessively abiding to the Law shows a lack inside the Law that asks for the contemplative speculative thinking to craft new meanings. In other words and in the context of this paper, Adam had to be split in two – his internal obedience and his external rebellion- to fall for the Muhammadan Law to appear. The appearance of the Muhammadan Law shows then something that is beyond good and evil, i.e. apocatastasis. Nonetheless, apocatastasis can be apprehended only by following the Muhammadan Law. See Elliot R. Wolfson, Chapter 13 "Ascesis, Hypernomianism, and the Excess of Lack: Semiotic Transfiguration of the Somatic" in *Accounting for the Commandments in Medieval Judaism*. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2022).

will politely fulfill the meaning (Ar. imtithalihi) of this order". Allāh retorted " I will make it apparent that you are turning against Me and disobeying Me'. Adam replied, "If it pleases you, I don't care." So it was for this reason that he turned against Allāh's command in appearance, whereas according to the reality of the meaning he incorporated, he always remained obedient to Allāh's command. Ibn 'Arabī al Ḥātimī¹⁷ said: 'When Adam ate from the tree, he descended to earth and then became Allāh's vicar on earth. He then became the father of all the prophets as well as the saints, the knowers of Allāh and finally the believers, until the Day of Judgment. He also became the father (of the bodily form) of the lord of existence, Muhammad.' Ibn 'Arabī al Hatimi added: 'If I had been in the same situation as Adam, I would have eaten the whole tree as well as all the veins of this tree.'¹⁸

We see here that Niasse institutes a retrospective movement. Ibn 'Arabī is an heir to Muhamadian wisdom. This in itself encompasses all the wisdoms of the prophets who preceded him, and adds a surplus of meaning that was inaccessible to the earlier prophets.¹⁹ So if Ibn 'Arabī is a Muhammadan heir, he can bring out of what Adam experienced - his lack of understanding of the reason for his fall - a reason that Adam did not know. I must now answer the following question: What is the event within this drama that drives this retrospective movement? It is the event by which Muhammad, from the height of the praised station (17:79), intercedes for the entire cosmos. Niasse doesn't comment at length the station from which the Prophet will intercede for the entire creation.²⁰ It is then in another part of his Qur'anic Commentary that we ought to look for an explanation of what this praised station is. Niasse takes a part of the explanation given by Ḥaqqī on the praised station and inserts it his commentary of (53 :10). It is here that one of the titles of Ibn 'Arabī appears.

"He revealed to him what He revealed to him" (53:10): The difference between Moses and Muḥammad is this. Moses is the one who spoke with Allāh (...). The Chosen One, on the other hand, is hidden in Allāh's secret. So Allāh says of him, "He revealed to

17. Ibrāhīm Niasse understands the title of "seal" that is commonly given to Ibn 'Arabī as indicating that he might well have been the seal of his time and moreover that his sealness is, in any case, inherited from four presences that Ibn 'Arabī perceives as being prophets (Jesus, Idrīs, Jesus, Ilyās and Khidr) whereas Aḥmad Tijani is the unique seal of all the saints of all times since he receives this station directly from Muhammad himself. See Zachary Wright, *Realizing Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 155.

18. Vol.1.88-89.

19. For many Sunni Sufis, the abrogation of religions prior to Islam implies a leap and a firm decision to be a disciple of Muhammad. This leap corresponds to the difference between the contemplation of the Divine Essence and the contemplation of the Divine Essence in the Muhammadan figure through the guidance provided by the Prophet Muhammad to his followers. For a presentation of this teaching by Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, Ibn 'Arabī's adopted son, see : Philipp Valentini, (PhD), French Sufi Theopolitics : on the Appropriation of the Akbarian concepts of God's Unity, Law and Perfect Pan by French modern perennialists, Univ. Fribourg Switzerland (2020).

20. Niasse states that the prophetic word on the praised station is very long and immediately after having said this, he continues his commentary of the Surah 17. Vol.4.340.

him what He revealed to him". The knowledge referred to here is known only to the loved one himself.²¹

Niasse continues this commentary with a quote from Ibn 'Arabī, which he takes from Ismā'il Ḥaqqī.²² Here is the story that Niasse believes illustrates the knowledge referred to in this verse (53:10). After saying that this is a dream by the greatest of masters (Ibn 'Arabī), Niasse tells the following story. After having stated that Ibn 'Arabī attended an assembly in which the different Prophets were present, he reports the conversation between Ibn 'Arabī and Hūd. Niasse then carries on the story by narrating it as if Ibn 'Arabī would tell it in person to his mauritanian listeners.

Among them, Hūd spoke to me and informed me of the reason for their gathering: they had gathered to intercede on behalf of Hallāj with our Prophet Muhammad - Peace be upon him and upon them! Indeed, (Hallāj) had been rude in saying, while living in this world, that the Prophet had not had an aspiration commensurate with his rank since he stated that he would intercede only for the great sinners of his community and not the whole of creation. Now this is wrong since the Prophet is in between His two hands²³ and he (the Prophet) said to him (Hallāj): 'The assembly of saints believe that the servant when he is extinguished in his Lord, the Truth speaks through his tongue. Is this true?' Hallāj answered: 'Yes.' He (the Prophet) then asked him: 'Even the highest of all blames among the words can be said in this situation of being extinguished in your Lord and still it is the Truth that speaks through one's tongue'. Hallāj answered: 'I repent, I repent'. The Prophet then told him: 'The condition for your repentance to be accepted is that you kill yourself through my Law'. Hallāj accepted and he was killed that day. In his mystical drunkenness, he then said: 'I am the Truth and there is nothing in this cloak except Allāh'. The exoterical and esoterical scholars decreed that it was necessary for Hallāj to be killed and he was killed. Since he left this world, (Hallāj) has remained veiled with regard to the Messenger of Allāh. This is why the purpose of this assembly is to intercede on his behalf with him - may Allāh shower His unitive Grace and Peace upon him! - From the time he left this world to the time the assembly mentioned here was held, more

21. Vol. 4.303

22. Although Niasse uses the passage as it appears in Ḥaqqī's Qur'anic commentary, he does not place it in the same place. Ḥaqqī uses the passage as a commentary of (93:5), and thus pursues a different aim from Niasse. Niasse wishes to show the excellence of the relationship between the divine instance and Muhammad, whereas Ḥaqqī wishes to show how Muhammad intercedes with Allāh for the whole of existence and not only for his immediate community.

23. The Hand of Mercy/Love and the Hand of Majesty/Rigour.

than three hundred and ninety nine years have passed. Once they have passed, the veil between Hallāj and the Chosen One (the Prophet) was lifted."²⁴

The passage that Niasse doesn't mention in his re-stating Ḥaqqī's version of Ibn 'Arabī's dream is the following conversation between the Prophet and Hallāj:

He was asked, "Why do you say that?" He replied: "Because Allāh the Most High has said: "And your Lord will give you a gift, so that you will be satisfied". Now, it was incumbent upon him not to be satisfied until Allāh had accepted his intercession for any unbeliever (*kāfir*) or believer; instead, he confined himself to asking to be allowed to intercede for the great sinners of my community". When he had uttered these words, Allāh's Messenger appeared to him and said:

- O Mansūr, was it you who blamed me for my intercession?

- O Messenger of Allāh, it was so.

- Have you not heard that my Lord - may He be glorified and magnified - said: "When I love a servant, I am his hearing, his sight, his tongue and his hand"?

- Of course, O Messenger of Allāh.

- If I myself am the Beloved of Allāh, it is indeed He who speaks through my mouth. It is therefore He who intercedes and to whom the intercession is made. I am a nothingness (*'adam*) within His Being. What blame is there against me, O Mansūr?

- O Allāh's Messenger, I repent of the words I have spoken. What will be the atonement for my fault?

- Immolate your soul for Allāh!

- What will I do?

- Kill your soul with the sword of my Law.²⁵

24. In Niasse's tafsir, this passage is found in Vol.6.24. The translation of this passage is inspired by the translation undertaken by Charles-André Gilis, *Les Sept Etendard du Califat* (Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 2004), 298-299.

25. In Niasse's tafsir, this passage is found in Vol.6.24. The translation of this passage is inspired by the translation undertaken by Charles-André Gilis, *Les Sept Etendard du Califat* (Paris: Editions Traditionnelles, 2004), 298-299.

Here Niasse, veils the core²⁶ of the teaching of Ibn 'Arabī, namely that the Prophet intercedes for the whole of creation because He is -through his senses and his walking on earth- the integral manifestation of Allāh's ipseity for all the worlds. Niasse alludes to this nexus between the Prophet and Allāh's ipseity when he tells his audience that the Prophet is in between God's two hands and that Hallāj was wrong believing that the Prophet intercedes only for the great sinners of his community. As in the case of the Pharaoh we will read below, Niasse alludes to an esoteric teaching found in the akbarian school but he doesn't explicitly mention the core of these akbarian teachings.

Ibn 'Arabī's explicit presence in Niasse's oral commentary of the Qur'an thus indicates a) a retrospective movement in Ibrāhīm Niasse's thought that is inaugurated by Muhammad's intercession. From this intercession which closes the cycle of Adamic humanity, Niasse's thought moves backwards in time to look for unfulfilled meanings in the experience that inaugurated the Adamic cycle - i.e. the fall of Adam. b) an invitation to read Ibn 'Arabī to understand the nexus between the Prophet and Allāh's ipseity. We shall now look at the meaning of Ibn 'Arabī's implicit presence in Niasse's thought.

B. The implicit presence of Ibn 'Arabī

Like Ibn 'Arabī before him, Niasse maintains that it is possible for the Sufi to contemplate the Divine Essence at the moment when the Sufi's 'my-ness' falls to earth. This is how they both understand the passage of the Qur'an in which Moses asks Allāh for permission to see Him (7:143). Ibn 'Arabī wrote: "'You asked to see Him', he says to Moses. Now, the Prophet of God has said: no-one will see God before he dies. That is so', replies Moses. When I asked to see Him, He granted my wish and I fell down thunderstruck. And it was whilst I was struck down that I saw Him.' 'Were you dead, then?' 'I was, in fact, dead.'"²⁷ This strongly resembles Niasse's meditations in his own commentary of the Qur'an, when he puts the following words into the mouth of the divine instance: "You can only see me if you die to your own existence, if you die to your own death as well as to your super-existence (Ar.

26. The act of veiling specific teachings is not a political act. When Niasse teaches orally this tafsīr in Mauritania, he is widely respected as a scholar by both scholars and politicians in Egypt, Senegal and Nigeria. It is most likely related to the idea that the disciple must appropriate these teachings with his own words and through his own daily struggles. In West Africa, Sufi teachings are often taught through more or less improvised maïeutic dialogues that seek first to catch the affect that is touching the disciple in a specific moment and time. Subsequently, the teacher seeks to transform the disciple in a dialogical path that leads him to a contemplation of a specific reality. The disciple knows that he has understood the oral teaching of his master when he finds a metaphor that translates this contemplation in his own world and with which his teacher agrees. How do we, as academic scholars, approach these processes of more or less esoteric veiling? I suggest that we should move between two complementary perspectives. On the one hand, we should study texts as belonging to a broader constellation of related texts that form the intellectual and spiritual background of the author whose work we are examining. On the other hand, we must attend to the living oral teachings that confer authoritative meaning upon these same texts by relating them to the everyday concerns of disciples who turn to them in search of guidance. Only by moving between these textual and oral dimensions can we grasp how meaning is both preserved and continually reactivated within the Sufi tradition.

27. Michel Chodkiewicz, The vision of God according to Ibn 'Arabī, in *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, 14 (1993).

baqā).²⁸ Niasse then takes up a distinction between *Dhat* - Essence as that which is in its own right by exclusion of that which it is not - and *'Ayn* - Essence as the source of the existent things - which has Neoplatonic tones²⁹ and was amply used by the Akbarian school. Niasse continues :

Those who know Allāh see the True One, but they do not see Him through their intellectual or contemplative eyes, but rather through the source (Ar. *'ayn*) of the True One - may He be praised. The knowers of God have extinguished themselves to their deeds, their qualities/attributes and finally their existences. They then subsist only in Allāh. They contemplate Allāh through Allāh. This is the path of initiatory knowledge (Ar. *m'arifah*).³⁰

Ibn 'Arabī's other implicit presence is found in the description of the conversation between Moses and Pharaoh. Ibn 'Arabī maintains that this conversation is an esoteric dialogue between Moses and Pharaoh in order not to reveal the secrets of Allāh's ipseity to the uninitiated.³¹ However, Pharaoh's initiation was incomplete, since it did not fuse contemplative knowledge of the Divine Essence with the full servitude to it's Reality - a servitude that is proper to Muḥammad. Niasse also opposes Muhammad's integral servitude which is identical to the first emanation of the Divine Essence from whom all existence has emerged to the claim of the Pharaoh that he is a divine person.³²

Niasse establishes a link between the fear felt by Moses before Pharaoh and the appearance of the name The Subduer (Ar. *Al al-Qahhār*) through the receptacle specific to Pharaoh's nature.

Moses was not afraid of magic nor of Pharaoh. He was afraid of the manifestation of the divine name the Subduer. (Since his childhood), the manifestation of the name the Subduer appeared to him as this name expresses a truth about Being always in the place of appearance that is Pharaoh. He took fear of this manifestation that was customary to him since this manifestation preceded for Pharaoh always the other

28. Vol 2.318

29. Jean Trouillard, Proclus et Spinoza, in *Revue Philosophique de La France et de l'Étranger* 172, no. 2 (1982): 435-48. However, the main difference between Speculative Sufism and Neoplatonism lies in the anxious fear of the void that Neoplatonists had. Such a fear is not found in Speculative Sufism. See George J Seidel, Chaos in Plotinus, in *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 10, no. 2 (1992): 211-20.

30. Vol. 2.318

31. Denis Gril, Le personnage coranique de Pharaon d'après l'interprétation d'Ibn 'Arabī.. In: *Annales islamologiques* 14 (1978), 37-57.

32. Niasse relates this in his commentary to Moses' response to Pharaoh's words 'I am your Lord, the Highest' (79:24). See Vol. 6.278.

manifestations of Being that occur through him (Pharaoh). The humanity of Moses required him to experience this fear.³³

This is slightly different than what is found in Ibn 'Arabī's teachings for whom God ordained Moses to answer Pharaoh's powerful and tyrannic manifestations with a divine that is proper to mankind as such. Nonetheless, both agree that the humility and kindness are the best answer to Pharaoh's grandiose delusions.

But, Niasse does not tell his listeners if Pharaoh was self-aware of being a manifestation of this divine name (Ar. *Al al-Qahhār*). He thus silences Ibn 'Arabī's teachings according to which Pharaoh had experienced a tenebrous or devilish intuition to become the 'locus of manifestation' of the name the Subduer.³⁴ According to the editor of Niasse's Qur'anic commentary³⁵, Niasse takes his views on this conversation between Pharaoh and Moses on the metaphysical identity of Allāh from the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, a commentary that has become almost canonical in Sunnism. Moreover, one of the two authors of this commentary, Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, was a strong defender of Ibn 'Arabī's teachings³⁶. Even, if Niasse does not quote here Ibn 'Arabī, he leaves here a remark that might invite the listener to deepen the esoteric meaning of this passage when he write about Moses's answer to Pharaoh: "If the unveiling of secrets was not forbidden, Moses would have given a closer answer."³⁷ So there might well be here an akbarian tone that finds its way to Niasse's own commentary.

However, Niasse does not share Ibn 'Arabī's view that Pharaoh died in a state approved by divine authority. Here, Niasse distances himself from Ibn 'Arabī's view that Pharaoh died as a Muslim, that is, that he obtained divine salvation at the end of his life because of the words the Qur'an put into his mouth: **"I believe that there is no other divinity than He in whom the children of Israel believed. And I am among those who place their fate in the hands of Allāh"** (10:90-92). According to Niasse, Pharaoh did not obtain forgiveness and divine approval because he did not pronounce the words of repentance with prior divine authorization, and above all he did not pronounce them at a time that favors sincere repentance.³⁸

33. Vol.4.92

34. However, Pharaoh's tenebrous intuition is often taught orally in different Tijani circles.

35. Vol.4.274 footnote 1.

36. Eric Geoffroy, De l'influence d'Ibn 'Arabī sur l'école shādhilīe (époque mamelouk) : premiers jalons in *Horizons Maghrébīns* 41. (1999), 83-90.

37. Vol.4 274-275.

38. Vol.3.105.

There is, however, one major point on which he differs from Ibn 'Arabī: this is Muḥammadian fatherhood, which detaches individualities from primordial matter and returns them to the pleroma of Aḥmadian reality.

C. With and beyond Ibn 'Arabī: Niasse on the generous act of *Jūd*

A great space of time separates Ibn 'Arabī and Niasse. In this space of time, the history of Sufism has thematized the notion of *aḥmadiya* as the proper name of the reality of divine uniqueness, by which the Divine Essence announces itself as absolutely unique and distinct from anything thinkable about it. This meditation does not begin with Ibn 'Arabī³⁹ but is amply developed by Aḥmad Tijani (1735-1815). Niasse writes:

He is pure Essence (Ar. *dhāt baḥt*), the source of all extinction without relationship (Ar. *'Ayn at ṭams*). A relationship with another than Self is established when from this source (Ar. *'Ayn*) emerges the epiphany/manifestation of the *aḥdiya*⁴⁰ which reveals in its very reality the pure Essence and then in this manifestation is revealed the name of the pure Essence which is that of *aḥmadiya*.⁴¹

While developing this idea of Aḥmadian reality, the history of Sufism since Ibn 'Arabī has sought to narrow the metaphysical gap between divine Essence and Muhammadan servitude.⁴² Niasse participates in this general movement, since he maintains that Muhammad's act of election as the Prophet *par excellence* is buried in the divine Essence.⁴³ Niasse writes:

The Chosen one, on the other hand, is hidden (Ar. *Maktum*)⁴⁴ in Allāh's secret. So Allāh says of him, "He revealed to him what He revealed to him". The knowledge referred to here is known only to the loved one himself.⁴⁵

Moreover, he places this inscription in the divine Essence beyond the opposition between Being and non-Being. In the following passages, Niasse takes up Ibn 'Arabī's idea

39. Paolo Urizzi, *Nesuis Pas Votre Seigneur ?* published online https://www.academia.edu/4811847/_Ne_suis_Je_pas_votre_Seigneur_Le_symbolisme_de_la_Pri%C3%A8re_selon_Ibn_Arabi (retrieved on the 23/01/2024), see footnote 13.

40. The divine oneness as it is an uncountable one that can not be listed in a list of regular numbers.

41. *Sirr al Akbar*, 427.

42. Fitzroy Morrissey, *Sufism and the Perfect Man* (Routledge, New York, 2020), chap. Al Jili's positions.

43. It is the very act of electing Muḥammad as the supreme Prophet that is hidden in God's Essence and absolutely not the human being Muhammad as such.

44. *Maktum* might well here be an allusion to the station of Aḥmad Tijani since followers of the Tijaniyah believe that he is the Hidden Pole (Ar. *Qutb al Maktum*). See Wright, *Realizing Islam*, chap. 4.

45. Vol. 6.24

that divine Essence generously dresses immutable essences⁴⁶ in garments visible to the common senses.⁴⁷ However, he develops it in a direction that sees things not appearing in the sensible world but rather reintegrating sensible things into their original source: Aḥmadian⁴⁸ reality, which he situates beyond the opposition between Being and non-Being. Niasse says:

He made appear the offspring of mankind and their ancestors from nothingness. (God) the True, manifested the spirits (of creatures), spoke to them and they responded to him. The occurrence of the existence of spirits occurs through the generous act of reality (Ar. *Jūd*) and does not belong to the realm of Being (Ar. *fabil-l jūd waqi'a mā waqi'a bi-l wūjūd*). In this moment, the end is not in the beginning. When Allāh loves His servant, He grants His servant in the initial moment all his capacities: hearing, sight, his tongue to speak and finally his hands (or his ability to grasp). In this initial moment, the end is in the beginning as Junayd said. In the same way, the initial occurrence occurs through the generous act of reality (Ar. *Jūd*) and does not belong to the domain of Being (Ar. *bi-l jūd lā bi-l wūjūd*). And the end of all things is also in the act of the occurrence of the spirits without being in the domain of Being.⁴⁹

Aḥmadian reality is then to be identified with the *generous act of reality* (Ar. *Jūd*) that institutes the reality of a thing. This generous act of reality (Ar. *Jūd*) 'is' beyond Being and non-Being. One could well be tempted to translate *wūjūd* here as existence, but in the sentence that introduces this passage it is indeed sheer nothingness that is opposed to Being. In the Akbarian framework the opposite of existence is relative non-existence since it is a non-existence from which existence comes out.⁵⁰ As far as I know, this term, i.e. relative non-existence, does not appear in Niasse's Qur'anic commentary.⁵¹ The power of the *generous act of the Real* is equivalent in Niasse's thinking to the coming out of the Muḥammadan form from the Self of divine ipseity, God's Self. It is beyond the opposition between Being and

46. This is to say the essences of existent things as they are in God's knowledge. These essences remain as such in God's knowledge and never experience the sensory world.

47. Pablo Beneito, The Servant of the Loving One, On the Adoption of the Character Traits of al-Wadūd, (Blog) Ibnarabisociety.org: <https://ibnarabisociety.org/servant-of-the-loving-one-pablo-beneito/> (retrieved on the 13.04.2022) ; Anthony Shaker, *Thinking in the Language of Reality* (Lac-des-Ile: Xlibris, 2012) 289.

48. Aḥmad is the name of the Prophet according to the degree of Being that refers to the Divine Essence.

49. vol.2.335-336.

50. William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (New York: Suny Press, 1989), 7.

51. Unless I am mistaken, I did not find it in his *Sirr al Akbar* either.

non-Being.⁵² Niasse writes about the Qur'anic verse "**Allāh erases or confirms what He wants and the primordial Scripture is with Him**" (13:39):

With regard to the common believer, "Allāh erases " what is reprehensible and "He confirms" what He wants to be praiseworthy.⁵³ With regard to the élite, He erases what belongs to their spiritual character and confirms what belongs to their lordly character. "Allāh erases" what belongs to Being (Ar. *wūjūd*) and confirms what belongs to the *purity and generous act of the Real* (Ar. *Jūd*) and then only Allāh remains.⁵⁴

Metaphorically speaking, this *generous act of the Real* is equivalent to a "sea of generosity and nobility"⁵⁵ which continuously flows (Ar. *Fayḍ*) over its formal limits upon Being. Niasse's movement is called the *Fayḍa Tijāniyya* since it refers to this metaphorical act of overflowing which, metaphysically, speaking is the *Jūd* or what I have called here the *generous act of the Real*.

But if the divine Essence is unknowable, how can it be experienced in its first emanation, i.e. the Aḥmadian reality? According to Niasse, this Aḥmadian reality can be known as the *father*. The idea that Muḥammad, or Aḥmad by his metaphysical name, is the father of spirits, and Adam the father of bodies, can already be found in Ibn 'Arabi.⁵⁶ Aḥmad Tijani later identified Muḥammad with the one who distributes the portion of existence attributed to each immutable essence. Tijani states here the hadith "I am the one who distributes (Ar. *Qasim*) but Allāh is the one who gives."⁵⁷ In Tijani circles this statement is often linked to the fact that Muhammad had a son named Qasim and thus this status of being 'the one who distributes' is then vested with a paternal function towards each singular existent. Furthermore, in his commentary of the Qur'an, Niasse after having stated several times that Jesus is fatherless⁵⁸, concedes that Jesus' father ought to be no none else than Muḥammad. Niasse conceives Muḥammad as the spirit that is inhaled in all things to bring them to life. Furthermore Muḥammad's spirit has been breathed into Mary and therefore

52. There is probably here a slight reminiscence of the "One" according to Plotinus and later Proclus which is also beyond Being and non-Being, see Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Le non-être chez Plotin et dans la tradition grecque*, In *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 10, no. 1 (1992): 115-33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24353897> (retrieved on the 13.04.2022) as well as Jean-Marc Narbonne, *De l'"au-delà de l'être" à l'"autrement qu'être": le tournant lévinassien*, in *Cités*, No. 25, Emmanuel Levinas: Une philosophie de l'évasion (2006), pp. 69-75.

53. That is, what belongs to the Praise that Allāh addresses to Himself.

54. Vol. 3.229. The formula 'Pure and generous act of the Real' is my own way of translating *Jūd*.

55. *Sirr al Akbar*, 415.

56. Muḥyī-d-Dīn Ibn Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah, khutbat al-kitāb*, translation and notes by Michel Vālsan, published in *Etudes Traditionnelles* no. 311, Oct.-Nov. 1953, 300-302.

57. 'Alī Harāzīm al-Barrāda, *Jawāhir al-Ma'ānī wa Bulūgh al-Amānī fī Fayḍ Sidi Abī 'Abbās al-Tijānī*, Bilingual Arabic/French edition, trans. Ravane Mbaye (Dakar: Dar Albouraq, 2011), 1409-1411.

58. Vol. 1. 282 as well as Vol. 2. 98.

Jesus has an immediate connection to the first emanation.⁵⁹ This is also a difference with Ibn 'Arabī, since for the latter the angel Gabriel is Jesus' father.⁶⁰

In Niasse's teachings, Niasse identifies himself with the "fathers of humans" in the account of a mystical journey he made in 1932.⁶¹ This journey enabled him to realize that "my beginning became my end and my end became my beginning, my wholeness became each of my particles and each of my particles became my wholeness". Initially, Niasse is projected into the presence of divine oneness. Then existence, like "smoke or shadow", emerges from his unincorporated essence. This is the primordial matter, the original chaos according to (41:11). He is then projected alongside the Prophet Muḥammad, whom he describes here as "the servant of the Divine Essence". Although he initially perceives himself as being at the Prophet's side, a few moments later, his identity and that of the Prophet merge : "I disappeared into him". After a long period of intense loneliness, Niasse hears a voice calling him "Aḥmad Tijani". According to his account, he then spent two million years sustaining the metaphysical presence of Aḥmad Tijani as he strove to manifest the majesty and power of the Divine Essence. After this stay with Aḥmad Tijani, Niasse wrote: "Following this, Allāh established me as the father of humans and the sustainer of all the existents and secret of all the existents, the Adam of imaginal silhouettes (*Ar.ashbāḥ*) and spirits". It is during this establishment as the father of imaginal silhouettes that Niasse descends into his body and regains possession of his senses. If Ibn 'Arabī's formula identifies Muḥammad with the father of spirits, and Adam with the father of bodies, Niasse here introduces the notion of *ashbāḥ*. Each spirit is a partial intensity of the whole Muhammadan spirit. The *ashbah* represents the moment when this partial intensity of being expands into a specific imaginal (i.e. non-material) silhouette so that, once it has descended into the world of the senses, it imprints its contours in matter that has the shape of Peter or John. The notion of *madad* implies that each corporalized spirit receives what has been assigned to sustain it on its journey from its celestial origin to its return to its celestial origin. Niasse thus presents himself as the father of the imaginative silhouettes, whose mission is to nurture them on their journey towards their bodily appearance and then towards their reintegration in the apocastasis. In other words, Niasse establishes a place for himself between Adam who is the father of our bodies and Muḥammad, who is the father of our spirits. Niasse will henceforth

59. Vol.2.83 and 99. Fatherhood as such can be oppressive if it seeks to identify arbitrarily what is known with what is. However, Fatherhood can also be emancipatory if it cuts an individual from the source of his traumata. See: Daniel Tutt, *Psychoanalysis and the Politics of the Family: The Crisis of Initiation* (Cham: Palgrave, 2022), 60-61.

60. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fusus al Hikam, An Annotated Translation of "The Bezels of Wisdom"* trans. Binyamin Abrahamov (New York: Routledge, 2015), chap. Jesus as well as Souad Hakim, *The Spirit and the Son of the Spirit*, published in (Blog) [ibnarabisociety.org: https://ibnarabisociety.org/jesus-according-to-ibn-arabi-souad-hakim](https://ibnarabisociety.org/jesus-according-to-ibn-arabi-souad-hakim) (retrieved on the 23/01/2024).

61. Imam Cheikh Tidiane Ali Cisse, *What the knowers of Allāh have said about the knowledge of Allāh*, Bilingual version English/Arabic (Atlanta: Faydabooks, 2014), 95-98 (Arabic)

enact the figure of the father of the silhouettes of the imaginal degree of Being who fully manifests in the imaginal and sensible realm the generous act of the Real.

D. Overturning Lacan's Names of the Father

As I have indicated above, there are several modes of paternity that the Muḥammadan spirit undertakes. This plurality is important because it distinguishes it from a simplistic and silly vision that would identify fatherhood with a political mode of imposing a single harsh and oppressive gaze on others. Lacan is useful here insofar as he makes explicit what a paternal tonality is, or better said, what the names-of-the-father are. Nevertheless, I'm detracting from the main dynamic of Lacan's thought. For speculative Sufism, the encounter with the fullness of Being is possible, whereas for Lacan, it is ultimately a lure. This skyjacking of Lacan allows me to build on his intuitions while steering them in another direction : that of a possible first encounter with the Muḥammadan election, which serves as a vessel for encountering Being in its very plenitude. The very fact that Niasse intends that the very first emanation belongs to the Aḥmadian name indicates that he sees in this first emanation and expression of a divine intentionality. Muḥammad's proper name⁶² is untranslatable; it designates Muhammad's own singularity, the meaning of which emerges in the personal encounter the Sufi makes with the first emanation as the *father of all things*. Lacan names the unitary trait the act of naming an individual such that his proper name becomes his unchangeable name. Furthermore, this notion enables us to understand what Sunni Sufi thinkers such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1073) or Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), for example, refer to as a "name". According to Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, a name designates that which marks the singularity of a creature in its servitude to the divine instance.⁶³ According to Qūnawī, this stability is not of the order of that which is changeable, but of the order of the always immanent essence of the thing as it is known in the knowledge that the Absolute has of this very thing.⁶⁴ Whether it's Lacan's notion of 'unary trait' or the notion of 'name' in Sunni Sufism, it's always a question of indicating what my intention designates as the constant and fixed identity of what I name.

62. Luis Izcovich, "La nomination sans Autre", in *L'en-je lacanien*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2009, pp. 39-52.

63. Francesco Chiabotti, "*Naḥw al-qulūb al-ṣaḡīr*: La "grammaire des cœurs" de 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qūṣayrī", *Bulletin d'études orientales* [On line], Vol. LVIII September 2009, published on the 01st September 2010 (retrieved on the 20th September 2023).

64. Shaker, *Thinking in the Language of Reality*, 218-219.

For Lacan, the function of the name-of-the-father⁶⁵ is to inscribe the child's separation from the mother : the child's immediate jouissance is interrupted by the father, who not only takes him from his mother's breast but also assigns him a first name that the child must learn to make his own, without being able to change it. By sticking a first name on his body, the father pushes the child to seek his own singularity outside the gaze of the mother, whose intimate aspiration is to devour her child.⁶⁶ Through the castration of desire, the father-name guarantees the child's access to the symbolic, to language. No longer immersed in the mother, the child learns to set in motion the emptiness that constitutes him or her: "I, 'Jacques', am missing something that I have to say to others to get it". This access to language is ensured by his first name, which, as Izcovich so aptly points out, designates him in all possible worlds.⁶⁷ The paternal symbolic is split from the maternal biological realm by the impossible jouissance - that of a void⁶⁸ that doesn't exist, but which nevertheless serves as a referent for organizing my past 'I wanted x or y' and my future 'I'll say z to get x'. It's because I am able to experience the emptiness within myself that I can relate to others. If I were still immersed in the immediate, oceanic enjoyment of my mother's womb, I would simply be incapable of apprehending the singularity of my own person.

In a similar way, it's by choosing the first Muhammadan emanation towards which to direct my desire that I rely on one of the⁶⁹ Muhammadan father-names which (depending on the situation I encounter and among its various father-names) detaches me from my disgregating passions (Jealousy, Arrogance, Anger) that are fueled by the magmatic character of the (motherly)⁷⁰ primordial matter. This father-name emancipates me from the original chaos in which I'm mired, chaos that disintegrates my person. This is where

65. Jacques Lacan, *On the Names-of-the-Father*, trans. Bruce Finck (Cambridge : Polity, 2013), 55-56 as well Jacques Lacan, *On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis*, trans. A. Sheridan, in *Écrits: A Selection* (Tavistock: Routledge, 1977), 557. Laure Razon, Olivier Putois and Alain Vanier synthesize Lacan's teachings well on the paternal metaphor when they write : "The paternal metaphor is what enables the child to understand the mother's (or mothering figure's) absence as an Oedipal separation: this metaphor refers to the effect of the introduction, by the Other, of a specific signifier called the Name-of-the-Father", see Laure Razon, Olivier Putois and Alain Vanier *The Lacanian Concept of Cut in Light of Lacan's Interactions with Maud Mannoni*, in *Front. Psychol.* 8:2177 (2107).

66. Gilbert Diatkine, *Le Séminaire, X : L'angoisse de Jacques Lacan*, in *Revue française de psychanalyse*, vol. 69, no. 3 (200), 917-931. The identification of the mother with a dark devouring void that appears in Lacan's teachings probably comes to him from Renaissance Neoplatonism, see : Danica Igrutinović, *Nothing of Woman, The Feminine Void of Matter in Shakespeare*, in *Belgrade English Language and Literature Studies* (Jan. 2014), 6:105-129.

67. Luis Izcovich, "La nomination sans Autre", in *L'en-je lacanien*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2009, 39-52.

68. Richard Boothby, 'The No-Thing of God: Psychoanalysis of Religion After Lacan', in Richard Gipps, and Michael Lacewing (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry* (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 Nov. 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198789703.013.35>, accessed 18 Aug. 2023

69. Daniel Tutt, *Psychoanalysis and the Politics of the Family: The Crisis of Initiation* (Cham: Palgrave, 2022), 60-61; Luis Izcovich, *La nomination sans Autre*, in *L'en-je lacanien*, vol. 12, 2009 :1, 39-52.

70. The identification of primordial matter with the figure of a 'mother' can be seen in the eulogy of the Prophet that was cherished by Ibrahim Niasse, the *Qasīdat al-Burda* by Al-Būṣīrī (d.1294). In the verse 18 we read: " The ego is like a baby: leave it and it grows up/ In love with suckling; but wean it, and it's weaned finally." This verse belongs to those words of encouragements that the poet utters to encourage himself to cut off from his disgregative passions. The passionate character of one's identity needs to feel the lack of the chaotic mother - i.e. to "wean" from his passions - to move towards a personality that masters its disgregative desires. For a translation of this eulogy, see Al-Būṣīrī, *The Burdah*, trans. Mostafa Azzam (Medina : Al-Madinah Institute, 2015).

Lacanian theory and Speculative Sufism take two different directions. For the late Lacan, the Real is outside of Being. Lacan identifies Being⁷¹ with something that is not solid and unchangeable since it is opposed to nothingness. To be is wanting to be something. Wanting to be something is making things exist through language and since these things are spoken, they have no stable ontological consistency, but they do express the Real. Lacan thus sets the Real outside of the opposition between Being and non-Being. However, the lacanian subject has no possibility to relate to the Real other than being touched by its monstrous images since he is by his very being fundamentally unrelated to the Real.⁷² We could translate Lacan's teaching here by saying that to be is to swim in a river that inevitably transforms the Real in a deception. In Lacanian theory, there is no place for the assumption that the mere fact of being alive can, in itself, lead one toward a state of bliss. On the contrary, in the epistemological context of Speculative Sufism, the person is immediately, through his five senses, attached to the fullness of Being.⁷³ But, as any person is a finite body, he perceives only parts of the infinite fullness of Being. What ties Knowledge and Being together in Speculative Sufism, especially as it is practiced in a West African Context, are theurgical rituals⁷⁴ (and not speculative thoughts) through which the Sufi hopes to transform his body for it to be capable of ordering the images of the fullness of Being in an order⁷⁵ that attunes the body (Germ. *Leib*) of the Sufi to that which is beyond any opposition between Being and Non-Being: the Absolute beyond Being and non-Being from which the *fatherly and generous act of the Real* (Ar. *jūd*) emanates and that appears to the Tijani disciple as having the fatherly shape of the Muḥammadan form.

71. Jacques-Alain Miller, Reading a Symptom, Conference held in London on April 2 and 3, 2011. See Asociación Mundial de Psicanálisis (Blog), <https://www.wapol.org/es/articulos/TemplateArticulo.asp?intTipoPagina=4&intEdicion=2&intIdiomaPublicacion=1&intArticulo=2305&intIdiomaArticulo=5&intPublicacion=13> (retrieved 20/01/2023).

72. Gabriel Byng, Eckhart and the Ek-sistence of God : A Mystical Quarter Turn in the Theology of the Real, in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* (Fall 2023) 22:2, 169-185.

73. This is how MT, one of the delegates of Niasse's grandson, Shaykh Maḥī Cisse in France, understands the prophetic word about the servant who has approached Allāh through supererogatory works "When I love him, I am the hearing by which he hears, the sight by which he sees, the hand by which he takes and the foot by which he walks" (Interview 15th July 2019) According to the latter, sense knowledge is more complete than intellectual knowledge, however transcendent the intellect considered is. The intellect dissects where the senses match things up. Note that the sense of smell is absent from this hadith. This is because the sense of smell belongs to perfume, which is the only thing that properly belongs to humans. See also, Ali Ghandour, *Die Theologische Erkenntnislehre Ibn al Arabi's* (Nordstedt: Editio Gryphus, 2018) 180-181 as well as vol. 2. 132: "if a person guides another person along the path of rectitude and the right path, it is as if he had guided the whole of mankind along the same path, and therefore it is as if he had given life to the whole of mankind. The essential meaning (in divine science) of murder is that it kills the (five) senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing) and the gift of life, revives the (five) senses."

74. Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 62 ; Gregory Shaw, Taking the Shape of the Gods: A Theurgic Reading of Hermetic Rebirth, in *Aries* 15, 136-169 (2015); Algis Uždavinys, *Philosophy and Theurgy in Late Antiquity* (San Rafael: Angelico Press/Sophia Perennis: 2010).

75. Like Ibn 'Arabi before him, Ibrahim Niasse, defends this idea of a creation that is renewed at each moment, cf. Ibrahim Niasse, *Pearls from the Divine Flood* (Atlanta: The African American Islamic Institute, 2006) trans. Zachary Wright, 97. The philosophical solution consists in distinguishing a synchronic contemplation of the wholeness of Being by the primal intellect (Ar. *al 'aql al awal*) from a diachronic vision of Being that occurs to an embodied and limited consciousness.

CONCLUSION

Ibn 'Arabī plays different roles in Niasse's philosophical dramaturgy. First and foremost, Ibn 'Arabī designates the person who, carrying the mission initiated by the praised station upon which the Prophet rises at the end of this cycle, comes to retrospectively seek in Adam's happy fault, meanings that are still unaccomplished. Secondly, Ibn 'Arabī provides the basic vocabulary for Niasse's dramaturgical thinking. I'm thinking in particular of the notions of servitude, of the minimal gap between the divine Essence and Muhammadan servitude, and finally of Muhammad's spiritual paternity. Nonetheless, Ibn 'Arabī's teachings are often strongly alluded to without unveiling the core of the Andalusian's teachings. However, Niasse's thought differs from the Akbarian school in that it focuses on the contemplation of the generous act of reality proper to Aḥmadian reality (Ar. *Jūd*) rather than what, admittedly long after Ibn 'Arabī, is called the unity of Being or *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Finally, Niasse's thinking departs from the later Akbarian school in that he experiences this generous act of the Real in the plural names of the Father of spirits as it unfolds in the four different degrees of Being (the degree of the sensible world, the degree of the imaginal, the degree of immutable essences, the supra-ontological non-degree of pure Essence) rather than in the mere formal investigation of the degrees as such. By meeting the first emanation of the Absolute as a *father of all things*, the individual cuts his ties with the magmatic maternal chaos and is reborn as a Muslim who fully actualizes in his daily life the whole meanings of the Qur'an.