

Gregory Vandamme

Huwa-lā-Huwa: the circle of being and the correlative ontology of Ibn 'Arabī

The metaphysical perspective of Ibn 'Arabī oscillates constantly between the distinction of the different relations that determine being, and the constant return to the indistinction of being itself. According to Ibn 'Arabī, only perplexity (*ḥayra*) is suited to the apperception of being, while the distinction and articulation of the relations that weave themselves into being seem, for their part, to require a mode of knowledge that allows for differentiation.

This presentation will show how the articulation of the various elements of Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysical system is based on a "correlative ontology", according to which existing realities are distinguished within a web of relations woven within the single being, while having no existence of their own, since they ultimately refer to the relation that being maintains with itself. It will then explain how this correlative ontology allows Ibn 'Arabī to found different levels of relationships, within which the notions of Creation and Divinity and their different modalities of correlation emerge.

This circular conception of being, in which the fundamental status of existing things is qualifiable only by perplexity, corresponds also to the circular movement that Ibn 'Arabī associates with "the perplexity of the *muḥammadan*" (*ḥayrat al-muḥammadi*). This movement of rotation around the pole of being, by which the latter is envisaged in an infinitely renewed way, is opposed by Ibn 'Arabī to the "linear" path (*mustaṭīl*), which for its part always necessarily relates to a particular determination of being, and thereby prevents it from being envisaged in itself.



Gregory Vandamme

University of Louvain

Gregory Vandamme holds a PhD in Religious Studies (UCLouvain), and specialises in classical Sufi thought, particularly the work of Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators. He is currently a research fellow at the F.R.S.-FNRS/UCLouvain, Belgium, and has been a guest lecturer at SciencesPo (Paris, France) and the Al Mowafaqa Institute (Rabat, Morocco). His doctoral thesis (dir. C. Bonmariage) focused on the notion of *ḥayra* (or "perplexity") in the thought of Ibn 'Arabī and his predecessors, and its use in the fields of epistemology, metaphysics and Qur'anic hermeneutics. He is the author of several scientific articles, co-organizer of international academic meetings, and editor for the Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society. His research focuses on the doctrines of speculative mysticism, Qur'anic hermeneutics and spiritual education in Sufism.