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LOVE (*HUBB*) OF GOD IN ISLAMIC MYSTICISM
– A STUDY OF A SEMANTIC DEVELOPMENT –
I – Love (*ḥubb*) of God in the Koran.

by

Giuseppe SCATTOLIN

INTRODUCTION

Love of God or Divine love (*al-ḥubb al-ilāhī*) is surely one of the most important topics in Islamic mysticism or Sufism, though in our view, it is not the central one. We think, in fact, that ‘the proclamation and the realization of the Divine unity’ (*tawḥīd*) is the real core of Islamic mysticism. From this point of view, the whole history of Islamic mysticism can be seen and interpreted as that of a quest and a striving for the full realization of the fundamental dogma of Islam: “There is no God but Allāh (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*)”.

However, beside this central theme of *tawḥīd*, other topics have been developed and gained importance in Sufi experience. Two of them need special mention, namely the theme of love (*ḥubb*) and that of knowledge (*maʿrifā*). These are closely linked with the theme of *tawḥīd*, because they are the nearest steps leading to it, and they gain particular connotations from it. In the course of time, a rich Sufi literature developed around the themes of love and knowledge.

The present research intends to deal particularly with the theme of Divine love (*ḥubb*) in Sufism. It intends to be first of all an historical approach, outlining the main stages of the development of the concept and experience of Divine love in Islamic mysticism. Through such an historical inquiry we shall pinpoint some of the most important Sufi trends and their representatives. In this way, we shall look at the history of Sufism from the point of view of love, trying to reach a global vision of the Sufi experience of the Divine love and highlighting the semantic development of their language that took place in the course of history.

The present article deals with the first source of Islam faith and piety, that is the book of the Koran, which is surely the basic reference of all Sufi experience. We intend to outline the extent and relevance of the vocabulary of love in the very text of the Koran so that we will be able to assess any later development in Sufi literature. On this basis, it will be possible to avoid a lot of superficial and erratic approaches, still too common in much of Islamic literature.

In the end, one will be able draw some comparative lines between the Sufi vision and experience of Divine love with the corresponding visions of love found in other spiritual experiences, such as Christianity, Judaism and the like.

A. Koranic Language and Sufi Language.

Before entering the subject of our research some preliminary questions must be discussed.

a. The Question of the Origin of Sufism.

The Koran is beyond any doubt the first source of both Islamic faith and spiritual experience. Therefore, in a inquiry on Divine or mystical love one has to face first of all the following question: does the Sufi language of love derive straightway from the very text of the Koran or not? Is there a direct, evident linguistic connection between the Koranic and the Sufi languages? Such questions, however, can be answered only in a larger and wider context because they are part of the general problem of Sufism and its Koranic sources¹. Different answers have been given to such questions, according to the different historical perspectives and perceptions adopted by scholars, summarized as follows.

i. **The theory of foreign origin.** Many scholars, especially in the past century, held the opinion that Sufism is not a genuine development of Islamic piety, but a phenomenon imported from foreign religions: either from Aryan peoples as Iranians or Hindus (E.H. Palmer, J.P. Brown, A. von Kremer, R.P. Dozy, C. Zaenher); or from other Oriental sources such as Buddhism or Taoism (O.Farrukh, T. Izutsu); or from Greek philosophy, especially Neoplatonism (R.A. Nicholson); or from Christian sources, such as oriental monasticism (I. Goldziher, A. Merx, A. J. Wensinck, M. Smith, Tor Andrae).

ii. **The theory of Islamic origin.** This is the thesis upheld at present by most scholars and it was first defended by the French Orientalist L. Massignon in his well

known work: “*Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique islamique*” (Paris, 1922). L. Massignon defended Sufism as a genuine internal development of the Islamic revelation and faith, and he intended to prove that the Sufi language is derived directly from the Koranic language through the technique of *istinbāt* (i.e. to delve deeply into the meaning of a word by means of the technique of repetitive meditation). Massignon’s work has been continued by Paul Nwyia in his research “*Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*” (Beirut, 1970). Though the question of the origin of Sufism has not yet been completely settled among contemporary scholars, it seems that Massignon’s opinion has become more prevalent.

iii. Muslim scholars, on the other hand, have different positions towards Sufism. Those of them who support Sufism, such as the late Egyptian scholar Abū al-Wafā al-Taftāzānī (d. 1995), usually embrace the thesis of the Islamic origin of Sufism and they to prove that it is a legitimate development of the Islamic faith. On the contrary, those who condemn Sufism, especially the so-called ‘monistic Sufism’ and many Sufi practices, on the line of the Hanbalite scholar Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), will willingly see in it an ‘innovation’ and a heresis (*bid’a*), which is foreign to the true Islamic tradition and consequently imported from non-Islamic sources.

b. The Question of the Origin of Sufi language.

Along with the question of the historical origin of Sufism, many scholars have pointed out that the two languages, the Koranic and the Sufi, are not exactly the same and the Sufi language shows a clear semantic development in respect to that of the Koranic text. This thesis has been embraced and defended in particular by Paul Nwyia in his classical study of Sufi language². Nwyia highlights the newness of the Sufi language, fruit of a real, personal experience through which Sufis have overcome the ‘rhetorical and unreal verbalism’ inherent in the Arabic speech, concluding that: “It has been through the Sufis that an authentic language, which is the one of experience, has been born into Arabic speech”³.

The newness of the Sufi language can be easily perceived in some Sufi utterances on Divine love, as in the following examples.

i. Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d.245/859) says in a prayer: “O God, in public I call Thee ‘My Lord (*rabb*)’; but in solitude I call Thee: ‘My Beloved (*ḥabīb*)’”⁴. In this prayer a sharp contrast is stressed between the term ‘Lord’ (*rabb*), very much used in the Koranic language and Islamic piety, and the term ‘Beloved’ (*ḥabīb*), never said of God in the Koran.

ii. Al-Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) in a meditation says that God contemplates all his attributes through love (*maḥabba*): "...and this attribute (*ṣifa*) was also a form in His essence that was His essence (*hiya dhāt dhāti-hi*)"⁵. It seems very arduous to find similar expressions in the text of the Koran.

iii. Abū al-Ḥasan Daylamī (d. 422/1030) continues al-Ḥallāj's meditation on love finding a triad of love in God: "There was in him Lover, Beloved and Love as one thing without any division in him (who is) pure Unity in which more than one thing could not possibly coexist"⁶. Also such a 'trinity' of love has no evident foundation in the Koranic text.

iv. Ibn 'Arabī (7th/13th c.) in his Sufi vision sees that every form of love is part of an ontological and cosmic love, a love of God for Himself, because: "...without love the world would have not appeared; its movement from nothing ('*adam*') to existence (*wujūd*) is the movement of the love of the Creator (*mūjid*) towards it (world)... it is proved that the movement was out of love, and there is no movement in the universe except in relation to love (*ḥubbiyya*)"⁷. This means that the movement of love is the love of the Real towards itself as Abū al-'Ala' al-'Afīfī comments: "... it is the love of the Whole as a Whole (as an Essence) and as a part (as a particular mode of the Essence)....When we say that we love God or anything, we mean that God loves Himself in us or in any other form"⁸. Also such an idea of ontological and cosmic love of God for Himself through creation cannot be read in the very letter of the Koranic text.

These are just a few examples, out of the many, one can easily find in Sufi literature. The concepts and terms used in these texts sound quite new and foreign, at least, to the letter of the Koranic text and they show that, in the course of history, a real and deep semantic development took place in Sufi language.

In conclusion, the Sufi movement appears to have been a quite complex historical process that cannot be fully explained through a partial or one-sided story. Along with the Islamic tradition of the Koran and the hadith, one has to take into account the influence of external religious traditions that helped in developing and deepening many Sufi concepts. Besides, and particularly in Sufi language, one has to consider the weight of the Sufis' personal experience as a basic factor from which a new language was formed and a deep semantic change came about. As Nwyaia says, the Sufi language is: "...an existential analysis in that it construes the real by bringing it up to the light of consciousness so that experience and language are born in the same act"⁹. All these different facets of the story must be carefully considered in order to reach an objective and complete picture of Sufism.

B. The Language of Love (*ḥubb*) in the Koranic Text

1. The Framework of the General Relationships Between God and Man in the Koran.

As said above, the Koran has surely been the first and main factor that shaped the Islamic religious thinking, that is the articulation of what can be called the 'Koranic world view' (*Weltanschauung*), because it fixes the basic framework of the relationships between God and the world. Consequently, in order to find the place of the language of love (*ḥubb*) in the Koran one must first outline the general pattern of the relationships between God and Man (human being), as they appear in the Koranic text. A good insight into this topic is the one given by the Japanese scholar, Izutsu Toshihiko, in his classical study *God and Man in the Koran*¹⁰. In his analysis, Izutsu Toshihiko highlights that there are four main and fundamental relationships between God and Man fixed by the Koran and into which all other relationships must be situated. They are:

- i. **Ontological relationships**, centred on the terms:
khāliq — *khālīqa*: Creator — creature.
- ii. **Communicative relationships**, centred on the terms:
wahy — *tanzīl*: inspiration — revelation from God.
ṣalāt — *duʿāʾ*: prayer — invocation from Man.
- iii. **Personal relationships**, centred on the terms:
rabb — *ʿabd*: Lord (God) — servant (man).
- iv. **Ethical relationships**, centred on the terms:

from Allāh there is:	from Man there is
<i>raḥma</i> (mercy)	<i>īmān</i> (faith)
<i>niʿma</i> (grace)	<i>shukr</i> (thankfulness)
<i>ghaḍab</i> (wrath)	<i>kufṛ</i> (unbelief)
<i>ʿiqāb</i> (punishment)	<i>taqwā</i> (fear)

From this pattern one can see that the Koranic language is focused around a number of terms.

a. God (*Allāh*).

There is no doubt that the Koran is, from a semantic point of view, built on an absolutely theocentric language. In fact, the very word *Allāh* (God) is, far above all other words, the central one in the whole Koranic vocabulary. At the end of his se-

mantic analysis, T. Izutsu can state: "...semantically *Allāh* is the highest focus-word in the vocabulary of the Koran, presiding over all the semantic fields, and, consequently, the entire system"¹¹. In fact, the term *Allāh* (God) is the term that occurs with the highest frequency in the Koranic text; we have counted it 2702 times¹². Fazlur Rahman claims that it occurs 2500 times¹³. At any rate, there is no doubt that *Allāh* is the term that is mentioned at the highest rate and that holds the central place in the Koranic vocabulary both on statistical and semantical levels.

b. The Creator-creation (*khāliq-khalq*) relationship.

God (*Allāh*) is, according to the basic Koranic revelation, the only Creator (*khāliq*) without companions, partners or competitors. In front of God can exist only the created being (*khalq*), the creature (*khālīqa*), in its ontological weakness, inconsistency and dependency. Consequently, the central ontological relationship between God and all that is not-God is that of Creator-creation (*khāliq-khalq*). God is the absolute Creator; this means that, in the Islamic thought, God is ontologically totally different from all his creatures. At the same time, he is absolutely all-powerful over them and nothing can condition his will and action.

c. The Lord-servant (*Rabb-ʿabd*) relationship.

God, the Creator, (*Allāh-khāliq*) manifests himself on a personal level first of all as the absolute Lord (*rabb*) of everything; no companion or competitor can exist beside him. In face of such an absolute dominion of God, the sole possible attitude of man is that of the servant-slave (*ʿabd*) towards his absolute Lord (*rabb*): "...the only possible attitude for Man to take towards Him is that of complete submission, humbleness and humility without reserve"¹⁴. This condition of servanthood (*ʿibāda*) is so inherent and intrinsic to the ontological constitution of the creature *qua talis* in front of its Creator that it is usually called 'servant' (*ʿabd*) and its whole being and behaviour is usually described in the Koran in the terms of a total and complete 'service' (*ʿibāda*) of God and such a 'service' (*ʿibāda*) is the real and ultimate purpose of all creation¹⁵. In fact, in the whole Koran there is only one verse in which the purpose of creation is expressed and this is clearly indicated as the servanthood (*ʿibāda*): "We have created *jinn*s and humans with the only purpose of worshipping us (*li-yaʿbudūnā*)". (K 51, 56). From all this it appears quite clear that the basic personal relationships between God and man in the Koranic language are clearly centered on that of Lord-servant (*rabb-ʿabd*).

Some of the most frequent Koranic terms are connected to such a fundamental relationship and all the other personal relationships between God and Man in the

Koran is shaped and qualified by it. These terms are: *islām* (self-surrender), *ṭā'a* (obedience) *qunūt* (submission, humbleness), *khushū'* (reverence), *taḍarru'* (self-abasement), *taqwā* (fear).

All these terms connote the attitude of absolute obedience, submission and humility. Moreover, the term *islām* (litt. self-surrender) will eventually be used in a more specific sense to designate the whole of the Koranic religion, because its most peculiar characteristic is seen in the attitude of unconditional self-surrender (*islām*). A large agreement among scholars is found on this point: the Koranic religion is commonly described and qualified as that of absolute *islām*, that is of complete self-surrender and submission to God's unbounded will and power¹⁶.

Inside the framework of the Lord-servant (*rabb-ʿabd*) relationship, the centre of the Koranic world vision, all other relationships are built and qualified. These latter may specify and colour that first and basic relationship, but never will they go beyond its clearly established boundaries. On this point the Koranic revelation is clear cut: God is the Lord (*rabb*), Man is the servant (*ʿabd*). The mere thought of going beyond such a boundary would appear to orthodox Muslim scholars an heresy, an innovation (*bid'a*), foreign to the Islamic faith, to be unquestionably dealt with by the sharpest condemnation.

In the light of such a basic conception, one can account for the frequent clashes that occurred, in the history, between Muslim scholars and Sufis. Muslims scholars, clinging to the literal meaning of the Koranic text, condemned everything that in their eyes would appear as contrary to such an understanding. Sufis, on their part, pretended to have reached, through their personal spiritual experience, a far deeper understanding of it. On such a basis, for example, Sufis will willingly speak of their relationship with God as a lover-beloved (*ḥabīb-ḥabīb*) relationship, going beyond the boundary of the Lord-servant (*rabb-ʿabd*) relationship, as it is formulated in the Koranic text. Such conflicts between scholars and Sufis had quite often tragic outcomes, since for orthodox Muslim scholars those Sufis appeared to be dangerous heretics and renegades to be dealt with by the gravest punishment foreseen in Islamic law, capital punishment. Those clashes have been many times coloured by the red blood of martyrdom, on the part of Sufis, because as an old Sufi saying tells: "Under the pen of any Muslim judge there is always the head of a Sufi that falls".

2. A statistical view of the Koranic language.

The previous conclusions can be better illustrated and visualized by a statistical view of the most important terms of the Koranic vocabulary, ranged according to their frequency rate¹⁷.

STEMS	FREQUENCY	MF pp.
1. Allāh	2702 times	40- 75
2. Rabb	957 x	285-299
3. ' M N	878 x	81- 93
4. K F R	525 x	605-613
5. R Ḥ M	340 x	304-309
6. ' B D	273 x	441-445
7. Kh L Q	260 x	241-245
8. W L Y	233 x	764-769
9. N ' M	147 x	707-709
10. S L M	138 x	355-357
11. Ḥ B B	83 x	191-193
12. H W Y	38 x	740
13. W D D	29 x	747
14. Kh L L	13 x	245
15. Ḥ N N	1 x	220
16. Sh W Q	0 x	—
17. ' Sh Q	0 x	—

Some remarks on this pattern.

a. This statistical view confirms Izutsu Toshihiko's statement that the term *Allāh* (God) first, and after it the term *rabb* (Lord) are the two absolutely dominant words in the Koranic vocabulary. They are both the semantical and the statistical level the very focus-words of the Koranic text and its world view.

b. After them, come two stems that indicate two opposite attitudes of man towards God. The first (' M N) indicates the attitude of belief and trust (*īmān*) in God's grace and revelation by which the believer (*mu'min*) enters into the security (*'amn-'amān*) granted by God. On the contrary, the stem (K F R) indicates the opposite attitude, that of disbelief and ungratefulness (*kufīr*), by which the unbeliever (*kāfir*) refuses and negates God's grace and revelation.

c. Then, comes the stem (R Ḥ M) which indicates God-Lord's (*Allāh-rabb*) general attitude of benevolence towards his creatures as will be explained below.

d. Next and very close in frequency there come stems. The first (' B D) defines the basic attitude of servanthood (*'ibāda*) of the servant (*'abd*) towards his God-Lord (*Allāh-rabb*). The other (Kh L Q) connotes the basic relationship between God-Crea-

tor (*khāliq*) and the world-creature (*khalq*). The stem (W L Y), on the contrary, indicates the reciprocal relationship of nearness (*walāya*) and protection (*wilāya*) between the Lord-protector (*walī-mawlā*) and the servant-protected (also called in Arabic *walī-mawlā*).

e. Then, come two other stems, also very close in frequency. The first (N ° M) indicates the benevolent generosity of God towards his faithful servant, granting him his grace (*ni'ma*) and happiness (*na'im*). The second (S L M) indicates the attitude of absolute surrender (*islām*) of the servant to the absolute will and power of his Lord, and the result of such an attitude which is the state of integrity and peace (*salām*).

f. The first stem that connotes love (Ḥ B B) comes at a very low frequency and is very distant from the previous ones. This stem is without doubt the central one in the language of love in the Koran, since the stems of its closest synonyms (H W Y — W D D — Kh L L — Ḥ N N) occur at a still lower frequency. It is worth noting that the stems of the synonyms of love which will play a very important role in Sufi vocabulary, namely (° Sh Q) (from which *'ishq*, passion) and Sh W Q (from which *shawq*, desire), are completely absent from the Koranic vocabulary.

3. The Language of Love in the Koran.

It is within the range of God-Man relationship, as above outlined, that the vocabulary of love between God and Man must be situated and understood. Such a vocabulary is centred on some basic synonyms of love.

a. Mercy (*rahma*): the 'benevolent attitude' of the Lord.

The Koran describes the benevolent attitude of the Lord (*rabb*) towards his servant (*'abd*) with many qualifications of which the most important are: mercy (*rahma*), grace (*ni'ma*), forgiveness (*maghfira*) and generosity (*fadl*).

However, it is the term mercy (*rahma*) that has a special place in the Koranic language not only because of its high frequency (313 times) compared to the others, but also for its special link with the very name of God (*Allāh*). In fact, from the stem of *rahma* (R Ḥ M) two qualifications or names derive that are strictly associated with the very name of God: God is usually invoked as 'the most merciful and compassionate' (*Allāh al-rahmān al-rahīm*):

- the qualifier *al-rahmān* (the most merciful) occurs 57 times: it is an emphatic form of the adjective derived from *rahma* and means 'the one who is rich, abun-

dant in mercy, or the most merciful'. In the Koran, this term is applied only to the name of God.

- the qualifier *al-raḥīm* (the most compassionate) occurs 115 times: this is another emphatic form of the adjective derived from *raḥma* and means 'the one who has the permanent quality of mercy and compassion'. In the Koran this term is applied also to creatures.

It must be noted that these two terms are not new in the religions of Near East and South Arabia (Yemen), on the contrary, they have a long pre-Islamic tradition¹⁸.

These two qualifications are derived from the stem (R Ḥ M) which is semantically linked with the term *raḥim*, that is the 'womb of the woman'. So, the basic connotation of the term, as derived from 'womb' (*raḥim*) is that of mercy in the sense of 'the tenderness and love a mother feels for her child'. The same term occurs also in the Bible and means: "... the feeling of those born from the same womb or the love of a mother for her child"¹⁹.

However, in spite of such a deep and emotional reference, one cannot avoid noticing that the two nouns, *al-raḥmān* - *al-raḥīm*, occur in the Koranic text in such stereotyped and fixed formulas as to make them lose their original and passionate implication. They come to signify not more that 'a general benevolent attitude' of the Lord towards his obedient and submissive servant without any emotional connotation. It must be also noted that the attitude of mercy (*raḥma*) always goes in one direction, from the superior to the inferior and never can there be a true reciprocity between the two partners of mercy. As Rahbar says: "Raḥma, or Mercy of God, naturally finds more room in the Qur'ān than His Love, for whereas Love admits of some equality and reciprocity of relationship, Raḥma on the other hand connotes in its object a certain inferiority"²⁰.

Moreover, any kind of deep and emotional meaning must be excluded from the Koranic usage of these terms not only on semantic grounds but also on the basis of the most general theological vision of God in the Koran. The Koranic God is above all the Lord (*rabb*), who rules over his creatures in complete freedom, and never is he described as having the emotions of a father or of a mother towards his or her baby, because this would make him linked with and conditioned by his creatures.

In this respect the Biblical language seems to be totally opposite to the Koranic language. In the Bible, God is depicted without restriction, along with his transcendental attributes, as being moved by the deepest and strongest emotions of mercy and love as a father and a mother, and also as a husband and a lover.

b. The friendship (*walāya*) of the Lord.

From the stem (W L Y) derive two important terms that also define a reciprocal relationship between the Lord (*rabb*) and his servant ('*abd*'); these are *mawlā* and *walī*, both of which mean 'protector and protected'. The reason for such usage is to be found in the semantic connotation of the stem (W L Y) which means first 'to be near, close to somebody', and, consequently, 'to be his friend' (*walī*) or to be in someone's 'friendship' (*walāya*). The saint will usually be designated in Islam as the *walī* (pl. *awliyā*), which means 'the friend of God'. From this first meaning derives a second meaning that is 'to be protected' (*mawlā-walī*) by someone or to be in his protection (*wilāya*). This is clearly the prevailing meaning in the Koranic text: God is the best protector of the believers and these are in God's protection²¹. Because of the reciprocal relationship included in the stem (W L Y) the derived terms can designate both partners of the relationship²².

c. Love (*ḥubb*) in the Koran: its basic meaning

The stem (Ḥ B B) is found also in other Semitic languages and seems to have the basic connotation of 'a passionate and sensual attachment to somebody or something, first of all in a sexual context'²³. This basic meaning has been preserved also in the Arabic language. The derivatives of the stem (Ḥ B B) indicate basically the passionate attachment to something or someone that can satisfy the sensual desire of a man, first of all to women, then to other goods that may give him pleasure and satisfaction. A good description of this kind of passionate and sensual love is given in the Koran itself in a passage in which the main objects of the natural love (*ḥubb*) of men are described:

"To men the appetites (*ḥubb*) of his passions (*shahawāt*) have been made attractive: women, sons, full measures of gold and silver, well dressed horses, cattle and fields". (K 3, 14)

However, starting from this basic connotation, the derivatives of (Ḥ B B) have been used throughout Arabic literature to express all kinds of feelings and degrees of love, such as friendship, personal and intimate relationship, especially in the literature of love stories. The lover (*ḥabīb*, *ahl al-maḥabba*) can reach a very high degree of spiritual love, especially in the stories of 'pure love' (*al-ḥubb al-'udhrī*). Then, expressions such as "love for or in God" (*al-ḥubb li- or fī-llāh*) are found to designate a sort of spiritual friendship²⁴.

Such a passionate and sensual connotation of love (*ḥubb*) seems to have been still very much felt in the Koranic revelation so that its usage has been quite limited in the range of God-Man relationships and not without some precautions. A close

analysis of the verses, in which the derivatives of (Ḥ B B) appear in God-Man relationships, shows that their meaning has been deeply 'purified' in order to make them lose their original connotation of passionate and sensual love.

Also the Academy of Arabic Language (Cairo), when explaining the meaning of love (*ḥubb*) and its derivatives in the Koran, gives as its first synonym the "inclination (*mayl*) of the soul towards what appears to it, or it believes, to be good". Then, speaking of the love (*ḥubb*) of God towards man it explains it as: "...that he (God) is satisfied *-riḍā*, from the stem (R Ḍ Y)- with him (his servant)". And speaking of the love (*ḥubb*) of man towards God it explains it as: "...that he (man) proclaims the greatness (*taʿẓīm*) of God and asks to come near to him through the acts of obedience (*tāʿa*)"²⁵. It is very interesting to note that the terms given as synonyms of love (Ḥ B B) here are taken from the roots (R Ḍ Y) (*riḍā*, *riḍwān* = to be satisfied), (ʿ Z M) (*taʿẓīm* = to proclaim someone's greatness) and (Ṭ W ʿ) (*tāʿa* = to be obedient).

From this analysis appears quite clear that the original connotations of passion, of personal and intimate relationship, have been completely blotted out from the semantics of the derivatives of (Ḥ B B) in the Koran, when applied to God-Man relationships. A closer analysis of the semantic spectrum of love's (Ḥ B B) term in the Koranic text will show such a general tendency of the Koranic language still clearer.

d. Love (*ḥubb*) in the Koran: its vocabulary

As the statistics above have shown, among the synonyms of love used in the Koran it is the stem (Ḥ B B) with its derivatives that appears with the highest frequency: 83 times, of which God is the subject of love in 49 instances. A more detailed view of its usage will provide a more specific perception of the dimensions of the love vocabulary in the Koran²⁶.

First of all, the 'natural man', that is the one who has not yet been enlightened and moved by faith, spontaneously loves the present world (*dunyā*) and its goods (*khayr*) (2, 216; 14, 17; 16, 18; 38, 32; 75, 20; 76, 28) and in a special way loves possessions (2, 177; 3, 92; 3, 152; 9, 24; 89, 20), his passions for women, sons, wealth (3, 14; 12, 30), food (76, 8), and he likes to be praised (3, 188). Natural love, which is not directed by faith, can be perverted to the point of loving infidelity (*kufṛ*) (9, 23) and its blindness (*ʿamā*) (41, 17), false gods (pretended equals to God, *andād*), calumny (lit. 'to eat one's brother's flesh') (49, 12) and defamation of his brothers (24, 19); it rejects the good counsel (7, 79) and doesn't love the believers (3, 119). Jews and Christians falsely pretend to be "God's friends" (*aḥibbāʾ Allāh*) (5, 18). It appears that the 'natural love', if not corrected by faith, is spontaneously oriented, according to the Koranic text, towards the present world, its vanities and sensual pleasures, even towards evil.

On the contrary, the love of the believer is directed towards other objects. He loves faith (*īmān*), God (*Allāh*) (3, 31; 5, 54; 2, 165), his pardon (24, 22), his victory (61, 13), to purify himself (9, 108), his fellowmen (28, 57), the emigrants (*muhājirūn*) (59, 9). The prophet Jacob loves the just Joseph in a special way (12, 8) and Joseph loves prison better than sin (12, 32). Abraham, the believer, does not love the setting stars (6, 76). In any case, the semantic connotation of love in the quoted texts is 'to be attached to or to prefer' somebody or something to something else. The meaning of love, as intimate friendship does not appear at all in these texts.

On the other hand, God's love is clearly classified according to the objects he loves or loves not. God loves those who do good (*muḥsinūn*) (2, 195; 3, 134; 3, 148; 5, 13; 5, 93), who are pious (*muttaqūn*) (3, 76; 9, 4; 9, 7), who act with equity (*muqsitūn*) (5, 42; 49, 9; 60, 8), who love him (3, 31; 5, 54), who purify themselves (*mutatahhirūn*) (2, 222; 9, 108), who repent (*tawwābūn*) (2, 222), who are patient (*ṣābirūn*) (3, 146), who trust in him (*mutawakkilūn*) (3, 159), who fight in his way (61, 4); God has a special love (*maḥabba*) (20, 39, the only instance of this term in the Koran) for Moses.

On the other hand, God does not love the infidels (*kāfirūn*) (2, 276; 3, 32; 22, 38; 30, 45), transgressors (*mu'tadūn*) (2, 190; 5, 87; 7, 55), corruption and corruptors (*muḥsidūn*) (2, 205; 5, 64; 28, 77), unjust (*ẓālimūn*) (3, 57; 3, 140; 42, 40), the sinful one (*athīm*) (2, 276; 4, 107), who is a traitor (*khā'in/khawwān*) (4, 107; 8, 58; 22, 38), pretentious (*mukhtāl*) and boastful (*fakhūr*) (4, 36; 31, 18; 57, 23), the haughty ones (*mustakbirūn*) (16, 23), those who exaggerate (*musrifūn*) (6, 141; 7, 31), who are light-hearted (*farīḥūn*) (28, 76) and spread calumnies (4, 148).

God's love, as described in these Koranic texts, appears to be tied to and delimited by the principle of justice: God loves what is good and hates what is bad; he is an impartial judge who has to apply the principle of distributive justice: to give good to the good, and evil to the evil. No hint of a personal, reciprocal relationship and passionate involvement between God and man can be perceived in these texts. The principle of justice seems to prevail overall in love relationship between God and man. Only in the case of Moses there is the mention of a gratuitous love that comes from God's pure and free choice and precedes all human merits.

In this respect Rahbar can state that: "Unqualified Divine Love for mankind is an idea completely alien to the Qur'ān. In fact 'to love' is a phrase too strong to convey the idea of *aḥabba* which can be rendered equally well as 'to like or to approve'... Even if we adopt the translation 'loves' for *yuhibbu* when it is used with God as the subject, nowhere do we find the idea that God loves mankind. God's love is conditional", i.e. it is conditional to the principle of justice.²⁷

e. Mutual love between God and Man?

One could object to the previous conclusion on the ground that there are two Koranic texts which have been very often quoted by Sufis and in which reciprocal love between God and Man seems to be explicitly affirmed. They are:

"Say, if you love God (*ruḥibbūna Allāh*), follow me: God will love you (*yuḥbib-kum*) and forgive your sins; God is indeed forgiver and merciful". (K 3, 31).

"O you, who believe! If you draw back (from your religion) God will call in other people (*qawm*), whom he loves and who love him (*yuḥibbu-hum wa-yuḥibbūna-hu*): (they will be) humble with the believers, but fierce with unbelievers, fighting in the way of God..." (K 5, 54).

These two texts seem to suggest that the Koranic text too speaks of a personal, reciprocal love (*ḥubb*) between Man and God. Yet, from a closer analysis of these texts it appears that it is not the case. In fact, the context of the two quoted verses is that of 'holy fighting or war' (*jihād*) in which the believers are called to show their unshakable fidelity and attachment to the cause of God and his Prophet against any temptation of drawing back²⁸. So, the word 'love' here means "to prefer, to be attached to somebody's cause". In the same context, God's love for his servants means his acceptance of their fidelity granting them his favors and forgiveness. Also in these texts there is nothing of the personal, intimate knowledge and encounter with God's love and essence as Sufis will read into them.

In two other verses of the Koran (K 2, 165; 9, 24) Man's love (*ḥubb*) is described as oriented directly towards God (*Allāh*). But also here, a closer analysis shows that the meaning of love does not go beyond that of "to prefer or to be attached to someone's cause" above everything else, as explained in the two previous texts.

f. A 'purified' language of love?.

From the previous analysis, it appears quite clear that there is a general tendency in the Koranic text towards a 'purification' of the language of love when used in God-Man relationships. The same tendency has been noted above in the usage of the derivatives from the stem (R Ḥ M), in which the intensity of 'the mother's feeling of compassion' has been overshadowed by the more general and neutral attitude of 'generosity and benevolence'. In the same way, all the intensity of 'passion' has been totally expunged from the derivatives of (Ḥ B B) in God-Man relationship in favour of the most general meaning of 'to prefer' or 'to be attached to somebody's cause'.

In the same manner, we have seen that the derivatives of (W L Y), which could convey the meaning of 'a close and intimate friendship', are used in the Koranic text to signify rather 'protection, allegiance', especially for someone's cause.

Such a tendency toward 'purification' of language is, of course, very much in tune with the whole Koranic theology in which God is thought of first of all as 'transcendent' and 'above all similarities with creatures' (*tanzīh*) and, consequently, he cannot share the 'feelings' of his creatures. In this way, however, many dimensions and deep aspects of love, such as those existing between husband and wife, parents and children, friends etc., are erased from the Koranic vocabulary in God-Man relationships. In the end, the Koranic vocabulary of love becomes very often a set of stereotyped and repetitive formulas that have lost their original connotation of emotion and tender passion, of close friendship and personal intimacy.

If one compares the Koranic texts with many Sufi expressions about Divine love, as the ones mentioned above, one cannot miss the different accent and stress found in such Sufi utterances. It seems that it has been the task and the merit of the Sufis to have introduced into the Islamic religious language their personal experience of love in all its dimensions. As Paul Nwyia had already clearly remarked in his study on the origins of the Sufi language: "It has been through Sufis that an authentic language, that is the one of experience, has been born into the Arabic speech"²⁹.

Only in two instances, however, does the Koranic language suggest some kind of 'tenderness in love' from God's side. These are the two names of God: *al-wadūd*, which means 'the friendly disposed' and *al-ḥannān*, which means 'the affectionate'. The first term, *al-wadūd*, is a derivative of the stem (W D D), a synonym of (Ḥ B B), and it occurs only twice in the Koranic text, in 11, 90; 85, 14. The other term, *al-ḥannān*, is a derivative of the stem (Ḥ N N), also a synonym of (Ḥ B B), and it occurs only once in the Koranic text, in 19, 13. But, of course, such isolated and limited instances of the Koranic text, occurring without any further qualification or description, do not change the general tone of the Koranic language.

From the present analysis, one comes to the conclusion that the Koranic language has been clearly and intentionally built on the idea of God as the 'Transcendent' and the 'Most High' (*subḥāna wa-ta'ālā*) and that such an idea was intended to be kept pure (*tanzīh*) from anything that could make God similar (*tashbīh*) to his creatures. Such a principle is consistently applied through out the Koranic text in the vocabulary of love in God-Man relationship and, thereafter, it has become the dominant mark of the Islamic speculation on God and his attributes.

A good example in case is the 'Chapter of love (*maḥabba*)' in *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya* of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (376/986-465/1074), a classical manual of Sufism. The author asks whether the term 'passion' (*ishq*) can be said of God and Man in their mutual relationship. He answers quoting the opinion of his master, an Ash'arite scholar, Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq (d. ca. 412/1021):

"Passion (*'ishq*) means to go beyond the limits. Of God, one cannot say that he trespasses the limits of love, consequently he cannot be qualified by passion (*'ishq*). And, on the other side, even if all the loves of creatures could be united in a single person, this cannot be said that he has reached the measure (of love) that God deserves. So, this person cannot be said that he has trespassed the limits in his love of God's. Consequently, one cannot say of God that he loves with passion (*'ishq*), neither can it be said of Man with regard to God that he loves (him) with passion (*'ishq*). The term passion (*'ishq*) must be absolutely excluded in our talking of God, of both God's relationship to Man and Man's relationship to God"³⁰. Yet, Sufis will use this very term passion (*'ishq*) without restraint in their utterances on God's love.

One cannot miss noticing the striking difference that exists in this respect between the Koranic and the Biblical languages. God's love in the Bible is charged with all the colours of human passion: God feels and endures all the passion of love as a father, a mother, a husband, a friend, a lover, with all its anguishes and pains. It is many a times a suffering love, an incessant and untiring longing for human beings, sinners and ungrateful as they may be³¹. A typical expression of such a passionate love of God for his people is found in the prophecy of Isaiah in which God's love is described as more passionate and faithful than a mother's love for her child:

"Can a woman forget her suckling baby? Can she not feel pity for the fruit of her womb? But, even if she could forget, I will never forget you" (Isaiah 49, 15; see also Jer. 31, 20; Hos. 9).

Love is a central theme throughout the Bible: "Love in the Old Testament is the basic character of the relationship between persons, a relationship with the qualities of devotion, loyalty, intimate knowledge, and responsibility..." and "Consonant with the personal and active character of human love is the view of Divine love in the Old Testament. God's love is not the emotional or the intellectual imposition of a favorable viewpoint upon an object of love, but is his redeeming activity in human history". and "The covenant love of Yahweh is therefore a faithful love, a steadfast, unshakable maintenance of the convenantal relationship"³². The revelation of God's love reaches its climax in the New Testament, in its highest proclamation that "God is love" (1 John. 4, 8.16).

Here, an important difference between the two religious texts, namely the Koran and the Bible, becomes evident. Though similar in other respects, the two texts show a profound discrepancy at the level of language, here of the language of love in the range of God-Man relationships. This is, no doubt, a 'revealing fact' that shows a basic difference at the level of the religious experience and thought from which the two texts were born. A comparative study in this respect could be very much enlightening and useful³³.

C. Conclusions on the language of love in the Koran.

a. From the previous analysis, it appears quite clear both at semantical as well as statistical level, that the language of love, with all its synonyms, is centered around the stem (**H B B**) and does not hold the central place in the Koranic vocabulary in the range of the personal relationships between God and Man. These are built first of all upon the Lord-servant (*rabb-‘abd*) relationship, that of servanthood (*‘ibāda*) and inside its limits all other relationships must be kept. From servanthood (*‘ibāda*) comes the basic qualification of the human being, he is the ‘servant’ (*‘abd*) and never can he trespass beyond this status. In the course of history, orthodox Sunnis have always condemned those Sufis who, in their quest of a deeper experience of God’s love, have pretended to have reached unity with God, in a sense that contradicts the letter of the Koranic text.

b. Moreover, it has been noted that love (*ḥubb*) and its synonyms, when used in the relationships between God and Man, tend to lose their original emotional connotation of a close, intimate friendship, or of a personal intercourse and passion. They come closer to more general connotations such as ‘acceptance, satisfaction’ (*ridā*), or ‘fidelity, loyalty’ (*walā*), ‘obedience’ (*tā‘a*) etc. It seems that the root (**H B B**) preserved a too clear a connotation of ‘sensual’ love and, therefore, could not be said of God without a previous ‘purification’ of its meaning. Such a tendency of ‘purification’ of love appears to be quite consistent with the general tone of the Koranic language which emphasizes God’s transcendence and dissimilarity (*tanzīh*) with respect to his creatures. This tendency has become also the dominant mark of Islamic theological thought ever since. In this respect, there is a basic difference between the Koranic and the Biblical languages.

c. In spite of these limits, Sufis will embrace the language of love with all its connotations of personal and intimate friendship to express their mystical experience and personal encounter with God. Love will become all the more central in Sufi experience and the language of love, from the peripheral place it has in the Koranic text, will acquire an increasingly central position in Sufi language. One can say that Sufis managed in transforming the Lord-servant (*rabb-‘abd*) relationship, proper to the Koranic language, into the relationship of lover-beloved (*ḥabīb-ḥabīb*), common in Sufi language. This can be seen quite clearly in many Sufi utterances, as that of Dhū l-Nūn: “O God, in public I call Thee ‘My Lord (*rabb*)’; but in solitude I call Thee: ‘My Beloved (*ḥabīb*)’”. It seems quite evident that a radical semantic change has taken place from the Koranic to the Sufi language of love. Such a semantic development cannot be, in our view, the fruit of a simple exegesis of the Koranic terms

(Massignon's view), but can only be the result of a personal, profound experience that became for Sufis the key reference of their understanding of the Koranic text (Paul Nwyia's view). In most cases, in fact, the Sufi interpretation does not fit the strict literal meaning of the Koranic text, but it brings in it new dimensions inspired by outer sources, first of all by their own personal and mystical experience. In this way Sufis gained new insight that reached not only beyond the pure literal meaning of the Koranic text but many times was seen in open contradiction with its outward and common understanding, as Sunni doctors will meticulously point out.

d. Yet, one must not underestimate the importance of the few mentions of love in the Koranic text. These few instances will be quite enough for Sufis to open the door to their new reading and understanding of the text in accordance with their own personal experience. Moreover, they will find in these Koranic witnesses a very strong argument (though very formalistic one in our view) to defend their own experience of the Divine love against the attacks of the strict Sunni doctors. Sufis will always be convinced that their experience is surely founded on and derive from the very text of the Koran and is therefore a sound and correct interpretation of it.

In the end, one must point out that the Sufi interpretation of the Koran has enriched Islamic thought with a very large and important literature of spirituality and theology. This literature, known as the 'Sufi interpretation of the Koran (*al-tafsīr al-ṣūfī*)', has become a fertile mine of mystical elevations and meditations for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

1. The classical study of this question is Louis Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, Paris, Vrin, (1st ed. 1922) 1954, pp. 45-49; id., "La méditation coranique" in *Opera Minora*, ed. by Youakim Moubarac, Beyrouth, Dar al-Maaref, 1963, II pp. 353-354; Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*, Beyrouth, Dar el-Machreq, (1st ed. 1970) 1991, pp. 9-16; he intends to continue and complete Massignon's work. See also the manuals of Sufism: Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, (1st ed. 1914) reprint. London, Routledge & Kegan, 1979, pp. 1-27; Arthur John Arberry, *Sufism. An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, (1st ed. 1950), reprint. London, Allen & Unwin, 1990, pp. 11-23; George Anawati — Louis Gardet, *Mistica islamica. Aspetti e tendenze — Esperienze e tecniche*, tr.it. di N.M. Loss, Torino, SEI, 1960, pp. 14-26; Marijan Molé, *Les mystiques musulmans*, Paris, (1st ed. 1965), reprint. Paris, Les Deux Océans, 1982, pp. 27-36; Robert Caspar, *Cours de mystique musulmane*, Rome, PISAI, 1968, pp. 8-13; Jean Chevalier, *Le soufisme et la tradition islamique*, Paris, CELT, 1974, pp. 39-47; Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, (1st ed. 1975) 1983, pp. 24-27; Abū l-Wafā al-Ghunaymī al-Taftāzānī, *Madkhal ilā al-tasawwuf al-islāmī*, Cairo, Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1979, pp. 39-42; Seyyed Hossein Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality I: Foundations*, World Spirituality No. 19, New York, Crossroad, 1987, pp. 3-47.

2. Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*. This study proves that there is a deep semantic development from the Koranic to the Sufi language beyond what Massignon's thesis seems to imply. One has to give a right account of such a linguistic development that cannot be explained just by a 'verbal' similarity, as many statements of Louis Massignon suggest. Nwyia's study of the Sufi texts intends to prove that such a semantic development of the Sufi vocabulary has its source in the newness of the Sufi experience.
3. "Grâce aux mystiques est né dans le parler arabe un langage authentique, celui de l'expérience", Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique* p. 4.
4. Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (336/948-430/1038), *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā'*, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1351-1357/1932-1938, Beirut, 1400/1980: "Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī" vol. 9, p. 332.
5. Massignon *Passion* (1st ed.) II, p. 604; id., *Passion* (2nd ed.) III, pp. 113-114; the same text is reported by Abū al-Ḥasan Daylamī with the term desire ('ishq) instead of love (maḥabba), Massignon, 'La notion de "l'essentiel désir"', *Opera Minora*, Lebanon: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1963, II pp. 232-234.
6. Massignon, 'La notion de "l'essentiel désir"', *Opera Minora*, II pp. 235
7. Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam*, ed. Abū l-'Alā al-'Afīfī, Beirut, 1980, pp. 203-204
8. Abū al-'Alā al-'Afīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid-Dīn Ibnul 'Arabī*, Cambridge, 1939, pp. 71-172
9. "Elle est une analyse existentielle en ce sens qu'elle fait le réel en le conduisant à la lumière de la conscience, de sorte qu'expérience et langage prennent naissance dans le même acte", Paul Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique* p. 4
10. Izutsu Toshihiko, *God and Man in the Koran*, Tokyo, Keio Insitute, 1964. This book provides a good semantic analysis of the Koranic language, see especially ch. 4-9, pp. 120-242. See also his *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, Tokyo, Keio Insitute, 1959. Other studies on the Koranic language are: Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1960; Jacques Jomier, *Les grands thèmes du Coran*, Paris, Le Centurion, 1978; Fazlur Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'ān*, Chicago, Minneapolis, 1980.
11. Izutsu, *God and Man* p. 75.
12. Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāz al-qur'ān al-karīm*, Cairo, Dār al-Ḥadīth, (1st ed. 1958) 1407/1987, pp. 40-75.
13. Rahman, *Themes* p. 2; Louis Gardet. "Allāh" in EI2 1, cols. 406a-417b; id., *Dieu et la destinée de l'homme*, Paris, Vrin, 1967, pp. 33-44; Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'ān*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1973, pp. 129-145; Fazlur Rahman, *Themes* pp. 1-19; Roger Arnaldez, *Le Coran*, Tournai (Belge), Desclée, 1983, pp. 62-76; Denise Masson, *Monothéisme coranique et monothéisme biblique*, Paris, DDB, 1976, pp. 33-94; Caspar, *Cours* pp. 74-89; for a most useful study on God's names see Daniel Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam*, Paris, Cerf, 1988.
14. Izutsu, *God and Man* p. 198.
15. Rahman, *Themes* pp. pp. 29-33.
16. Izutsu, *God and Man* pp. 198-199; pp. 234- 239; id., *The Structure of the Ethical Terms*, Tokyo, Keio Insitute, 1959 pp. 175-204; Rahman, *Themes* pp. 29-33.
17. Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-mu'jam al-mufahras*, indicated here as MF.
18. The term *al-raḥmān* has a long pre-Islamic tradition in the Semitic languages. It appears, since the third millenium B.C., as one of the fundamental titles of *El*, the supreme God of the Semitic Olympus: Paolo Xella, *Gli antenati di Dio*, Verona, 1982, p. 50. The same term occurs in the Biblical tradition as a title of Yahweh '*raḥôm*' (v. Ex. 34,6 and parallel). Later, it is found in the pre-Islamic Judaico-Christian inscription in South Arabia (Yemen) as *Raḥmānān*: Jacques Jomier, "Le nom divin '*al-Raḥmān*' dans le Coran" in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, Damas, 1957, II pp. 361-382; Toufic Fahd, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1968, pp. 140-141. The two forms of emphatic adjectives have a different semantic connotation: *al-raḥmān* indicates the 'overflowing of mercy', not necessarily permanent, but said of God, it means the 'permanent overflowing of mercy'; *al-raḥīm* indicates the permanent quality of mercy; Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-*

- ʿArab*, Dār Lisān al-ʿArab, Beirut, sd., I pp. 1143-1144. Masson, *Monothéisme* pp. 75-78; Cragg, *Mind* pp. 121-123.
19. E.R. Achtemeier, "Mercy" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by Arthur Buttrick, New York: Abington Press, 1962, vol. 3, col. 352b.
 20. Rahbar, *God of Justice* p. 158.
 21. *Muʿjam al-fāḡ al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, ed. by Majmaʿ al-Lughat al-ʿArabiyya, Cairo, Al-Hayʾat al-Miṣriyya al-ʾĀmma li-l-Taʾlif wa-l-Nashr, 1390/1970, II pp. 885-894.
 22. For further information on this concept see Michel Chodkiewicz, *Le sceau des saints*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, especially pp. 29-39.
 23. In the Akkadian language from the stem (H B B) come. the verb 'to caress' and the name 'spouse, lover'; in Hebrew and Aramaic languages from the same stem derive the name to designate the 'bosom' of the woman and the verb 'to love'; in ancient Arabic languages the verb 'to love' derives from this stem, see "H B B" in *The New Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Francis Brown (ed.), Indiana: Association Publishers, 1981 (repr.) p. 285 b; "H B-Liben" in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Ernst Jenni und Claus Westerman, München, Kaiser Verlag, 1971, vol. 1 cols. 60-72; also Arnaldez, *Le Coran* p. 68; Masson, *Monothéisme* pp. 79-80.
 24. "H B B" in *Dictionnaire arabe-français-anglais*, ed. Régis Blachère, Moustafa Chouemi, Claude Denizeau, Paris, Maisonneuve, 1967-1976, III pp. 1993-2009; For the meaning and usage of the derivatives of the stem (H B B) in Arabic see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Beirut, sd., I pp. 544-547.
 25. *Muʿjam al-fāḡ al-Qurʾān* vol. I pp. 243-245.
 26. (H B B) in *Al-muʿjam al-mufahras* pp. 191-193
 27. Rahbar, *God of Justice* p. 172.
 28. See comments of these verses in Régis Blachère, *Le Coran*, Paris, 1950, III pp. 864.1129; Hamza Boubakeur, *Le Coran*, Paris, 1972, I pp. 115-116, 232-233; Alessandro Bausani, *Il Corano*, Firenze, 1978, pp. 519-537.
 29. "Grâce aux mystiques est né dans le parler arabe un langage authentique, celui de l'expérience", Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique* p. 4.
 30. Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *Al-risāla fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf, Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, (1a ed. 1385/1966) 1972-1974, vol. 2 p. 610.
 31. Some basic literature on this topic: "Amour" par Claude Wiéner in *Vocabulaire de théologie biblique*, ed. by Xavier Léon-Dufour, Paris, Cerf, 1970, cols. 46-56; "Love in the Old Testament" by E.M. Good, vol. 3 pp. 164b-168b; "Love in the New Testament" by G. Johnston, vol. 3 pp. 168b-178b in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick, New York, Abington Press, 1962; "Agapao-Agapè" in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Chicago, University Press, 1957, pp. 4a-6b; "Liebe" by P. Van Imschoot in *Bibel-Lexicon*, ed. by Herbert Haag, Köln, Benzinger Verlag, 1968, pp. 1050-1056
 32. "Love in the Old Testament" by E.M. Good, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary*, vol. 3 pp. 164b, 166b, 167a.
 33. See Denise Masson, *Monothéisme coranique et monothéisme biblique — Doctrines comparées*, Paris, Desclée De Brouwer, 1976, pp. 62-94.