Mysticism among Jews in the Islamic Middle Ages until 1500
For the *Cambridge History of Judaism* vols. 5 and 6

Jewish – Muslim Mystical Encounters in the Middle Ages With Particular Attention to al-Andalus (Muslim Spain)

Sara Sviri (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

1. Introduction

In the thirteenth century, Judaism and Islam gave birth to two monumental works which had a lasting impact on their respective mystical systems: within Judaism and the Kabbalistic tradition it was the *Zohar,* the *Book of Splendor*, "which was destined to overshadow all other documents of Kabbalist literature by the success and the fame it achieved and the influence it gradually exerted".[1] According to Yehuda Liebes, who has studied the method and process of its compilation and the identity of those who participated in this process, it seems to have been compiled by "the mid-thirteenth century circle of 'Gnostic Kabbalists' in Castile."[2] Within the Muslim mystical tradition, it was the work of the Andalusia born Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), in particular his *Meccan Revelations* (*al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*), in which "he was to express in writing that vast range of esoteric knowledge, which, until his time, had been transmitted orally or by way of allusions only".[3] That these two thirteenth-century mystical works, which mark turning points in the history of Jewish and Islamic mystical traditions, were conceived within

[1] See Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 156.
[2] See Yehuda Liebes, "How the Zohar was written," in his *Studies in the Zohar*, trans. A. Schwartz, S. Nakache and P. Peli (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), 88; for further references to Kabbalah studies, see below, note 8.
[3] Paraphrasing Ralph W. J. Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia: the 'Rūḥ al-quds' and the 'al-Durrat al-fākhira' of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. Ralph W. J. Austin (Sherbone, Gloucestershire: Beshara Publications, 1988), 46; see also William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledg. Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), x; also Alexander D. Knysh. *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition. The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany, N. Y: *State University of New York Press*, 1999), 1. The literature on Ibn al-ʿArabī is probably as extensive as the literature on *Sefer ha-zohar*. For a good introductory list, the following works should suffice: Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur. The Life of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. P. Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic texts Society, 1993); Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints. Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. L. Sherrard (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993); Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowlede*; idem, *The Self-Disclosure of God. Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998); Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. R. Manheim (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1969).

such temporal and spatial proximity is thought provoking. The fact that both were compiled by mystics of Spanish origins raises the question of possible common roots. Indeed, although Kabbalah, geographically and temporally speaking, relates to post-Andalusian Jewish history, when one adds up the literary testimonies stemming from the tenth century onwards, it appears that the question of Kabbalistic origins should be viewed with an Andalusian pre-history in mind.[4] In spite of clear differences between the two – the *Zohar* was compiled in Aramaic in the later part of the thirteenth century within a Jewish circle from the north of Spain living under Christian rule; the *Meccan Revelations* was written in Arabic in the earlier part of that same century by an Andalusian Muslim (albeit after having left al-Andalus for the eastern Muslim world) – both the *Zohar* and the *Meccan Revelations* mark the culmination of an intellectual, mystically-inclined process, which, for Andalusian Jews and Muslims alike, had started approximately two centuries before, that is, in the tenth century, when certain teachings were brought to al-Andalus from the East and inspired there a growing interest in the mystical dimension of the religious life.

Rather than offering a list of medieval Jewish mystics in Muslim lands, this chapter wishes to chart the track and contents of these mystical teachings in order to trace and identify these "common roots". Consequently, it will attempt to show that the main source of inspiration for the evolving medieval Jewish mystical culture came from versions of a neoplatonic mystical philosophy, which, since the tenth century onwards had circulated in Muslim Spain in texts written in Arabic as well as in Judaeo-Arabic (and subsequently also in Hebrew translations) and which, through a long line of Jewish and Muslim authors, had contributed to the development of both Jewish and Islamic mysticisms in the Middle Ages. These texts belong mainly to the fields of philosophy (*falsafa*) and mystical philosophy (sometimes referred to in Arabic as *ʿilm al-bāṭin* or *ḥikma*), and only to a small extent to Ṣūfism. By bringing mystical philosophy to the forefront of the historical, comparative and typological enquiry, this chapter, finally, wishes to draw typological distinctions between Ṣūfī-type Jewish mysticism and the

[4] On this possibility and on the continuation of Judaeo-Arabic writings in fourteenth-century Castile, see Amos Goldreich, "The Theology of the *Iyyun* Circle and a Possible Source of the Term "*Aḥdut Shavah*," in *The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Europe*, ed. Joseph Dan, Hebrew (Jerusalem: the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987), 141-156.

Kabbalistic type. It thus hopes to put in perspective the tendency, benevolent as it may be, to reconcile Judaism and Islam by emphasizing similarities, affiliations and reciprocities between their commonly avowed respective mysticisms: Ṣūfism and the Kabbalah.[5] Lastly, my discussion concerns continuity rather than influences. The question of 'influences', to my mind, is overrated in scholarship and tends to be either biased or reductive. Furthermore, evidence concerning 'influences' may be circular, especially in the context of cultural phenomena and processes in which cross-fertilization had been involved, as those which prevailed between Judaism and Islam in the Middle Ages.[6] At this stage of the study of medieval Jewish and Muslim mysticisms, questions concerning influences should, I believe, give way to more pertinent questions concerning literary connections, thematic continuities, and typological distinctions.

Scholarly attention to Jewish mysticism in the Middle Ages has become, in the main, split into two research avenues, each one focusing on a particular component of medieval Jewish mysticism: concerning the Islamic East, scholars, in a constantly growing number of studies, have focused on the movement named 'Jewish Ṣūfism' (or also, and more appropriately, 'the pietistic movement' of medieval Egypt)[7]; as for the European West, Jewish mysticism here has been associated particularly with the Kabbalah.[8] Openly or

---

[5] For one of the latest contributions to this discussion, which reflects current attempts at highlighting similarities between Judaism and Islam rather than differences, see Thomas Block, *Shalom/Salām. A Story of Mystical Fraternity* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011).

[6] Such circularity can be seen, for example, in the context of letter speculations, where the direction of the influential flow is not at all clear: did it flow from Judaism (or other late antique systems) to Islam or, later on, from Islam to Judaism – or perhaps it flowed both ways? For the possible imprint of *Sefer Yeẓira* in the work of the tenth-century Muslim mystic Ibn Masarra, see Sarah Stroumsa, "Ibn Masarra and the Beginnings of Mystical Thought in al-Andalus," in *Mystical Approaches to God: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Peter Schäfer (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006), 107-109.

[7] For an overview of 'Jewish Ṣūfism' and its field of research, see Paul B. Fenton, "Abraham Maimonides (1186-1237): Founding a Mystical Dynasty," in *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13th Century*, eds. Moshe Idel and Mortimer Ostow (Northvale, N. J.: J. Aronson, 1998), 127-154; idem, "Judaism and Ṣūfism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, eds. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 201-217; idem, "Judaism and Ṣūfism," introduction to Obadiah Maimonides, *The Treatise of the Pool* (*= al-Maqāla al-Ḥawḍiyya*), trans. Paul Fenton (London: The Ocragon Press, 1981), 1-71. For the Pietistic movement (*ḥasīdūt*) in medieval Egypt and, in particular, for the figure of R. Abraham Maimonides (d. 1237), the son of Moses Maimonides and one of the leaders of this movement, see Shlomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967-1993), vol. 5, 474-494.

[8] The list of studies and monographs in this field is vast. Suffice it to mention here Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Liebes, *Studies in the Zohar*; Charles

tacitly, these two scholarly avenues have mostly operated separately, reflecting their respective fields as autonomous and distinct from one another. While scholars of the Kabbalistic lore draw mainly on Jewish Studies and on texts in Hebrew and Aramaic, scholars of Jewish mysticism in the East draw on their proficiency in Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic, in Islamic Studies and in the history of the Jews in Islamic lands.[9] Very rarely are the two disciplines viewed in tandem.[10] However, the cumulative material relating to the spiritual quest and the mystical trends among medieval Jews and, for that matter, also among Muslims, especially in al-Andalus, i.e., Muslim Spain, draws attention to historical and cultural processes which took place during the tenth to the twelfth centuries, processes which shaped the intellectual milieu in which both Jews and Muslims participated. This period, by and large, had preceded the Almohads' (*al-muwaḥḥidūn*) takeover of al-Andalus in the middle of the twelfth century – an event which put an end to the Jewish existence there by forcing the non-Muslim communities of al-Andalus to either convert to Islam or to leave the Muslim regions. At the same time this historical calamity, *ipso facto*, heralded the consolidation of the Jewish settlement in Castile and Catalonia (Christian Spain).[11] From this perspective, it is evident that even though, in the late Middle Ages, Jewish mysticism did mature into two distinct trends or even, as I shall show, into two types, both trends had germinated in a shared ground; when assessing and describing the nature and development of medieval Jewish

---

Mopsik, *Chemins de la Cabale: vingt-cinq études sur la mystique juive* (Paris: Éditions de l'éclat, 2004); Scholem, *Major Trends*. As for Ashkenazi Hasidism, it lies, I believe, beyond the scope of this chapter.

[9] Note that not only Scholem's comprehensive *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* lacks a chapter on Judaeo-Arabic mysticism, but also later, more recent general works, such as J. H. Laenen, *Jewish Mysticism: An Introduction*, trans. David E. Orton (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) and Rachel Elior, *Jewish Mysticism: The Infinite Expression of Freedom*, trans. Yudith Nave and Arthur B. Millman (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), leave out altogether the Judaeo-Arabic component of Jewish mysticism.

[10] Among scholars who have shown interest in both Jewish Ṣūfism and the Kabbalah, one should mention Alexander Altmann: for example, his "The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism," and his "The Ladder of Ascension," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, 1-72; Paul Fenton: for example, "La *hitbodedut* chez les premiers Qabbalistes en orient et chez les soufis," in *Prière, mystique et Judaïsme:* colloque de Strasbourg, 10-12 septembre 1984, ed. Roland Goetschel (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1987), 133-158 and "The Hierarchy of the Saints in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 10 (1991): 12-34; Haviva Pedaya: for example, "'Possessed by Speech': Towards an Understanding of the Prophetic-Ecstatic Pattern among Early Kabbalists", Hebrew, *Tarbiẓ* 65 (1996): 566-636.

[11] For the historical circumstances, see Sarah Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World. Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8, 53-59; see also Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992), vol. 1, 76-7 et passim.

mysticism, these origins should not be overlooked. Interestingly, the shared background, anchored in neoplatonic mystical philosophy, is relevant also for better understanding the nature of Muslim mysticism in al-Andalus. Thus, although it is commonplace to identify "Muslim mysticism" at large with "Ṣūfism",[12] it should be noted that in al-Andalus (and to some extent also in the Muslim East), a non-Ṣūfī type of mysticism had been at work; notably, a neoplatonic version of mystical philosophy.[13] This type of philosophical mysticism had been present in al-Andalus since the tenth century and it can be witnessed profusely in the works of both Jewish and Muslim philosophers and mystics. As for the Ṣūfī type of Jewish mysticism, it, too, had its offshoots in al-Andalus, as can be seen from the ground breaking work of Baḥyā ibn Pāqūda, *The Duties of the Hearts*.[14] However, around 1151, after the expulsion of the non-Muslim communities from al-Andalus by the Almohads, this Ṣūfī-type mystical trend left al-Andalus and, with the Maimūnī family, emigrated to the East, finally settling in Egypt. In Egypt it flourished within the circles of the 'pietists (*ḥasidīm*)', to whom, in modern times, the designation 'Jewish Ṣūfīs' has been applied.[15]

2. Historical Background

In spite of the longstanding fallacy that, in the tenth century, Ṣūfism was thriving in al-Andalus,[16] the history of Andalusian Ṣūfism still poses for the scholars some open questions: when do we really find a "thriving" Ṣūfī movement in al-Andalus; what was

[12] See, for example, Haïm Zafrani, "Mystique juive et mystique musulmane," in his *Kabbale, vie mystique et magie: judaïsme d'Occident musulman* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1996), 17-18.

[13] For the concept "mystical philosophy, see below, note 45.

[14] For the Ṣūfī nature of *The Duties of the Hearts*, see Amos Goldreich, "The Possible Sources for the Distinction between 'The Duties of the Organs' and 'The Duties of the Hearts'," in *Teʿūda, Studies in Hebrew and Arabic in Memoriam Dov Eeron*, Hebrew (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1988), 179-208; Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue. Philosophy and Mysticism in Baḥya ibn Paqūda's* Duties of the Heart (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Sara Sviri. "The Emergence of pre-Kabbalistic Spirituality in Spain: the Case of Baḥya ibn Paqūda and Judah Halevi," *Donaire* 1996, 78-84; see also below, at notes 19, 106.

[15] For a biographical description of Moses Maimonides and his family, see Stroumsa, *Maimonides in His World*, 8 and the references mentioned there in note 26; for the development of the Ṣūfī type of Jewish mysticism and the pietistic circle in medieval Egypt, see above at note 7; see also below, at note 117.

[16] See, for example, Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy. Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's* Kuzari (New York: SUNY Press, 2000), 3; M. McGaha, "The *Sefer Ha-Bahir* and Andalusian Ṣūfism", *Medieval Encounters* 3 (1997): 20-57, especially 32, 45; note, however, McGaha's reference to Fenton's caution concerning the difficulty "to distinguish authentic Sufi themes from those common to general Islamic Neoplatonism" - see McGaha, 45 and note 126.

the nature of Andalusian mysticism during the tenth to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries and, in particular, can Ṣūfism in al-Andalus be seen as a mirror-image of eastern Ṣūfism.[17] In fact, a tentative answer to the third question can be articulated: In the East, by the end of the tenth century, many of the classical Ṣūfi compilations had been in circulation and use; several important centres of teaching, which drew many adepts and disciples, had by then been formed and established; a particular Ṣūfī lingo and ethos had evolved covering and promoting an experiential mode of mystical life: Ṣūfism and Ṣūfī literature had indeed been thriving there. This cannot be said about the Ṣūfi presence in al-Andalus. The Andalusian heresiographer Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), in his book *Concerning Religions, Heresies and Sects* (*Kitāb al-fiṣal fī al-milal*), does mention several – though by no means numerous – anecdotes relating to Ṣūfis in his homeland: he saw them as mostly despised and outlandish figures; but he offers no discussion on Ṣūfism as such nor does he mention any Ṣūfi texts in particular.[18] Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, the first work to have appeared in al-Andalus which can be qualified as Ṣūfi was a book in Judaeo-Arabic titled *The Guidance to the Duties of the Hearts* (*al-Hidāya ilā farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*). It was written by Ibn Ḥazm's Jewish contemporary, Baḥyā b. Paqūda.[19] The first indigenous, Andalusian compilation written by a Muslim and fashioned on eastern Ṣūfī-type works appeared much later: it was *Maḥāsin al-majālis* (*The Loveliness of the Assemblies*) by Ibn al-ʿArīf (d. 1141).[20] That Ṣūfi teachings (though without explicit acknowledgement of their presence) are first attested to by a Jewish rather than a Muslim author can, perhaps, be explained by the fact that up until the reign of the Umayyad Caliph al-Ḥakam II (961-976), any pursuit of knowledge outside of the Qurʾān and the Sunna was strictly forbidden by the intolerant jurisprudents of the Mālikite school, who

[17] Note Addas's comments in "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʿArabī," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma K. Jayyusi (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 909-929 and especially 912.

[18] See ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm, *Kitāb al-fiṣal fī 'l-milal wal-ahwāʾ wal-niḥal* (Beirut: Dār al-jīl, 1985), vol. 4: 21, 138, 143, 155, 160, 170.

[19] See also below, at notes 30, 37, 79; interestingly, Lobel, who wrote on "Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's *Kuzari*", admits that "The Sufi is a background figure, an absent speaker whose presence we feel throughout the dialogue" – see *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 4, 159; see also Sara Sviri, "Review: Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's Kuzari*, " *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 53 (2002):177; note that even in Baḥyā's book, Ṣūfism as such is not mentioned.

[20] See Ibn al-ʿArīf, *Maḥāsin al-majālis d'Ibn al-Arīf*, ed. and trans. M. Asín Palacios (Paris: Libraire orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1933).

had been supported by the early Muslim rulers of al-Andalus.[21] From such restrictions the Jewish communities may have been exempted. Although earlier in the tenth century al-Andalus did produce an indigenous mystic, Ibn Masarra al-Jabalī (d. 931), he and his disciples seem to have had to resort to convening in remote mountainous places and, in any case, remained controversial and persecuted figures.[22] Besides, as has become clear in a recent study, Ibn Masarra was no Ṣūfi.[23] Intellectual activities in al-Andalus took pace energetically only after the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba and against the background of a general relaxation in the authority of the religious legalists. Nevertheless, the beginning of an intellectual endeavour in al-Andalus can be traced to the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III (912-961).[24] This was also the time when Jewish literary creativity began, cultivated and encouraged by Ḥasdai ibn Shaprūṭ (d. ca. 975), the leader of the Jewish communities and, apparently, an important courtier-diplomat in the service of the Caliph.[25] In terms of Jewish history, Ibn Shaprūṭ's diplomatic, cultural and communal activities herald what became known as "the Golden Age".[26] The relative intellectual relaxation meant that Muslims and Jews could now become more freely exposed to writings and teachings that arrived in al-Andalus from the East.

[21] See Miguel Asín Palacios, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra and his Followers*, trans E. H. Douglas and H. W. Yoder (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 16-26, and especially 24; also Sarah Stroumsa, "Al-Andalus und Sefarad. Von Bibliotheken und Gelehrten im muslimischen Spanien", trans. Christoph Cluse, in *Arye Maimon-Institut für Geschichte der Juden: Studien und Texte*, vol. 2 (Trier: Kliomedia, 2010), 11 et passim.
[22] See Palacios, *Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra*; Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʿArabī", 911-919; cf. Sarah Stroumsa and Sara Sviri, "The Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra and his *Epistle on Contemplation*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 36 (2009): 202.
[23] See Stroumsa and Sviri, "Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus", 204, 209, 210; cf. Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʿArabī", 911-919; see also below, notes 61-62 and at note 74.
[24] See William M. Watt and Pierre Cachia. *A History of Islamic Spain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977), 79, 128.
[25] See Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, transl. A. Klein and J. Machlowitz Klein (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1992) , vol. 1, 155-227; José M. Millás Vallicrosa. "The Beginning of Science among the Jews of Spain," in *Binah*, *Jewish Intellectual History in the Middle Ages*, ed. Josehp Dan (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1994) vol. 3, 37-38; Ibn Haiyan al-Kurtubi, *Crónica del Califa ʿAbdarrahmân III An-Nâsir entre los años 912 y 942* (=*al-Muqtabis V*), trans. M. J. Viguera and Federico Corriente (Zaragoza: Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura, 1981), 350-1, 355; David J. Wasserstein, "The Muslims and the Golden Age of the Jews in al-Andalus," in *Dhimmis and Others: Jews and Christians and the World of Classical Islam*, eds.Uri Rubin and David J. Wassestein (Tel-Aviv: 1997, = *Israel Oriental Studies* 17), 184.
[26] See Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*; also Esperanza Alfonso, *Islamic Culture through Jewish Eyes. Al-Andalus from the tenth to twelfth century* (London: Routledge, 2008), 61-2; Wasserstein, "The Muslims and the Golden Age of the Jews in al-Andalus", especially 182.

Cultural openness of Muslim and Jewish societies continued with greater momentum after the collapse of the Caliphate and its breakdown into small and rival kingdoms. During the eleventh century, under the "Party Kings" (*mulūk al-ṭawāʾif*), this cultural growth produced great literary figures, Muslim as well as Jewish. Andalusian Jewish intellectuals, who had access to the various branches of Arabic literature – poetry, grammar, rhetoric, religious sciences, as well as science, philosophy and mysticism – participated in the shaping of the Andalusian culture. Although Muslim and Jewish authors produced their works within the boundaries of their own religious culture and for their co-religionists, they shared a common Arabic-based culture. The literary works which were imported from the East, in particular writings of philosophical, pietistic and mystical orientations, responded to a spiritual and intellectual awakening in both religions. Of special significance were the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren (*Rasāʾil ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*). In tenth-century Baṣra, these 'Brethren' formed a group which, for all intents and purposes, had inclinations toward Ismāʿīlī teachings[27] and whose literary products, The Epistles, bear strong neoplatonic features. They were brought to al-Andalus, possibly to Saragossa, in the eleventh century (on Saragossa, see more below) or perhaps even earlier.[28]

That the last century of Jewish existence in al-Andalus – from the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the twelfth century – witnessed a growing interest on the part of Jewish intellectuals in spiritual issues, can be discerned from the abundance of liturgical poetry as well as philosophical writings produced during this period by such authors as Solomon Ibn Gabirol (fl. first half of the eleventh century),[29] Baḥyā ibn Paquda (d. ca. 1080),[30] Moses ibn Ezra (d. ca. 1135),[31] and Judah Halevi (d. 1141),[32] to name but a few.

[27] See Palacios, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarra*, 120; Georges Vajda, *Introduction à la pensée juivie du Moyen Age* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1947), 88; Samuel M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismāʿīlism* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 155-176; Shlomo Pines, "On the term *Ruḥaniyyot* and its Origin and on Judah Halevi's Doctrine," *Tarbiẓ* 57 (1987-88), 515; Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam. The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 165-178.

[28] For the question of the dating of the *Epistles* and of the manner of its arrival in al-Andalus, see below, at note 92.

[29] See Jacques Schlanger, *La Philosophie de Salomon ibn Gabirol. Étude d'un néoplatonisme* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), especially part I, 1-157.

[30] Cf. Lobel, *Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 2; also Baḥyā ibn Paqūda *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, ed. and trans. M. Mansoor (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 1-2; cf. D. Kaufmann, *Studies in Medieval Hebrew Literature*, trans. I. Eldad, Hebrew (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1962),

During this twilight period of the Andalusian Jewish Golden Age, the cultural centre had shifted from the South to the North of al-Andalus. After the disintegration of the Caliphate of Cordoba in 1013, many Jewish families emigrated to the North of the Iberian Peninsula, most of which was still under Muslim rule. Many migrants settled in Toledo and in Saragossa. After the fall of Muslim Toledo in 1085 to the Christian *reconquista*, it was Saragossa on the Ebro valley, the northernmost of the Muslim *ṭāʾaifa*-kingdoms, which occupied the main political and cultural centre in Muslim Spain, until 1118 when it, too, fell to the Christian king Alfonso I.[33] Under the rule of the Banū Hūd, Saragossa became one of the greatest and most prosperous of the Muslim kingdom-cities.[34] As we have mentioned, it was probably to this city that the influential Epistles of the Sincere Brethren were brought from the East in the second half of the eleventh century or earlier.[35] Two of the literary figures mentioned above lived in Saragossa: Baḥyā b. Paqūdā in the early part of the eleventh century and Solomon ibn Gabirol in its later part. When Arabic lost its exclusivity as the language of culture and communication, it was in Saragossa that the first generation of Jewish translators from Arabic into Hebrew emerged. Moses ibn Giqatilla (or Chiquitilla), a grammarian and bible commentator who flourished in the third quarter of the eleventh century, and a refugee from Cordoba to Saragossa, was the first of a long line of translators to commute between the two sides of the Pyrenees, transmitting Judeo-Arabic writings to the Jewish communities of the North.[36] This project of translations from Arabic into Hebrew, which was to last for several generations, made the works of Baḥyā and Judah Halevi, written originally in Judeo-Arabic, available to the Jewish communities in Castile and Leon, Navarre, Aragon, and Barcelona, as well as to their neighbouring Jewish communities of

---

11.

[31] See Paul Fenton, *Philosophie et Exégèse dans* Le Jardin de la métaphore *de Moïse Ibn ʿEzra, philosophe et poète andalou du XIIe siècle* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 12-22.

[32] See Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, Introduction, 8-9 and 181, note 1.

[33] See A. Saénz-Badillos, "Saragossa," in *Encyclopaedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[34] See Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, vol. 2, 253-4.

[35] See Joaquín Lomba Fuentes, *La Filosofía Islámica en Zaragoza* (Zaragoza: Diputación General de Aragón, Departamento de Cultura y Educación, Colección "Temas de Historia Aragonesa" 7, 1987), 38; also Maribel Fierro, "Bāṭinism in Al-Andalus. Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 353/964), Author of the "*Rutbat al- Ḥakīm*" and the "*Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm* (Picatrix)," *Studia Islamica* 84 (1996): 106-108.

[36] See Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, vol. 2, 259-262; also J. M. Delgado, "Moses ibn Chiquitilla," in *Encyclopaedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

Provence.[37] For these Northern provinces, the eleventh century, and especially its second half, although replete with political upheavals after the fall of Toledo, was nevertheless a period of economic expansion, political consolidation, cultural flourishing, and a deepening of the spiritual quest.

In this quest, eleventh-century Jewish intellectuals found inspiration from sources which came via two avenues: the one Muslim, especially in the form of texts – such as the aforementioned Epistles of the Sincere Brethren – relating to neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy. The other avenue was Jewish, in the form of ancient, or pseudepigraphic, mystical texts in Hebrew, foremost among them the enigmatic *Sefer Yeẓira* (*The Book of Creation*), but also the Merkavah and Hekhalot literature. These texts, with their bold theophanic images, mystical verbal practices, and cosmogonic theories, had surfaced in different parts of the Jewish world during the late Geonic period, aroused great interest and instigated discussions, polemics and commentaries.[38] The range of commentaries to *Sefer Yeẓira* written by tenth-century theologians and philosophers such as Saʿadya Gaon from Baghdad (d. 942), Dūnash ben Tamīm from North Africa (fl. ca. 950) and Shabbetai Donnolo from Italy (d. 982), indicates the degree of interest which this intriguing book had produced. In al-Andalus, its profound impact can be seen in the works of two of the most creative and influential figures in Jewish medieval intellectual history: in the poetic and philosophic writings of Solomon ibn Gabirol[39] and in Judah Halevi's *The Kuzari*.[40] In *The Kuzari*, written in the early part of the twelfth century, Judah Halevi dedicated a significant part of the fourth chapter to

---

[37] According to the testimony of Judah ibn Tibbon (d. 1190), the translator of both the *Duties of the Hearts* and of *The Kuzari*, he translated the former "at the instigation of Rabad" (R. Abraham ben David of Posquière), one of the early Kabbalists – see Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, trans. Allan Arkush (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 221 and 223.

[38] For a survey of the scholarship concerning the provenance of the Hekhalot and Merkavah literature, see Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines. Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 74-124; for "visionary experience in Pre-Kabbalistic Sources", see ibid, 125-187.

[39] For Ibn Gabirol and *Sefer Yeẓira*, see Yehuda Liebes, "*Sefer Yezira* in R. Salomon Ibn Gabirol's writings and a commentary on the poem 'I have loved you'," Hebrew, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987): 73-123; cf. Moshe Idel, "Jewish Thought in Medieval Spain," in *The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. Haim Beinart, Hebrew (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 207-223; also Schlanger, *Philosophie de Salomon ibn Gabirol*, 105 et passim.

[40] For Halevi's indebtedness to the Merkavah tradition, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "Merkavah Traditions in Philosophical Garb: Judah Halevi Reconsidered", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 57 (1990–91), 179-242.

elucidating some of the mystifying theories contained in *Sefer Yeẓira*.[41] Both Ibn Gabirol and Judah Halevi, and they are only the most prominent examples, amalgamated in their works powerful cosmological and cosmogonic speculations together with phraseology and letter speculations which drew from earlier Jewish mystical texts. In forging fundamental concepts and ideas, which were soon to come forth in the Kabbalistic literature, they, and others, clearly point to the importance of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Judaeo-Arabic products for Jewish spirituality and, in particular, for envisaging subsequent phases of Jewish mysticism in terms of continuity rather than mystifying leaps.[42]

Foremost among the imported Muslim sources which had been studied by Jewish as well as Muslim intellectuals, were, indeed, the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren. But there were also indigenous Andalusian literary works by Muslim authors with which Jewish intellectuals were familiar. These included, *inter alia*, the pseudo al-Majrīṭī's *Goal of the Sage* (*Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, known as *Picatrix* in the Latin world); al-Baṭalyawsī's *The Book of Imaginary Circles* (*Kitāb al-dawāʾir*, or *al-ḥadāʾiq*, known in Hebrew as *Sefer ha-ʿagullot ha-raʿyoniyyot*) and Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy ibn yaqẓān*. [43]All these works exhibit strong philosophical-mystical leanings with unmistakable neoplatonic traits. It will be noticed that this short list does not include works by Ṣūfīs. This is no oversight. In spite of the testimony of Baḥyā's *The Duties of the Hearts*, Ṣūfīsm was not the main carrier of mystical teachings to inspire contemporaneous Jewish seekers after spiritual teachings. Moreover, envisaging Ṣūfīsm as the agent of possible Muslim contributions to the pre-history of the Kabbalah is, in my opinion, the main stumbling block for a valid appraisal of the process which I am trying to highlight in this chapter. In fact, during the tenth and eleventh centuries, notwithstanding a strong Andalusian propensity for piety and asceticism (a propensity which, in itself, did not encourage engagement in either intellectual speculations or in individual mystical pursuits), Andalusian intellectuals had

[41] See Judah Halevi, *Al-Kitāb al-Khazarī. The Book of Refutation and Proof on the Despised Faith*, eds. David H. Baneth and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977), 174-185 =*The Kuzari. An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. trans. H. Hirschfeld (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 228-240.

[42] On the Kabbalists esteem for *Sefer yeẓira*, see Moshe Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," in *Studies in Maimonides*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 40; see also Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, especially ch. 4, 125-187.

[43] See Mauro Zonta, "Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on Judaic Thought," in http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/arabic-islamic-judaic, section 3.

not been exposed so much to Ṣūfī mystical teachings as to philosophical ones, which had a strong neoplatonic-mystical flavor. These philosophical-mystical teachings in themselves had been touched by Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī adaptations of neoplatonic texts. By assuming that Ṣūfīsm was the main, if not the sole, manifestation of Muslim mysticism in al-Andalus, and by underplaying the mystical nature and importance of neoplatonic philosophy prevailing there, scholarship has seldom registered the straight line that connects this non-Ṣūfī philosophical mysticism with the Jewish mystical tradition.[44]

3. Mystical philosophy, Ṣūfi mysticism, Ibn Masarra and *Ikhwān al-ṣafā'*[45]

Medieval Neoplatonism, as is well known, is associated with several texts of late-antique Hellenistic origin, which had circulated in Arabic since the ninth century. Foremost among these texts was the apocryphal so-called *Theology of Aristotle*,[46] which,

[44] Note the pertinent observations made by M. Idel, "Kabbalah in Spain: Some Cultural Observations," in *Encuentros* and *Desencuentros. Spanish Jewish Cultural Interaction throughout History*, eds. Carlos C. Parrondo, M. Dascal, F. M. Villanueva and A. S. Badillos (Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 2000), in particular, his wonder "why none of the Spanish Kabbalists… quoted from these Hebrew translations [of al-Ghazālī's works] – see 54 and 70-71. In light of the cultural process and the typological distinctions which I propose (see also below), it is clear that, in order to reconsider the possibility of Islamic impact on the Kabbalah, one should speculate less about the role of Ṣūfism but rather consider the neoplatonic Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic materials. Questions pertaining to Ṣūfi presence or absence from the medieval Kabbalistic lore should thus be rephrased. Against this background, cf. Idel's comment on the probable neoplatonic influence behind R. Isaac the Blind's notions of the *sefirot*, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 136; see also 138 and 342 note 213; also below, at note 56.

[45] For the term "rationalistic mysticism" - "a very special type of mysticism which we tentatively will call mysticism of reason or simply rationalistic mysticism" – see Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism, Mysticism, Metaconsciousness: Problems of the Soul in the Neoaristotelian and Neoplatonic Traditions*, (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1963), introduction, 2-3 et passim. D. Blumenthal, in his *Philosophic Mysticism. Studies in Rational Religion* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006), uses the term "philosophic mysticism" mainly in the context of the philosophy of Moses Maimonides; he writes: "… I deal with the application of the concept of philosophic mysticism only to Judaeo-Islamic philosophy" (see 26, note 11); the Kabbalah, therefore, seems to be left out of Blumenthal's study. The same comment applies also to Blumenthal's chapter "Philosophic Mysticism: The Ultimate Goal of Medieval Judaism," in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judeo-Arabic Culture*, eds. B. Hary and H. Ben-Shammai (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1-18. For "philosophical mysticism in eleventh-century Spain", see also D. Lobel, *Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 21-34.

[46] There exists a vast literature on the pseudo-Aristotle texts, their neoplatonic affiliation and their place in Arabic culture; see, for example, Jill Kraye, C. B. Schmitt and W. F. Ryan (eds.), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The* Theology *and Other Texts* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986); Peter S. Adamson, *Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the 'Theology of Aristotle'* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 2002); Christina D'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic: Neoplatonism in translation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds. P. Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2005), 10-31; Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society (2nd-4th/8th-tenth centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), 141-50 et passim; Rosenthal, "Ash-Shaykh al-Yūnānī and the Arabic Plotinus Source," *Orinetalia N. S.* 21 (1952): 461-92, vol. 22 (1953): 370-400 and vol. 24 (1955): 42-66; reprinted in idem, *Greek Philosophy in the Arab World. A Collection of Essays* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), III.

in the last resort, is a reworking of Plotinus's *Enneads* IV, V and VI. Two Arabic versions circulated in the medieval Muslim world: a shorter and a longer one.[47] The longer version has survived in fragmentary manuscripts written in Judaeo-Arabic from which, in the sixteenth century, a Latin translation was produced.[48] This longer version, extant only in Judaeo-Arabic, had clearly circulated among medieval Jewish intellectuals. Nevertheless, these Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts must have existed alongside Arabic ones and its contents must have been shared by both Jews and Muslims. The Longer version of the pseudo-Aristotle's *Theology* has been shown to portray neoplatonic ideas and schemes in a mode close to Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī teachings.[49] The Jewish familiarity with and adoption of ideas deriving from the nexus of neoplatonic teachings and Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī conceptions, in particular in al-Andalus, have been assiduously studied by Shlomo Pines,[50] M. S. Stern,[51] P. B. Fenton,[52] as well as, more recently, in a number of doctoral theses produced by young Israeli scholars.[53] These texts and studies help us draw a type

[47] The short version was published twice: first by F. Dieterici in 1882 followed by a German translation in 1883 and again by ʿAbdurraḥmān Badawī, *Plotinus apud Arabes* (Cairo: Maktabat al-nahḍa al-miṣriyya, 1955). It was translated into English by G. Lewis and included in Paul Henry and Hans R. Schwyzer's critical edition of Plotinus's *Enneads =Plotini Opera*, (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1951-1973), vol. 2; the longer version still awaits a publication and a critical edition. For a long lists of references to the *Theology* in the writings of both Jewish and Muslim authors "from Persia to Andalusia", see Fenton, "The Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the *Theology of Aristotle*," in Jill Kraye, W. F. Ryan and C. B. Schmitt, *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages* , 259-60, note 2.
[48] See Samuel M. Stern, "Ibn Ḥasdāy's Neoplatonist. A Neoplatonic Treatise and its Influence on Isaac Israeli and the Longer Version of the *Theology of Aristotle*," *Oriens* 13-14 (1961): 58-120; reprinted in idem, *Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Thought*, ed. F. W. Zimmermann (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983); Fenton, "The Arabic and Hebrew Versions of the *Theology of Aristotle*," 241-64.
[49] See Shlomo Pines, "La longue récension de la *Théologie d'Aristote* dans ses rapports avec la doctrine ismaélienne," in *Revue des études Islamiques* 22 (1954): 7-20; reprinted in *The Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, ed. S. Stroumsa (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), volume III, 390-403; Daniel de Smet, "Les bibliothèques ismaélienne et la question du néoplatonisme ismaélien", in *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists*, ed. Christian D'Ancona (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 488-9 et passim.
[50] See Shlomo Pines, "Shiʿite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 165-251; reprinted in The *Collected Works of Shlomo Pines*, vol. V: *Studies in the History of Jewish Thought*, eds. Warren Z. Harvey and Moshe Idel (Jerusaelm: Magnes Press, 1996), 219-305); also idem, "On the term *Ruḥaniyyot* and its Origin and on Judah Halevi's Doctrine", *Tarbiẓ* 57 (1987-88): 511-40, Hebrew.
[51] See also above, note 48.
[52] See also above, notes 47-48.
[53] See Ehud Krinis, "The Idea of the Chosen People in Judah Halevi's al-Kitāb al-Khazarī and its Origins in Shīʿī Imām Doctrine," Ph.D. diss., Beer Sheva, 2008; Ayala Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and his place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought," Ph.D. diss., Jerusalem, 2010; Michael Ebstein, "Philosophy, Mysticism and Esotericism: Ismāʿīlī Thought and Andalusian Mysticism," Ph.D. diss. (forthcoming), especially chapter 2 ; for medieval Jewish and Muslim Neoplatonism and early Kabbalah, see Adam Afterman, "Intimate Conjunction with God: The Concept of "Devekut" in the Early Kabbalah (Provence and Catalonia)," Ph.D. diss., Jerusalem, 2008.

of mysticism which should be distinguished from Ṣūfīsm. Whereas Ṣūfīsm, by and large, focuses on an inward journey to the innermost regions of man's being, identified as "heart" (*qalb*) or "secret" (*sirr*), mystical philosophy is interested in an upward, contemplative journey that would culminate in the conjunction (*ittiṣāl*) of the human "partial" intellect (*al-ʿaql al-juzʾī*) with the universal intellect (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*). Ṣūfīsm describes a constant struggle between two opposing elements in man's being: the "heart", which, although hidden and veiled, contains the capacity to "know" God and to abide in God's nearness; and, in polar opposition to it, the "lower-self" (*nafs*), a dark and lustful aspect in man's makeup.[54] As for neoplatonic philosophical mysticism, its upholders regard the "soul" (*nafs*) or, at least, its higher parts, as a noble element in man, which, before attaching itself to the lower world, had belonged to the cosmic "universal soul" (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*). Where Ṣūfīsm charts a journey to the inner, concentric layers of the "heart",[55] neoplatonic mystical philosophy envisages encompassing cosmic spheres, emanated from the transcendent One and circling in a hierarchical realm. In addressing "medieval Jewish mysticism", these distinctions are significant: they help us elucidate that, in historical as well as comparative terms, the search for Muslim and Judaeo-Arabic antecedents and precursors of the Kabbalah should not focus on Ṣūfīsm. In other words, distinguishing between neoplatonic mysticism and Ṣūfīsm is necessary for observing, with greater clarity than hitherto proposed, how mystical speculations, which, in Provence, Catalonia and Castile, were formulated in mystical texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic, had their roots in neoplatonic and Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī mysticisms rather than in Ṣūfism.[56] It was this type of mysticism, rather than the Ṣūfī type, which had occupied a

---

[54] For the *nafs* in Ṣūfism, see Sviri, "The Self and Its Transformation in Ṣūfism, with Special Reference to Early Literature," in *Self and Self-Transformation in the History of Religions*, eds. D. Shulman and G. Stroumsa (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 195-215.
[55] See, for example, [pseudo?-] al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, "A Treatise on the Heart *Bayān al-farq bayna al-ṣadr wal-qalb wal-fuʾād wal-lubb* attributed to al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. ca. 300/912)," in *Three Early Sufi Texts*, ed. K. L. Honerkamp (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2003), 3-81
[56] An interesting case in point is the work of the Muslim author Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 1127): his Arabic work *The Book of the Imaginary Circles* (*Kitāb al-dawāʾir al-wahmiyya*), immersed in neoplatonic mystical philosophy, had enjoyed several Hebrew translations during the middle ages and up until the sixteenth century; that it had been read and absorbed by later medieval Kabbalists can be seen in the numerous citations in Kabbalistic literature – see Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and his place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought", Introduction et passim. For other examples and assessment of the indebtedness of early Kabbalah to medieval Neoplatonism, see Sara O. Heller-Wilensky, "Isaac Ibn Latif – Philosopher or Kabbalist?," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann

central position in the inter-communal intellectual circles throughout the medieval world.[57]

Mystical philosophy is first attested to in al-Andalus in the works of the tenth century Ibn Masarra al-Jabalī ("the dweller of the mountain"). He was born in Cordoba in 883, travelled to eastern parts of the Muslim world as well as to North Africa, and died in his mountainous retreat in 931, where he had lived and taught, probably in some sort of secrecy, a community of disciples. His life span coincides with the reign of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III *al-Nāṣir* (912-962), in whose service, as we have seen, the Jewish courtier Ḥasdai ibn Shaprūṭ (ca. 915-975) had been active. This is also the time when, in Qayrawān, a new dynasty took power, posing rivalry and threat to both the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus and to the ʿAbbasid Caliphate in the eastern Muslim world: this dynasty established itself as Caliphate by its leader, the Fāṭimī-Ismāʿīlī ʿAbd Allāh (or ʿUbayd Allāh) al-Mahdī (ruled 910-934).[58] It is noteworthy that Isaac Israeli (d. mid tenth-century), the early tenth-century Jewish neoplatonist, was a physician at the court of this new Fāṭimī Caliph.[59] Ibn Masarra's two extant works, which were thought lost till 1972, portray clear hallmarks of neoplatonic mystical philosophy in its medieval, monotheistic-Muslim garb.[60] In contrast to scholarly evaluations of Ibn Masarra as a Ṣūfi,[61] an analysis of his extant works has shown that there is nothing particularly Ṣūfī in his thought and terminology; rather, they exhibit clear neoplatonic affiliations.[62] Ibn Masarra's epistle titled the *Epistle on Contemplation* (*Risālat al-iʿtibār*) sketches an upward contemplative journey through a neoplatonic ladder whose rungs, from below upwards, are Nature (*al-ṭabīʿa*), the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), the Universal

---

(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 185-223; also Goldreich, "The Theology of the *Iyyun* Circle".

[57] See also above, at note 43.

[58] See Dachraoui, "al-Mahdī ʿUbayd Allāh," in *Encyclopaedia* of *Islam*², vol. 5, 1242-44; also Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, trans. M. Bonner (Leiden: Brill, 1996), esp. 121-2.

[59] See Alexander Altmann and Samuel M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli. A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the early Tenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), "Biographical Notes", xvii -xxiii.

[60] On Ibn Masarra and the literature on him, see Stroumsa and Sviri, "Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus", 201-203, especially notes 1 and 5. For a detailed commentary and analysis of Ibn Masarra's works, see Stroumsa and Sviri, *The Beginning of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus*, forthcoming.

[61] See, in particular, Stroumsa and Sviri, "Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus", 209, note 35 and Samuel M. Stern, "Ibn Masarra, Follower of Pseudo-Empedocles – an Illusion," in *Actas do IV Congresso de estudos árabes e islâmicos. Coimbra – Lisboa. 1 a 8 de Setembro de 1968* (Leiden: 1971), 326-7.

[62] See Stroumsa and Sviri, the previous note.

Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*) and, ultimately, the Lord (*al-rabb*), the Creator (*al-khāliq*), the One (*al-wāḥid*). The image of a ladder, which frequently appears in medieval Muslim and Jewish sources, was examined by Alexander Altmann. The material gathered by Altmann makes evident the neoplatonic connection of this image and its purport. According to Altmann, this image "is neoplatonic in character, and for this reason it made an impact on medieval Jewish philosophers and mystics."[63] Thus, Ibn Masarra's use of the contemplative ladder imagery does not only connect him with a long chain of mystical philosophers of Andalusian origin; it also, significantly, predates all of the medieval sources collected by Altmann. It thus helps us to point to the middle of the tenth century as the beginning of the so-called 'pre-history' of both Islamic and Jewish mystical-philosophical systems in al-Andalus.[64]

The second extant work by Ibn Masarra is titled *The Book of the Properties of Letters* (*Kitāb khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf*). As the title suggests, the work deals with the power which religious language and its components hold. In particular it deals with those Arabic letters which are designated as 'isolated' (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*): these are fourteen 'mysterious letters' which appear at the beginning of twenty-nine Qurʾānic sūras (hence they are also known as *ḥurūf al-fawātiḥ*, the opening letters).[65] Likewise the epistle deals with letter combinations such as *k* and *n,* a particularly powerful combination as, traditionally, it signifies the divine creative command *kun* (Be!).[66] It also deals with sacred formulae, mostly derived from the Qurʾān, such as *bismi allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (in the Name of God the Merciful the Compassionate) and which, beyond their canonical sanctity, enclose also, according to our author, divine secrets and esoteric meanings. Ibn Masarra's work is strewn with idioms and concepts such as "the universal intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*), "the universal soul" (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), the "universal body" (*al-juththa al-kulliyya*), which are unmistakably neoplatonic.[67] In addition to the neoplatonic background, the work

---

[63] See Altmann "Ladder of Ascension," 44.
[64] See above, Introduction, at note 4.
[65] See A.T. Welch, "QURʾĀN: 4/D: The Mysterious Letters," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*^{2}, vol. 5, 412-14; also K. Massey, "Mysterious Letters," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, vol. 3, 471-77.
[66] See Sara Sviri, "*Kun* – The Existence-Bestowing Word in Islamic Mysticism: A Survey of Texts on the Creative Power of Language," in *The Poetics of Grammar and the Metaphysics of Sound and Sign*, eds. S La Porta and David Shulman (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 35-67.
[67] It is worth adducing the entire passage where these notions occur (translated by Stroumsa and Sviri): "From the Godhead (*al-ulūhiyya*, namely, the name Allāh) combined with both "the Merciful" (*al-raḥīm*)

exhibits also the imprint of concepts, themes and myths attested profusely in Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī sources, according to which letters are the primordial building blocks in the cosmogonic chain of creation and in cosmological schemes.[68] Ibn Masarra, much like the earlier Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī materials and the later letter speculations found extensively in the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī,[69] combines philosophical speculations with traditional and mythical discourse concerning the divine secrets enclosed in sacred language.[70] Such synthesis is often achieved by applying the method of analogy – either between philosophical concepts and letters, in particular the letters categorized as "mysterious", or between philosophical concepts and traditional-mythical images. The graphic form of the letters is often also incorporated into these speculations. Of particular interest in this respect is the following passage, which bears also interesting comparative parallels: "Some say that [the letter] *hamza* is the intellect (*al-ʿaql*), and that it is the [divine] will (*al-irāda*); [the letter] *alif* is the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqa*), [the letter] *wāw* is the animal soul (*al-nafs al-ḥayawāniyya*), and [the letter] *yāʾ* – the vegetative soul (*al-nafs al-nabāṭiyya*); for the *alif* is upright, the *yāʾ* reclines, and the *wāw* prostrates. In the same

---

and "the Compassionate" (*al-raḥmān*), you come to know that the universal intellect (*al-ʿaql al-kullī*) is immersed within the universal soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), and that the universal soul is immersed within the body of the world (*juththat al-ʿālam*) - this is so according to the teaching of the philosophers and the ancients of the erring nations, people of the periods of interval [between prophets] who, without prophecy, attained the knowledge of God's unity" – see Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh Ibn Masarra, *The Book on the Properties of Letters (Kitāb khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf)*, in Stroumsa and Sviri, *Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus*; and Muḥammad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Jaʿfar, *Min qaḍāyā al-fikr al-islāmī* (Cairo : Maktabat dār al-ʿulūm, 1978), 315 (= f. 133).

[68] For letter speculations in early Ismāʿīlīsm, and in particular in the corpus associated with Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, see Paul Kraus, *Jābir ibn Ḥayyān: contribution à l'histoire des idées scientifiques dans l'Islam. Volume II: Jābir et la science grecque* (Cairo: l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1942), 223-270; Georges Vajda, "Les lettres et les sons de la langue Arabe d'après Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī," *Arabica* 8 (1961): 113-130; Heinz Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der frühen Ismāʿīlīya: eine Studie zur islamischen Gnosis* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1978), 38-52; see now also Ebstein, "Philosophy, Mysticism and Esotericism", chapter 5 (on letters; for the possible influence of *Sefer Yeẓira* and its medieval commentaries on Ibn Masarra, see Stroumsa, "Ibn Masarra and the Beginnings of Mystical Thought in al-Andalus", 105-110; for a striking similarity between Ibn Masarra's cosmogonic speculations and Ismāʿīlī ones, note the following passage (trans. Stroumsa and Sviri): "[The letter] *hāʾ* is the [primordial] dust (*habāʾ*), that is, the letters. From it He composed all things; it falls under the *fiat* (*kun*) and [the letter] *yāʾ*. Some say that it is Gabriel, while some say that it is the spirit by which the letters were composed" – Ibn Masarra, *The Book of the Properties of Letters*, f. 141; for the primordial dust (*habāʾ*) identified with letters in the Jābirian corpus, see Ebstein and Sviri, "The so-called *Risālat al-ḥurūf* (*Epistle on Letters*) Ascribed to Sahl al-Tustarī and Letter Mysticism in al-Andalus," forthcoming.

[69] See, in particular, ch. 2 of the *Meccan Revelations*; see also Denis Gril, "The Science of Letters," in *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz (New York: Pir Press, 2004), vol. 2, 107-219; see also below, note 104.

[70] Cf. Stroumsa and Sviri, "Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus", translation, [29], 222.

way you find these three faculties of the soul in created beings. This is so because the animal which possesses a rational soul stands upright, like *alif*; that which possesses an animal soul only, kneels down, like *wāw*; and that which possesses a vegetative soul, its shape is of something prostrating, for its head is near only to the earth, as [is the case with] all plants."[71] Needless to say that, concerning the mystery of letters and divine names, similar hermeneutical method is profusely employed also by the Kabbalists.[72]

The echoes of Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī teachings may explain why Ibn Masarra and his followers were accused, among other things, of being "esotericists" (i.e., *bāṭinī*s). This label could have pointed to an association with the Ismāʿīlīs, since the latters were collectively named, pejoratively, *al-bāṭiniyya*.[73] At the same time, a distinction between "inner" (*bāṭin*) and "exterior" (*ẓāhir*) could have also been associated with Ṣūfism, due to the latter's emphasis on the "inner" mode of worship and its elevation over and above the "exterior". In fact, the attribute *bāṭin* or *bāṭinī*, more than anything, has become one of the sources for the confusion concerning the distinction between Ismāʿīlī-type esotericism and Ṣūfism, a confusion exhibited in modern as well as in medieval scholarship. In terms of Ibn Masarra's religious affiliations, attempts at making out what the label *bāṭinī* signified, led modern scholars to erroneous conclusions.[74] In fact, Ibn Masarra's works do not show any exclusive Ṣūfī characteristics. Neither do they show any adherence to the ideological tenets of Shīʿism or Ismāʿīlism. Ibn Masarra was neither Ismāʿīlī nor Ṣūfī,

---

[71] For a strikingly similar hermeneutical passage concerning the Hebrew letters *a–h-w-y*, cf. Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari*, trans. Hirscfeld, 202 (*Al-Kitāb al-Khazarī*, 150 = f. 97a).

[72] Cf. McGaha, "Sefer Ha-Bahir and Andalusian Sufism", 53-55, where McGaha points to the similarity between the graphic hermeneutics of Ibn al-ʿArabī and that of *Sefer ha-Bahir*. I would concur with McGaha that the points he makes could be comparatively valid, accept that they hardly point to a Ṣūfī background, as he maintains.

[73] For a critique of the Ismāʿīlīs under the label of *al-bāṭiniyya* by the famous Ṣūfī author, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), see his *Faḍāʾiḥ al-bāṭiniyya* ("The Ignominies of the Bāṭiniyya"), ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-ʿArabiyya, 1964); see also Ignaz Goldziher, *Streitschrift des Ġazālī gegen die Bāṭinijja Sekte*, with Introduction, Arabic text and German analysis (Leiden: Brill, 1916).; for a detailed discussion concerning the accusation against Ibn Masarra, see Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʿArabī", especially 915-918.

[74] See, in particular, Stern,"Ibn Masarra, Follower of Pseudo-Empedocles – an Illusion", especially 326, where Stern rejects Asín Palacios's theory concerning Ibn Masarra as a follower of the "pseudo-Empedocles" and accepts him as Ṣūfī; for a rejection of Stern's theory concerning Ibn Masarra's Ṣūfism, see Stroumsa and Sviri, "Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus", 209-210, notes 31-39; on the possible confusion regarding *ʿilm al-bāṭin* and those associated with it, see Amos Goldreich's perceptive comment in his "An Unknown Treatise on Suffering by Abū al-Qāsim al-Kirmānī," in *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, part 1, Hebrew (=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 7, 1980), 176-7.

but a Sunnī mystical philosopher, inspired by neoplatonic ideas of the kind that, during his lifetime, started to permeate into the western parts of the Muslim world.

Historical questions pertaining to the Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī presence in al-Andalus have not yet been resolved in scholarship; nor are they, strictly speaking, within the scope of this study. It should be mentioned, however, that, in the tenth century, the political power of the Ismāʿīlī dynasty in North Africa, i.e., the Fāṭimīs, was a formidable threat to the Umayyad Caliphate in al-Andalus.[75] Curiously, the members of the Andalusian intellectual milieu, although apparently detached from allegiance to this political and ideological power, were nevertheless avid recipients of the mystical and philosophical teachings which derived from the Ismāʿīlī lore.[76] It can, perhaps, be suggested that, within intellectual circles, this reception could have been facilitated by the proliferation of one of the most ecumenical and humanistic products of Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī thought, namely the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren.[77] That the influence of the Epistles, either directly or indirectly, was pervasive, can be seen from the following list of writers whose works contain explicit or implicit allusions to them. Among the Andalusian Jewish writers mention should be made of Solomon ibn Gabirol (fl. eleventh century),[78] Baḥyā ibn Paqūda (d. ca. 1080),[79] Moses ibn Ezra (d. ca. 1135),[80] Judah Ha-Halevi (d. 1141),[81] Yosef ibn Zaddiq (d. 1149),[82] Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1164).[83]Among the later Jewish

---

[75] See, for example, David J. Wasserstein, *The Caliphate in the West. An Islamic Political Institution in the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 10-15.

[76] See Krinis, "The Idea of the Chosen People in Judah Halevi's al-Kitāb al-Khazarī"; Pines, "On the term *Ruḥaniyyot*", 511-540; idem, "Shiʿite Terms and Conceptions", 165-251; Ebstein, "Philosophy, Mysticism and Esotericism".

[77] On these *Epistles*, their Ismāʿīlī background and ecumenical and humanistic spirit, see the references given in Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: a Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London: I. B. Tauris in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004), 166-173; Nader El-Bizri (ed.), *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their Rasāʾil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008), and the rich bibliography given in 279-298; for their intimate, "brotherly" approach, see especially G. de Callataÿ, *Ikhwan al-Safaʾ. A Brotherhood of Idealists on the Fringe of Orthodox Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 1-2; for their ecumenical spirit, see especially Daftary, "Foreword," in *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, ed. El-Bizri, xvii.

[78] See Schlanger, *Philosophie de Salomon ibn Gabirol*, 94-97.

[79] See Lobel, *Sufi-Jewish Dialogue*, 2-3 et passim.

[80] See Fenton, *Philosophie et Exégèse*, 77-81, 85-8 et passim.

[81] See Pines, "Shiʿite Terms and Conceptions", 184-9 et passim; Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 38.

[82] See Vajda, "La philosophie et la théologie de Joseph Ibn Çaddiq," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 17 (1949), 93-181.

intellectuals from Christian Spain who made use of the Brethren's Epistles, one should mention the Kabbalist Isaac ibn Laṭīf (d. ca. 1290)[84] as well as the thirteenth-century author and compiler Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera (d. 1295).[85] This list is not merely inventorial; it is an attestation of the impact and endurance of this particular Arabic Ismāʿīlī source and its esoteric teachings upon Jewish thought, from its appearance in al-Andalus sometime at the beginning of the eleventh-century (or even earlier) up until the later Middle Ages and, in fact, well into the Renaissance.[86] As for Muslim writers, one of the clearest examples of strong affinities with the Epistles is Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 1127). His indebtedness to the Epistles has been diligently shown in a recent study.[87] But al-Baṭalyawsī is also a strong case in point for the link with late medieval Jewish spirituality: The acquaintance of Jewish Kabbalists throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance with al-Baṭalyawsī's mystical-philosophical work, *The Book of Imaginary Circles* (or *The Book of Gardens*) – in the Jewish tradition it was known as *Sefer ha-ʿagullot ha-raʿyoniyyot* – has long been known and incorporated into scholarly studies.[88] During this period several Hebrew translations of this work had been produced, including one by Moses ibn Tibbon (mid thirteenth century) and a later, partial translation by Shmuel ibn Muṭoṭ (fourteenth-fifteenth centuries). The latter was included in Ibn Muṭoṭ's own work *Meshovev netivot*.[89] This is of particular interest in our search for links and continuities, for al-Baṭalyawsī's cosmological and cosmogonic theories,

---

[83] See Dov Schwartz, *Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*, Hebrew (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1999), 16-18 et passim (also in English: *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*, trans. D. Louvish and B. Stein (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

[84] See Heller-Wilensky, "Isaac Ibn Latif – Philosopher or Kabbalist?", 195-200.

[85] See Martin Plessner, "The Importance of R. Shem-Tov ibn Falaquera for the Study of the History of Philosophy," in *Homenaje a Millás-Vallicrosa*, Hebrew (Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Volume 2, 1954–1956, 161–186).

[86] In compiling this list, I am indebted to Zonta, "Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on Judaic Thought."

[87] See Eliyahu, "Ibn al-Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī and his place in Medieval Muslim and Jewish Thought," 67-8 et passim.

[88] See ibid, 174, 227; see also Schlanger, *Philosophie de Salomon ibn Gabirol*, 198; also Moshe Idel, "Man as the "Possible" Entity in Some Jewish and Renaissance Sources," in *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 33-47.

[89] See Ibid, 176-187.

themselves inspired by the Epistles, were blended by Ibn Muṭoṭ into his commentary on *Sefer yeẓira*.[90]

Another link in this chain is exhibited by *The Goal of the Sage* (*Ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, known in Latin as *Picatrix*), a work on magic, alchemy and astrology which was composed in al-Andalus as early as the mid tenth century or as late as the middle of the eleventh-century. An Andalusian Mathematician, Maslama al-Majrīṭī (d. ca. 1008), to whom the authorship of this book had been ascribed,[91] was also said to have brought to al-Andalus (perhaps to Saragossa) from the East the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren.[92] While the question of authorship of the book has been scholarly debated, the thematic and conceptual links between *Picatrix* and the Epistles, as well as the neoplatonic background of both works, have been commonly acknowledged. Also acknowledged is the impact of the *Picatrix*, especially of its talismanic language (to use Idel's idiom), on late medieval and Renaissance Kabbalists, Jewish as well as Christian.[93] The magical and theurgic elements contained in both the *Picatrix* and the Epistles, in particular in the context of the term *rūḥāniyyāt* (Hebrew: *rūḥāniyyot*; Greek: *pneumata*), have been studied and discussed by Shlomo Pines. In an article in Hebrew, Pines has shown that these esoteric elements, portrayed also in medieval Jewish works such as Judah Halevi's the *Kuzari*, have their origin in late-antique neoplatonic teachings. In the Arabic world they have been adopted by esotericists such as those ninth/tenth-centuries scholars associated with the corpus of Jābir ibn Ḥayyān and with the Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlīs.[94] Thus, as we have already seen, discourse on magic, alchemy, astrology, theurgy and letter mysticism had been prevalent in the Middle Ages among Muslim as well as Jewish authors who, particularly in al-Andalus, promoted the development of a neoplatonic mystical-

---

[90] See ibid, 189-192, especially 191-2; on *Sefer yeẓira*, see above, notes 6, 38-42, 68 and below at note 104.
[91] For its dating and authorship, see Fierro, "Bāṭinism in Al-Andalus"; also D. Pingree, "Some of the Sources of the Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 43 (1980), 1-15.
[92] For the evidence of Ṣāʿid al-Andalusī (d. 1069), see Fierro, "Bāṭinism in Al-Andalus", 107 and note 115; see also above, at note (for Saragossa) 28.
[93] See Moshe Idel, "On Talismanic Language in Jewish Mysticism," *Diogenes* 43 (1995): 23-41; also idem, "Kabbalah and Hermeticism in Dame Frances A. Yates's Renaissance," in *Ésotérisme, gnoses et imaginaire symbolique: mélanges offerts á Antoine Faivre*, eds. Richard Caron et als. (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 71-90.
[94] See Pines, "On the term *Ruḥaniyyot* and its Origin", especially the summary on 534.

philosophical milieu in Arabic. Kabbalah scholarship shows that these themes and the practices associated with them endured well into the Renaissance.[95]

4. Letter mysticism: Misplaced Speculations.

I have already referred above (see note 16) to an article by Michael McGaha who took upon himself the rather bold task of showing that "the *Sefer ha-Bahir*" – considered the oldest extant specimen of Kabbalistic writings – "can only be properly understood in the context of the Ṣūfī 'science of letters', which was the source of its Gnostic ideas and imagery".[96] Basing himself on secondary literature, McGaha first offers a summary of Ismāʿīlī [!] esoteric teachings associated with the "science of letters" (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*) (pp. 32-39), then goes on to show "the influence of Sufism on Andalusian Jewry" (pp. 39-48). McGaha, and some of the studies on which he bases himself, reflect the pervasive confusion as regards Islamic mysticism in general and, in particular, as regards the question of its purported influence on Medieval Jewish mysticism. This confusion, as has already been pointed out above, is due to the failure to observe two basic givens: firstly, that in the Middle Ages Islam produced two distinct mystical systems: Ṣūfism on the one hand and neoplatonic-type mystical philosophy on the other; secondly, that Ṣūfism in al-Andalus took a different developmental course and form than Ṣūfism in the East. The question of the possible influence of Islamic mysticism on Jewish mysticism should, therefore, be tackled with finer analytical and comparative tools than has hitherto been done and with clearer typological, geographical and historical distinctions. It is true that Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), the best known figure which Andalusian mysticism has produced, is conventionally regarded as Ṣūfī. Moreover, there is no doubt that he himself, in spite of

---

[95] See Moshe Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretation of Kabbalah in the Renaissance," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* , ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 107-170; also Sara O. Heller-Wilensky, "The Dialectical Influence of Maimonides on Isaac Ibn Laṭif and Early Spanish Kabbalah", in *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, part 2, Hebrew (=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9, 1990): 289-306, esp. 296 and notes 29-30. Note, however, Krinis's comment concerning the scholarly neglect to take note of the direction at which Pines had pointed in his studies on Judah Halevi – see Krinis, "The Idea of the Chosen People in Judah Halevi's al-Kitāb al-Khazarī", 7-8 and especially note 12. Interesting in this respect is Yehuda Liebes's personal testimony of Pines's wish to explore possible links between the Kabbalah and the Ismāʿīlīs and of Liebes's own conjectures in this regard – see Liebes, "Shlomo Pines and Kabbalah Research," in *Shlomo Pines Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, part II, Hebrew (=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 9, 1990), 21.

[96] See McGaha, "*Sefer Ha-Bahir* and Andalusian Ṣūfism", 32; on *Sefer ha-Bahir*, considered the oldest Kabbalistic text, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, 49-198.

continually criticizing many of the previous Ṣūfī teachers,[97] considered himself a member of the community of Ṣūfis. And yet, when one looks closely for Ibn al-ʿArabī's intellectual sources of inspiration, one cannot but acknowledge the neoplatonic strands in his mystical philosophy.[98] This has been shown in the earliest phases of modern scholarship on Ibn al-ʿArabī by Abū al-ʿAlāʾ Affīfī, who wrote the first scholarly monograph on Ibn al-ʿArabī,[99] but has since been almost disregarded. As for the Andalusian so-called Ṣūfī authors prior to Ibn al-ʿArabī, only one can be said to have produced a work in a similar vein to the eastern Ṣūfī compilations: Ibn al-ʿArīf (d. 1141) and his book *The Loveliness of the Assemblies* (*Maḥāsin al-majālis*).[100]

Two early mystics mentioned by Ibn al-ʿArabī in his works form the basis for McGaha's elaborate discussion on "Ṣūfī letter speculations" and its purported influence on early Kabbalah: the Andalusian Ibn Masarra and the Baṣran Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896). I have already referred to Ibn Masarra and to his two extant compositions (see above). A detailed analysis of Ibn Masarra's works shows that ideas, conceptions and terms that he discusses and uses in his treatises reflect an intellectual background inspired by neoplatonic mystical philosophy and not by Ṣūfism. There is nothing in his writings which can identify him exclusively as a Ṣūfī.[101] This is despite the fact that in his *Book on the Properties of Letters* he does mention and cites Sahl al-Tustarī, a distinguished early Ṣūfī master from the East. However, a study of an unnamed epistle, which was ascribed (erroneously) to Sahl al-Tustarī by Muḥammad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Jaʿfar (who had discovered and published also Ibn Masarra's works), and which Jaʿfar [!] titled *An Epistle on Letters* (*Risālat al-ḥurūf*), shows that, although Sahl is cited and referred to in

---

[97] For Ibn al-ʿArabī's criticism of eastern Ṣūfis, see Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʿArabī", 909; for Ibn al-ʿArabī's polemical position against al-Ghazālī, see Abrahamov, "Ibn al-ʿArabī's attitude toward al-Ghazālī," in *Avicenna and His Legacy*, ed. Y. Tz. Langermann (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 104, 112, 115; for his displeasure with al-Ḥallāj, see, for example, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabi, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Beirut: dār al-fikr, 1994), chapter 73, vol. 3, 21.
[98] See Ebstein, "Philosophy, Mysticism and Esotericism: Ismāʿīlī Thought and Andalusian Mysticism," Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, forthcoming.
[99] See Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dín-Ibnu ʿArabí* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), Appendix, 184-188.
[100] See also above, at note 20.
[101] See Stroumsa and Sviri, "Beginnings of Mystical Philosophy in al-Andalus", 210, notes 38-39.

this epistle, it could not have been written by him.[102] This study also suggests that esoteric teachings, in particular those touched by Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī letter speculations, may have been embraced by Andalusian Muslim mystics and philosophers under the disguise of teachings attributed to respectable figures of the eastern Sunnī tradition. Such precaution may have been necessary in view of the concern in al-Andalus vis-à-vis the Fāṭimī-Ismāʿīlī North-African regime (on this see also above).[103] Be that as it may, it is evident that, while Ibn Masarra represents an intellectual type of mysticism influenced by neoplatonic and Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī esoteric teachings, the traditional and authentic Sahl al-Tustarī represents an altogether different type of a mystic (on this, see also above).

The same, *ipso facto*, can be said about letter speculations. In medieval and mystical Islam two distinct types have evolved: on the one hand there is the conventional acronymic, etymologically-based hermeneutics of the meanings which Arabic letters enclose, especially those letters which are used in scriptural language; in particular, the fourteen 'isolated letters' (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*) at the beginning of twenty-nine Qurʾānic sūras (known as the *fawātiḥ*). I have named this type as 'type α'. This hermeneutical type is profusely prevalent in Ṣūfī as well as in non-Ṣūfī Qurʾān hermeneutics. But there is also a rather occult type of hermeneutics in which, by means of theosophical and mythical insights and analogies, the secrets contained in language are deciphered. I have named this type as 'type β'. This latter type is characteristic of letter mysticism within the Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī tradition and, as we have seen, it is also attested to in al-Andalus in writings by both Muslims and Jews. While 'type α' recognizes the sacred, symbolic and acronymic nature of the Arabic scriptural language, it lacks any conception of letters as building blocks of creation in a cosmogonic and cosmological scheme. It also underplays the sense of the magical, performative power that words and letters hold for the possessors of occult knowledge. 'Type β,' on the other hand, emphasizes precisely these conceptions and powers. Type β is associated with ancient teachings: in Islam, with the Jābirian corpus which, in itself, exhibits the imprints of Late Antique Neoplatonism and Hermeticism; and in Judaism, with *Sefer yeẓira* (it, too, may have drawn from Hellenistic

---

[102] See Ebstein and Sviri, "The so-called *Risālat al-ḥurūf* (*Epistle on Letters*) Ascribed to Sahl al-Tustarī and Letter Mysticism in al-Andalus," forthcoming.
[103] See Ebstein and Sviri, *ibid.*

sources) and in the speculations which it inspired in the medieval commentaries engaged with it. It is the latter type of letter speculations, 'type β,' which pervades both Ibn Masarra's Epistle on Letters and the short, unnamed epistle associated with Sahl al-Tustarī. In McGaha's theory concerning the purported influence of Ṣūfism on early Kabbalah, these typological distinctions are blurred and confused; they are likewise confused in the scholarship upon which McGaha bases himself.[104] However, my intention is not to review McGaha's thesis. Rather, I wish to offer McGaha's paper as an example for the need to revise our acquaintance with and understanding of the Andalusian intellectual milieu during the tenth to the twelfth centuries and beyond, in order to portray more coherently the chain which links Muslim and Jewish mystical systems in that part of the world. To conclude: the search for this chain points in neoplatonic, Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī directions rather than in the direction of Ṣūfism.

5. Andalusian Jewish mysticism: the cases of Baḥyā ibn Paqūda and Judah Halevi

Having discussed the double nature of mysticism in medieval Islam, we arrive now at the question of the presence of an analogous binary typology in Jewish mysticism in the Islamic Middle Ages. Some years ago I offered a typological analysis of two Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish spiritual trends in al-Andalus: the one represented by *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Hearts* by Baḥyā ibn Paqūda, the other by Judah Halevi's *The Kuzari*.[105] As is well known, both works were written in Arabic (or Judaeo-Arabic), one in the second half of the eleventh century, the other in the first half of the twelfth. Both were translated into Hebrew in the second half of the twelfth century, when the earliest groups of Kabbalists and their writings emerged in Provence and in the North of Spain. The aim of a typological approach was then, and is now, to offer a platform from which the nature and origin of later developments within Jewish spirituality can be better

[104] See Gril, "Science of Letters," 146; Addas, "Andalusī Mysticism and the Rise of Ibn ʿArabī," 917-8 and 930, note 47; note Addas's pertinent question on 918: "How… are we to… judge the doctrine which some regard as belonging to philosophy and others as belonging to mysticism?" Whereas Addas opts for "mysticism", which, in her interpretation, is identical with Ṣūfism, I opt for the option of the neoplatonic-type of "mystical philosophy".

[105] See Sviri, "Emergence of pre-Kabbalistic Spirituality in Spain". I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Hilary Pomeroy, one of the editors of the 1996 issue of *Donaire* where my thoughts were originally published. I would also like to thank the Spanish Embassy in London for publishing my paper in their by now discontinued *Donaire*.

observed, especially against their Andalusian background. The present discussion allows me to take up this typology again in a finer resolution.

Baḥyā ibn Paqūda and *The Duties of the Hearts*

Baḥyā ibn Paqūda lived and flourished, most probably, in the northern part of Muslim Spain during the eleventh century (possibly about a generation after Ibn Gabirol). His work is not only proof of the cultural contacts between Jewish and Muslim spirituality and pietism, it is also a reflection of his individualistic and committed search into areas which he had found neglected by the rabbinic tradition. *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Hearts*, in this respect, is a landmark in the history of Jewish spirituality. According to the explicit testimony of its author, he wrote it in order to fill a didactic vacuum in Jewish inner, devotional life.[106] The fact that it became well known among Jewish communities, probably already in Baḥyā's lifetime, shows that such a vacuum had indeed been experienced among his contemporaries. "[Baḥyā's] book", writes Amos Goldreich, "is often characterized as following the line of traditional pietism, but in fact it carries a bold and extreme innovation in Jewish religious thought. The main innovation is contained in the very title of the book, *The Duties of the Hearts*, a term which has no resemblance or origin in previous works of Jewish sages."[107] Goldreich has convincingly shown that the paradigmatic and systematic distinction which Baḥyā makes – apparently for the first time in Jewish literature – between the duties of the hearts (*farāʾiḍ al-qulūb*) and the duties of the organs (*farāʾiḍ al-jawāriḥ*), and especially the predominance that Baḥyā assigns to the inner (*bāṭin*) religious life over and above the outer (*ẓāhir*) performance of the commandments, are ideas inspired by Ṣūfism, and especially by the writings of al-Muḥāsibī, an early Muslim mystic from Baghdad (d. 857).[108] Baḥyā's dependence in themes as well as in terminology on Ṣūfi literature had been explored by eminent scholars such as Goldziher, Yahuda, and Baneth. What Goldreich has added is pinning down the ninth-century al-Muḥāsibī as the possible direct

[106] See Baḥyā ibn Paqūda, *Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, 88-9.
[107] This is my English rendering of Goldreich's Hebrew text in "The Possible Sources for the Distinction between 'The Duties of the Organs' and 'The Duties of the Hearts', 179.
[108] On him, see Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdād. A Study of the Life and Teaching of Ḥārith B. Asad al-Muḥāsibī A.D. 781-857* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977); also Josef van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Ḥāriṯ al-Muḥāsibī* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1961).

source for Baḥyā's inspiration. In *The Duties of the Hearts* Baḥyā interlaces skilfully Jewish piety anchored in the Bible (especially in the Wisdom literature) and in the early rabbinic tradition with anecdotes and concepts articulated in early Ṣūfi literature. Baḥyā never openly admits to his expansive borrowings from the Ṣūfi lore, but his procedure is transparent to any student of early Ṣūfī literature. Moreover, not only is Baḥyā's use of Ṣūfi material generally acknowledged – in themes, anecdotes, terminology and imagery; his book appears to be, as we have already noted, the oldest extant Ṣūfī-type work to be produced in the Western Muslim world during the eleventh century (see above, at notes 14, 19).

Judah Halevi and the quest of *the Kuzari*

It is commonly accepted that, sometime between 1130 and 1140, Judah Halevi wrote his prose work as a polemical book aimed against contemporary intellectual and religious currents. Arguing against "Greek Wisdom", namely, Hellenistic philosophy, his main polemical arguments are designed to demonstrate that metaphysical knowledge cannot be derived from mental speculations and philosophic formulations. In view of the diversity of philosophical systems and schools, he argues, how can philosophers be a reliable source for the understanding of the nature of God and Creation? Their knowledge is limited to the nature of the sub-lunar world; as for what is above the sphere of the moon, they can do no more than offer opinions, not a true vision of reality.[109] Alongside these well-known arguments, however, other polemical lines can also be discerned in *The Kuzari*. As the sub-title suggests, Halevi wrote it as a *Book of Refutation and Proof on the Despised Faith*. By implication, therefore, the book aims at demonstrating the supremacy of Judaism over Christianity and Islam and at presenting it as the only true religion. This supremacy Halevi demonstrates by pointing to a special propensity of divine origin which is specific to the Jewish nation. He relates it to what he names "the divine matter" (*al-amr al-ilāhī, ha-ʿinyan ha-ʾelohi*): an innate propensity which is transmitted within the Jewish nation through a genealogical heredity. Judah Halevi's

---

[109] See Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari*, trans. Hirschfeld, 199, 213, 239, 268-274; Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, trans. David W. Silverman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 120; Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 114; see also Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, 68-75.

doctrine is based on the understanding that among human beings, as well as among human societies, only a select number of individuals and groups exist who are destined by God to evolve in a way that makes them ready to receive the 'divine matter'. These individuals and groups constitute a special, elevated human species which represents the "inner core" (*lubb, lev*) of humanity. In relation to it, the rest of mankind are like "outer husks" (*qushūr, qlippot*).[110] Interestingly, for Judah Halevi's thought, as for Baḥyā's, the distinction between inner (*bāṭin*) and outer (*ẓāhir*) is fundamental. However, unlike Baḥyā, Halevi uses these polar concepts not in order to distinguish between two different modes of worship, but between two different types of individuals and communities. Whereas Baḥyā sees the inner worship, the worship of the heart, as the only means whereby God can be reached, for Judah Halevi, "inner" is based on a particularistic understanding of the special characteristics of the select groups and individuals among the Jewish people, chosen by God to impart His will, either through prophecy or by means of divine inspiration. It is these outstanding chosen ones who become both the recipients and then the transmitters of God's divine matter.[111]

From Halevi's view of the supremacy and exclusivity of the Jewish religion and its law, another polemical line follows: the supremacy of the concrete, physical, ritualistic mode of worship over the interiorized one. The question that occupies the narrative of *The Kuzari* from the outset is a ritualistic one. In a recurring dream, an angel rebukes the King of the Khazars, the protagonist of Halevi's book, saying: "Your way of thinking is indeed pleasing to the Creator, but not your *way of acting*."[112] Then, when the King in his search for the right way of acting interviews a philosopher, and when the latter draws a

---

[110] On *lubb* (core) versus *qushūr* (husks) in the Neoplatonism of Isaac Israeli, see Altmann and Stern, *Isaac Israeli. A Neoplatonic Philosopher*, 184; for *lubb* or *lubāb* in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*, see Pines, "Shiʿite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," 172, 190 note 168; see also Krinis, "The Idea of the Chosen People in Judah Halevi's al-Kitāb al-Khazarī," 172, 175-176; on the concept of "husks" in early Kabbalah, see Altmann, "The Motif of the 'Shells' in ʿAzriel of Gerona," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 172-179; On *qlippot* in *Sefer ha-Zohar*, see Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, trans. D. Goldstein (Oxford: The Littman Library, Oxford University Press, 1989), 494-50.

[111] On the 'divine matter', *al-amr al-ilāhī*, in Judah Halevi and on its Shīʿī-Ismāʿīlī sources, see Pines, "Shiʿite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," 172-178, 224-228; also Krinis, "The Idea of the Chosen People in Judah Halevi's al-Kitāb al-Khazarī," 164-207; cf. Ebstein, "Philosophy, Mysticism and Esotericism," chapter 2; see also Diana Lobel, "*Ittiṣāl* and the *Amr Ilāhī*: Divine Immanence and the World to Come in the *Kuzari*," in *Esoteric and Exoteric Aspects in Judeo-Arabic Culture*, eds. Benjamin Hary and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 107-130, especially 108-109, 115-116, et passim.

[112] See Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari,* trans. Hirschfeld, 35-36.

picture of a God who has no interest in man's actions, the King responds: "There must no doubt be *a way of acting*, pleasing by its very nature, but not through the medium of *intentions*".[113] Judah Halevi thus prepares the ground for showing that inner intentions, as a spiritual means, are inferior to outer religious actions.[114] His approach is, therefore, diametrically opposed to that of Baḥyā's. For Judah Halevi, the ritual performance of the religious commandments is the key to activating the divine matter. His emphasis is on the efficacy of the ritualistic acts prescribed by God to His elect; on the mystery enclosed in them; and on the deep religious experience which they produce. Thus, explaining the mystical effects of the ancient sacrificial rituals performed in the days of the Temple, he writes: "You slaughter a lamb and smear yourself with its blood, skinning it, cleaning its entrails, washing, dismembering it and sprinkling its blood… If this were not done in consequence of a divine command, you would think little of all these actions and believe that they estrange you from God rather than bring you near to Him. But as soon as the whole is properly accomplished, and you see the divine fire, or see true vision and great apparitions, you are aware that this is the fruit of the preceding actions, as well as of the great influence with which you have come in contact."[115] Latent within Judah Halevi's polemic against philosophy, Christianity and Islam, inheres, therefore, his unmistakable rejection of the Baḥyā's-style inner worship, which, even if based on good intentions, is nevertheless devoid of the impact – the theurgic impact – which only the concrete deed entails.[116]

The works of Baḥyā and Judah Halevi clearly point to two polar trends within pre-Kabbalistic Andalusian Jewish spirituality. Baḥyā ibn Paqūda is not merely a Jewish pietist and moralist, as some scholars of Jewish spirituality would have it. He represents a type of mystical endeavour which can be qualified as psychological, introverted and devotional. It is characterized by an inward rather than outward, spiritual rather than physical, outlook. In this Ṣūfī-like type, the spiritual energy is engaged mainly in introverted practices such as self-observation (*muḥāsaba*), withdrawal (*iʿtizāl*) and

---

[113] See *ibid*, 39.
[114] On the question of ritual versus intention in the Kabbalah, see Idel, "Some Remarks on Ritual and Mysticism in Geronese Kabbalah," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, 3 (1993):117.
[115] See *The Kuzari*, trans. Hirschfeld, 183.
[116] On this, cf. Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah," 50.

meditation (*murāqaba*). Temporary or indefinite periods of seclusion (*khalwa*) and ascetic practices (*zuhd*) are seen as the means whereby a detachment from material and psychological ties can gradually be achieved. The central organ in the 'physiology' of this type of mysticism is the heart, which is conceived of as the *locus* within man's physical and psychological makeup where God, or God's secrets, resides.

This type of mysticism did not die out with Baḥyā. It continued within the pietistic circles which became associated with the descendants of Maimonides. In Egypt, where the Maimūnī family settled after its expulsion from al-Andalus around 1165 (see above), the House of Maimonides constituted an uninterrupted line of community leaders up until the fifteenth century.[117] Abraham Maimūnī, the son of Maimonides, alongside his functions as a community leader and court physician, belonged to a Jewish mystical circle which engaged in practices inspired by Ṣūfism.[118] In his literary work *Kifāyat al-ʿābidīn* (literally: "What suffices for the Worshippers"),[119] he outlines a devotional path which is similar to the one recommended by Baḥyā. Furthermore, R. Abraham openly mentions Ṣūfi practices with undisguised applause.[120] Other members of this distinguished family, too, wrote in Judeo-Arabic works which show clear Ṣūfī characteristics.[121] And Maimonides himself, in his philosophic work *The Guide of the Perplexed*, follows a spiritual line which shows, surprisingly for some, common traits with the Baḥyā-type introverted piety and devotion.[122] This becomes visible when we compare the above quoted passage from *The Kuzari* on the effects of the sacrificial ritual with a passage on the sacrificial laws from *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides, in a statement which was to shock many, writes, "… as at that time the way of life, generally accepted and customary in the whole world and the universal service upon which we were brought up, consisted in offering various species of living beings in the temples in

---

[117] See Eliyahu Ashtor, *History of the Jews of Egypt and Syria under the Mamlūks*, Hebrew (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1944), 300.
[118] See Shlomo D. Goitein, "Abraham Maimonides and his Pietist Circle," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), 145-164.
[119] See Abraham Maimonides, *The High Ways of Perfection* (= *Kifāyat al-ʿābidīn*), trans. S. Goldblatt, Vol. 1 (New York: The John Hopkins Press, 1927), vol. 2 (Baltimore: 1938).
[120] See, e.g., *ibid.*, vol. 2, 419, 423.
[121] See, e.g., Obadyah Maimonides, *Treatise of the Pool*.
[122] See Haim Kreisel, "Asceticism in the Thought of R. Bahya Ibn Paquda and Maimonides," *Daat* 21 (1988): 5-22 (the English section).

which images were set up… His wisdom, may He be exalted, and His gracious ruse… did not require that He give us a law prescribing the rejection, abandonment, and abolition of all these kinds of worship…". Alluding to other, more introverted, ways of worship, Maimonides continues: "At that time this would have been similar to the appearance of a prophet in these times who, calling upon the people to worship God, would say: '*God has given you a Law forbidding you to pray to Him, to fast, to call upon Him for help in misfortunes. Your worship should consist solely in meditation without any work at all*."[123] Such a statement takes the inner path of worship to its extreme limit. No ceremony is, in fact, required; only a deep, introverted intent. In the eyes of most Kabbalists, the adoption of such an extreme introverted mode of the religious life could hardly have been envisaged.[124]

Concluding remarks

Typologically speaking, Baḥyā can be seen as a model of a Jewish Ṣūfī, a type which, after him, had its continuation in subsequent generations of Jewish mystics, notably in the circles of the Egyptian pietists. Judah Halevi's type of mysticism, on the other hand, with its emphasis on the theurgic and mystical effects of the religious rituals, had its continuation in the Kabbalah. For the Kabbalists, "the action of a man performing a rite" – to cite Gershom Scholem – "is the finite embodiment of something which is present in mystical substantiality in the pleroma of the *sefiroth*".[125] In other words, it is the religious act in itself, in its concrete actuality and physicality, which reflects and embodies God's creative powers. By carefully performing the commandments, the worshipper, in a mysterious way, participates in God's work and its influence in the cosmos. Moreover, man can even activate something which reaches far beyond the

---

[123] See Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 3: 32, vol. 2, 526.

[124] On the Kabbalists' rejection of Maimonides 'rationalization' of the commandments and of its far reaching implications, see Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah", 44-50 and esp. 48-50.

[125] See Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schoken Books, 1969), 123

immediate, visible aspects of his act. This is so for Judah Halevi, and it is so also for the Kabbalists.[126]

Now, while typologies by their very nature are schematic, human phenomena, whether individual or collective, never are. It will be fruitless to argue that medieval Jewish mystics fall strictly into one or the other of these two types. A typological attempt, however, is a useful, if not an indispensable, tool for understanding Jewish mysticism in a wide historical and phenomenological context. Such typological distinctions, within an historical context, call for a broader definition of Jewish Mysticism than has conventionally been adopted. By including the various types and trends of Judaeo-Arabic spirituality within the major trends in Jewish mysticism, in particular those Judaeo-Arabic trends which developed in al-Andalus, a finer, more nuanced and more comprehensive picture may be presented.

---

[126] On the theurgic trends in the rabbinic tradition and in the Kabbalah, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 156-199; on the mystical aspects of the ritualistic action, see Idel, "Some Remarks on Ritual and Mysticism".