

**THE TRANSMISSION AND ADAPTATION
OF MYSTICAL THOUGHT IN THE MEDIEVAL
MEDITERRANEAN BASIN**

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ABSTRACT:

In a recent cover story in *The Atlantic*, the noted historian Bernard Lewis described the relationship of the Middle East and the West in the following manner: "This is no less than a clash of civilizations- the perhaps irrational but surely historical reaction of an ancient rival against our Judaeo-Christian heritage."¹ Lewis's argument clearly differentiates between the West and the Middle East. In fact, Lewis's argument is founded upon a historiographical construction that places the Arabic World outside the scope of a Judaeo-Christian tradition and the heritage of Western civilization. The contemporary political repercussions of Lewis's thought notwithstanding, his historical constructions are hopelessly flawed and fail to take account of the dynamic and prolific interaction between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism within the Arabic World and also in Europe. Lewis fails to acknowledge the fact that much of the so-called Judaeo-Christian tradition, such as Kabbalah and Scholasticism, owes much of its existence to the intellectual outpouring of the Arabic World. The intellectual achievements of the Muslims, Christians, and Jews of the Arab World helped to establish their own dynamic tradition and, furthermore, much of their thought was imparted to their European counterparts in such varied forms as Ibn Rushd's commentaries upon Aristotle, Hunayn Ibn Ishaq's translations of the Greek classics, Moses de Leon's central Kabbalistic text, the Book of Zohar, and the philosophical thought of al-Ghazzali. However, it is indispensable when examining the growth of intellectual traditions within the Arabic World to bear in mind that the achievements of Muslims, Christians, and Jews were never

independent achievements but the fruition of the intellectual engagement and dialogue that occurred between the various sectarian groups.

The brilliant historian Gustave Von Grunebaum describes the nature of the interaction between the East and West by stating that, Although, in general, fear and incomprehension marked the outlook of East and West on one another, and although the latent political and religious hostility between Islam and Christianity- glowering at one another across the sea- only rarely softened to indifference, a partial community of foundation made recurrent interaction of their fates appear less accidental, more meaningful, and more fruitful even, than a clash of any two unrelated culture systems would have been. In a sense, war between the West and the Near East was civil war, and cultural interchange, a development within one area of civilization.

The Greek heritage, Roman law, the concept of revealed religion, monotheism, the technique of philosophical thought, the scholastic approach to theology- they were present on both sides of the Mediterranean, in different proportions and amalgamations, to be sure, encased in local, alien matter, appearing distorted in the eyes of both antagonists, and put to perverted use. Still intellectual communication remained possible, with its usual result of stimulation and irritation.²

While Von Grunebaum's statement is directed at the communication between East and West, his thoughts shed much light on the nature of sectarian exchange within the Arabic World. The three major religious communities of the Arabic World and Mediterranean basin were able to communicate due to the commonalties of their heritage and the historical circumstances that placed them in a position to interact in an intellectually fruitful arena. It is my hope in this work to examine how intellectual trends cut across sectarian boundaries

and were adapted by the various religious groups and thinkers. In doing so I will be examining the intellectual milieus in which thinkers of varying religious backgrounds emerged. While it is abundantly clear that intellectual figures that evolve and work within common intellectual milieus will often share and benefit from the innovations of other intellectuals regardless of their religious persuasion, it has often been overlooked by historians of different backgrounds for reasons such as religious chauvinism, racism, and political expediency. I hope my work will appear as an enthusiastic endorsement of A.J. Wensinck's statement that, "mysticism is an exponent of the unity of Hellenistic monotheism."³

In my study I will examine the influence of the Eastern Syriac-speaking Christian ascetic and mystic, Mar Ishaq of Nineveh, upon the early ascetical and pseudo-mystical thought of the Islamic thinker and ascetic, Harith al-Assad al-Muhasibi. I will then turn to a short examination of al-Muhasibi's impact on the towering Islamic intellectual, al-Ghazzali. Finally, I will examine the nature of the influence of Islamic mysticism upon the evolution of Jewish Mysticism in medieval Andalusia. My aim in this work is to begin an exploration of the establishment of an intellectual tradition in the Arabic World and to illustrate the nature of sectarian interchange that occurred throughout the Mediterranean basin. Furthermore, I believe this work will demonstrate the synergistic and open nature of the intellectual traditions in the Arabic World and the manner in which the three major religious groups of the Near East and Mediterranean basin were able to communicate and to build upon the accomplishments of their forebears regardless of their religious

affiliation. Hopefully this work will help to elevate the study of the intellectual history of the Arab World above the commonly tread paths of religious polemics and will begin to shed light on the abundantly complex relationships that marked the intellectual discourse of the Middle East during the periods in question. Furthermore, as part of an overall understanding of the nature of cultural heritage and intellectual traditions, the intellectual outpouring of the Middle East has an integral role in the formation of the cultural and intellectual discourse of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. As De Lacy O'Leary, speaking as an Englishman, has pointed out,

What we call the "middle ages" had an important place in the evolution of our own culture condition, and owed much to the transmitted culture which came round from ancient Hellenism through Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew media. But this culture came as a living thing with an unbroken and continuous development from what we call the "classical age."⁴

Hence, I believe the study at hand, while perhaps appearing obscure in nature or isolated in impact, will bear witness to the rich and complex character of the intellectual tradition of the Arab World which in turn bequeathed much of its own knowledge and many of its achievements to the Medieval Europeans.

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2. Gustave E. Von Grunebaum. *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* . (London, 1961) p. 72.
3. A.J. Wensinck. *The Mystical Treatises of Isaac of Nineveh* . (Amsterdam, 1923) p. xxvi.
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PART ONE- MAR ISHAQ OF NINEVEH AND ABU 'ABD ALLAH AL-
HARITH AL-MUHASIBI:

Before proceeding to a discussion of the intellectual trends which marked the work of both these thinkers, I believe it will be of great assistance to give a brief biographical account of the respective thinkers.

While there has been a certain degree of controversy regarding the life of Mar Ishaq, there are points of scholarly agreement. The scholarly disputes have partly arisen due to the fact that he has often been confused with Mar Ishaq of Antioch, and also due to the fact that there is scant source material chronicling or regarding his life.¹ What is known is that Mar Ishaq originated from Bet Katraye in Qatar and was instructed in Scripture and Patristic teachings at an early age. Soon after he concluded his formal studies, Mar Ishaq became a monk and a teacher in his native land. He was later ordained Bishop of Nineveh by the Kathilicos Mar Girgis sometime between 660 and 680, perhaps in 676, in the monastery of Bet Abe.² The appointment of Mar Ishaq as Bishop of Nineveh was a highly symbolic act which was intended to ease the tumultuous relationship of the Church of Qatar and the mother Church of Persia. Before 676 and the appointment of Mar Ishaq, the Church of Qatar had been deemed schismatic by the Mother Church and the appointment of "an illustrious native son of Qatar" helped to signify the unity of the two churches.³ It is somewhat surprising that a man of such deep monastic and ascetical convictions such as Mar Ishaq would accept the episcopate. However, after succeeding the Bishop

Moses, Mar Ishaq speedily resigned his position after serving for a short period of only five months. It is probable that his resignation was tied to his desire to lead a monastic and solitary life, and to the fact that the citizens of Nineveh were less than enthusiastic in their approval of the foreign-born Mar Ishaq.⁴

While it is clear that Mar Ishaq departed his episcopate to pursue a life of solitude and asceticism, it is unclear as to where he pursued the solitary life. One account holds that he retreated to the surrounding mountains to pursue his ascetical path among the anchorites of the area.⁵ Another account holds that Mar Ishaq ascended the mountain of Matut and led a life of solitude in the Bet Huzaje region.⁶ A final account holds that shortly after departing his Chair at Nineveh Mar Ishaq retired to the monastery of Rabban Shapur where he was buried.⁷

While it may appear somewhat odd that Mar Ishaq is considered a saint of the Orthodox Church due to his affiliation with the Church of Persia, Orthodox apologists have attempted to situate Mar Ishaq within the framework of Orthodoxy and separate from the Christological debates of the era, particularly Nestorianism. A contemporary Orthodox account states that,

Saint Abba Isaac was not a Nestorian, as is commonly held in the West. For those of us who are Orthodox Christians there is no problem. The memory of the Church informs us that Abba Isaac is numbered among the saints, and he is celebrated in the Church calendar as such. In the Greek and Russian editions of the writings of the writings of Saint Isaac, no need was felt to demonstrate this fact since no one ever doubted it. It is in the English-speaking world that this has become a problem for some, and since, alas, even some Orthodox, who should know

better, repeat the allegation that Saint Isaac was a Nestorian Bishop, we have taken the time and effort to demonstrate that at the time of Saint Isaac one cannot claim historically that the Persian Church was 'Nestorian in the doctrinal sense of the term. Independent of all such considerations, however, there is nothing in the writings of the saint- may his blessing be upon us- which contains the condemned Christological doctrines of Nestorianism or any other of the other heretical teachings of the time.⁸

The fact that Mar Ishaq was considered a saint by the different Orthodox Churches and not a Nestorian had serious implications regarding the spread of his thought. His acceptance by the various churches of the Near East meant that his writings were widespread throughout the region. The ultimate testament to the widespread proliferation of Mar Ishaq's thought is his pivotal role in the contemporary Orthodox monastic revivals in the Egyptian Desert and on Mount Athos.⁹

Mar Ishaq did not pursue the written word until relatively late in his life and until he had spent a considerable portion of his life following the strict code of ascetical monasticism. His early aversion to the written word was most probably due to his belief that "From a man who has not gained experience of prolonged stillness do not expect to learn anything further about the good things of asceticism, even if he is a great sage and a teacher, having many achievements behind him."¹⁰ However, it should not be assumed that Mar Ishaq was wholly averse to the written word. As was expressed in his writings, he cherished the written word when it had been well thought through and when it arose from the experience and patience of the religious life. He later wrote that, "A man who talks of virtue

from the experience of his own labor transmits virtue to his hearers," and he further implored the reader to, "Love uncouthness of speech joined with knowledge from inner experience more than to spill forth rivers of instruction from the keenness of your mind and from a deposit of hearsay and writings of ink."^{1 1} It was for this reason that Mar Ishaq went against his fundamental humility in an attempt to transmit what he had learned in his years of ascetic and mystical solitude. He expounded on this line of thought when he wrote that, "These things I have written down as a reminder and source of profit for myself, and for every man who comes upon this book, according to what I have understood from both the divine vision of the Scriptures and from true mouths and a little experience itself, in order that they might be a help to me through the prayers of those who are profited by them. For I have taken no little trouble to set these things down."^{1 2}

Mar Ishaq wrote in the hope that his own experiences could inspire or guide those who read his treatises and homilies. He went on to state,

I now compose this homily for the kindling and enlightenment of our souls, and of those who come across it, with the hope that, perchance, some might rouse themselves by reason of their desire for what I speak of, and endeavor to practice it.^{1 3}

Based on his own sayings and the appraisal of contemporary scholars it is probable that Mar Ishaq did not begin recording his thoughts and experiences until later in life. In fact, a Syriac text that chronicled the Bishop's life states that, "At last he became blind, so that the brethren wrote down his doctrine."^{1 4}

Even before his death in the early part of the eighth century, Mar Ishaq had gained widespread notoriety throughout the Near

East. The East Syrian writer Hanoun Ibn Yohanna Ben As-salt chronicles Mar Ishaq's popularity within monastic circles and states that,

This Holy Man [Mar Ishaq] wrote his epistles and his works for perfect monks in whom he perceived a pure intellect, abundant understanding, indeficient knowledge, and perfect worship of God. And they, in turn, honoured his writings, acknowledged their truth, adhered to his path, and were aided by the excellence of his guidance.¹⁵

By the eighth century, the noted East Syrian writer and monk Joseph Hazzaya had begun to refer to Mar Ishaq as, "the illustrious among the saints, Mar Ishaq."¹⁶

Due to his widespread notoriety and his initial and dramatic influence within the Syrian Church, Mar Ishaq's works were translated into Greek and Arabic at an early stage, and eventually his work was translated into all the languages of the Mediterranean basin.¹⁷ Much of the translating activity took place in the Orthodox monastery of Mar Sabbas in Palestine.¹⁸ What is important for this work is that the works of Mar Ishaq were available in Arabic at an early stage and were in circulation during al-Muhasibi's lifetime.

Mar Ishaq's work and thought were perhaps the greatest and most well-known of the surviving achievements of the monastic revival of Mesopotamia which began in the latter half of the sixth century.¹⁹ Mar Ishaq's work is also an example of the rich Christian mystical tradition which itself represented a long-standing and evolving intellectual tradition. Within his work he cited the teachings of Saint Theodore of Mopsuestia, Saint Diodorus of Tarsus, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Athanasius, Saint Ephraim, Pseudo-

Dionysius, Saint Macarius of Mesopotamia, Origen, Evagrius of Pontus, and various sayings attributed to the Desert Fathers.²⁰ When dealing with a work or thinker that is part of such a complex intellectual tradition such as the Christian mystical tradition, it must be realized that it is a representation of many of the past themes that have dominated the tradition. Hence, Mar Ishaq's own thought is inherently impregnated with much of the classical heritage, Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought and the thought of the Stoics and the philosophic school of Alexandria, which so often marked the entire mystical endeavor of Christianity.²¹ A.N. Wensinck describes Mar Ishaq by stating that, "It is not amazing, but only natural, that Isaac will prove to belong to Hellenism in its general sense."²²

Due to the early translations of his work and the intellectual vigor of his era, it has often been argued claimed, and intimated that Mar Ishaq had a considerable influence upon the rise of a Muslim ascetic and mystical tradition. Such a point of view is proposed by the British historian Margaret Smith and also by A.N. Wensinck who went so far as to state,

But, as I have said above, it is not only in these special points, it is in his whole set of ideas that Isaac appears to be one of those Christian thinkers such as have determined the general character of sufism. In this respect he has one of the first places in the history of sufism.²³

And further, Margaret Smith states,

Isaac's work , at least, was translated into Arabic, and there was much intercourse between Christians and Muslims in the early centuries of the Islamic era and up to al-Muhasibi's lifetime, that a knowledge of such literature and the mystical teaching which is contained might well have been available to

al-Muhasibi, anxious as he was to discover truth wherever it was to be found.²⁴

Furthermore, the historian Edward Jabra Jurji writes that, Christian mystics leading the life of solitaries became conspicuous at this time. Isaac of Nineveh is one of these. Having held the office of Bishop for only five months, he renounced everything and withdrew to a meditative life in the mountains, where he made a study of mysticism, concerning himself fundamentally with Purgation and Illumination....Al-Muhasibi, who pioneered with his disciples in the pathway of Purgation, was one of the first to declare that as purification brings freedom from the attachments of this world one might expect to attain to the stage of Illumination and thence proceed to the unitive life in God.²⁵

While there has long been speculation regarding the relationship between Mar Ishaq and the rise of Sufism and the work of al-Muhasibi, little has been done to verify or support such an outstanding and far-reaching claim. While it is almost impossible, short of instances of direct quotation, to ascertain with certainty that al-Muhasibi utilized the works of Mar Ishaq, it is very possible to surmise that both these figures arose from a common background and intellectual milieu. Therefore, it is my hope to document certain aspects and intellectual trends which color the works of both these men and, hence, to identify the intellectual climate in which both men functioned and helped to shape. I do not intend to discredit the originality of either thinker or to disparage the originality of Islamic intellectuals, a scholarly approach often employed in the Orientalist tradition, but, instead I hope to make a contribution to the understanding of the relationship of Christianity and Islam during the formative years after the rise of Islam.

The life and writings of Harith al-Muhasibi coincide with the flourishing of Mar Ishaq's thought, the regional trend of Christian asceticism and mysticism, and the intellectual flowering of the early Abbasid Empire. He was born in 781 in al-Basra as Abu 'Abd Allah Harith Ibn Assad 'Anazi. It was not until later in his lifetime that he became known as al-Muhasibi due to his continuous practice of self-examination (*hasab*). He was born into an influential and wealthy family. However, due to religious differences with his father, whom al-Muhasibi considered to be a heretic, he left his parents' home at a fairly early age.²⁶ Even after his father's death, al-Muhasibi, who was virtually moneyless and propertyless, refused to accept his inheritance of thirty thousand dinars.²⁷

al-Muhasibi spent most of his life between al-Basra and Baghdad, an area known as one of the richest regions of Christian tradition. Margaret Smith describes al-Muhasibi's Baghdad as,

A focus of world culture and refinement, where the most distinguished theologians and commentators of Islam, as well as many Jewish and Christian scholars, were to be found, teaching, discussing and writing.²⁸

It is not surprising therefore that al-Muhasibi's work was marked by eclecticism and the intellectual trends of his era and region. He was also an adherent of the Shafi'i school of canon law and was in fact a student and early disciple of Imam Shafi'i, the founder of the Shafi'i school which has remained as one of the four major schools of canon law till the present.²⁹ al-Muhasibi was also an acquaintance of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the founder of another of these four major schools of canon law. Due to the often speculative nature of much of al-Muhasibi's thought and the fact that he was an adherent of many

Sufi doctrines, his relationship with the ultra orthodox ibn Hanbal was less than hospitable.³⁰ In a foreshadowing of the later and more serious reactions and clashes of orthodox Islam with Sufism, the dispute between ibn Hanbal and al-Muhasibi served as an early example of the uneasy co-habitation of orthodoxy with mystical Sufism. However, even throughout ibn Hanbal's serious disagreement with al-Muhasibi, which resulted in his banning of several of al-Muhasibi's works, he never lost his respect for his intellectual foe whom he termed "the lion at attention."³¹

al-Muhasibi kept up his teaching and writing throughout his lifetime, and was followed by a group of disciples which included the celebrated Sufi Abu al-Qasim ibn Muhammad al-Junayd of Baghdad, Shaykh Abu Hamza Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Baghdadi al-Bazzaz, and Ahmad ibn Muhammad Abu al-Hasan al-Baghawi, known as Nuri.³² He eventually died in seclusion while continuing his life of asceticism and poverty in 857.³³

While much of his life is either unknown or based upon legends and anecdotes, his works have survived till the present due to their dramatic influence upon generations of Islamic intellectuals. The magnificent historian of Islamic mysticism, Louis Massignon, terms al-Muhasibi "the true master of primitive Islamic mysticism."³⁴ Majid Fakhry, the renowned scholar of Arabic intellectual history, writes that "The two greatest Sufis that the school of Baghdad produced, however, were without doubt al-Muhasibi and al-Junayd."³⁵ Due to his originality in producing and elaborating a system of Islamic mystical thought and his knowledge of at least some Classical, Hellenistic, Christian, and Jewish thought and

traditions, al-Muhasibi provides the historian a point of departure in the examination of the rise of Islamic Sufism in the intellectually active milieu of Abassid Baghdad.

In several of his works al-Muhasibi directly quotes passages from the Gospels and also retells the parable of the wheat and the tares and the parable of the sower.³⁶ Al-Muhasibi also quoted *hadiths* which were considered orthodox but were in fact direct borrowings from Talmudic and Christian literature.³⁷ Furthermore, al-Muhasibi's employment of terms which were prevalent in Christian thought provide further evidence that he was exposed to Christianity in several different forms. A contemporary of al-Muhasibi, Ya'qubi, writing in 872, quoted an Arabic translation of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles which was circulating during al-Muhasibi's lifetime.³⁸ Furthermore, as much of the Christian mystical tradition had been based upon classical and neo-Platonic thought, it was vital that al-Muhasibi have access to these works so as to be able to converse and interact with the Christian and Jewish influences of his era. As has been pointed out,

Eighty years after the fall of the 'Umayyads the Arabic speaking world possessed Arabic translations of the greater part of the works of Aristotle, of the leading neo-Platonic commentators, of some of the works of Plato, of the greater part of the works of Galen, and portions of other medical writers and commentators, as well as of other Greek scientific works and of various Indian and Persian writings.³⁹

al-Muhasibi's historical and geographic proximity to Mar Ishaq of Nineveh's intellectual milieu and climate allows for a constructive microcosmic analysis of the relationship and interaction of Christianity and Islam, whether direct or indirect, in the immediate

centuries following the rise and rapid spread of Islam throughout the Near East.

In this examination I will focus on three areas in which the writings and teachings of Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi converge. I will shortly discuss the manner in which both thinkers writings contain similar technical and conceptual terminology. In this discussion I will analyze and detail their conception and definition of the heart as the center and whole of the inner nature. Next, I will more elaborately discuss two areas of remarkable similarity which are rooted in the vision of the purity of the heart: the teachings regarding an ascetical pathway and the teachings regarding the mystical gnosis which can be achieved by the purified heart during the final stage of the ascetical pathway. The final area of this discussion is of utmost importance in the attempt to document the nature of interaction of Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi. The reason for this is that the goal of both ascetics is far different and much more unique and original from that of most mystics of the era. The *terminus ad quem* of their ascetical and mystical visions is based upon a visionary and unitary experience of the Divine.⁴⁰ The radical nature of their ascetical pathways points to the ingenuity and evolutionary character of their thought, and the massive impact that such motifs had upon the evolution and adaptation of mystical thought throughout the Arabic World in the centuries following their historical period of activity. While there existed more radical figures such as al-Hallaj and al-Bastami, the more moderate unitary tradition represented by Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi exerted a dramatic

influence on the motifs which preoccupied mystics and on the overall evolution of mystical thought.

In his *Mystical Treatises* , Mar Ishaq refers to the purity of the heart as altogether differing from the purity of the mind. He states that,

Purity of mind is something other than purity of heart, just as there is a difference between one of the members of the whole body and the whole body. The mind is one of the senses of the soul. The heart is the central organ of the inward senses; this means the sense of senses, because it is the root. And if the root is holy, so also are all the branches. But this is not so if it is holy in one of the branches only.^{4 1}

Mar Ishaq's conception of the heart as the center of all inward senses, and hence the soul, is a theme that would reappear throughout the history of mystical thought in such places as the writings of 'Ibn al-'Arabi and the Zohar. This conception was also found in other Christian mystical works of the era, such as the writings of Simon of Taibutheh, who wrote that,

When the tables of the heart are inscribed with good it radiates light, peace, and life. But when they are inscribed with evil, it radiates tumult, perturbation, darkness, and the error of ignorance through its care for the desires of this world. It is through the latter that the heart is injured and darkened, and through the former that the mind, the memory, and the understanding are purified and illuminated.^{4 2}

al-Muhasibi's writings also make specific reference to the nature of the heart.

al-Muhasibi's conception of the heart reflects his belief that it represented the whole of the inner nature, basically identical to Mar Ishaq's construction and the popular conception which dominated

Christian, Jewish, and Islamic for centuries to come. A man's actions are determined by his heart and therefore a man can be judged on the basis of his heart alone. al-Muhasibi states that, "God only desires their hearts from His servants and their members will follow their hearts."^{4 3} He goes on to describe the heart as, "The chief of the members [of the body], and upon it depend the purity of the body and its defilement."^{4 4} He also emphasizes the pivotal nature of the heart in the actions of man:

God has laid commands and prohibitions upon each member, which are binding upon it, and He ordained for the heart, after faith and repentance, single-mindedness of action towards God most high, and fear of His chastisement, and satisfaction with His decrees, and hope in His grace.^{4 5}

The nature of the heart, whether pure or impure, was the deciding factor in the behavior of man and his relationship to God.

Another terminological and functional similarity in the two ascetical mystics' thought which is based upon the notion of the pure heart is the ascetical pathway. The second stage, that of purification or purgation, must be based on the first stage of open repentance and the acknowledgment of one's deficiencies and the almighty power of God. Repentance and the knowledge of one's obedience to God must serve as the foundation for any future action aimed at becoming nearer and closer to God. While this might appear to be somewhat obvious, the fact that the conception of an ascetical pathway follows certain progressive steps is fairly unique at this historical stage and occurs in the works of the two thinkers under discussion. al-Muhasibi describes the initial acknowledgment of God

and man's need for fearful obedience to the almighty in the following manner:

The first thing is that you should realize that you are a servant under authority, for whom there is no salvation except through fearing your Master and Lord, and no destruction for you if you do so. Therefore remember and reflect upon that which you were created and the reason for which you were placed in this transient world, and know too that you were not created for idle pleasures and that you were not left blind with no guidance. You were created and placed in this world only by way of trial and experience, either to obey God or to disobey Him, and you will pass from this world into everlasting torment or into the eternal bliss. If you know that you are a servant under authority, you will understand why you were created and to what you must inevitably apply yourself. That is the very beginning of the purification of the heart, for it cannot be purified unless it knows itself to be under authority and a creature, and then you will know that there can be no salvation for one who is but a creature and in a state of servanthship, except through obedience to his Lord and Master, and the guide to that obedience is knowledge of His commandments and prohibitions, for obedience is the road to salvation, and knowledge is the guide to the road, and the foundation of obedience is abstinence, and the foundation of abstinence is godliness, and the foundation of that is self-examination (*muhasaba*), and self-examination is based on fear and hope, and that which guides the self-examination is the spiritual knowledge which is the fruit of the virtuous which will enable God's creatures to serve Him with their hearts and members.^{4 6}

In this lengthy passage there are several interesting points. Once again al-Muhasibi emphasizes the heart as the center and vital facet of the inner nature. However, what is far more interesting is that al-Muhasibi envisions the ascetical pathway as only beginning once obedience and fear to God and his commandments begins. Before the

ascetic can even begin purgation or purification he must submit his will to God. Hence the initial realization of submission, coupled with obedience and fear, form the foundation for the ascetical pathway, denial of the world, and the beginning of spiritual knowledge. It is vital to note that the conception of attaining spiritual knowledge was one that was not widely known among Islamic circles, and for al-Muhasibi to endorse such a conception was relatively groundbreaking.⁴⁷

Mar Ishaq's conception of the ascetical pathway is also predicated on the fear of God and the foundation which it provides for the ascetic on his pathway. Mar Ishaq believes that,

Fear is necessary for human nature in order that it might keep within the bounds of obedience to God. But the love of God incites a man to desire the works of virtue and through love he is caught away to the doing of good. Spiritual knowledge naturally comes after the performance of the virtues, but both are preceded by fear and love; and again, fear precedes love. Whoever says with presumption that it is possible to acquire the more perfect virtues before he accomplishes the elementary has, without a doubt, laid the first foundation for the ruin of his soul. For the Lord's way is that the more perfect be born of the former virtues.⁴⁸

Mar Ishaq's ascetical path is foundational, much like al-Muhasibi's, in that the ascetic must first come to fear God before spiritual knowledge and the fruits of the virtuous can be had. Mar Ishaq also adds that, "The fear of God is the beginning of virtue, and it is said to be the offspring of faith. It is sown in the heart when a man withdraws his mind from the world's distractions so as to confine its wandering thoughts with the ruminations of reflection upon the restitution to come."⁴⁹ He also adds that, "The beginning of a man's

true life is the fear of God. But the fear of God does not consent to dwell in a soul that is distracted over outward things."⁵⁰

In much the same vein he states that,
The power of nature attests that it behooves man to believe in Him Who brings forth all things in His creation, to believe the words of His commandments, and to do them. From this belief is born the fear of God. When a man joins righteous works to the fear of God and makes a little progress in this activity, the fear of God gives birth to spiritual knowledge.⁵¹

The very systematic nature of the pathway and the steps which it involves are replicated in the thought of both men, although they are not stylistically systematic writers. Beyond the nature of the heart, both Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi have a clear vision of the ascetic's path to illumination. The foundation of the path, which is fear and submission to God, provides the ascetic with a springboard to the second major stage of the pathway, purgation and purification. As Mar Ishaq writes,

It is not, however, the fear of God that gives birth to this spiritual knowledge (because what is not inherent in a nature cannot be engendered by it), but rather this knowledge (because what is not inherent in a nature cannot be engendered by it), but rather this knowledge is conferred as a gift upon that working which belongs to the fear of God. As soon as you search well into the work of the fear of God, you will find this to be repentance, and from this arises spiritual knowledge.⁵²

This passage lays the groundwork from which the committed ascetic will be able to strive to reach the apex of the pathway, spiritual knowledge or gnosis.

The ascetical life and the renunciation of the earthly pleasures are described as the only path for those virtuous few who seek God.

Distaste for the material world and a sincere belief to pass beyond the earthly world are essential characteristics of the Christian and Islamic mystical traditions. Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi are clear proponents of asceticism and the possible experiences it offers to those who are fervent in their battle against the worldly pleasures and the temptations of Satan. The roots of such thought, which were elaborated by thinkers such as Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi, can be traced to the classical heritage which both thinkers shared. The seeds of the Near Eastern mystical tradition can be traced to the thought of Plato, who states in the *Timaeus* that, "We are creatures not of earth but of heaven, where the soul was first born, and our divine part attaches us by the head to heaven, like a plant by its roots, and keeps our body upright."⁵³ In the *Republic*, Plato outlines the transcendence of the forms,

In like manner....the object of knowledge[the forms] not only receives from the presence of the Good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived to them from it, though the good itself is not an essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power.⁵⁴

The embryonic forms and motifs of the classical world formed the foundation stones from which the mystical traditions of the three great monotheistic religions grounded their own subsequent additions and elaborations. al-Muhasibi, in the fashion of Near Eastern ascetics and mystics, admonishes his readers and declares,

I have found the origin of what is inimical to the spiritual life to come, the most far-reaching of the stratagems of Satan in corrupting the faithful and destroying the sanctions of religion, to be the love of this world and exaltation and glory therein. It is the root of evil and the chief of sins, and because of it God's creatures are remiss in what is due to Him, and go astray from

His law, and neglect prayer and fasting and the rest of the ordinances, and, through love of wealth and reputation, they are enticed by the seductions of what is unlawful and sinful, and despise much of what is in accordance with the Divine command and purpose. For the sake of this world, they disobey God and fall into mortal sin, and bring themselves to perdition unawares.^{5 5}

al-Muhasibi's comments form the crux of the motivation for following the ascetical path. He also quotes a tradition ascribed to Jesus which states that, "The love of this world is the chief of all errors, and the best remedy for the believer in the matter of his faith is the detachment of his heart from the love of this world."

(smith156) Quoting the early pseudo-mystic Ibrahim b.

Adham(d.776), al-Muhasibi is unequivocal in his espousal of the renunciation of the world,

If you wish to be the friend of God or to be loved by Him, renounce this world and the next. Do not desire either of them; empty yourself of those two worlds and turn your face toward God. Then God will turn His face toward you and overwhelm you with His grace. For I have learned that God revealed the following to John, son of Zakariyah [John the Baptist]: 'O, John, I have pledged that none of My servants will love Me (I who know his secret intentions), without being the sight with which he sees, the tongue with which he speaks, and the heart through which he understands.' Once this is done, I will make him shun occupying himself with anything other than Myself....and will be present to him day and night. He will come closer to Me and I will come closer to him.^{5 7}

Once becoming free of the world, the ascetic will be one step closer to achieving his visionary and unitive goal.

Mar Ishaq also endorses the ascetical life as the conduit for those who wish to escape the passions of this world to reach the

higher plane of God. Mar Ishaq writes that, "This is virtue: that in his mind a man should be unbusied with the world. The heart cannot become tranquil and be without imaginings as long as the senses are active."⁵⁸ He also states that, "When a man's thoughts are totally immersed in the delight of pursuing the wisdom treasured in the words of Scriptures by means of the faculty that gains enlightenment from them, then he puts the world behind his back and forgets everything in it."⁵⁹

Asceticism is man's pathway to escaping the world and its temptations. Once man realizes and fears his subservience to God he will turn naturally to the manner of life which is most compatible with the dictates of the divine. Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi conceptualized a three-stage path to escape the material world which began with repentance and continued purification of the heart and the soul.

The second stage, which happens to be the most thoroughly explicated and elaborated, of purification is deeply rooted in the need for sincere and fervent repentance, humility, and prayer. al-Muhasibi describes the penitent man as follows:

Among the signs of the penitent are emaciation of body and abstinence in food and weeping over himself, with much fear, and prolonged requests for forgiveness, and much prayer and fasting, for with humility he combines deprivation for his body. It is a sign of baseness and depravity to abandon weeping over himself and his many sins, while the sincerity is constant intercession for forgiveness by night and by day.⁶⁰

Mar Ishaq's conception of purification resembles that of al-Muhasibi. Interestingly enough, both ascetics place an emphasis on the need for man to shed tears during prayer. The shedding of tears during

purification is a unique and complementary characteristic of both

Mar Ishaq's and al-Muhasibi's thought. Mar Ishaq declares,

Behold, what good things are born in a man from struggle! It often happens that when a man bends his knees in prayer and stretches forth his hands to the heavens, fixing his eyes upon the Cross of Christ and concentrating all his thoughts on God during his prayer, beseeching God all the while with tears and compunction.^{6 1}

In another instance he goes on to add,

The iniquitous mouth is stopped during prayer, for the condemnation of the conscience deprives a man of his boldness. A steadfast heart joyously sheds tears in prayer. Voluntary and steadfast endurance of injustice purifies the heart. Patient endurance of injustice springs from disdain for the world.^{6 2}

The second major stage of the pathway, that of purification, must be completed before one can go on to the higher stages of illumination and inspiration or gnosis.

The manner in which Mar Ishaq envisions the attainment of purification is through the mortification of the earthly presence. He describes this process as follows: "Exercise continuous vigilance and find no place for heedlessness in your heart, in all activity on your part, as in every time of rest, in silence and in speech, in your coming in and in your going out, in times of recreation, in love and in hatred, in laughter and in weeping, you must be exacting with yourself."^{6 3} For al-Muhasibi the manner of purification is a way of life in which the ascetic can never divert his attention from the task at hand. He explains his point allegorically: "For the medicine, in a difficult case, does not cure the one who takes it except by continued administration, and a garment, when it is very soiled, is not cleansed

except by repeated washing."64 Mortification and purification are not restricted to certain aspects of the ascetic's life but instead cover all facets of his earthly presence including sleep, fasting, prayer, humility, and *zuhd*, the escape from the world. He even cautions his disciples to " Laugh little, avoid jesting, and restrain your complaints."65

Al-Muhasibi advises that, "Abstinence is the most excellent part of the service of God," and that, "the foundation of the faith is abstinence."66 Abstinence is the central facet of the ascetic life or *zuhd*. The concept of abstinence in ascetical life is crucial to the three main pillars of the ascetic which are uniquely construed in the works of al-Muhasibi and Mar Ishaq: Fasting, Poverty, and Self-Examination of the Inner Feelings.

al-Muhasibi envisions the practice of fasting as an integral facet of the stage of purification. He writes that, "Hunger breaks the power of the self and satiety increases insolence, and hunger strengthens concern and grief in concern, and concern and grief destroy sensual lusts and desire."67 Gaining mastery over ones' appetite is an essential step in escaping the limitations placed upon the human body. As a step in the overall process al-Muhasibi believes that, "Through such fasting, the heart will be illuminated and the soul purifies and the spirit will be led to the presence of God."68

The notion of poverty is also a key to the stage of purification. al-Muhasibi expounds upon the virtues of leading the life of poverty: Preoccupation with the thought of God is more fitting for the seeker after Him than preoccupation with wealth, even though it is to be used for good works. Let God's servant, then, be

content with sufficiency and renounce all beyond that, for he may rest assured that evil is bound up with seeking much of this world's goods. Let him follow in the steps of those who are now with the Blessed in Paradise, who, if they ate in the morning, had nothing left for their evening meal, and if they sought a loan, found none to give it, who possessed no garment save that which covered their body, who had no means of enrichment, and yet morning and evening they were satisfied , acquiescent in the Will of their Lord.⁶⁹

Just as one renounces the world in other aspects of his life, purification is dependent on the denial of earthly wealth and riches. For this reason, he places the pursuit of poverty as one of his three main pillars of the purgatory state.

The need to renounce all aspects of the outer life through fasting and poverty was not enough to ensure the purification of the heart. For al-Muhasibi, the practice of examining the inner passions and feelings is the central plank to fulfilling the purification and ascending to the next stage of illumination. For this reason he addresses his disciples saying,

O my brothers, search out your innermost selves and the secrets of your breasts, and purify them from malice and hatred and the tendency to rejoice in other's misfortune, and from evil surmisings and enmity and loathing, which eat up good deeds. It may be that some one of you is preserving in some sin and is unaware of it. Do you find in your hearts the love of this world and pleasure in its welcome of you, and enjoyment of its lusts? Do you sometimes find delight in being praised and made much of, and do you shrink from blame or feel exasperated by it, and do you dislike anything which is in opposition to your own wishes, and are you pleased with what is in agreement with them? And do you delight in regarding the creatures without taking any heed of them? Do you find

within you the fear of poverty, and do you hate anything which God has decreed for you? For this and suchlike are sins of the heart and you are heedless of them. Is it not so? Then exert yourselves to mortify blameworthy habits of thought, and do not underestimate them, for he who overlooks such sins has despised the warnings of God and will not attain the higher knowledge of Him.⁷⁰

Exterior purification is not complete, and, in fact, when exercised without the corresponding purification of the inner self is tantamount to hypocrisy. To ensure that the inner self is purified the ascetic must endure patiently all the tribulations and humiliations sent by God. Hence, he writes that, "If you are afflicted with trials and calamities in that state urge yourselves to patience in adversity, for that is God's regard upon His servant. And guard against complaint and lack of contentment with what is decreed."⁷¹ By enduring patiently the misfortunes and trials sent by God the examination and purification of the inner self is attainable when coupled with outward purification. In describing the results of the stage of purification al-Muhasibi writes,

These are the qualities produced by the fight waged against the self by those who practice self-examination, those who resolutely set themselves in opposition to the self and mortify it with the help of God. They attain to a high and honorable station, for all things depend upon strength of purpose, and to him who has strengthened his purpose the struggle against the lusts becomes easy, by the help of God the Most High, and he will not have long to wait before the Divine grace is revealed within his heart."⁷²

For al-Muhasibi the completion of the stage of purification places the ascetic at the brink of experiencing illumination and union with God,

the next stage on the pathway. In describing the preparation for attainment of the mystical stage, al-Muhasibi believes,

It means that you must exercise continuous vigilance and must find no place for heedlessness in your heart, in all activity on your part, as in every time of rest, in silence and in speech, in your coming in and in your going out, in times of recreation, in love and in hatred, in laughter and in weeping, you must be exacting with yourself.⁷³

And to achieve the mortification of the inner senses one must be unceasing, "for the medicine, in a difficult case, does not cure the one who takes it, except by continued administration, and a garment, when it is very soiled, is not cleansed except by repeated washings."⁷⁴ By continually attempting to strictly maintain the three central pillars of the pathway the ascetic will be able to elevate his consciousness to a higher plane.

As al-Muhasibi states, "The followers of God desire, fear, and *zahadu* (quit the world), and in this manner reach a higher level of awareness."⁷⁵ What is quite original in al-Muhasibi's form of Islamic asceticism and mysticism is his belief in the possibility of a higher awareness. For generations of mystics, including al-Ghazzali and Ibn al-'Arabi, the foundations for their more elaborate and complex systems of mystical thought are rooted in the primitive mysticism which was first laid out in an Islamic context by al-Muhasibi.

Mar Ishaq's ascetical path to purification is nearly identical to that of al-Muhasibi. He warns his followers by declaring, "If the small pupil of thy soul has not been purified, do not venture to look at the globe of the sun, lest thou be bereft even of the usual sight."⁷⁶

He saw the matter of this world as chains that bound the ascetical journey and he further believed that, "It is necessary to free one's self from matter, for freedom from matter precedes the bonds in God."⁷⁷ In much the same manner he elaborates the attitude of the ascetic searching for God,

That a man has absolutely no care for any of these passing things and whose soul is night and day given to the works of God, without zeal for excellence and because of his absorbing anxiety for the divine things, and who, therefore, neglects to prepared dress and food and to fix and to prepare a face for his shelter and the like-that such a man trusts in God that He will prepare in its due season all he needs and that He will care for him- this is really true trust and a trust of wisdom.⁷⁸

The preparatory stage which Mar Ishaq speaks about follows the same pattern which was outlined by al-Muhasibi, and the purification is based on the three pillars of fasting, poverty, and the mortification of the inner senses.

The matter of fasting in Mar Ishaq's purificatory stage conspicuously resembles the treatment which is present in the work and teachings of al-Muhasibi. In a section entitled, "On Fasting and Vigil," Mar Ishaq writes,

Just as the satisfaction of the belly is the source of all evils, and as the slackness of sleep kindles the lust of fornication, so fasting, vigil, and wakefulness in God's service by withstanding the sweetness of sleep through crucifying the body throughout the day and night, are God's holy pathway and the foundation of every virtue. Fasting is the champion of every virtue, the

beginning of the struggle, the crown of the abstinent, the beauty of virginity and sanctity, the resplendence of chastity, the commencement of the path of Christianity, the mother of prayer, the well-spring of sobriety and prudence, the teacher of stillness, and the precursor of all good works. Just as the enjoyment of light is coupled with healthy eyes, so desire for prayer accompanies fasting that is practiced with discernment.⁷⁹

The above passage is a microcosmic representation of the overall pathway. It is foundational in nature, and each step taken expedites the attainment of the next step. Much as al-Muhasibi viewed fasting as simply one aspect of the penitential and ascetic life, Mar Ishaq also links fasting with the achievement of further goals. Hence, "When a man begins to fast, he straightaway yearns in his mind to enter into converse with God."⁸⁰ Mar Ishaq's use of the conception of fasting is simply a functional usage that allows the ascetic to come closer to the purifying of the heart. "This means that a man, being wise, shall lay down a fair law for his belly, by untroubled constant sitting alone. Proceeding from here he will reach the subduing of the senses."⁸¹ In fact, "In a full stomach there is no knowledge of the mysteries of God."⁸²

In analyzing the ascetical pathway it is extremely trying to attempt to break down the methods of purification into separate and distinct parts since each different facet is inherently tied to and is part of the overall ascetical outlook. However, it is also clear that Mar Ishaq also envisioned the life of poverty as a necessary prerequisite to the purgation of the heart. Not only is poverty a

matter of simple abstinence but in achieving poverty one is afforded "the time to attain constant study of the words of God."⁸³ But Mar Ishaq also endorsed the notion that "nothing brings such serenity to the mind as voluntary poverty," and that "Scarcity in all things teaches a man patience; but whenever we enjoy possessions, we are unable to control ourselves."⁸⁴ He also believed that

As long as a man chooses to be free of possessions, departure from life always arises in his mind....He acquires disdain for every suggestion of honour and bodily ease that is sown in his thoughts....If he meets afflictions, he is confident, knowing for a certainty that they will procure a crown for him. He patiently endures them with all joy, accepting them with exultation and gladness, since he knows that God himself Who has provided these afflictions because of the profit gained from unknown causes through unmanifest acts of providence.⁸⁵

Each step taken on the pathway has a synergistic effect in propelling and aiding the ascetic further along the path by strengthening his fortitude and cleansing his mind and heart.

As is to be expected, the purification of the inner senses is necessarily the corresponding action for those who are seeking outward and inward purification. To achieve the knowledge of God, which Mar Ishaq urges his readers to believe as a possibility to the truly penitent and unceasing ascetic, one must achieve a purification and self-examination much like that al-Muhasibi urged upon his own disciples. For Mar Ishaq the natural progression and foundational nature of the ascetic's pathway meant that "Every one who ventures to acquire the latter things before the former, undoubtedly lays a perishable foundation in his soul," and hence,

Until the outward man becomes dead to the ways of the world, not only to sin, but also to the whole bodily service-until the

natural impulse is brought low- so that the sweetness of sin has no more mastery over the heart, the spirit of God does not spread its sweetness, and man's limbs are not unveiled to life, and divine impulses do not show themselves in the soul.⁸⁶

Hence, movement along the pathway necessitates the purification of the inward senses of man as the outward experiences such as poverty and fasting are pursued and achieved. Mar Ishaq uses the allegory of medicine, much like al-Muhasibi did some fifty years later, to emphasize the healing and mortifying power of inner purification: "As medicines purge the body from the impurity of bad humours, so grievous afflictions purify the heart from evil passions....his soul is exempt from the storm that customarily blows when he perceives the affairs of society."⁸⁷ The path of purgation with the aid of God allows the ascetic to examine himself and to become closer to the final ecstatic state of illumination.

The first emotion that befalls a man by divine grace and draws the soul towards life, strikes the heart with thought concerning the transitory character of this nature. This thought is naturally connected with contempt of the world....if he makes this emotion increase in his soul by perpetual concentration and by gazing at himself, he will bring himself near to that which no tongue is able to tell.⁸⁸

The remarkable similarity of al-Muhasibi's self-examination(*muhasaba*) and Mar Ishaq's "gazing at himself" is quite interesting since the notion of inner examination of one's heart was not as widespread as it would later become in ascetical and mystical circles.⁸⁹ However, the teachings of both ascetics under discussion helped to formulate a clear construction of the self-examination process and also represent the reformulation and birth of an

intellectual tradition that would be carried throughout the Arabic-speaking world and the Mediterranean basin for centuries to come.

The final stage of the ascetical pathway is the area in which the thought and writings of Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi converge most dramatically. The stage of illumination and unity with God was, at this point in the evolution of mystical thought and practice, a radical and groundbreaking intellectual and spiritual construction. However, both ascetics bear witness to the possibility of attaining the mystical unitary experience if the ascetical pathway is pursued unceasingly and fully.

Mar Ishaq, in reiterating the motivation for pursuing the solitary life, writes of the possibilities which await those who are diligent in their asceticism: "For freedom from connection with the world will naturally set in motion flashes of intuition from which it can exalt itself unto God and remain in ecstasy."⁹⁰ Even the hint that such a state was attainable was fairly radical for the era. While not busying himself with descriptions and elaborate discussions of the ecstatic state like later mystics, such as Ibn al-'Arabi, Mar Ishaq provides part of the foundation for the work of later mystics by iterating his belief in the attainability of the ecstatic state. The interaction with God is of a powerful order such that, "On account of its intensity this meditation is sometimes mingled with ecstasy."⁹¹ Hence, "the mysterious kind of illumination- as the gifts imparted unto each of the saints- is a kind of influence which possesses the mind. And when man is deemed worthy of the illumination, the mind is snatched away in ecstasy and expanded by some divine revelation."⁹² Furthermore, "he that reaches this from time to time,

will not remember that he is clad with a body, nor will he know that he is in the world."^{9 3}

The foundational nature of the ascetical pathway should not be overlooked as man can only attain the final state when he "is deemed worthy of this[the ecstatic state], when he puts off outward and inward sin, by observing the commandments of the Lord, which are anterior to this state."^{9 4} One should keep in mind the advice of Mar Ishaq regarding progress on the ascetic's path: "Every station which on the morrow thou attainest to in the way of excellence and knowledge of the truth will be found by thee more glorious and excellent than that in which thou has spent the night before. But its beauty vanishes by the beauty of that which thou wilt reach tomorrow."^{9 5} The twofold process of inner and outer purification allow the ascetic to be placed in a position in which he may be judged worthy of such divine illumination. While Mar Ishaq "belongs rather to the early than to the later type of Oriental mystics," and focuses in his writings on the path to illumination, he does give brief and seldom glimpses and descriptions of the ecstatic and illumined stage."^{9 6} In one instance he writes that,

As the saints, in the world to come, do not pray, when the mind has been engulfed by the Spirit, but dwell in ecstasy in that delightful glory, so the mind, when it has been made worthy of perceiving the future blessedness, will forget itself and all that is here.^{9 7}

In this quote, the ecstatic experience is paralleled with the future life to come; hence, the illumined solitary is given a brief foretaste of Paradise. In another passage he poses a rhetorical question and goes about answering the question himself:

What time is so holy and fit for sanctification and receiving of gifts as the time of prayer, in which man speaks with God? At this time of God alone he thinks, and Him alone he supplicates; his whole thought is absorbed in discourse with Him and his heart is full of Him. It is in this state, therefore, that the Holy Spirit joins with the things, which the man prays, some unattainable insights which stir in him, so that by these insights the mind is absorbed in ecstasy.⁹⁸

The unitive and illuminative experience is described in this passage forsaking Mar Ishaq's usual devotion to the explication of the ascetic pathway.

However, these rare descriptions are an important step in the evolution of mystical thought. In another even more vivid description, Mar Ishaq writes,

Sometimes from prayer a certain contemplation is born which also makes prayer vanish from the lips. And he to whom this contemplation of this happens becomes as a corpse without soul, in ecstasy. This we call sight during prayer and not an image or form forged by phantasy, as fools say. Also in this contemplation during prayer there are degrees and differences in gifts. But to this point there is still prayer. For thought has not yet passed into the state where there is no prayer, but a state superior to it. For the motions of the tongue and the heart during prayer are keys. What comes after them is the entering into the treasury. Here then all mouths and tongues are silent, and the heart, the treasurer of the thoughts, the mind, the governor of the senses, the daring spirit, that swift bird and all their means and powers and the beseeching persuasions have to stand still there: For the master of the house has come.⁹⁹

This is a rare and very limited instance in Mar Ishaq's work in which he goes beyond the vagaries and lack of specificity which usually characterize any mention of the illuminative stage in primitive

ascetical mysticism of the Near East. While dominated by the discussion and repetition of the purificatory stages, Mar Ishaq's short insights into the final mystical state are a foreshadowing of the more elaborate trends which later flourished in the Arabic East.

The short glimpses of the intuitive, illuminative, and overarching world of the mystic are found also in the primitive mystical vision of al-Muhasibi. In words that echo the motifs of Mar Ishaq, al-Muhasibi writes that,

The love of God in its essence is really the illumination of the heart by joy, because of its nearness to the Beloved; and when the heart is filled with that radiant joy, it finds its delight in being alone with the recollection of its Beloved, for love, in solitude, rises up triumphant, and the heart of the lover is possessed by the sense of its fellowship with Him; and when solitude is combined with secret intercourse with the Beloved, the joy of that intercourse overwhelms the mind, so that it is no longer concerned with this world and what is therein.¹⁰⁰

This intercourse with the Divine is marked by the fact that, "To that one whom God has placed in the rank of His lovers, He gives the vision of himself, for He has sworn, saying, by My glory I will show My face and I will heal his soul by the Vision of Myself."¹⁰¹ He also goes on to write that, "Whoever knows God loves Him and whoever loves him, He makes to dwell with Him, and whom He makes to dwell with him, in whom He dwells, blessed is he, yea blessed."¹⁰²

While al-Muhasibi is mostly concerned with the nature of the solitary's arduous trek towards the Divine, he, much like Mar Ishaq, occasionally makes a descriptive mention of the ecstatic state. In one of these rare instances he describes those who have reached the final stage as follows:

The hearts of such lovers are held captive in the hidden shrine of the Divine loving-kindness, they are marked out by their knowledge of the revelation of the Divine, being transformed by the joy of the vision, in contemplation of the invisible, and the enveloping Glory of God, and from them all hindrances are removed, for they tread the path of friendship with God, and are transported into the Garden of vision and their hearts dwell in that region, where they see without eyes, and are in the company of the Beloved without looking upon Him, and converse with an unseen friend. This is the description of the lovers of God, who do righteousness, who are gifted with heavenly wisdom, who are on their guard both night and day, pure in all their thoughts....and their joy is made perfect, and they possess an everlasting treasure within their hearts, for it is as if they contemplated with the eye of the heart the glory that is invisible and God is the object and goal of their aspirations.¹⁰³

Going beyond the visible and sensual world, the illumined solitary is able to grasp what is by its very nature unattainable. This reoccurring mystical motif regarding the surpassing of the sensual world and sensual experience is one that is found throughout the mystical tradition of the Near East.

al-Muhasibi's description of the afterlife of the saints and their entrance into the kingdom of heaven occurring "When the All-Glorious shall dwell in them and take them wholly as His own, because of their love to Him," parallels his description of the mystical experience.¹⁰⁴ Much like Mar Ishaq's parallel of the ecstatic experience with Paradise, al-Muhasibi writes that, "The righteous who believe, who walk in the way of their Lord, in obedience to Him, will be rapt away to contemplate and dwell within the presence of the face of the All-Glorious, for the goal of the true lover's desire is to

look upon the face of God, and when they meet with Him, He bestows upon them no greater grace than the vision of His countenance."¹⁰⁵ Hence, the mystical experience during this lifetime is, in essence, a glimpse of the glories of those in Paradise.

At this stage in al-Muhasibi's pathway, the ascetic has attained the highest stage of mystical experience. The iteration of the possibility of attaining such a state, while delineated by Mar Ishaq and several Christian mystics, such as Dionysius the Aeropagite, was fairly original in its Islamic context. For this reason, al-Muhasibi's espousal of this specific trend of thought which marked the Near Eastern Christian tradition, gives an interesting insight into how intellectual trends and motifs were transmitted and adapted throughout the region and how the various religious groups interacted on an intellectual basis, whether directly or indirectly. Furthermore, the fact that elaborate mystical constructions and systems came to dominate much of the future mysticism of the region is a testament to the important intellectual foundations laid by Mar Ishaq and al-Muhasibi and a select group of innovative thinkers such as al-Hallaj(922d.) and al-Junayd(910).

It has been my hope in this section of the work to begin to document the nature of Christian-Islamic intellectual interaction shortly after the rise and rapid spread of Islam. Based on their common cultural, philosophic, and religious traditions the members of the various sectarian groups were able to communicate with and adapt much of the thought of their counterparts. The dynamism of the Arabic World during this era was partly due to this interaction and to the fact that adaptation and borrowing were not perceived as

cultural threats but as supplements to the existing body of knowledge. As will be seen, the foundations of this interaction, whether direct or indirect, helped to reformulate and to give birth to an intellectual tradition. The works of al-Ghazzali and the medieval Andalusian mystics cannot be extracted from this intellectual tradition, and should be seen as different stages in the evolution of the mystical tradition of the Near East and Mediterranean Basin.

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1. A.J. Wensinck. *The Mystical Treatises of Isaac of Nineveh*. (Amsterdam, 1923) p. xvii. Wensinck's work is the first English translation of Mar Ishaq's work from the original Syriac.
2. Margaret Smith. *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*. (London, 1935) p. 97. Smith's work, while often lacking rigorous analysis and a sophisticated analytic framework in regard to the differences between asceticism and mysticism, nevertheless provides an excellent introduction to al-Muhasibi's work. Furthermore, I have employed many of Smith's translations of al-Muhasibi's works.
3. St. Vladimir's Press. *Saint Isaac of Nineveh on Ascetical Life*. (Crestwood, NY, 1989) p. lxviii. This work is the latest revision and translation of Mar Ishaq's work into English from the original Syriac.
4. Wensinck, p. xix.
5. Cheslyn Jones and Geoffrey Wainwright. *The Study of Spirituality*. (Oxford, 1986) p. 212.

6. Wensinck, p. xviii.
7. *Ibid* , p.xviii.
8. St. Vladimir's Seminary, p. xxxix.
9. Jones and Wainwright, p. 204.
10. St. Vladimir's Seminary. p. 308.
11. *Ibid* , p. 8 and p. 32.
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14. Wensinck, p. xix.
15. St. Vladimir's Seminary, p. lxxiii.
16. *Ibid* , p. lxxiv.
17. Smith, *An Early* , pp. 12-14 and pp. 84-87. Smith offers a fairly complete account of how Mar Ishaq's work was translated into Arabic and Greek at a particularly early stage.
18. St. Vladimir's Seminary, p. lxxiv.
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20. Wensinck, p. xvii.
21. Andrew Louth. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* . (Oxford, 1981) Louth's work provides a succinct and cohesive analysis of the rise and spread of the Christian mystical tradition. Louth traces the roots of this tradition to the Classical world and to the works of Plato, Philo, Plotinus, and Origen.
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27. *Ibid* , p. 4.
28. Smith, *An Early* , p. 60.
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30. al-Muhasibi, *al-Rizq* , p. 6.
31. *Ibid* , p. 6.
32. For a complete discussion of al-Muhasibi's disciples see Margaret Smith, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad* and Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj Volumes I-IV*, (Princeton, 1982).
33. Smith, *An Early* , p. 16.
34. Jurji, p. 5.
35. Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 1970) p. 265.
36. Kenneth Cragg. *The Arab Christian* (Louisville, Kentucky, 1991) pp. 85-86. al-Muhasibi's work *al-Ri'aya li Huquq Allah* (Cairo, no date) shows al-Muhasibi's knowledge of Christian phrases, terms, parables, and Gospel.
37. Smith, *An Early* , p. 60.
38. *Ibid* , p. 83. Smith points out the fact that, even before the ninth century, the Christian Gospels had been translated into Arabic for use by the Arabacized Christians of the Near East, particularly the Levant.
39. De Lacy O'Leary. *Arabic Thought and its Place in History* (London, 1922) p. 105.
40. Majid Fakhry. *Philosophy, Dogma and the Impact of Greek Thought in Islam* , (Aldershot, 1994) p. 194.

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42. Smith, *An Early* , p. 88.
43. al-Muhasibi, *al-Ri'aya* , p. 110.
44. *Ibid* , p. 110.
45. Smith, *An Early* , p. 88.
46. al-Muhasibi, *al-Ri'aya* , p. 8.
47. Massignon, *The Passion, Volume I* , p. 39.
48. St. Vladimir's Seminary, p. 22.
49. *Ibid* , p. 3.
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51. *Ibid* , p. 227.
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59. *Ibid* , p. 5.
60. Smith, *An Early* , p. 153.

61. St. Valdimir's Seminary, p. 39.
62. *Ibid* , p. 49.
63. Smith, *An Early* , p. 159.
64. al-Muhasibi, *al-Ri'aya* , p. 17.
65. *Ibid* , p. 165.
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PART TWO- AL-MUHASIBI AND AL-GHAZZALI:

In an attempt to connect fluidly the intellectual traditions of Near Eastern mysticism, I will succinctly discuss the manner in which major trends in al-Muhasibi's thought can be found in the works of al-Ghazzali. Due to al-Ghazzali's impact on the evolution and acceptance of mysticism, it is important to understand how his own intellectual accomplishments were part of a larger and far more expansive tradition.

Abu Hamid Muhammed ibn Muhammed al-Ghazzali was born in Tus in Khorassan in 1058. After the premature death of his father, he was entrusted to "the care of a Sufi, whose influence extended through his subsequent career."¹ After his studies in the field of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) were completed, he became the pupil of al-Juwayni, the premier Ash'arite theologian of the era.² It was under his tutelage that he was introduced to the study of *Kalam*, philosophy, and logic.³ After meeting the Saljuk Sultan Malikshah's vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, a staunch defender of Sunnite orthodoxy, al-Ghazzali was appointed head of al-Mulk's theological school in Baghdad.⁴ Established as a bulwark against the heterodox propaganda of the Fatimid Caliph of Cairo, the school served as a reply in kind to the agitation arising from Cairo.⁵ After being initiated into the Sufi way in 1093 and 1094, he became disillusioned with his teaching post and resigned his position.⁶ This incident serves as a foreshadowing of the tensions that would shape al-Ghazzali's lifetime, those of Sunnite orthodoxy and Sufism. He eventually gained renown for being one of the great figures in the elaboration and defense of medieval mysticism. Along with Ibn Al-

'Arabi, al-Ghazzali is recognized as one of the chief systemizers and synthesizers who helped to rally orthodoxy to the defense of the Sufi way and experience and helped to secure a position for Sufism within orthodoxy.⁷

al-Ghazzali's elaborate defense of Sufism and his espousal of Sufi doctrine must be understood in terms of the broader and more encompassing movement of mysticism in the Near East. While al-Ghazzali was a figure of intense originality and insight, he also reflected many of the growing mystical and theoretical trends of the region and era. Based on his future impact on Sufism even up till the present, his brand of Sufism deserves attention based on its profound impact on the direction of Sufism.

al-Muhasibi had also attempted to reconcile orthodoxy and Sufism, and al-Ghazzali wrote in his *al-Munkidh min al-Dalal* that he was indebted to the efforts of al-Muhasibi in presenting the, "real doctrines of Sufism."⁸ In another work, the *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, al-Ghazzali wrote that al-Muhasibi, "was the savant (*habr*) of the nation in his knowledge of religious practice and excelled all others in his teaching on the errors of the self, and on sins of action and delusions in regard to good works," and that his works, "were worthy of attention because what he said was based upon experience."⁹ Furthermore, al-Ghazzali regarded al-Muhasibi's onetime student and disciple, al-Junayd, as one of his principle intellectual guides and mentors.¹⁰ In another work which recounts his adoption of the Sufi Way he writes that, "When I had finished my examination of these doctrines I applied myself to the study of Sufism....As it was more easy to learn their doctrine than to practice it, I studied first all those

of their books which contain it: *The Nourishment of Hearts* by Abu Talib of Mecca, the works of Harith al-Muhasibi, and the fragments which still remain of al-Junayd."^{1 1} Therefore, it is quite obvious that al-Ghazzali was familiar with the works of al-Muhasibi and that they influenced the evolution of his own thought. Much like al-Muhasibi and al-Junayd before him, al-Ghazzali, "skirts the pantheistic abyss without falling into it."^{1 2}

al-Ghazzali's works echo many of the themes and motifs which were most marked in al-Muhasibi's own work. For instance, he reiterates the belief in the heart as the center of all understanding and writes, "Comprehending knowledge of the heart and of the real nature of its qualities is the root of religion and the foundation of the Way of those who seek God."^{1 3} He also goes on to quote al-Muhasibi's statement in this regard and writes that, "God only requires their hearts from His servants."^{1 4}

al-Ghazzali also adopted many of the characteristics which were evident in al-Muhasibi's discussion of the ascetical pathway. He assumed that too begin the Way one must renounce this world and repent unto God. He writes that,

In the same way there is a considerable difference between knowing and renouncement comprehending conditions and causes, and practicing renouncement and detachment from the things of this world. I saw that Sufism consists in experiences rather than in definitions, and that what I was lacking belonged to the domain, not of instruction, but of ecstasy and initiation.^{1 5}

In this passage al-Ghazzali acknowledges the need for the renunciation of the world and the possibility of experience ecstasy along the ascetical pathway. In one of his descriptions of the Way,

al-Ghazzali writes that, "Worship is an outward form, which is prescribed by the Law, and we show our devotion to God by observing it, but its spirit and inner life are humility and intention and presence of the heart and single-minded sincerity."¹⁶ This presence of the heart is later described by al-Ghazzali as, "the essence of prayer."¹⁷ al-Ghazzali also advocated the humility and renunciation that inherently accompanied the purificatory stage of the pathway.¹⁸ Hence, he states that, "For he who loves anything is constantly remembering it, and inevitably the remembrance of what is loved takes possession of the heart, and therefore you see that a man whose love is set on another than God has no prayer free from idle thoughts."¹⁹ And, writes further, "Let the face of your heart be with the face of your body, and remember that as the face does not turn towards the direction of the House except by turning away from everything else, so the heart does not turn towards God unless it has been emptied of all else."²⁰ One who has turned away and renounced this world is, therefore, "lost to himself and found unto the Lord."²¹ Much like al-Muhasibi, al-Ghazzali delineates the fruits of the Way in his discussion of the impending illumination and ecstasy which awaits those who conscientiously follow the ascetical pathway. The fruits of inspiration, "are only revealed to adepts in Sufism and in a state of ecstatic transport."²²

He reinforces the notion of ecstasy and describes it as a state only attainable by those who are well-versed and well-disciplined in the Way. Therefore,

This state, then, can be revealed to the initiated in ecstasy, and to him who is incapable of ecstasy, by obedience and attention, on condition that he frequents the society of Sufis till he

arrives, so to speak, at an imitative initiation. Such is the faith which one can obtain by remaining among them, and intercourse with them is never painful.^{2 3}

Even to those who could not reach the highest levels of attainment were able to receive some form of inspiration however incomplete.

However, for those who could reach the higher stages of illumination,

There is no being in the world other than God and the face of everything is perishable, save His face not in the sense that it perishes at some time or other, but rather in the sense that it is perishing eternally and everlastingly and cannot be conceived to be otherwise. Indeed, everything other than He, considered in itself, is pure nonbearing, and considered from the standpoint of the being which it receives from the First Reality, has being not in itself but in regard to the face of its Maker, so that the only thing which truly is God's face. Therefore, nothing is except God Almighty and His face, and consequently everything is perishable eternally and everlastingly, save God's face.^{2 4}

This higher plane of illumination involves an annihilation of the transient body of this world in the everlasting and omnipresent vision and presence of God. However, for al-Ghazzali, much as for al-Muhasibi, there remains an even higher state of spiritual and mystical attainment. He describes such an experience in the following passage:

Praise to be God Who hath consumed the hearts of His saints in the fire of His love and hath taken captive their thoughts and their spirits in longing to meet with Him and to look upon Him and hath fixed their sight and their insight upon the Vision of the beauty of his presence, until by inbreathing of the spirit of union, they have been rapt beyond themselves....and they see nought like unto Him among things visible or invisible, and they are mindful of nought in the two worlds save Him alone. Their longing is only for that which is to be found in His

presence, and their going to and from is round about Him alone. For Him is all that they hear, and it is to Him that they give heed, since He hath closed their eyes to all but Him and hath made them deaf to all words save His. These are they whom God hath called to be his saints, who are His and His alone.²⁵

Through the elaboration and defense of the foundations of the mystical tradition of the Near East and Mediterranean Basin, al-Ghazzali was building upon many of the themes and motifs which can be found in the works of both al-Muhasibi and Mar Ishaq of Nineveh. This short addendum regarding similar intellectual and mystical trends and motifs found in the thought and writings of al-Muhasibi and al-Ghazzali has served to highlight the thoroughly foundational, organic, and evolutionary character of this intellectual tradition. As will be discussed in the following section, the achievements and innovations of the various religious groups of the Near East and Mediterranean basin, coupled with their common heritage, provided the intellectuals and their intellectual milieus with a dynamic impetus that fueled the direct and indirect borrowing and reformulation of trends and motifs across historical, regional, and sectarian lines.

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1. al-Ghazzali. *The Confessions* . Translated by Claud Field. (Lahore, Pakistan, no date) p. 7.
2. Majid Fakhry. *A History of Islamic Philosophy* . (New York, 1970) p. 244.
3. *Ibid* , p. 244.
4. *Ibid* , p. 244.

5. *Ibid* , p. 244.
6. *Ibid* , p. 244.
7. *Ibid* , p. 277.
8. Margaret Smith. *An Earl Mystic of Baghdad* . (London, 1935) p. 269.
9. *Ibid* , p. 269.
10. Fakhry, A *History* , p. 278.
11. al-Ghazzali, p. 47.
12. Fakhry, p. 280.
13. Smith, p. 271.
14. *Ibid* , p. 271.
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22. al-Ghazzali, p. 61.
23. *Ibid* , p. 56.
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PART THREE -THE TRANSMISSION AND ADAPTATION OF ARABIC
MYSTICISM AMONG THE JEWS OF AL-ANDALUS:

The great Andalusian Sufi, Ibn Al-'Arabi (1165-1240) is a towering figure in Islamic history. However, his work and life cannot be taken out of context. While his achievements marked a high point in mystical thinking, his own thought must be viewed as a facet of a larger Near Eastern and Andalusian mystical movement. This movement began much earlier with the initial works of mystics such as Mar Ishaq of Nineveh and al-Muhasibi of Baghdad, and, some have argued, has its Andalusian roots in the works of the ninth century figure Ibn-Masarra.¹ What is clear about the nebulous roots of Andalusian mysticism is that it was based upon a long tradition of Near Eastern religious heritage and classical Greek thought. Much as the early transmission of ascetical thought and pseudo-mystical shortly after the rise of Islam was possible due to the common heritage of those involved, the outpouring of mystical thinking in Medieval Andalusia was due to the communal interaction between the various religious strands of the society. The study of intellectual history in the Arabic World entails an understanding of the broad connections and traditions which established vibrant and prolific intellectual communities throughout the Near East. The traditions which were established and elaborated at the initial phases of the Arabs' ascendancy provided the foundations for the later transmission and adaptation of mystical, philosophical, and scientific thought throughout the Arabic World. The noted historian Gustave Von Grunebaum describes this common tradition as follows:

"Emphasizing through pride and fear and bewilderment what they

knew for their own, both Christendom and Islam allowed themselves to forget that they were lauding and damning in subservience to the same values and that the love and hate was born from the same mood."² The fact that Islam and Christendom were born of the same religious and philosophical traditions, though often overlooked historically, would play a central role in the flowering of medieval Andalusian society and culture much as it did in the Baghdad of Harith al-Muhasibi. The process of cultural differentiation along sectarian lines was much more muted in Al-Andalus due to the Arabicization of both the Jewish and Christian communities. The influence of Arabic as a language should not be underestimated, since historically it has been a medium for philosophical and cultural bonding. For this reason the mystical movement of Andalusia and the rest of Spain must be viewed as non-sectarian phenomenon which was embraced regardless of religious affiliation.

The connections between the various religious elites has been clearly documented by past historians. The religious and intellectual elites of the three communities consisted primarily of the clergy, legal scholars, philosophers, and mystics. It is safe to say that the Jewish intellectual and religious milieu was directly and indirectly familiar and conversant with Islamic philosophical and religious thought. The great Maimonides gave praise to the works of Ibn Rushd in his letters and based much of his own thought on the works of Ibn-Sina and Al-Farabi.³ Translations of Al-Ghazali's work have been found in several Hebrew versions most importantly that of Rabbi Abraham Ibn Hasdai.⁴ Furthermore, there is evidence from the Genizah documents in Cairo that certain Jewish thinkers and

religious figures were tutored directly by Muslim mystical thinkers.⁵ As early as the time of Avicenna (Second half of the eleventh century), Ibn Gabirol, the innovations of Muslim thought in Andalusia - in this case of Ibn Masarra - were being integrated with the Jewish thought of the day.⁶ Jewish intellectuals also served as translators of Arabic works into Latin, and were often employed by the leaders of Christendom, such as Frederic II, to serve in the royal court.⁷

Historically speaking, during the medieval era large segments of the Jewish intellectual milieu were exposed to Arabic thought. However, on a much less complicated level Asín Palacios elucidates this relationship by writing: "The fact that the Hebrew people lived together with the Spanish Muslims, whose language they spoke, explains, as a very normal phenomenon, how they became imbued with" Arabic thought.⁸ The intellectual milieu of Andalusia was a reflection of a larger society which functioned according to ideas which were acceptable to all communities. The common cultural heritage of the three religious communities of al-Andalus enabled the intellectual fruits of the different groups to pass directly or indirectly to the various other communities. This process was for the most part a transmission of the ideas of the ruling class, the Arabs, to the Christians and Jews. However, the purpose of this work is not to designate praise for any individual section of Andalusian society, but to accentuate the fact that Andalusian intellectuals were part of an integrated cultural phenomenon which was pluralistic by nature. Whether or not the transmission of thought was direct or indirect is unimportant ; what is important is that the like-mindedness of

thought in Andalusia enabled Jews and Christians to participate fully in Arabic culture.

The mystical renaissance which was facilitated by Ibn Al-'Arabi is a clear example of the fluidity of thought in Andalusian society and the Arabic World as a whole. Whether through direct borrowing or common evolution, many of the same mystical conceptions appeared in the works of all three communities. This section will be focused on the transmission of and subsequent adaptation of Islamic and Arabic thought and mysticism in the Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah of al-Andalus. I will attempt to highlight the similar intellectual and mystical trends of the Jewish community which corresponded with the overall cultural trends of the era. I will examine the work of the pre-Kabbalistic mystic Bahya Ibn Paquda, the ecstatic Kabbalah of Abraham Abulafia, and the practical Kabbalah of Moses De Leon. The immense outgrowth of Kabbalistic thinking during and after the life of Ibn Al-'Arabi must be seen as the result of a common mood and attitude which captivated the imagination of the intellectual milieu of both communities. As the intellectual historian Munk states, "The Jews remained in the same spiritual state until the period when Mohammed and his successors brought about in Asia an immense revolution, and the spiritual monuments of the Mussulman world reacted powerfully upon the synagogue."⁹ The mystical movement of Andalusia must be seen as a facet of the larger process which Munk refers to. To understand fully the unique nature of Spanish Kabbalah, it is fundamental to understand that it was an outgrowth

of a larger societal outpouring of Arabic thought and culture which would eventually have its impact on all of Christendom and Islam.

The intellectual milieu of Spain should therefore be seen as a fairly fluid and flexible segment of Andalusia society in which trends of thought affected and influenced all three religious communities. Regardless of religious affiliation, the various intellectual figures were reacting and basing their work upon the same trends of thought. This phenomenon is a testament to the dominance and creativity of Islamic thought and philosophy in the medieval era. For this reason, the intellectual energy of the three religious communities of Al-Andalus, particularly the Islamic and Jewish communities, can be seen as an intense and fairly unique outburst and embrace of Arabic thought and philosophy.

BAHYA IBN PAQUDA:

Before proceeding to discuss the rise of Spanish Kabbalism I would like to point out that the transmission of Islamic mysticism and its integration into Jewish mysticism was a process which had begun well before the rise of Ibn Al-'Arabi. For this reason, Ibn Al-'Arabi and his offshoots should be seen as the high point of a long and varied tradition. Asín Palacios traces the beginnings and fundamental roots of Andalusian mysticism to the works of Ibn Masarra, and he includes the future work of Jews and Moslems among those which belong to his specific tradition. The mystical work of Bahya Ibn Paquda should be seen as a precursor to the later intense mysticism which engulfed Andalusia. Ibn Paquda lived during the second half of the eleventh century in Muslim Spain, most

probably in Saragossa.¹⁰ He served as a judge in a rabbinic court, and "was for that reason particularly alive to the dangers of mere external observance to which a religion of works and ritual practices was exposed."¹¹ The primary text associated with Ibn Paquda is the *Kitab al-Hidaya ila Fara'id al-Qulub*, or *The Duties of the Heart*.¹² This work is a testament to the evolution of mysticism in Andalusia and proof of Jewish participation in Arabic culture in general.

Ibn Paquda's work introduced the concept into Jewish Andalusian thought that the inner spiritual dimensions of the human was as important as the outward dimension which was prescribed through Jewish law. He attempted to devise a system of spiritual commandments which were of equal importance for every individual Jew. S.D. Goitein refers to his work, *The Duties of the Heart*, as "the first full reception of Muslim ascetic theology into Judaism."¹³ Goitein describes the work as follows:

Bahya's teachings, which designate The Love of God as the center and goal of human life and postulate permanent examination of one's conscience and the practice of world-denial, echo the great pietists of the Muslim East. So greatly was Bahya -- by profession a doctor of Jewish Law-- impressed by them, that he used their writings profusely even when he might as easily have quoted a passage from the Talmud for the same purpose.¹⁴

His writing was so imbued with an Islamic influence that Georges Vajda states, "Bahya still utilizes anecdotes and maxims having as heroes or authors, real or fictitious, Muslim personalities, Mohammed, the caliphs, the saints of Islam, and sometimes Jesus,

but he replaces these proper names with vague and conventional designations."¹⁵ Bahya made a distinct use of Muslim mysticism and Arabic Neo-Platonism, and he structured his work on the basis of Arabic models.¹⁶ Much like the Muslim mystics of his era, Ibn Paquda's work attempted "to lead the reader through the ascending stages of man's inner life, toward spiritual perfection and finally union (or at least communion) with God."¹⁷ He also made use of the Platonic conception regarding the soul, which was quite popular among Muslim mystics, in which "man's soul, which is celestial in origin, is placed, by divine decree, where it runs the risk of forgetting its nature and mission."¹⁸ Furthermore, he made use of the microcosm-macrocosm motif which flourished in later Kabbalistic teachings.¹⁹ Although it is unquestionable that he made use of Arabic mystical thinking, it is unclear what sources he was privy to. It has been theorized that he modeled his work on the basis of Al-Ghazali's structures and ideas, but there is no direct evidence of such a connection.

Bahya's importance lies in the fact that he integrated Arab mysticism with his form of Jewish mysticism. His work and style point to the fact that intellectual trends cut across sectarian differences. The evolution of mystical thinking within al-Andalus can therefore be seen as a process which characterized the intellectual milieu as a whole. It must be pointed out that Bahya was still somewhat unique in his own time. However, his work was a precursor for the flowering of the Spanish Kabbalists. It was soon after the popularization of his own work and that of Ibn Al-'Arabi that the Kabbalah movement began to flourish in Spain.

ABRAHAM ABULAFIA:

The work of the thirteenth century mystic, Abraham Abulafia(1240-1291), represents the culmination of ecstatic Kabbalism in medieval Spain.²⁰ He was born in Saragossa and continued his education in Tudela.²¹ At the age of eighteen the colorful and unusual life of Abulafia began to take shape. It was at this point that he left Spain and began his travels, which eventually took him throughout the Mediterranean as far as Palestine.²² It was not until he returned to Spain in 1270 that he took active interest in the study and practice of Kabbalah. In the short span of time between 1271 and 1291 Abulafia produced an estimated fifty Kabbalistic works.²³ These works consisted primarily of handbooks for mystical experience, interpretations of Classical Jewish texts, and "prophetic" works.²⁴ The most important of these works are the mystical tracts *Hayye ha-Olam ha-Ba*, *Or ha-Sekel*, *Imre Sefer*, *Ozar Eden Ganuz*, and *Sefer-Heseq* and the prophetic tract *Sefer ha-Ot*. These works by Abulafia later came to form the foundation of an entire Kabbalistic school.

His background and education did not include any higher rabbinic learning, and for this reason his thinking was highly susceptible to outside influences, Sufic thought in particular.²⁵ It is not clear whether Abulafia was brought into direct contact with Sufi teaching, but it is apparent that certain facets of Sufic thought found their way into his ecstatic message. His work focused on trying to "unseal the soul, to untie the knots which bind it."²⁶ He sought a channel which would lead to an intimate experience of the Divine.

The primary manner in which this goal was accomplished was through the practice of *hitbodedut* (concentrated thought and seclusion).²⁷ However, this practice was, as Moshe Idel points out, "an indication of external influence."²⁸ As opposed to Islamic and Christian mysticism, Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism had no tradition of seclusionary behavior or meditation. To elaborate this point Idel describes the practice of Kabbalah as, "not involv[ing] any discontinuity in his [the Kabbalist's] outward behavior, as opposed to what generally happened to one who joined a Sufi brotherhood or monastic order."²⁹ Here Abulafia describes the practice of *hitbodedut*:

Be prepared for thy God, O Israelite! Make thyself ready to direct thy heart to God alone. Cleanse thy body and choose a lonely house where none shall hear thy voice. Sit there in thy closet and do not reveal thy secret to any man.³⁰

The practice of seclusion, or *zuhd* (renunciation), was also a practice encouraged by Sufis. Ibn al-'Arabi encouraged the practice and was clearly familiar with it when he writes, "The men of Allah are three. There is no fourth: Men who are dominated by renunciation(*zuhd*), constant devotion(*tabattul*), and pure acts, all of them praiseworthy."³¹

In another work Ibn al-'Arabi praises the practice by writing: "You see kings, like slaves before the pious renouncers(*zuhhad*), because the latter are independent through God."³² Clearly, there is ample evidence to suggest that the Sufi conception of *zuhd* could have been transmitted to Abulafia. The concept was not limited simply to Ibn al-'Arabi and was typical of Sufism in general.

The work of the Persian mystic Al-Ghazali was translated into Hebrew by Ibn Hasdai and dealt specifically with the concept of seclusion.^{3 3} He commanded his followers to, "bring yourself to a place such that their presence or absence becomes a matter of indifference. Then seclude yourself in a corner and make do with the divine service of the commandments as ordered, and sit with a heart empty of all thoughts and worry, and let all your thoughts be only of the supreme God."^{3 4} Once again it is not clear whether Abulafia was brought into direct contact with such Sufi teachings. However, due to the extreme similarity of the practice and the fact that it represented an innovation in Jewish mysticism it appears that the concept was borrowed from the popular Andalusian Sufism of his day.

Abulafia's teachings bear striking resemblance to Sufic thought in other areas as well, such as his emphasis on the recitation of the names of God. His practice of the recitation of the names of God was closely related to his practice of combining the letters of the divine name to achieve revelation. This concept of letter combination and the recitation of the divine names is essentially an innovation in Jewish mysticism which marks a point of integration on Abulafia's part. In later times the teaching of recitation of the Divine names and letter-combination by other Kabbalists was an indication of the influence he had on Kabbalistic thought. In his epistle *Sheva' Netivot ha-Torah*, he states:

This path is the beginning of the wisdom of letter-combination in general, and is only fitting to those who fear God and take heed of His name [Mal 3:16]. And the sixth path.....is suitable to those who practice concentration (hitbodedut), who wish to

approach God, in a closeness such that His activity - may He blessed - will be known in them to themselves.^{3 5}

Abulafia also states at a later time that, "they received an influx of the supernal inner emanation by virtue of the Divine names."^{3 6} A very similar conception of how to achieve union with God is echoed by Ibn Al'Arabi:

The letters emerge from the breath of the human breather, who is the most perfect of the configurations. Through him and his breath become manifest all the letters, for he is upon the Divine Form through the Breath of All-merciful and the manifestation of the letters of engendered existence; so also is the domain of words.^{3 7}

Ibn Al-'Arabi's statement is also in close accord with Abulafia's belief that proper breathing was also a critical facet of hitbodedut.

Abulafia writes in his *Mafteah ha-Sermot* that, "One must take each one of the letters and wave it with the movements of his long breath so that one does not breathe between two letters, but rather one long breath."^{3 8} While Abulafia's statement is much more intricate in its prescriptions, he is primarily concerned, as in Ibn Al-'Arabi, with the connection between the recitation of the names of God and concentration through breathing techniques.

Similarities are also apparent in the descriptions of the mystical experience itself. The experience itself was to be marked by the eventual reaching of an ecstatic state. While much of Kabbalism was influenced by the trends in Islamic thought, Abulafia was somewhat unique in embracing the concept of an ecstatic

mystical experience. He described the mystical experience in *Ozar 'Eden Ganuz* in the following manner:

And you shall feel in yourself an additional spirit arousing you and passing over your entire body and causing you pleasure, and it shall seem to you as if balm has been placed upon you, from your head to your feet, one or more times, and you shall rejoice and enjoy it very much, with gladness and trembling; gladness to your soul and trembling of your body, like one who rides on a horse, who is happy and joyful, while the horse trembles beneath him.³⁹

As opposed to the normal and traditional forms of Jewish mysticism of this period, Abulafia either through contact with the radical aspects of Sufi thought or his own innovation came to regard pleasure as an acceptable and even desired result of a mystical experience. The end result of such experience was the actual attainment or experience of the divine. While such statements were considered somewhat extreme during his day, much of Ibn Al-'Arabi's thought describes the attainment of such an end. He describes in rather convoluted terms the attainment of the ecstatic state as follows:

The finding of the Real in ecstasy is diverse among the finders because of the property of the divine names and the engendered preparedness. Each breath of engendered existence possesses a preparedness not possessed by any other breath. The possessor of the breath (*sahib al-nafas*) is the one who is described by ecstasy.⁴⁰

Ibn Al-'Arabi goes on to describe the ecstatic experience as, "the states (ahwal) that come upon the heart unexpectedly and annihilate it from witnessing itself and those present."^{4 1} For both Abulafia and Ibn Al-'Arabi, the attainment of the ecstatic state was a goal that was achievable by following the proper practices. Through the common practice of seclusion and the recitation of the Divine names, both thinkers saw a direct conduit to the Divine. Although the actual attainment of ecstasy is described in varying ways by each writer, the achievement of ecstasy is a unique and common link between the two mystical thinkers.

Abulafia's mystical thinking was quite innovative in regard to much of the Kabbalistic development of medieval Spain. Idel regards him as the first mystic "to connect *hitbodedut* with a practical, detailed system to give the concept of *hitbodedut* real content: essentially the combination of letters and the vocalization associated with them."^{4 2} This development is strikingly similar to the Sufi practice of *dhikr* and the recitation of the names of God. While the connections between the two systems of thought have not been clearly recognized, it is assumed that the influence of Sufic thought helped shape his brand of ecstatic Kabbalism. Regardless of the exact manner in which such thought was transmitted it is a clear indication that common conceptions and ideas traveled throughout the various communities of Spain. This would seem to point to a general mood or attitude which prevailed throughout the whole of Spain and would support claims that the intellectual milieu of the various religious groups was intellectually and philosophically connected. Whether through cultural exchange or osmotic forces, the thinkers of

Andalusia, regardless of religion, arrived at many of the same conceptions in regard to mystical thought. The intense similarities in philosophical and mystical thinking point to some sort of transmission of thought. Furthermore, the degree of similarity in conception, practice, and writing is a testament to the intense Jewish involvement in and embrace of Arabic thought and culture.

MOSES DE LEON AND THE BOOK OF ZOHAR:

The book of Zohar, or Splendor, is the single most influential literary work of the Kabbalah. The work, which was a collection of several writings, was so highly regarded that Gershom Scholem describes its status in the following manner: "From about 1500-1800, [it was established] as a source of doctrine and revelation equal in authority to the Bible and Talmud, and of the same canonical rank."^{4 3} As opposed to the ecstatic Kabbalism of Abulafia, the Zohar re-established the school of practical Kabbalah. Scholem regards the Zohar as "the complete antithesis of the now familiar system of Abulafia."^{4 4} The nature of the work is quite traditional when compared to Abulafia since it attempts to remain closely connected to the scriptural text.^{4 5} Scholem describes the Zohar as a work of theosophy which "purports to perceive and describe the mysterious workings of the Divinity, perhaps also believing it possible to become absorbed in its contemplation."^{4 6} Theosophy entails a deeper mystical significance which can only be understood through the symbolic.^{4 7} The title, Zohar, refers to the splendor which emanates from the divine light of all things.^{4 8}

Before proceeding with the discussion it is critical to deal with the question of authorship, since it directly affects the logic and consistency of my arguments. Orthodox Kabbalists still argue that the Zohar was written by the second century Palestinian, Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai.⁴⁹ This opinion seems to be fueled and motivated by religious concerns and is quite unscholarly. However, even Scholem admits that at the start of his Zoharic studies he believed the work to be a finished product which was based on ancient teachings and writing fragments.⁵⁰ The book itself is composed of "a multitude of writings of apparently very different character, loosely assembled under the title of "Zohar".⁵¹ For this reason Scholem initially saw the work as simply a compilation of writings by different authors from different periods.⁵² However, through his work on the Zohar, which covered nearly half of a century, Scholem came to regard the work as the product of the thirteenth century Spanish Kabbalist, Moses de Leon. He noted that, "The entire work belongs to the last quarter of the thirteenth century."⁵³ Scholem arrived at his conclusions through a philological examination of the works, which were written in Aramaic. Scholem's philological examination of the *Zohar's* language is succinctly stated when he writes:

The Aramaic of the *Zohar* is a purely artificial affair, a literary language employed by a writer who obviously knew no other Aramaic than that of certain Jewish literary documents, and who fashioned his own style in accordance with definite subjective criteria.⁵⁴

Scholem also attributed the peculiarities of the work to the influence of the common Medieval Hebrew of the era.⁵⁵ Based on these exhaustive studies Scholem finally attributed the work to the Spanish Kabbalist Moses de Leon.

The fact that the Zohar was written during the thirteenth century is not surprising considering the general proliferation of mystical thought in all of Spain. Furthermore, the similarities between the Zohar and other Islamic mystical works can be seen as further proof of the immense impact of Arabic mysticism upon Jewish mysticism.

The conception of the dual meaning of a text- exoteric and esoteric- was adopted by Judaism through the influence of the Arabs and their mystical thought. Through this process the Kabbalists sought, "to rediscover their own world in the depths of Holy Scriptures."⁵⁶ The Arabs who adhered to the belief that the Quran could be seen as having an inner or mystical meaning were termed *bataniyya*. This tradition was clearly an innovation on the part of medieval Judaism since there existed no such tradition in ancient Jewish teaching. Scholem also points out that "It is interesting to note that the terms used by many Jewish philosophers to denote these two levels of meaning (*bitson* and *penimi*, outward and inward) never occur in this context in older Jewish sources, but are literal translations of the corresponding Arabic terms."⁵⁷ Based upon the existence of an inner meaning of the text, the Spanish Kabbalists and the Zoharic scholars attempted to provide a mystical interpretation concerning the inner meaning.⁵⁸ Scholem notes that "In many passages of the Zohar the principle is developed that the

Torah is at once hidden and manifest, esoteric and exoteric, '*oraita sethim ve-galya*.'⁵⁹ This dualism further marked the entire realm of the human world and was not simply limited to scripture. In the Zohar, Moses De Leon describes the dual meaning of scripture as follows:

Verily the Torah lets out a word and emerges a little from her sheath, and then hides herself again. But she does this only for those who know and obey her....So is it with the word of the Torah, which reveals herself only to those who love her. The Torah knows that the mystic haunts the gate of her house. What does she do? For within her hidden place she discloses her face and beckons to him and returns forthwith to her place and hides.⁶⁰

The Torah and the rest of the symbolic world must be seen as having two meanings. The esoteric meaning or inner meaning is what will be uncovered by the mystic. Moses De Leon goes on to describe the mystic who sees the two meanings as

A man [who] is then termed perfect, a master of the house, to whom she discloses all her secrets, concealing nothing. She says to him: do you see now how many mysteries were contained in that sign I gave you on the first day, and what its true meaning is?⁶¹

De Leon goes on in another passage to further elaborate the inner meaning found in scripture:

Rabbi Simeon said: If a man looks upon the Torah as merely a book presenting narratives and everyday matters, alas for him! Such a Torah, one treating with everyday concerns, and indeed a more excellent one, we too, even we, could compile. More than that, in the possession of the rulers of the world there are books of even greater merit, and these we would emulate if we wished to compile some such torah. But the Torah, in all of its words, holds supernal truths and sublime secrets.⁶²

The same conception of an outward and inward meaning was expressed by Ibn Al-'Arabi regarding the outer and inner content of truth. He stated:

Every seeker of his Lord must be alone with himself with his Lord in his inmost consciousness, since God gave man an outward dimension (*zahir*) and an inward dimension (*batin*) only so that he might be alone with God in his inward dimension.⁶³

In the nineteenth chapter of the *Futuhāt*, Ibn Al-'Arabi elaborates his own conception of the disclosure of knowledge by writing:

Know that increase and decrease has another chapter which we shall also mention, God willing. It is as follows: God placed within each thing - and the soul of man is one of the things - a manifest dimension (*zahir*) and a nonmanifest dimension (*batin*). Through the manifest dimension, man perceives things which are called "entities", and through the nonmanifest

dimension, he perceives things which are called
"knowledge."⁶⁴

Since the concept of dual meaning is absent from any ancient Judaic sources, it is reasonable to assume that the sudden outpouring of Spanish Kabbalistic writing, particularly the Zohar, which endorse an exoteric and esoteric meaning, was in large part influenced by the Sufi *bataniyya*.⁶⁵ There are no Jewish sources which mention the dual meaning before the ninth and tenth centuries.⁶⁶ Kabbalistic teaching which emerged from Spain shortly after the death of Ibn Al-'Arabi contained clear mention of the dual meaning of the scripture and the world. Once again, it is not clear whether Moses De Leon followed and imitated the concepts of Ibn Al-'Arabi. However, what is clear, is that the same mystical thoughts and trends were circulating through Muslim and Jewish circles.

Another facet of the Zohar, the reliance on the microcosm-macrocosm motif, is also found in the Sufic thought of the era.⁶⁷ Alexander Altmann traces the common origins of this motif to the Greek maxim "Know thyself."⁶⁸ Ibn Al-'Arabi expressed this same formula when he quoted the Prophet as saying, "He who knows himself knows his Lord."⁶⁹ This concept can be traced back to Socrates and its later elaboration by Hellenistic philosophers. It was transferred to the Arabs and became widespread among mystics and philosophers such as Hunayn Ibn-Ishaq, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Al-'Arabi. The concept of self-knowledge was transferred to medieval Judaism from the Arab philosophers.⁷⁰

The microcosm motif was elaborated and interpreted by thinkers such as Al-Ghazali and Al-Hallaj before being adopted by

Ibn Al-'Arabi.⁷¹ The Syriac-speaking Christian mystic, Mar Ishaq of Nineveh, who was earlier discussed, also displayed a knowledge and usage of the microcosmic motif in his primitive mystical thought. In this manner, the pre-cursors of Ibn Al-'Arabi's conceptions can be seen in Mar Ishaq's declaration that, "the ladder to the Kingdom is hidden within thee and within thy soul."⁷² Similarly, he admonishes his readers regarding the path to illumination, "Thereby thou wilt find Him that is within thee. For to the humble the mysteries are revealed."⁷³ Mar Ishaq later goes on to write that, "Grace makes manifest all the glory which God has hidden in the nature of the soul, showing the soul this glory and making it glad because of its own beauty. Moreover it does not remember the body which hid its own beauty from its sight. Then it sees heavenly beauties in itself, the exact mirror which by its great purity shows the beauty of faces."⁷⁴ I cite these quotations of Mar Ishaq as further evidence of the foundational, evolutionary, and organic character of intellectual traditions, in this case, the mystical tradition of the Near East. From Mar Ishaq's fairly primitive vision of the microcosm was later elaborated the conceptions of 'Ibn Al-'Arabi and the Zoharic formulation of the microcosm.

Ibn Al-'Arabi's conception of the microcosm is nicely summarized in the following statement:

God formed a knowledge of Himself; thereby He knew the world, and for this reason, it emerged in a Form [sura]. And God created man as an exalted design by summarizing the ideas [ma'ani] of the macrocosm, and made him a manuscript

containing in miniature everything in the macrocosm....With regard to him the Prophet has said, God created Adam after his own image.⁷⁵

What is interesting about this conception is that it is based upon Biblical and Greek evidence.⁷⁶ Both these realms of thought were clearly accessible to the medieval Jew, and, therefore, this idea passed from Islam to the Jews because it was a concept founded in the singular common heritage of both religions. The complex medieval concept of the microcosm in Judaism was primarily concerned with the construction of man in the image of God. In the *Tiqqune Ha-Zohar*, which is a commentary on the first section of the Torah, it is said, "The limbs of man are all arranged in the order of the Beginning [al sidre bereshit] and man is therefore called a microcosm['olm qatan]."⁷⁷ This statement refers to the Beginning which represents "the mystical days of creation which are identical with the six lower Sefirot(six mystical days of creation)."⁷⁸ The statement implies that self-knowledge will lead to the knowledge of God. There are also several Zoharic passages which refer to man as "comprising everything."⁷⁹ One such passage explains the relationship as follows: "God created man in His image, in the manner [ke-gawna] of the Ten Sefirot."⁸⁰ Once again, the passage is a direct elaboration of the Delphic Maxim's exhortation to "Know thyself." This same self-knowledge is what enabled the Kabbalist to eventually acquire the knowledge of God.

The relationship of Islamic and Jewish mysticism shows a clear connection in regard to the microcosm-macrocosm motif, and is also deeply connected to its antecedents in Classical and Christian

thought. The resemblance in the conception of mystical thought arises from the twofold foundation of a common religious and philosophical heritage and the interconnectedness of the intellectual milieu. Based upon the common cultural heritage that Von Grunebaum refers to, both communities were able to elaborate and transmit their variations of the Delphic Maxim.

The purpose of this essay was to prove the existence of an interconnected Andalusian intellectual milieu, and to build upon my earlier work regarding the existence of a much broader and historically-connected mystical intellectual tradition in the Near East and in the Mediterranean basin. I chose to approach this topic by an analysis of the intellectual milieu, so as to determine the degree to which the Arabic thought and culture of the day were accepted and elaborated upon by the Jewish elites of Al-Andalus. The mystical outpouring from Spain was a movement which engulfed not only the Islamic and Jewish communities, but also the Christians. Based on their common heritage and common cultural perception, Islamic and Jewish mysticism evolved and accommodated much of the same thought in their mystical conceptions. From pre-Kabbalistic writings, to ecstatic Kabbalah, and finally practical Kabbalah the nature of Mystical thought was profoundly shaped by the cultural context in which it arose. The similarities in design and philosophy are a direct outgrowth of the singular heritage of both communities and the existence of an Andalusian intellectual milieu in which common ideas were transmitted.

The variety and creativity of the ideas which shaped the intellectual milieu is clear from the wide array of mystical practices which have been discussed. Aside from the general aura of Sufi piety that surrounded the different genres, each mystic group and movement varied in its specific teachings. On the most basic, yet revolutionary level, all the mystical groups discussed adopted the Sufic concept that the Divine could be attained through mystical experiences. The strictures regarding the actual method of attainment differed dramatically between the various groups. However, each mystical movement did borrow and participate heavily in the dominant and flourishing Arabic culture of the era. It should be noted that the Arabic culture of the era was intensely involved in the transmission and reconciliation of Greek thought with mystical speculation. This feature of Arabic thought was also transmitted to the intellectual elites of the other religious communities. In Ibn-Paquda's pioneering work there is an emphasis on Neo-Platonism and Muslim mystical concepts regarding the ascension to the Divine. Abulafia borrows heavily from the ecstatic mysticism of the day which emphasized dhikr, zuhd, breathing techniques, and the eventual ecstatic union with God. In the Zoharic works of Moses de Leon the emphasis is placed on the popular conception of bataniyya, or dual meaning, and the motif of the microcosm-macrocosm. The various mystical movements all attempted to achieve a higher knowledge of the Divine through mystical experience.

The remarkable feature of the Andalusian intellectual milieu, much like the earlier intellectual milieu of Abbassid Baghdad, was

the degree to which popular philosophical and mystical ideas were transferred and transmitted to the other religious communities.

Based upon their common cultural heritage, their use of Arabic, and the creativity of the medieval Arab world, the intellectual milieu of Al-Andalus, regardless of sectarian differences, was able to flourish and produce a remarkable outpouring of mystical thinking.

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ENDNOTES:

1. Asín Palacios, p.xi
2. Von Grunebaum, *Medieval*, p.30
3. Munk, *Philosophy*, p.29
4. Idel, "Hitbodedut", p.408
5. Spector, p.153
6. Asín Palacios, p.130
7. Munk, *Philosophy*, p.29
8. Asín Palacios, p.131
9. Munk, *Philosophy*, p.15
10. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, p.105
11. Werblowsky, p.220
12. *Ibid.*, p.220
13. Goitein, p.152
14. *Ibid.*, p.152
15. Vajda, p.87, translation of original French: Bahya utilise
coramment des anecdotes et des sentences ayant pour héros ou

auteurs, réels ou fictifs, des personnalités musulmanes, Mohammed, les califes, les saints de l'Islam, et parfois Jésus, mais il remplace partout les noms propres par des désignations vagues et conventionnelles.

16. *Encyclopedia Judaica* , p.105

17. *Ibid.* , p.106

18. *Ibid.* , p.107

19. *Ibid.* , p.107

20. Idel, "Hitbodedut" , p.407

21. Idel, *Abraham*, p.2

22. *Ibid.* , p.2

23. *Ibid.* , p.4

24. *Ibid.* , p.4

25. Idel, "Hitbodedut" , p.407

26. *Ibid.* , p.410

27. *Ibid.* , p.409

28. *Ibid.* , p.408

29. Idel, *Abraham* , p.4

30. Jacobs, p.62

31. Chittick, p.373

32. *Ibid.* , p.316

33. Idel, "Hitbodedut" , p.408

34. *Ibid.* , p.408

35. *Ibid.* , p.411

36. Idel, *Abraham*, p.19

37. Chittick, p.129

38. Idel, *Abraham* , p.24

39. *Ibid.* , p.188
40. Chittick, p.212
41. Idel, "Hitbodedut" , p.412
42. *Ibid.* , p.412
43. Scholem, *Zohar* , p,7
44. Scholem, *Trends*, p.205
45. *Ibid.* , p.205
46. *Ibid.* , p.206
47. *Ibid.* , p.207
48. Bokser, p.116
49. Jacobs, p.80
50. Scholem, *Trends* , p.159
51. *Ibid.* , p.159
52. *Ibid.* , p.159
53. Scholem, *Origins* , p.5 ; Fro a complete and detailed account of Scholem's philological reasoning, see his work *Major Trends In Jewish Mysticism* .
54. Scholem, *Trends* , p.113
55. *Ibid.* , p.113
56. Scholem, *Kabbalah and its Symbolism* , p.51
57. *Ibid.* , p.51
58. *Ibid.* , p.51
59. *Ibid.* , p.51
60. *Ibid.* , p.55
61. *Ibid.* , p.56
62. Scholem, *Zohar* , p.121
63. Chittick, p.158

64. *Ibid.* , p.218
65. Altmann, p.198
66. *Ibid.* , p.198
67. *Ibid.* , p.213
68. *Ibid.* , p.202
69. *Ibid.* , p.202
70. *Ibid.* , p.198
71. *Ibid.* , p.207 and Chittick, p.16
72. Wensinck, p.8
73. Altmann, p.36
74. *Ibid* , p.349
75. *Ibid.* , p.208
76. *Ibid.* , pp.196-199
77. *Ibid.* , p.208
78. *Ibid.* , p.208
79. *Ibid.* , p.209
80. *Ibid.* , p.210

CONCLUSION:

It has been my aim to document the existence of a continuous, organic, and evolving intellectual tradition, namely the mystical tradition, in the Near East and Mediterranean basin. My work has also been an attempt to focus on the symbiotic and synergistic character of intellectual advancement in the region. By focusing on the common motifs and trends that colored the works of intellectuals and religious figures of the three major monotheistic religions, I have attempted to demonstrate that due to their common cultural and intellectual backgrounds the various sectarian groups were able to communicate and influence the evolution of Near Eastern thought. From my work it is clear that the various intellectual figures of the Near East and Mediterranean basin were exposed to and adapted the works, thought, and writings of other intellectuals. What is important in this point is the fact that sectarian difference did not put an end to the transmission and adaptation of intellectual innovations. Furthermore, it has been my hope to demolish simplistic divisions and constructions that have essentialised the nature of difference, be it Islamic versus Christian or Western versus Eastern. Much of the legacy of this dynamic intellectual period was bequeathed to Europe and helped to fuel and expand the boundaries and influence of Near Eastern figures. It has never been my desire to domesticate and fashion history in an appealing light, but instead to realize areas of convergence and commonality. It is clear that sectarian tension and violence existed within the Near East and that European interests often clashed with those of the Arabic World. However, such historical political differences and the clashes and

conflicts of the present should not cloud or obscure the fact and nature of intellectual borrowing, adaptation, and reformulation that marked the Near East and the Mediterranean basin during the late Classical and Medieval periods.