



<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>

Theses Digitisation:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/research/enlighten/theses/digitisation/>

This is a digitised version of the original print thesis.

Copyright and moral rights for this work are retained by the author

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge

This work cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Enlighten: Theses

<https://theses.gla.ac.uk/>
research-enlighten@glasgow.ac.uk

**The Role of The Intellect In The Medieval Jewish and
Islamic Mystical Traditions: A Comparative Study
Between R.Abulafia and Shaykh Suhrawardi**

By

MARLINE SHAHEEN

**A Special Study presented as part of the
requirement for the degree of
Master of Theology**

**University of Glasgow
March 2000**

ProQuest Number: 10390791

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10390791

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

GLASGOW
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

11895 (copy 2)

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to many people whose constant support and guidance in every stage of the study was of incalculable value. I am indebted to Dr Joel Marcus, lecturer in Biblical Studies at Boston University School of Theology, who supervised the Jewish section of this study. Also, I am in great debt to Dr Lloyd Ridgeon, lecturer in Islamic and Persian Studies at the department of Theology and Religious Studies in Glasgow University, whose constant moral and intellectual support at every stage of the study was of immense value.

I am also indebted to the British Library for their kind understanding and help they gave during my visits to the library. I should also like to express my appreciation to the School of Oriental and African Studies for allowing me to visit their library.

I am grateful to the Scholarship awarded to me by Dickson/Findlater/Jamieson, and for the financial support I received from the Airey Neave Trust.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the constant support of family and friends.

Abstract

The intellect has a unique role in the mystical transformation. Mystics claim that the intellect as a mystical tool leads to the perfection of the self. The state of perfection is achieved when the true human essence and meaning are realised through this mystical intellect. Thus, mysticism has a rational aspect to it which can be defined in terms of the role the intellect in the mystical experience leading to perfection.

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTARCT	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
- Kabbalah	6
- Sufism	11
PART ONE-R. ABULAFIA	16
- Abulafia's Life.	17
- Abulafia's Works.	19
- Abulafia's Hermeneutics.	20
Abulafia's Spiritual Psychology	23
- The Biblical Definition of the term 'Spirit'.	23
- The Kabbalistic and the Philosophical Understanding of 'Spirit'.	26
- One Spirit with Different Gradations.	33
The Intellect (<i>Sekhel</i>)	38
- What is <i>Sekhel</i> ?	38
- Human and Divine <i>Sekhel</i> .	39
- The Role of the Active Intellect in the act of Intellection.	42
The Relation of the Soul to The Intellect.	46
Conclusion	48

	<u>Page</u>
PART TWO – SHAYKH SUHRAWARDI.	50
- Suhrawardi's Life.	51
- Suhrawardi's Works.	53
- Suhrawardi's Hermeneutics.	54
Suhrawardi's Spiritual Psychology	58
- The Spirit (<i>Ruh</i>), Soul (<i>Nafs</i>), and body (<i>Jism</i>) in the Qur'an.	58
- The Sufic and The Philosophical Understanding of "Spirit".	62
- The Human Spirit as One, but with Different Gradationds.	68
The Intellect (<i>'Aql</i>)	73
- What is <i>'Aql</i>	73
- <i>'Aql</i> as an 'Instinct'	74
- The Mystical <i>'Aql</i> .	76
- The Role of <i>Basira</i> in the Mystical Experience.	78
The Relation of <i>Ruh</i> to <i>'Aql</i> .	82
Conclusion	83
CONCLUSIONS	85
- Preliminaries	85
I. The Intellect As The Essence of Humanity	87
II. Perfection of the Soul, the 'Ideal Human Being'.	92
III. Philosophy Or Mystical Interpretation.	96
BIBLIOGRAPHY	98
APPENDIX A	105
APPENDIX B	106
APPENDIX C	107
APPENDIX D	108

Introduction

Mysticism is a very complicated phenomena, and much of its complexity may be seen in the problems encountered when investigating it. The first problem one encounters in the study of mysticism is how to define this term, for the simple reason that mysticism has no set and unified dogmas and doctrines to help us in this respect. Mysticism may include the experiences, visions, practical guidelines, and poetry which is so distinctive and fascinating. Thus, mysticism is a universal phenomena because every religion, theistic or non-theistic, has a mystical tradition which is unique to that tradition. At the same time, every religion has a mystical tradition that flourishes within it, and this has led many scholars of mysticism to speak, for example, of the Jewish mystical tradition, the Islamic mystical tradition, the Christian mystical tradition, and so on. The above classification of mysticism according to religious beliefs led to the production of many studies concerned with the similarities and differences between two mystical traditions¹. Therefore, we can say that a comparative study is considered to be one of the positive elements that might contribute to the understanding of mysticism and mystical experience. In addition to the above comparative approach to mysticism, there is the Psychological approach that investigates the human nature employed by mystics. Both these approaches to mysticism provided much understanding of this phenomena. Thus, we can conclude by saying mysticism is so broad a phenomena that is not, and cannot be, confined within boundaries.

The problem that arises from the word mysticism is how to find a precise definition for it, when in fact mysticism or mystical is an incommensurable phenomena that can assume many forms. The ambiguity of this term is clearly demonstrated by examining some definitions of mysticism given by some scholars. For example, Inge defines mysticism as "The attempt to realise, in thought and feeling, the immense of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal"². On the other hand, for Wainwright mysticism is defined in terms of a "Unitary states which are Noetic, but lack specific empirical context"³. While for Underhill mysticism is:

The expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order, whatever be the theological formula under which that order is understood.⁴

¹ Such as Zaener's Study (1961) Mysticism Sacred and Profane, (Clarendon Press, Oxford), and Isutzu's Study (1983) Sufism and Taoism (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles).

² Inge, W (1899), Christian Mysticism, (Methuen, London), p.5.

³ Wainwright, W (1981), Mysticism, (University of Wisconsin, Madison), p.1.

⁴ Underhill, E (1912) Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development in Man's Spiritual

Each of the above definitions views mysticism from a different angle. Inge points to the relation of the *eternal* to the *temporal*, while for Wainwright it is described by its *noetic* quality, and for Underhill it is seen from the *transcendental* aspect. This suggests that there is no one agreed definition of mysticism to be considered as accurate or complete. However, one can add to the above definitions of mysticism and say mysticism is the quest for the true essence of humanity, in an attempt to bridge any gap that might exist between humans and Reality.

Having defined mysticism, it is appropriate here to say something about different elements that are definite in the mystical experience. The first is the mystic who is convinced that there exists a reality beyond the present one, and who aims at establishing an emotional and spiritual bond with it. This reality, which is the second element of mysticism, pervades everything. It is real for the mystic and can be known and felt by following a specific path of contemplation and meditation. The above reality is referred to sometimes as the *Ultimate, One, Real, God, Intellect*, and by many other names. The third element in the mystical experience is the path followed to reach this reality. These paths are heterogeneous in character and are different across all religions.

Generally, mystics tend to express the above reality in a paradoxical way through the use of a cryptic language, in addition to the metaphors and symbols used to convey this reality. Perhaps it is safe to say that much of the problem posed by mysticism lies in this very characteristic. It is in fact difficult to discern most of the time what is really conveyed in these mystical writings, and this is the second problem any student of mysticism might be faced with. The reason behind the use of such a language is that human language is limited and insufficient to describe God as God is. Thus, it is the task of the scholar to be familiar, as much as possible, with this type of language and with all its obscurities.

This study is concerned with the Jewish and Islamic Mystical traditions in medieval times, and one mystic has been chosen from each tradition for comparative reasons. In addition, a brief introduction to both Kabbalah and Sufism will be given below, which will give us a flavour of both traditions.

It is believed that these two traditions were heavily influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, especially that of Aristotle, Plato, and particularly Plotinus⁵. These philosophical systems spread between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, and were thoroughly studied

Consciousness, 4th ed. (Meuthen, London), p.xiv.

⁵For more information on this topic, see *History of Jewish Philosophy*, Routledge History of World Philosophies', ed.Frank D and Leamna O,(Routledge, London), 1997, vol.II, pp.149-187.

and investigated. This influence of philosophy on religious thought became more prominent and identifiable after many of Aristotle's works were studied by Muslim philosophers; such as al-Farabi, Ibn-Bajja, Ibn Tufayl, Avicenna, and Averroes. This influence, of course, created a tension between the philosophers and the proponents of Islamic sciences (*Fuqaha*⁶), and it was "bitterly resented and disparaged by the intellectual elite of the Islamic world"⁷. The reason behind this resentment and bitterness is that this influence was seen as alien to the spirit of Islamic Law and was viewed as a threat to its spirit.

The role philosophy played in medieval Judaism can be said to be of a minor affect⁸. However, there were some contacts between Jewish and Islamic philosophy at a specific period. Jewish philosophers came to know the works of Aristotle and Plato through the works of the Muslim philosophers mentioned above, whose works were translated into the Hebrew⁹. The rapid spread of philosophy meant that much of theological thought became saturated with philosophical terminology, and in this respect mysticism was affected by philosophy to the extent that much of mystical literature was littered with philosophical terms and concepts. Not only that, philosophy's search for answers to many problems in life; such as God, the cosmos, and human beings was so attractive to some mystics that they adopted a whole philosophical system of thought. Such attraction is best illustrated in Abulafia's system of Kabbalah, which is heavily dependant on Aristotle's thought system. Although, other concepts might be found in Abulafia's thought, such as neo-Platonism, as will be explained below.

The adoption of philosophical terminology and thought led to the appearance of a common language which was shared between philosophers and mystics, and this is significant. So, it is appropriate here to ask: Why did philosophy appeal to mystics in general?

The appeal of philosophy to mystics is a fascinating subject, and deserves an independent study; however, a few general reasons will be identified here for the sake of clarification. Philosophy's attraction for mystics can be seen in that both view existence in a similar manner, this view is connected with the belief that a more serene reality does exist, which is accessible through a specific path. This view is different from the traditional perspective, where this reality can be reached after death. However, this reality for the

⁶*Fuqaha* is from the word *Fiqh*, which means *Jurisprudence*.

⁷Leaman O (1988), *Averroes and His Philosophy* (Clarendon Press, Oxford), p.5.

⁸See Frank E and Leaman O, op cit. p.93.

⁹See Leaman O, op cit. p.9. Also see *History of Islamic Philosophy* part I, Routledge History of World Philosophies, ed. by Nasr H and Leaman O, (Routledge, London), 1996, vol.I.

philosophers is pure intellect and can be reached through intellectual and mental exercise, whereas for the mystics this reality is God the Creator. One aspect of the reality of God the Creator, is the possibility to know Him and have an intimate relationship with Him, through a mystical path which begins with contemplation. This contemplative life constitutes the practical dimension of mysticism, which is different from the theoretical approach of philosophy. Secondly, both philosophy and mysticism are concerned with topics such as the nature of God, the One, or the Intellect, the meaning of life, and human beings in relation to both God and the cosmos. Both address the above topics through being and existence, and they link it with the understanding of ontology and epistemology (theory of knowledge). The above two sets (that is being and existence, and ontology and epistemology) are connected in both systems of thought. However, for mystics the authenticity of revelation is set above that of reason, for creation and revelation are inseparable events, and revelation, for mystics, illuminates what reason cannot apprehend. Therefore, this hidden reality for mystics becomes the subject of the mystical contemplation, which is something difficult for the philosophers to follow, and this is the main difference between the two traditions.

Finally, the reason for the shared outlook between philosophers and mystics can be found in that both traditions approach the Biblical and Qur'anic text from an angle different from that of the established religious authorities. Philosophers view these passages in terms of allegories, whereas for the mystics symbols point out to another reality. Thus, the hidden reality is portrayed through symbolic language. This symbolic language plays an important part, not only as an affirmation of the hidden reality, but also of the great image it communicates to the mystic as objects of thought. For example, some Kabbalists would consider the *Names of God* contained in Torah as symbols or objects of thought leading to Reality, which is God. In the same way, Sufis would contemplate the declaration of faith "There is no other god, but God" as the object of thought leading to Reality. All of this will be explained later in this study. Therefore we must conclude that such adoption of philosophical terminology should not be viewed as a legitimate way to make mysticism rational or appealing. On the contrary, the use of such a terminology indicates that mystics perceive that the mystical experience has a rational and intellectual aspect to it. This rationality of the mystical experience could be viewed in the role the intellect plays in this experience. It seems that the intellect plays a major role in the mystical attainment of a knowledge believed to be hidden and out of reach. Such a view is present in both the Jewish and Islamic mystical traditions to the extent that the mystical experience is understood in terms of the intellectual apprehension. In addition to the philosophical terminology, mystics are also affected by the philosophical tripartite division of the soul; however, these divisions are understood from a Biblical and Qur'anic

perspective. Added to this, when it comes to describe in clear words the role of the intellect in the mystical experience mystical language becomes much affected by philosophical terminology. The reason for this is that a description of the intellect as a faculty is not found in the Bible and the Qur'an. Added to that, the intellect in these two traditions is linked with the spirit or soul and becomes part of it sometimes, at other times the intellect is seen as separate from the spirit. That is why we have to look at the intellect and the spirit individually, and in their relation with each other, which is of paramount importance for the understanding of the mystical experience. Because such closeness exists between mysticism and philosophy they have become so entangled that any attempt to separate the two is futile. Even so, many studies have attempted to disentangle mysticism and philosophy (such as that of Scholem)¹⁰.

This study aims to identify the role of the intellect in the mystical experience in two medieval thought systems. Examining the role of the intellect will enable us to identify a mystical definition of the intellect in both systems, and to understand that the role of the mystical intellect is viewed as a hermeneutical method employed by mystics to apprehend divine reality. Furthermore, as the subtitle indicates, a comparison is included in this study between the views of Kabbalah represented by R. Abulafia, and the views of Sufism represented by Shaykh Suhrawardi. Such a comparison requires thorough examination and analysis. Consequently, an effort will be made in this study to expose independently the crucial role of the intellect in the mystical experience in each thought system, and to proceed further into comparative conclusions.

With this in mind, the first half will be devoted exclusively to expose and analyse Abulafia's understanding of the intellect, while the second half will be devoted entirely to an analysis of Suhrawardi's understanding of the intellect. Only in part three is an attempt made to compare the two views based on the results of the analysis in the previous two parts.

A starting point for this comparison is provided by the fact that the mystical experience in both traditions is based on two dimensions of the human structure, the spirit and the intellect. These two dimensions are also viewed as important in the process of becoming, in the mystical sense. Thus in both traditions the ontological structure is related to epistemology.

In accordance with the above plan, the first half of the study will include a brief introduction to Abulafia's life, work, and hermeneutics which is relevant to this study. It

¹⁰See Scholem (1995), *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (Schocken Books, New York).

will also be concerned with an exposition of his spiritual psychology including the spirit at all levels. This part will also include an explication of Abulafia's understanding of the intellect, which is philosophical in nature. An examination of the relation between the spirit and the intellect will prove vital to the understanding of Abulafia's view of *mystical union*; so that an analysis of this relation is included. At the start, it must be stressed that many studies have been carried out on Abulafia's thought, specifically those of M. Idel, and the present study is heavily dependent upon them. However, this study is exclusively concerned with a specific area in Abulafia's thought, intellect. Therefore, this is not an exhaustive study of Abulafia; rather it is based primarily on his book *Or ha-Sekhel (Light of the Intellect)*¹¹. However, references from his other books relevant to the discussion will be cited and most of the translations used here comes from Idel's works on Abulafia.

In the second part, a similar structure will be followed by outlining Suhrawardi's life, work, and hermeneutics. The terms spirit (*ruh*), soul (*nafs*), and the intellect (*'aql*) will be isolated and analysed, and in the final section an attempt will be made to establish a relationship between *ruh* and *'aql*. In addition, this study is concerned with Suhrawardi's views found in his book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif (Gifts of Gnosis)*, which is a compendium on Sufism.

It is appropriate now to include in this introduction a general description of Kabbalah and Sufism.

Kabbalah

The word Kabbalah is used to refer to the Jewish Mystical tradition. The word Kabbalah literally means "Something handed down by tradition"¹². The word itself comes from the root **k-b-l** which means "to accept" or to "receive", thus making it a tradition which is received orally and passed down from teacher to disciple. Two aspects of Kabbalah are important. First is the oral character which means that it is equated with the oral Torah. Secondly, Kabbalah is identified with the words of the Prophets recorded in the *Talmud*. These two aspects of Kabbalah are interrelated and are important in the understanding of this tradition. Thus, Kabbalah includes all the Biblical teachings, all the esoteric teachings contained in the *Talmud* and the *Mishnah*, that are speculative in

¹¹This book is still in a manuscript form, and is found in many libraries in Europe.

¹²Scholem G (1978), *Kabbalah* (Meridian Books, New York), p.3.

nature, and all the forms of Jewish Mysticism, Kabbalah is therefore pluriform in nature. The great scholar of mysticism, Scholem, has highlighted the diversity of Kabbalah by stating that it is "Mysticism in fact, but at the same time it is both esotericism and theosophy"¹³. The term Kabbalah evolved from a *Talmudic* concept to a tradition that is more subtle, and Kabbalists consider themselves to be inheritors of a tradition that goes back to the "Period of the second Temple and became active factors in Jewish history"¹⁴. The role Kabbalah played in Jewish mentality must be seen in the form of authentication it assumes, and it must be remembered that this form is set in the Bible, the *Mishnah*, and the *Talmud*.

Kabbalists believe this tradition is so sacred that it cannot be put in a written form. It had to be transmitted orally. Despite this conviction, many Kabbalists composed many works concerned with the teachings of this Kabbalah, and these works were so diverse. Consequently, the study of Kabbalah became limited and restricted by many Kabbalists. Because of its esoteric nature certain criteria were imposed. For example:

- They limit the age of initiates.
- They specify certain ethical qualities required of initiates in order to receive this tradition.
- Kabbalists stress that the number of students before whom this teaching is revealed must be more than two.

The esoteric nature of Kabbalah is also associated with the belief that this Kabbalah contains certain revelations that are primordial in nature, and given by God to Adam. These revelations are connected with the concept of the *Zelem Elohim* (image of God), as declared in Genesis 1:27 "So God created humankind in his image". This *Zelem Elohim*, as will be discussed below, became the parameter for the understanding of Man by Kabbalists. Man as such, is believed to have a unique nature which yearns to return to its Creator. This unique nature is defined in the Kabbalah as the soul or the spiritual dimension of humanity.

In addition, Kabbalists believe that these revelations contain the wisdom (mentioned in some of the apocryphal books) that was associated with special people in the Hebrew Bible, such as Enoch¹⁵. We can conclude therefore that a connection was made by Kabbalists between primordial knowledge and wisdom, and the teachings of the

¹³Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.3.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵An apocryphal book known as *The Book of Enoch* was found at Qumran, among other scrolls.

Kabbalah. This, of course, gave the Kabbalah a second form of authenticity and identification, making the Kabbalists inheritors of esoteric wisdom.

The Torah contains many themes which became the objects of speculation by the Kabbalists. For example the creation stories in Genesis 1-2 are interpreted by Kabbalists as the creation of the world through the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the ten *Sefirot*. These ten *Sefirot* represent the ten emanations from God (see appendix A). These speculations on Genesis 1-2 were recorded in a systematic way in a book called *Sefer Yezirah* (*The Book of Creation*)¹⁶. This book's thought is much derived from another book *Ma'aseh Bereshit* (*Acts of Creation*), which tells of the acts of creation¹⁷. In addition to these writings, there existed a third one which was similar in nature to the two above, the book *Ma'aseh Merkabah* (*The Works of the Chariot*). This volume was a focus of mystical speculation and included visions of the Throne and the Chariots recorded in the book of Ezekiel. From these passages it is possible to measure and calculate the Divine Body (*Shi'ur Komah*)¹⁸. These speculations also included descriptions of the ascent into the Palaces (*heikalot*)¹⁹ and their full description together with descriptions of the angels as the guardians of these *heikalots*.

In addition to the Torah and these speculative works, there exists in Kabbalah another mystical theme derived from the figure of the Prophet Moses. The reception of Divine revelation by Moses is understood to be unique to him, and Kabbalists believe that God gave Moses a kind of knowledge which is esoteric in nature (that is oral). This knowledge is only revealed to those who are willing to follow the paths of Kabbalah. Thus, for the Kabbalists Moses was not only a Prophet but also a great mystic who possessed knowledge directly from God. This knowledge is available to the Kabbalist. Kabbalistic aim was to establish and connect their being with God. This connection was shaped by the theosophical speculation mentioned above. However, the theosophical nature of Kabbalah did not last for long, and there later appeared another tradition of Kabbalah that was particularly concerned with speculations on the Divine Names mentioned in Torah and letter combinations. Thus, Kabbalah shifted from being theosophical to practical in nature, and was called *Kabbalah Ma'asit* (Practical Kabbalah), to distinguish it from the more theoretical version *Kabbalah 'Yyunit* (Theoretical Kabbalah).

¹⁶For further information on this book see Scholem G, *Kabbalah*, pp.23-30.

¹⁷ Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.6.

¹⁸In Kabbalah it is believed that God has a body similar to humans, where its full measurements can be calculated through these visions.

¹⁹See Scholem G, op cit, pp.14-21.

Practical Kabbalah was associated with the Divine Names which were the objects of meditation and contemplation that would uncover all the hidden knowledge contained in these Names. This method of contemplation involves three basic techniques; letter combination (*notarikon*), mathematical calculations (*gematria*²⁰), and permutation (*temunah*). Each of these three methods lead to the appearance of a type of Kabbalah which was intellectual in nature, and became attractive to many Kabbalists.

Intellectual Kabbalah as one of the traditions of Kabbalah spread in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and was affected by Hellenistic thought. This tradition responded to the questions of God, the cosmos, and the role of humanity within the cosmos, in relation to God. Thus, there appeared a school of Kabbalah that gave prominence to the role of the intellect in the mystical experience. Among the Kabbalists of this period is R. Abulafia, who is considered to be the first to bring Kabbalah and Philosophy together. The reason behind the rise of this school of thought lies in the spread of Aristotle's and Plato's systems of thought and through the works of the Muslim philosophers mentioned above. It is to be stressed here that the role of the intellect is not identified as the ability of the intellect to apprehend in a rational way all religious truths. Rather, the intellect becomes one of the hermeneutical methods enabling Kabbalists to perceive divine knowledge. Therefore, in this respect the intellect as the tool of mystical apprehension, becomes the Mystical Intellect. The result is that much of the speculative literature of these Kabbalists use philosophical terminology, and this type of thought reached a pinnacle in the works of Abulafia. This is one of the areas that this study will attempt to analyse.

The adoption of philosophical terminology must be seen as the search for truth, and this search parallels that of the philosophers. R. Moses de Leon, who was a great thirteenth century Spanish Kabbalist, described this quest:

The subject of the intellectual soul is hidden and concealed in all. And although the philosophers called it the intellectual soul, they were not far removed from the truth.²¹

The above passage indicates the closeness between Kabbalah and philosophy, and at the same time, affirms the philosophical quest for truth. This attraction of both Kabbalah and philosophy to truth is seen in the role of the intellectual soul.

²⁰For further information on this topic see Scholem G., *Kabbalah*, pp.337-43.

²¹Cited in Tishby I (1989), *The Wisdom of the Zohar* Translated by Goldstein D, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989), vol.II, p.711.

In conclusion, we have looked at the different forms of Kabbalah that have evolved over a set period of time. We have discussed the rich traditions that lie behind the Kabbalah, including the Torah, the figure of the Prophet Moses, and all the speculative thoughts contained in the books of *Sefer Yezirah*, *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, and *Ma'aseh Merkabah*. In addition to these, there existed in medieval times two other books called the *Zohar* and the *Bahir* (*Book of Splendour*). These contained all the mystical speculations of many Kabbalists²². The former is divided into topics and is considered to be a pseudographic work aiming to instruct the Kabbalists. Its appearance proved that the flourishing spirit of mystical speculation and interpretation reached its apex in this period.

As we have seen, the term Kabbalah has evolved to include "all the descriptions of heavenly ascent, visions of Divine forms, angelification, and mystical union"²³.

The goal of the Kabbalist in his speculations is to reach divine knowledge, based on the awareness that this knowledge will lead to personal salvation. This knowledge is also characterised as being both epistemological and teleological in nature, and one way to reach it is through the union of the soul with God. In the *Zohar* God is called by the name *Ein Sof* (nothingness), which is an attribute of God. One way to reach *Ein Sof* is to transform the ego (*Ani*) to *Ein Sof*, that is from a 'thing' to 'nothingness'²⁴. By this method the Kabbalists are able to apprehend *Ein Sof*, who is hidden. Kabbalists also point out that humanity is able to apprehend God through the ten *Sefirot*, and through the self. The latter represents the Kabbalah of R. Abulafia with which this study is concerned.

²²Scholem in his book *Kabbalah*, dates the period for the writing of the *Zohar* as between 1280 and 1286, p.57.

²³*History of Jewish Philosophy* part I, ed. Frank D and Leaman O, Routledge World Philosophies, (Routledge, London), 1997, vol.II, p.454.

²⁴Interestingly, in Hebrew *Ani* and *Ayn* have the same letters; thus, there is a word play here.

Sufism

The Islamic mystical tradition is known as Sufism. In Arabic the word *tasawwuf* is used to denote the process leading an individual to become a Sufi. This process involves a transformation of the personality which includes ethical and moral transformation. Thus, *tasawwuf* is not an 'ism' as a tradition defined by ideological and doctrinal beliefs as invented by Western scholars. Because of this misinterpretation and misunderstanding, it became more difficult to give a precise definition to *tasawwuf*. However, for the sake of convenience, the rest of this study will use this term.

Sufism has no single and unified system of thought that is considered by Sufis to be the only way to become a Sufi. Rather, Sufism includes all the teachings, visions, and the practical ways of the mystical path. There are a plethora of mystical paths to be found in Sufism, to the extent that many Sufi orders appeared named after their founders (such as Ahmadiyya, Shadhiliyya, Qadiriyya)²⁵.

Historically, the term *tasawwuf* appeared for the first time in the second century of al-Hijra (eighth century CE), and the first person to be called al-Sufi was Abu Hashim al-Zahid (d.767)²⁶. The origin of the term Sufi was much debated, and still is the subject of further speculations today. However, we can limit these origins to include:

- The special type of dress, which was made from wool *suf*. Hence, the term Sufi comes from the word *suf*, and Sufis wore this type of dress to distinguish themselves as *Mutasawwifun*.
- The word *safi* (pure), because the process of becoming a Sufi involves ascetic practices, and is concerned with the purification of the heart and the soul.
- The word *saff* (rank) might be the origin of the term Sufi, because Sufis claim to be in the stage nearest to God. This would include a special status as the ones who know God, and this knowledge is attained through gnosis (*Ma'rifa*); thus, a true Sufi is the one who knows (*'Arif*) God.
- The word *Sophia*, from the Greek meaning Wisdom. Sufis, because of their nearness to God, are said to be in possession of divine wisdom (*Hikmah Ilahiyah*). Thus, Sufis are the wise men and women.

²⁵For further details on Sufi orders see Ernst C (1997), *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Shambhala Press, Boston), pp.120-146.

²⁶Ibid, p.21.

The problem we are faced with here is the uncertainty that surrounds the origin of the term Sufi, and it is not clear whether they were assigned this name or they called themselves Sufis. If we know more about this issue, then we will be more confident in postulating an origin for this term. However, it is certain the term Sufi has developed to include those ethical and moral qualities most Sufis were characterised by.

Shaykh Suhrawardi, in his book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, attributed all of the above origins to Sufis; yet he adds another connection between Sufis and another group of people, known as *ahl al-Sifa* (people of the attribute). This group of people are the *Muhajirun* (Immigrants), who left everything and followed Muhammad, were characterised by the attribute of *fuqr* (poverty). Suhrawardi, by citing all the above origins of the term Sufi, is actually confirming the belief that a true Sufi is the one who strives to achieve all the above qualities. Thus, Sufism can be defined as a process involving a total transformation of the individual through the acquisition of the ethical and moral qualities, leading to the perfection of the personality. These qualities are so noble and admired that their pursuit is still attractive to many people today, who follow this way of life.

The above associations and characteristics seems secondary to the more profound and meaningful essence of *tasawwuf*, for the term *tasawwuf* is a reflexive term denoting a process of becoming Sufi. For this reason, Suhrawardi defines *Sufiyya* as a term that:

Appeared among them (Sufis), they were named by it, and they called others by this name. So, the name is their mark, and knowledge of God is their characteristic, and worship is their adornment, and truths of Truth are their secrets.²⁷

Thus, Sufis were called by this name because of their distinctive way of life, their special dress, their ascetic practices, and by the characteristic of poverty. But the true essence and meaning of the term Sufism relates to the feelings of longing for God and belonging to Him as the Creator. The aspect of longing for God is expressed in the conviction that an intimate relationship with God is conceivable, where in the end the soul is able to attain knowledge of God. This knowledge can be experienced too in worship, leading to Truth (*al-Haqq*), God. In conclusion, we can say that the term *Sufiyya* and *tasawwuf* became well known and established by the twelfth century CE, and there appeared many renowned Sufi masters who had many admirers and followers, such as Shaykh Suhrawardi. In addition, there appeared in Sufi terminology a concept that was connected with the process leading to perfection. The term *Awliya' al-Allah* (Friends of

²⁷ *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.64.

God) is designated to those Sufis who achieved the highest degrees of perfection. Thus, a spiritual hierarchy existed in Sufism, starting with Muhammad as the Seal of the Prophets, and ending with believers²⁸. The station of Friends of God is equated with that of the Prophets, and sometimes it is seen as lower than that of the Prophets, depending on the Sufi's understanding of this station.

The Qur'an contains many themes that are considered mystical by Sufis. For example 2:225 mentions the majesty of God's Throne (*'Arsh*) "His Throne extends over the earth" (cf.20:5,55:26-27), and this verse was the subject of much Sufi meditation. Below *'arsh* lies the *Kursi* (the Footstool) mentioned in 2:254, and these two objects of divine providence that extends to heaven and earth are interpreted mystically by Sufis.

Ibn al-'Arabi (d.1240), one of the great Sufi masters, describes God's Throne by saying that "God's great solicitude towards the cosmos is that He sits upon the Throne that encompasses the cosmos through His name All-Merciful "To Him will be returned the whole affair"[11:123]"²⁹. The Throne here is connected with the mercy of God. For Sufis the mercy of God precedes His wrath; thus, the Throne represents the sphere of pure mercy, which is also an attribute of God.

Furthermore, in 2:172 God says "Am I not your Lord" *Alastu bi-Rabbakum*, and for Sufis this passage is interpreted mystically as the covenant declared to the soul when God fashioned it. Thus there existed a station in the spiritual ascension known as the station of *Alastu bi-Rabbakum*, which is the highest stage a Sufi can ascend to.

In addition to the Qur'an, for Sufis there exists another mystical element, and that is the figure of the Prophet Muhammad. He is the perfect role model since he is the nearest to God, and the Qur'an testifies to this status of Muhammad. For example in 4:80, he is described as the Messenger of God, and in 48:10 allegiance to Muhammad means allegiance to God. Added to this, for Sufis one of the Qur'anic verses referring to Mohammed's mystical experience occurs in 17:1. This verse is understood to refer to 'Night of the Ascent to Heaven' *Laylat al-'isra' wa al-mi'raj*, and it was elaborated upon in the *Hadith*³⁰. In addition to the figure of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an tells of two other important figures who have special significance for Sufis. The first is the figure of Adam, who was created by the Spirit of God, according to the *Hadith*³¹.

²⁸See Ridgeon L (1998), *'Aziz Nasafi* (Curzon Press, London), p.172.

²⁹Cited in S.Murata (1992), *The Tao Of Islam* (State University of New York, Albany, New York), p.87.

³⁰The *Hadith* contains all the words and works of Muhammad, and it was transmitted orally through those who were near to him.

³¹See Wensinck (1927), *The Early Muhammadan Tradition* (E.J.Brill, Leiden, London), vol.I, p.79.

Adam was also taught by God all the names of the creatures in 2:31, thus giving Adam the status of a vicegerent (*Khalifa*), who has knowledge of God. This type of knowledge is known in Sufi terminology as *Ma'rifa* (gnosis). The second figure who is associated with knowledge in Sufism is the figure of Khidr³². He is endowed with a special kind of knowledge, known as *'ilm al-ladduni*, which enables him to unravel the inner (*Batin*) meanings and the mysteries of specific events. Sufis would claim that the above knowledge given to both Adam and Khidr, is attainable by following specific paths of meditation. Therefore, it must be stressed, that for Sufis, the above traditions are proofs of the Islamic nature of Sufism.

There exists many subjects of mystical contemplation (angels, appearance of Satan (*Iblis*)); however, the most profound and meaningful one for Sufis, is God.

In Muslim theology God is known through the stories of the Prophets, and the stories of creation recorded in the Qur'an. This God cannot be known in His pure essence; however, there are manifested in creation many attributes of God, and these attributes are known as the ninety-nine Divine Names called "Names of Beauty and Majesty" *Asma' al-Jamal wa al-Jalal*³³. In another description of God, the Qur'an points out to the two aspects of God, the manifest (*al-Zahir*) and the non-manifest (*al-Batin*). And in 57:3 God is described as both "The First and the Last" and "The Outward and the Inward" or "The Evident and the Hidden". For Sufis God's outward or evident aspect is displayed in creation (cf.41:53). Thus, God is said to display some similarity to creation, and this is known in Islamic thought as *Tashbih*. Whereas the inward or the hidden aspect becomes the subject of mystical speculations, because God has no similarity (42:2), and this is called *Tanzih*. Furthermore, the outward aspect of God is believed to be manifested in the ninety-nine Names of God, but the uniqueness of God as the only Creator is manifested in the *Shari'a* (Law). The *Shari'a* contains a basic Islamic declaration of faith known as *Tawhid* (There is no other god, but God). In a sense this represents the outer (*dhahir*) aspect of religion. The inner (*Batin*) aspect of religion can be identified as God, and for Sufis this God can be known through a specific path known as *Tariqa*.

Added to that, for Sufis the only thing that is real is God (cf.6:73), and because all of creation comes out of God, everything in creation finds its reality (*Haqiqa*) in God. This formula is the basic Sufi declaration of faith, in addition to *Tawhid*, and it represents the principles of Sufic way to faith. Therefore, a contemplation on the *Shari'a* through the

³² *Khidr* is a mystical figure, and in Islamic thought he is seen as the subject of God's mercy and knowledge as recorded in 18:65.

³³ These Names are the pointers to God's greatness as recorded in 20:8.

path of meditation (*Tariqa*), will lead to Reality (*Haqika*), and this contemplation will lead also to the transformation of the multiplicity of human nature (*Kuthra*), to the station of Unity (*Wahda*), reached through *Tawhid*. One aspect of *Tawhid*, is to remember God daily and in prayer, which is a religious duty of every Muslim. Al-Ghazali³⁴ (d.1111) describes faith (*Iman*) as "Believing in the heart and the testimony of the tongue". This testimonial aspect of religion is important in the identification of the true believer.

³⁴He is one of the most famous Muslim scholars, who later became a Sufi, and his most famous and well known work is *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revivification of the Religious Sciences).

PART ONE
R.ABARAHAM ABULAFIA

R.Abraham Abulafia

R. Abulafia is one of the most fascinating figures of medieval Jewish tradition. He was labelled as dangerous and a scoundrel by R Adret, who was a major *Halachic* figure in Spain, and he described Abulafia as "That scoundrel Abraham who declared himself prophet and Messiah"³⁵. R. Azulai wrote of Abulafia but in a more paradoxical and sympathetic way: "[Abulafia is] One of the worthless people or worse", and at the same time he describes him as a "great rabbi among the masters of secrets, and his name is great in the land of Israel"³⁶. Such is the status of Abulafia that he is seen both as a "great rabbi" who added a new layer to the Kabbalah of his time, and as "one of the worthless", because of the kind of Kabbalah he propounded, which was seen as alien to the spirit of *Halachah* (the law). However, despite this controversial aspect of Abulafia's personality, his thought spread to the land of Israel, and was considered as the major contributor to the rise of the mystical school in Israel, known as the Safed school. One of the present scholars of Kabbalah, Ben Zion described Abulafia as "One of the colourful figures in the early history of the Kabbalah was Abraham ben Samuel Abulafia (1240-1292). Abulafia introduced an ascetic as well as an ecstatic influence into the Kabbalah"³⁷. Thus, what is so controversial about the figure of Abulafia must be attributed to his rationalistic approach to Kabbalah, in addition to the use of Divine Names in his system of thought which was prohibited by the *Halachah*. The above statement by Ben Zion firmly acknowledges the role Abulafia played in the foundation of the Ecstatic (Prophetic) Kabbalah, which was more practical than the theoretical Kabbalah dominant at Abulafia's time. The important element in the study of Abulafia lies in the part the ecstatic Kabbalah played in the rise and spread of the *Hasidic* movement in Europe in the sixteenth century. Thus Abulafia's importance in the development of these traditions testify to the part his thought played in medieval Jewish tradition, and must be seen as an integral part of this tradition.

Hellenistic philosophy became known to many Kabbalists, and Abulafia knew Aristotle's system of thought through the works of the Muslim philosophers³⁸. This has made his Kabbalah more colourful and altogether different in character from the main Kabbalah.

³⁵Solomon Adret, *Responsa*, (Vienna, 1812), f.71c-72a, No.548. Cited in "Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities In Jewish History", ed.Marc Saperstein (1992), (New York University Press, New York), p.251.

³⁶R.Azulai is known as the *Hi"da*, and he wrote a commentary on the Zohar known as *Shem ha-Gedolim*, where this passage comes from. It is cited in Idel M (1988), *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (State University of New York, Albany, New York), p.1.

³⁷Bokser, B Z (1981), *The Jewish Mystical Tradition* (The Pilgrim Press, New York), p16

³⁸See page 9.

Therefore, his thought is worthy of examination and analysis, and a comparative study between his thought and that of another mystic from a different mystical tradition will enable us to appreciate his mystical path. This study aims to provide such analysis by comparing Abulafia's thought of the intellect to that of Suhrawardi. However, before such a comparison can be made a detailed examination of Abulafia's Spiritual Psychology and the concept of *Sekhel* (the Intellect) must be isolated and established first. It is believed that such a study will also enable us to reach an understanding of the process of becoming in the mystical sense, through union (*Devekut*). But first let us briefly look at Abulafia's life, works, and hermeneutics.

Abulafia's Life

All of Abulafia's family background and education comes mainly from his writings. Most of these writings are still in manuscript form in European libraries. They contain some autobiographical material outlining Abulafia's teaching and the path to mystical contemplation. Abulafia's mission and his strong convictions of being the Messiah is included in these writings.

Abulafia was born in Saragossa in the Hebrew year 5000 (1240 CE) after creation, which was of significance for Abulafia as another pointer to his mission³⁹. By this, he reckoned that redemption would occur in his own lifetime in the year 1290 (5050 Hebrew year). Saragossa is in the province of Aragon in Spain, Abulafia's father Samuel moved later to Tudela in the Navarre region, and it is there that Abraham grew up. As any Jewish boy in medieval times, Abulafia learned the Torah and its commentaries, some grammar, *Mishnah*, and *Talmud* from his father. At the age of eighteen, and after the death of his father, Abulafia travelled to Palestine in search of the mystical river *Sambatyon* "By whose banks the remnants of the ten tribes of Israel were said to live"⁴⁰. However, his journey was brought to an end at Ein-Harod, because of the battle between the Mamluks of Egypt and the Tatars from the east, so he got no further than Acre. Afterwards, Abulafia went to Greece and later married in Italy. Until then, Abulafia seemed to be a typical Jewish student of Torah with no mystical inclinations apart from the journey in search of the river *Sambatyon*, which might hint of the beginning of such inclinations.

³⁹See Saperstein M, op cit. p.252.

⁴⁰Scholem G 'Kabbalah' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Keter Publishing House Ltd, Jerusalem, Israel, 1972, vol.I, p.186. Idem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd edition,(Schocken Book, New York, 1995) p.126. Also see Idel M, op cit. p.2.

Later, Abulafia studied philosophy, especially Maimonides⁴¹ (d.1204), *Guide of The Perplexed* with R.Hillel of Verona⁴². His speculations and study did not stop there. He was introduced to Kabbalah by his teacher R.Baruch Togarmi, and the latter wrote a commentary on *Sefer Yezirah*⁴³. This period in Abulafia's life is crucial because it is where his mystical convictions started to take shape, though he did not compile any systematic work until the year 1273, when he went to Sicily and Greece. After this period of mystical speculation, Abulafia emerged as a Kabbalist and a follower of Maimonides. Both Kabbalah and philosophy had a great influence on Abulafia's thought, and it is more appropriate to call him Kabbalist/Philosopher. What philosophy did was to provide Abulafia with philosophical ideas to advance his system of thought. Believing himself to be the Messiah of Israel, Abulafia went to Rome to meet with Pope Nicholas III. He interpreted this as analogous to the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh (Exodus 5). Because of this, he was condemned to death by burning. However, the sentence against him was not carried out because of the Pope's death in 1280. This incident strengthened Abulafia's conviction of himself as the awaited redeemer, and for this reason he was persecuted by his fellow Jews.

Abulafia is one of the figures who wanted to go beyond the fulfilment of the commandments, and to retain the spiritual dimension by giving it a prominent place in the Jewish way of life. So, he believed that a mystical and direct experience of God can lead to the discovery and the strengthening of religious truth. Thus, he claimed to have found a new way to reach this truth and taught it to his disciples, among them R. Joseph Gikatilla⁴⁴, one of the eminent Spanish Kabbalists. Abulafia had many other disciples, such as R.Moses of Burgos, and the unnamed author of *Sha'are Zedek*⁴⁵. In addition, Abulafia's Kabbalah reached Palestine and there he had many followers, such as R.Solomon ha-Kohen and R.Isaac of Acre⁴⁶.

It is not known why the above mentioned people adopted his system of thought. However, one thing is certain Abulafia's Kabbalah spread fast in Europe and Palestine. Abulafia's books were copied into many languages, and studied by many people.

⁴¹Maimonides is one of the great thinkers and religious philosophers of medieval Jewish tradition, he wrote the ten articles of faith. For further information on Maimonides see 'Moses Maimonides', Kreisel H, in *History of Jewish Philosophy*, Routledge World Philosophies, edited by Frank E and Leaman O, Routledge, London, 1997, vol.I, pp.245-280.

⁴²R.Hillel is a philosopher and physician who lived in Italy.

⁴³See page 8.

⁴⁴R.Gikatilla lived in Segovia, and became a disciple of Abulafia between 1272-74.

⁴⁵This author mentions in his book that Abulafia is his teacher.

⁴⁶R.Acre is one of the exponents of *Ecstatic Kabbalah* in Palestine, he wrote a commentary on *Sefer Yezirah*. For further information see Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.92.

It is possible to argue that his popularity lay in the very nature of his Kabbalah, which is practical and contains many techniques of meditation and contemplation to help the adept in their mystical journey. However, we can identify another reason which is clear from his writings: namely the intellectual nature of his Kabbalah. For Abulafia both the intellectual and spiritual pursuits enhance and liberate the mystic from the burden of physical being. In the end, this will lead to the attainment of knowledge as a result of the union of the soul with God, in which *Sekhel* (the Intellect) plays a major role. It is this aspect of the role of the intellect in the mystical union that will be explored in this study.

Abulafia's Works

Abulafia is considered as a "Prolific writer" and "One of the most fertile authors of the thirteenth century"⁴⁷ by Idel. The spread of his thought must be attributed to his works being copied and studied by many students of Kabbalah who found in these books the way to mystical union. Abulafia left behind a large number of writings testifying to his fertility of thought, and many of these have survived and are in manuscript form in many libraries in Europe. Even so, some are still missing.

Abulafia's system is contained in his handbooks for attaining mystical experience. In these works he establishes a new way of Kabbalistic thought that is clearly concerned with the acquisition of Prophecy and *devekut* (cleaving to God or union). Among these books is *Hayyei ha-Olam ha Ba*⁴⁸, which contains explanations of the 72 letter-name of God. These are illustrated by circular figures with exact instructions for mystical meditation. Another work of his is *Or ha-Sekhel (Light of the Intellect)*, which explains the role of the intellect in the mystical meditation and the mysteries of the Tetragramaton⁴⁹. *Ozar Eden-Ganuz* contains autobiographical notes concerning Abulafia's belief in the dawning of the Messianic era in the Hebrew year 5050 (1290 CE), and *Sefer ha-Hesek* is a treatise on the Divine Names and their efficacy.

In addition to the above, Abulafia wrote many commentaries, such as *Sefer hu Mafteah*, which is a commentary on the Torah, and he wrote *Sitrei Torah*⁵⁰. The latter is a

⁴⁷Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.4.

⁴⁸Also known as *Sefer ha-Shem*, and a copy of this book is found in the British Library in the Margoloth Catalogue of Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts under the title: *Perush ha-Shem ha-Meporash*, catalogue No.757, II, and 758, II.

⁴⁹These are the different names attributed to God in the Hebrew Bible.

⁵⁰A small section of this community is found in the British Library, Margoloth Catalogue No.757,I.

commentary on Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*. He also wrote a commentary on *Sefer Yezirah*. In addition to commentaries, Abulafia composed many prophetic books based on his convictions of being the Messiah. Most of these books are lost.

However, there is one book that is extant and was published by Graetz *Jubilschrift* (1887, 65-88). It contains all the mystical and messianic visions which he had during a period of high spirituality.

Finally, Abulafia promoted and defended his system of thought by writing some polemic epistles explaining his Kabbalah, such as *Vi-Zot Li-Yhuda* and *Sheva ha-Torah*. Both of these epistles are published by A.Jellinek in *Ginzei Hockmat ha-Kabbalah* and in *Philosophie Und Kabbalah*. The British Library holds many manuscripts by Abulafia, such as *Sefer Temunah*⁵¹ with a commentary on it; *Ilas-Sedhar Ham-Mithhappekh*⁵², which is a treatise on the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There is also a commentary by him on *Sefer ha-Malkhuth* in the British Library⁵³.

Abulafia's Hermeneutics

The notion of the "conservative" character of the mystical experience must be seen in the mystic's sensitivity, though an innovator and a radical thinker, towards the more orthodox approach to religion. Because, mystics share the same traditions with these people, so Kabbalists would uphold these traditions and consider them to be one of the essential elements in the process of learning. However, in the Jewish tradition the processes of learning contain a variety of ways, and the student of Torah is exposed to a number of complex methods which enable him⁵⁴ to understand Torah. The above traditions can be identified as the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud* and all the *Haggadic* or *Aggadic* literature. These shaped all the exegetical works, and the mystical ones too.

However, a different kind of tradition, the Kabbalah, started to spring up between the eighth and tenth centuries that affected the above exegetical investigations. It was a new type of literature, coloured and effected by ontological speculations. Thus, many Biblical stories were given mystical significance. For example the story of Creation in Genesis 1-2 was interpreted mystically. By this, Kabbalistic quest for the meaning and goal of

⁵¹British Library Catalogue no.757, I.

⁵²British Library Catalogue no.749, V

⁵³British Library Catalogue no.749, VII.

⁵⁴In medieval times only boys were allowed to continue their education.

human life was connected with their view of God, creation, and the nature of human beings.

Consequently, the relation of humanity to God was structured on the belief that the ultimate goal of humanity is to be in union with God. This union Kabbalists saw as achievable, because they are made in the image of God. The image of God postulated by Kabbalists was completely different from that of *Halackah*, and this led to the increase of opposition by the *Halackic* figures to these mystical trends. One aspect of these speculations can be identified as the adoption of the Divine Names contained in Torah, to build a human structure believing it to be leading to God. This is true of Abulafia, who advocated the way of the Divine Names (*Derekh ha-Shemot*), leading to union with God. For Abulafia, each letter and each word convey a different meaning and different reality. Contemplation on the Divine Names will lead to the strengthening of the religious experience of the individual. Furthermore, for Abulafia, the vowel and the consonants represent two different realities similar to that of the human reality. Abulafia says that "It has been stated that the letter is like matter, and the vowel is like the spirit that animates it"⁵⁵. The analogy of the letter and the vowel to matter and spirit is interesting, for it represents the view that the written text becomes an arena of the human psychology and physical activity. At the same time, this method as a hermeneutical tool closes the gap between the reader and the text, where the text becomes a representation of the struggle between two realities in humanity.

In addition, Abulafia employs another hermeneutical tool in his process of understanding. He postulates that the letters of Torah are not mere physical representations. Because Torah as a written text has a spiritual dimension, in addition to the physical representation. This spiritual dimension is recovered through contemplation and meditation⁵⁶. This view of Torah comes from the premise that God gave Moses not only the commandments, but also some kind of knowledge that can be unveiled through certain methods. This knowledge is available for those who are willing to embark on the path of speculation. For Abulafia, this type of knowledge, which is oral in nature, is contained in the Divine Names. Not only that, this type of Torah contains "certain methods by which to interpret the written one"⁵⁷. It is interesting to note that for Abulafia, the oral Torah is a prerequisite of understanding the written one, and not the

⁵⁵*Or ha-Sekhel*. Cited in Idel M, "The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia", p.141. Note that this view is also found in the *Zohar*.

⁵⁶For further information on this topic see Idel M (1989), *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics In Abraham Abulafia*, Translated into English by Kallus M, (State University of New York, Albany, New York), pp46-81.

⁵⁷*Ibid*, p.48.

other way round. What is portrayed here is the hermeneutical spiral, where the reader starts from the written text and progresses to the spiritual dimension, and then back to the written text in a transformed manner. In other words, it is the movement from the particular (micro), to the universal (macro), and back again to the particular aspect in advanced place.

Finally, another hermeneutical method employed by Abulafia in his speculations, is his theory of the significant characteristic of the Hebrew language. He believed that the Hebrew language represents a proto-type language from which all other languages spring. Therefore, the Hebrew alphabet is significant. The significance of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the 4 letters of the Divine Name *YHWH*, with their mathematical calculations (*gematria*) became the tools leading to *unio mystica*. Abulafia was also convinced that these letters contained an esoteric dimension, and he incorporated this dimension in his system of thought.

All of these methods Abulafia employed in his system of thought, and perhaps that is why his ideas spread rapidly. This has made his Kabbalah more distinctive in character from the other Kabbalah of his time, and by this he added another layer to that Kabbalah.

Abulafia's Spiritual Psychology

-The Biblical Definition of the Term 'Spirit'

The Hebrew Bible employs three different notions of the term 'Spirit', and these notions are used interchangeably. The first is *nefesh*, which is the most common one, the second is *ruach*, which is less common than *nefesh*. The third notion is *neshamah*, and this term is used less than the other two. All these notions point out to the spirit; however, each one of these notions has a specific meaning. The precise meaning of these notions are determined by the context, and it is possible to isolate and identify this meaning. Thus, we will examine these meanings to see how they are understood from the Biblical perspective.

The first two chapters of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible are of paramount importance for any understanding of the spirit as an integral part of the human makeup. The creation of human beings is considered in relation to God in these two chapters. Genesis 2:7b speaks of the creation of Adam "And breathed (God) into his (Adam's) nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (*nefesh hayyah*)". *Nefesh* here is only identified as *nefesh* when it is living. The dead person has no *nefesh*. Thus, *nefesh* on its own is nothing and cannot be considered as an extra power given to Adam. Rather, it must be seen as the final outcome of the process of creation. The above verse indicates that *nefesh* characterised Adam as a living being (*nefesh hayyah*). Consequently, it should be seen as synonym to life⁵⁸ (cf. Proverbs 8:35f, I Samuel 28:9, Psalm 124:7, Proverbs 18:7). What this means, is that if human beings are devoid of *nefesh*, then they are dead. Therefore, *nefesh* can only be applied to the living.

Nefesh has another meaning where it is considered to be the seat of sensation, feelings, and desire. For example, in Exodus 23:9 the feelings of oppression is emphasised. *Nefesh* in this context can be translated as 'soul', because it speaks of the *nefesh* of the stranger in relation to feelings of oppression associated with the *nefesh* of the stranger. In addition to the above sensual and appetitive functions of *nefesh*, it is also seen as the recipient of afflictions (Genesis 24:21, cf. Psalm 31:7), and as the organ of sympathy in Job 30:25.

⁵⁸Note that this term can also refer to the *throat* (Isaiah 5:14; Habakkuk 2:5), or the *neck* (Psalm 105:18; Isaiah 51:23), and it could also mean *desire* (Proverbs 23:2; Micah 7:10, and the *individual person* Genesis 19:19ff). For further information on this subject see Wolff H (1974), *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (SCM Press, London).

Moreover, in many places in the Bible *nefesh* is associated with the whole set of feelings. For example, in II Samuel 5:8 the feeling of hatred is expressed by those who “are hated of David’s soul”. In other words hatred comes from the soul. In the same manner, we can say that love comes from *nefesh* as well, and in *Song of Songs* it describes the beloved as “the one who my *nefesh* loves”. There is also the weeping and grieving *nefesh*. For example, when the Prophet Jeremiah addresses the Israelites in 13:17, he tells them of the “weeping of his *nefesh*”, and the grief the exile will bring. Finally, *nefesh* can also be subject to salvation, as in Psalm 35:9 where it is described as “shall be joyful in the Lord”. By this act *nefesh* is said to be yearning to its Creator and its longing to build a relationship with God (cf. Psalm 103:1; 42:5; 43:5). This feeling of belonging to the Creator is always present in *nefesh*, which is aware of the presence God. So we can conclude by saying that the term *nefesh* refers to the life and being of an individual, including the state of their mind, and his or her feelings and emotions. All these psycho/physical activities are needs attributed to *nefesh*.

Yet, in addition to *nefesh* the creation stories employs another term used widely to refer to human beings: *ruah*. *Ruah*, literally means power or wind (Genesis 1:2), but when it is mentioned in relation to creation it means breath. While the term *nefesh* is identified with human beings and animals, *ruah* significantly refers to God; as something proceeding from the Godhead. Wolff in his book *Anthropology of the Old Testament* calls this term “a theo-anthropological term”⁵⁹. However, in Genesis 2:7 *ruah* is the link between God and humanity. In other words, the human *ruah* extends from the breath of God. In another place in the Bible *ruah* plays an important part in the preservation of human life. For example, in Zechariah 12:1 where God is said to have formed (*yazar*) the *ruah*. The life and death of an individual depends on this *ruah* as power of life, and at the same time, *ruah* is aware of the needs of *nefesh*. In this respect *ruah*, as life preserver, must be seen in relation to the flesh (*basar*), where *basar* is shared by humans and animals. In Ezekiel 37:5f a description of the making of the whole of the human body is given, where *ruah* is given to *basar* “Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh (*basar*) to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you”.

This passage describes the two stage formation of human beings: first the physical formation, and then the breathing into this physical structure. This description is similar to Genesis 2:7, where the physical structure is formed first then the spirit is breathed into it. Thus we have a consistent view that human beings have two dimensions: one the *basar* and the other the *ruah*, and the two of them are linked together. Therefore, one

⁵⁹ Wolff H, op cit. p.32.

has to conclude that *ruah* and *basar* must always be linked in relation to human beings, and must not be understood in opposition to each other, but as two dimensions of humanity.

On the other hand, *ruah* is also associated with God, and when it is associated with God it is always portrayed in terms of power that is vital and crucial in specific events.. For example, in Isaiah 42:1 the *ruah* of God is given to the Servant of God who will "Bring forth justice to the nations". In addition, the *ruah* of God gives the gift of prophecy, and all the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible claim to have received this gift of prophecy as the result of the outpouring of God's *ruah* on them. For example, in Numbers 24:2ff the *ruah* of God came upon Balaam and he spoke, and in Joel 2:28 the *ruah* of God is poured on all flesh to prophecy, dream, and have visions. What we can conclude from the above passage, is that the *ruah* of God brings understanding and knowledge to human beings. It brings wisdom, as in Deuteronomy 34:9 where Joshua the son of Nun was "full of the spirit of wisdom (*ruah Khokmah*), because Moses had laid his hands on him".

In conclusion, *nefesh* and *ruah* are to be associated with humans since they play a vital role in sustaining and keeping the individual alive. However, *ruah* can also be attributed to God, and in this sense it is seen as the driving force behind prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

In addition to *nefesh* and *ruah*, another term appears in the Genesis stories which is used in a similar manner to *ruah*. The term *neshamah* is found in a few places in Genesis, and always refers to humans, like *ruah*. However, there are passages in the Bible where this term is used exclusively of God. When *neshamah* is said of God, it must be translated as breath, not like any breath, but breath with the added emphasis of a breath as the source of inspiration. For example, in Job 32:8 the term *Nishmath Shadei* (The Breath of the Almighty) is the source of inspiration, and in Job 33:4 *Nishmath Shadei* is the source of life. Thus, *neshamah* of God is the source of all understanding and life. Without *neshamah* humans are lost. In relation to this, *neshamah* as a sign of breath given by God directly can be thought of as an aid given to human beings to apprehend God. Consequently, *neshamah* in comparison to *nefesh* and *ruah*, must be considered a spirit of a higher order. It is this *neshamah* that urges humanity to come closer to God. So, *neshamah* and *ruah* are two synonymous terms. However, *neshamah* in general is used of God, but when it is used of humans it denotes power external to them.

The three types of spirit isolated and identified above represent different dimensions of awareness of the self in relation to God. *Nefesh* and *ruah* are vital for human life to be

existent, while *neshamah* is vital in respect of bringing humanity in a more experiential aspect, closer to God.

-The Kabbalistic and the Philosophical Understanding of 'Spirit'

Spirit or soul as a Biblical notion is a broad concept, and is used in different contexts and in different nuances. On the other hand, spirit might refer to the essence and the true meaning of human beings, and can be seen in opposition to the body. This aspect of the spirit as being the essence of humanity is exploited by Kabbalists, and they stress that human beings are "Made in the image (*zelem*) of God" (Genesis 1:27). God's *zelem* is, for Kabbalists, embodied in humanity to the extent that everything in creation is brought into actualisation through them. One aspect of the embodiment of *zelem* of God is the realisation of the human self, which is to be understood as a mixture of the above three Biblical notions. Thus, human beings have a primacy and supremacy over creation because of *zelem*, and the *Zohar* testifies to this supremacy by postulating that human beings are "Both the acme and the final culmination of the creative process, the pillar that supports the world"⁶⁰. According to this view, God created the cosmos, and it is the responsibility of humanity to support it through the *Sefirot*⁶¹. These *Sefirot* are the ten emanations of God, and this theory of emanation is similar in principle to the neo-Platonic concept of creation of the many from the One. In addition this similarity, Kabbalists employ a tripartite division of the soul similar to that of Aristotle and Plato, side by side the Biblical division analysed above. However, it is essential here to give a brief description of the philosophical understanding of the soul.

The soul, as an ontological phenomena, was subject to investigation by many philosophers who identified it either with elements of fire and water; or as an incorporeal substance in opposition to the body. However, Aristotle (384-322BC) is considered to be the first philosopher to have systematically identified the soul in terms of the properties it contains. His views on the soul (*psuche*) are found mainly in his book *De Anima*, and it is in this book that he criticises his predecessors who thought of the soul in a materialistic or dualistic way. The soul, for Aristotle, is neither something extra given nor additional kinds of spiritual bits that exist in the living body. He thought that one should think of the body and the soul in terms of form and matter. For Aristotle what is

⁶⁰Tishby I (1989), *Wisdom of the Zohar*, (Oxford University Press for Littman Library, Oxford). Vol.II, p.677.

⁶¹See p.8.

so vital for an understanding of the soul is to "Determine the nature and essence of the soul in terms of its properties"⁶². Aristotle perceived that the soul is not similar in nature to the body, and thus defined it as "The form of the body with the potentiality for life". As a form, this soul is one but with various properties identified as functions, these functions are classified as follows:

- Nutrition: This type of function is more connected with the body, and is known as the vegetative soul.
- Perception and appearance (imagination): This soul is vital for the sustenance of the body, because it is the source of all types of movements in the body, and all sensation and desire arise from this soul. Thus, it is only found in humans and animals, and it is called animal soul or vital soul.
- Rational Thought: This soul is responsible for all kinds of intellection and is termed rational soul or psyche. This part of the soul, Aristotle saw, is cognitive and is able of grasping intelligibles; thus, it is associated with humans only.

For Aristotle then, humanity possesses three types of soul, and these types function in different ways. In addition to this classification he advanced another idea and postulated that the soul is characterised by functions. The affect of these functions can only be realised in matter. The idea behind this is that the soul cannot exist apart from the body, and it comes into being with the body. This view stands in contrast to the Platonic premise of the pre-existence of souls.

Plato (428-347 BC), on the other hand, thought of the soul in connection with knowledge and understanding. He regards the soul as similar in form to a Polis which is made of various people, and speaks of the parts of the soul as agents of power which can bring harmony to the soul, like the Polis. Each part is identified as lover of something⁶³, for example:

- Lover of wisdom: This part is also called intellect, which takes on the role of a councillor who controls the other parts.
- Lover of victory: This part is also called power or anger, and is considered to be the spirited part.
- Lover of money and possession: This part is called desire or appetitive part.

⁶²Wedin M (1988), Mind and Imagination in Aristotle (Yale University Press, New Haven and London) p.10

⁶³See Moline J (1981), Plato's Theory of Understanding (The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison), p.59.

Moreover, for Plato the lover of wisdom part of the soul is seen as immortal; thus, the soul is described with eternity and does not perish with the body. At the same time, this part is capable of leading and controlling the other two parts. Therefore, for Plato the intellect leads the other parts of the soul to the state of harmony. The difference between Plato's and Aristotle's thought is that Plato's conviction is that the soul can carry different types of ethical qualities, like the Polis. As to the origin of the soul, Plato believed that the soul is not tied to matter, and it precedes the body in existence.

Thus, both Aristotle and Plato affirm the unity of the soul, but they differ in its identification and its fate.

Kabbalists identified the three Biblical parts of the soul with the philosophical tripartite division as explained above. They identify a hierarchy of the soul ranging from the lower to the higher, and each part is associated with a specific level of consciousness. The following division, found in the book of *Zohar*, uses the Biblical terms treated above. But, they added a philosophical function to each part of the soul:

- *Nefesh*: The lower part of the soul, which is called the *anima* or the *animal soul*. This soul is shared by humans and animals, and it enters the body at the moment of birth. The concern of this soul is all the bodily needs. Thus, it keeps the body nourished all the time. All the sensations and feelings are associated with it. *Nefesh* disappears by the death of the person.
- *Neshamah*: The higher part of the soul, and is considered to be the most pure and sacred. It is external to human beings, and it enables them to study Torah and to observe the commandments. As the Breath of God (Genesis 2:7)⁶⁴, *neshamah* gives human beings the power to intuit the realm of the Godhead. Thus, all mystical intuition and apprehension is associated with this soul. *Neshamah* parallels the philosophic rational soul⁶⁵, and is characterised as able to grasp all the intelligibles around it. One cannot apprehend the reality of *neshamah*, because it is something external, eternal, and beyond time and space.
- *Ruah*: The intermediate stage between *nefesh* and *neshamah*, and while everybody is given *nefesh* at birth, this soul is more connected with consciousness. This soul is found in those who are spiritually awakened. Thus, its sphere of influence is *nefesh*, and it arouses in *nefesh* the spiritual sense to meditate and reflect on God, the cosmos, and the human structure. *Ruah* is also connected with personal morality, and in this sense, it enables humanity to distinguish between good and evil, and to follow the good. It incites in humanity the effort to reflect on their nature, and to be conscious of the world around them. As an intermediate stage between *neshamah* and *nefesh*, *ruah* reflects the light that emanates upon it from *neshamah* onto

⁶⁴See p.25.

⁶⁵See p.27.

nefesh creating a kind of steady flow of knowledge from *neshamah* to *nefesh*.

What is so significant in the Kabbalistic description of the tripartite division of the soul, is that Kabbalists ascribe to these parts powers to instruct and motivate the individual to reach perception. Thus the soul is considered as one, but with different parts that are connected with intuition and perception. These two powers, that is intuition and perception, enable human beings to apprehend the mystery of God.

The unity of the soul and its division into three is undisputed in Kabbalah, yet this division is affected by the philosophical view of the function of each part. But Kabbalists always set their belief and faith over and above that of the philosophers, and R. Moses de Leon⁶⁶ sets a comparison between the views of the philosophers and Kabbalists concerning:

The mystery of the soul is that it is divided into three parts, but joined together in a single unity. Even though they appear to be separated from one another because of their separate names, they really form one mystery, *nefesh, ruah, neshamah*. They are indeed a single mystery without any division. The philosophers divide the mystery of the soul into three levels, and they gave them separate names, each one referring to its special function; the vegetative, the animal, and the intellectual soul, and they particularised the function of each of them. However, according to the mystery of the Torah, and the way of the Tree of Life concerning the real truth of the matter, and according to the very roots of faith from which holy source everything is derived, it all involves one single thing in accordance with the method that have followed.⁶⁷

In this passage de Leon affirms the soul's division into three parts forming a unity. Yet, he rejects the philosophic division of the soul into levels. For him, the parts are equal and are in fact one single soul. Moreover, de Leon rejects the second philosophic premise that each part of the soul has a particular function. This approach seems inadequate for de Leon. The particularisation of each part of the soul would always create a problem of how to reconcile the origin of each part of the soul. By affirming the unity of the soul, de Leon eradicated this problem. Added to that, de Leon in another place in the same book praises the philosophers' speculations on the intellectual soul, which he identified with the *neshamah*. De Leon postulates that:

The subject of the intellectual soul is both hidden and concealed in all aspects of its mystery, and according to the mystical of Torah it is called *neshamah*, more exalted

⁶⁶de Leon is a major thirteenth century *Halakhic* figure in Castile, who wrote many Pseudographical works to counteract the rationalistic trends of his time.

⁶⁷*Sefer ha-Nefesh ha-Hakhmah*, pt.1, sig.2, fol.4b, cited in Tishby I, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, p711.

than all the other true intellectual names, as we shall explain later. And although the philosophers called it the *intellectual soul*, they were not far from the truth, for some of the philosophers explained that the eminence of the intellectual soul consists in the light of the intellect which is bestowed upon it from the Active Intellect.⁶⁸

Here De Leon wants to show that the *neshamah* is the object of intellectual apprehension, just like the intellectual soul, through the bestowal of the intellect. A new concept appears in this passage which is crucial for the act of intellectual apprehension, namely the Active Intellect⁶⁹. De Leon adopts here a psychology different from that of the philosophers, and this psychology gives prominence to the intellectual capacities of the soul. This line of thought can be identified as that of the school of Maimonides, who identified the role of the Acquired Intellect as bestowing salvation on the soul. The difference between Maimonides and the philosophers in this respect is that for Maimonides the Acquired Intellect can only be activated through the study of Torah and the commandments, which is similar to the role of *neshamah* described above. This school of thought makes a distinction between two functions of the soul important for this act of intellectual apprehension. The first is the speaking soul (*nefesh ha-medabberat*), and the second is the rational soul (*nefesh ha-sikhli*). The latter soul is in a sense similar to the philosophic rational soul; however, this soul possesses "Supernal power which can bring man to perfection and which is identified with the true soul or *neshamah*"⁷⁰. The separation of speech and rationale is interesting here. Speech, as a spiritual function, is differentiated from the intellectual capacity of the soul. Abulafia, in *Hayyet ha-nefesh*, defined speech as:

Speech is not itself the intellect, but speech is the true spiritual faculty, the highest natural faculty that the soul can possess; for the separated intellect bestows intellect upon it, in the same way as the sun bestows light upon the eye. And speech is a faculty of the soul, a tool of the intellect, like the sight of the eye which is a faculty of the eye, and this is a tool of the sun which sheds light upon it.⁷¹

Speech is the sign of the intellectual transformation, and this speech is activated by the intellect. Without it we would not know about this intellect, just like the sun to the eye. Abulafia describes speech as spiritual faculty. This is interesting because we know that all the prophets in the Hebrew Bible were characterised by the prophetic speech, which is one of the authenticating signs of Prophecy. Added to this, Abulafia wanted to link

⁶⁸Ibid, p.721.

⁶⁹This term will be discussed later under the heading 'The intellect'.

⁷⁰Scholem G, *Kabbalah*, p.156.

⁷¹Cited in Tishby I, op cit, p.720.

intellectual and mystical apprehension with speech and Prophecy because his kabbalah was prophetic (ecstatic) in nature.

With the above classification of the soul into three parts, Kabbalists faced a problem in identifying the source of the different parts of the soul in relation to the *Sefirot*. This problem is related to the question of the pre-existence of souls. If the souls are pre-existent in time, in which *Sefirah* they exist? The pre-existence of souls is well attested in the *Aggadah*, and rabbis often debated that "You must know that all the souls from Adam to the end were created during the six days of creation. They were all in the garden of Eden, and they were all present at the revelation of the Torah"⁷².

Based on the above conviction, the pre-existence of the souls does not appear to be a matter of debate for the Kabbalists. What is of greater importance is the origin of each part of the soul. However, Kabbalists solved this problem by postulating a kind of a hierarchy of souls in a parallel structure to the *Sefirot*. There appeared the following parallels:

A- The *Sefirot hesed, gevurah, and tiferet*, respectively; thus, forming an upside down triangle. (see appendix B)

B- The following:

1-To the mystery of creation (*beriyah*), formation (*yezirah*), and making (*'asiah*), based on Isaiah 43:7.(see appendix C)

2-Represent the *Sefirot binah (neshamah), tiferet (ruah), and malkut (nefesh)*. (see appendix D)

Type B1 is a model-relationship between these three worlds and the *Sefirot*, and by this each part of the soul is given certain characteristics. For example, *beriyah* is linked to *Sefirot khokmah* (wisdom) and *binah* (understanding), which parallels *neshamah*. Thus, we can say that *neshamah* is characterised with wisdom and understanding making it the perfect soul. *Yezirah* is linked with *Sefirot chesed, gevurah, nezach, hod, and yesod*, and this is where *ruah* originates. Thus it is characterised by love, power, endurance, majesty, and foundation. Finally, *'asiah* is linked with *Sefirah malkut*, where *nefesh* originates, and is characterised as worldly. By this structure of the soul, Kabbalists thought of the human soul in all its three parts as similar and a miniature structure of the *Sefirot*. So, we can conclude that the *Sefirotic* structure reflects the human structure.

⁷²Midrash Temunah, pikudei 3, cited in Tishby I, "Wisdom of the Zohar", vol.II, p.699

Therefore, unity and harmony must be achieved in these two structures by bringing everything together.

-One Spirit With Different Gradations

The Kabbalistic psychology could be seen in parallel to the philosophic psychology of Aristotle and Plato. However, Kabbalists saw the *neshamah*, the higher part of the soul, as possessing intuitive capacities enabling it to apprehend all mysteries. By this, Kabbalists went beyond the basic Biblical understanding of the soul, and they incorporated philosophical and intellectual arguments in their discussions. Even more, there were some Kabbalists who adopted not only part of philosophical arguments and terminology, but a whole philosophical system of thought. They incorporated these arguments in their Kabbalah. This reached its apex in Abulafia, who claims to have found the most practical way for the attainment of knowledge. He was convinced that the soul, as intellectual, can be in union with the object of its thought, and this object he defined as the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect's role is to cause the soul to become intellectual, and to be in union with God. This type of Kabbalistic thought led to the foundation of future forms of Kabbalistic philosophy which spread in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such as *Lurianic Kabbalah* and the *Hasidic* movement. Therefore, it is essential here to analyse Abulafia's spiritual psychology, because it is important for the understanding of his Kabbalah as a whole. So, we will look at his understanding of the soul, and will see how close he is to Kabbalah and philosophy in general.

The human soul, as a hidden spiritual entity, is one of the human dimensions characterised by the ability to undergo a mystical transformation, and this is a basic mystical belief. Like any Kabbalist, Abulafia affirmed this mystical characteristic of the soul. However, one cannot find a clear reference to division of the soul into three parts in his writings. Yet the absence of such a reference is not an indication that he does not believe in it. On the contrary, there are many passages that suggest such a division of the soul. One of these is found in his epistle *Vi-Zot Li-Yhuda*, in a section where Abulafia is discussing sacrifice, unity, purity and merit where he alludes to the three parts of the soul:

It is necessary for the one who brings sacrifice to bring closer the pure to the pure, so that they might be united in merit. And for this reason the *middot*⁷³ preceded *sekhel* [intellect] in order that the *ruhot*, *nefeshot*, and *neshamot* might attain merit in them [*middot*].⁷⁴

⁷³The *middot* (plural) are the qualities of God recorded in Avot 5:1. They are understanding, knowledge, truthfulness, faithfulness, and righteousness.

⁷⁴*Vi-Zot Li-Yhuda* (Hebrew), published by Jellinek A (1889), 'Ginzei Hekhmat ha-Kabbalah'

What is interesting here is that unity and merit are attributed to the three parts of the soul. Furthermore, the divine qualities *middot* are given a higher position than that of *sekhel*, indicating that merit is not an attribute of *sekhel*, but an attribute of *middot*.

This attribute of *middot* could be achieved by the human soul, when it has achieved unity at a certain level. This level could be seen as the level of bringing the self closer to God, that is "the pure to the Pure". In addition, Abulafia emphasises that the *middot* are the outcome of unity. However, it is possible to isolate two stages of union in this passage. The first is the unity of *ruhot*, *nefeshot*, and *neshamot*, leading to merit, and the second is the union of the Kabbalist with the divine "the pure to the Pure" leading to *unio mystica*. Therefore, the division of the soul into three parts found in Abulafia is viewed from a different angle.

The division of the soul into three parts is also mentioned in the writings of R. Joseph Gikatilla⁷⁵, a disciple of Abulafia. The former learned from his teacher, Abulafia, the techniques of *gematria* (numerology), *notarikon* (acrostics), and *temunah* (permutation). In his book *Sha'are Orah*⁷⁶, Gikatilla writes:

This *sefirah* (i.e. *Binah*) is called 'Repentance', the reason being that the *neshamot* are emanated from this place, and the *ruhot* from *Tiferet*, and the *nefashot* from the *sefirah Malkut*. And they are bound to one another so that they can all be united in the *sefirah Binah*. How? The *nefesh* is linked to the *ruah*, and the *ruah* to the *neshamah*, and the *neshamah* is in the *sefirah Binah*.

What is found in the above passage is a clear reference to the three parts of the soul, that are linked together "they are bound together", despite their existence in different *Sefirot*. This view is also found in the *Zohar*, which is similar to model B2 (described on page 11). Furthermore, Gikatilla describes the unity of these parts as being in the *Sefirah Binah*. *Binah* is the level of intelligence, and so the human soul in this process will become intelligent. It is possible to say that such a conviction of the three parts of the soul and their unity might have existed in Abulafia's thought, because of the close relation between him and Gikatilla, his disciple. It might be argued that Abulafia does not mention the three parts of the soul in relation to the *Sefirot*, because he is sceptical of the Kabbalah of *Sefirot*. He rejects the idea of those who make the *Sefirot* as the one and only Kabbalah, and in *Vi-Zot Li-Yhuda* he says that there "Exist Kabbalists who believe in the *Sefirot* in the same manner as the Christians who believe in the Trinity"⁷⁷.

(Leipzig), p.22.

⁷⁵See note 44, p.18.

⁷⁶Cited in Tishby I, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol.II, p.692.

⁷⁷Found in Jellinek A, op cit. p.19.

For Abulafia, the Kabbalah of *Sefirot* is the "Beginner's Kabbalah"⁷⁸, and it is of use to those who are newly embarking in their mystical journey. The more advanced Kabbalah that leads to unity, is the Kabbalah of the way of the Divine Names (*Derekh ha-Shemot*). This is of far more value for Abulafia than the Kabbalah of *Sefirot* (*Derekh ha-Sefirot*). Added to this, Abulafia attacks those Kabbalists who follow the way of the *Sefirot* and say that "Divinity is ten *Sefirot*, and these ten are one"⁷⁹. What is of interest for Abulafia is not the *Sefirot* as the way to mystical union; rather, he is interested in the concept of the qualities represented by these *Sefirot*. These qualities are the same qualities of the *middot*, mentioned above. So, the aim of this mystical union, Abulafia would claim, is to actualise these qualities in the human soul leading to perfection.

We saw above that Abulafia's system of thought is about the union of the soul with the divine. This union is achieved through the contemplation on the Divine Names. These names are found in Torah, and they contain all the divine knowledge needed to achieve this union. Abulafia emphasises that this knowledge is available to the Kabbalist, and he says "...And when your mind (*da'atka*) comes to cleave to His mind, which gives you knowledge..."⁸⁰. It should be noted that Abulafia is referring to the mind and not the soul or the intellect, and that the word *da'at* literally means 'knowledge'. However, knowledge can only be present in the mind, but here Abulafia seems to be referring to the knowledge of the soul attained when in union with God. About this knowledge Abulafia writes in *Ozar 'Eden Ganuz*:

These are the things that God has chosen above all else in the world of the soul; therefore, He has given them to the soul in *potentia*, and when they go from *potentia* to *actu*, the soul acts on another Soul, so the souls are renewed and His knowledge shall save many from Sheol.⁸¹

This passage speaks of two types of soul; in *potentia* and in *actu*. The soul in *potentia* seems to be in possession of knowledge in a crude and undifferentiated manner. However, the soul in *actu* possesses knowledge which is defined as divine, because it leads to salvation. This view of knowledge as internal to the soul, but in a potential form, which is similar to Avicenna's view of the Rational Soul⁸². The soul when it has acquired the intelligibles will be called in *actu* or in *habitu*, and for Abulafia the Divine

⁷⁸Found in Jellinek A, op.cit. p.19..

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Or Ha-Sekhel, cited in Idel M, "The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia", p.132.

⁸¹Cited in Idel M, op cit. p.18.

⁸²Avicenna, *On the Rational Soul*, translated and cited in Gutas D (1988), "Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition"(E.J.Brill, Leiden), p.72.

Names represent these intelligibles acquired by the soul. These intelligibles are the subject of meditation, and they contain knowledge crucial for salvation, which is the aim of this intellectual act.

Finally, there are benefits to be accrued from the above intellectual activity, is the union of the soul with God. Therefore the aim of Abulafia's kabbalah is not to influence the Godhead as such, but to transform the self into a level of perfection leading to eternal life. These benefits are recorded in *Hayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba*:

The benefits of the knowledge of the name of [God] is in its being the cause of man's attainment of the actual intellection of the *Active Intellect* and the benefit of the intellection of the *Active Intellect* is in the ultimate aim of the life of the intellectual soul, and its ultimate aim is the reason of the life of the World to come. This aim is the union of the soul by this intellection, with God, may He be blessed, for ever and ever...⁸³

The intellection of the soul has a purpose of leading the Kabbalist to the world to come; therefore, union has an extended affect. But, the benefits are reflected in this life too, and the aim of this intellection is described by Abulafia as:

The union of the soul, by this intellection, with God, may He be blessed, for ever and ever and eternally, and that thing called the "image of God" (*Zelem Elohim*) and His likeness, "will live in man everlasting life without any limit, like the life of the Creator, which is their cause". And of this it is said (Deuteronomy 5:20), "for it is your life and length of days" your life in this world and length of days in the next world. And it is said (Deuteronomy 4:4), "And you who cleave unto the Lord as your God are living still this day", implying that one who does not cleave to God does not live forever.⁸⁴

The idea here is that the human soul must be transformed in a way to be similar to that of *Zelem Elohim* and His Likeness, which is recorded in Genesis 1:26-27 as a description of the creation of Adam. This image will define not only the true essence of humanity in this world, but also their essence in the world to come; thus, leading to the view of the ideal human being. The Genesis passage 1:26-27 fascinated the early interpreters and exerted an immense influence in their view of Man. This passage suggests that human beings resemble God, and God in many passages seems to possess organs similar to human organs (cf. Exodus 3:20, Lamentations 2:1, 1 Samuel 8:21, Daniel 9:18, Psalm 86:1, Psalm 78:2, Psalm 67:1). However, the creation story in Genesis 2:7 is different from the above passage in its context, and this difference led many to consider the two accounts of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 as two separate creations. Philo of

⁸³ Cited in Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, pp.128-129.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.129.

Alexandria in the first century BC, dealt with this problem in an allegorical way⁸⁵. For him, Genesis 1:27 represented creation of an “*ideal type*” man, which is an act different from that of the creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7. Philo writes:

There is a vast difference between the man thus formed [in Genesis 2:7] and the man that came into existence earlier⁸⁶ “*in the image*” of God [Genesis 1:27]. For the man formed [in Genesis 2:7] is an object of sense-perception, partaking already of such and such quality, consisting of *body* and *soul*, man or woman, by nature mortal; while he that was made “*in the image*” [of God] was an idea or type or seal, an object of thought [alone], incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible.⁸⁷

Therefore, it is possible that Abulafia is referring to this type of creation, which is “an object of thought alone”, as the outcome of the mystical union. This ‘image of God’ is what any Kabbalist would strive to attain, and this image, Abulafia says, “will live in man everlasting life without any limit”⁸⁸. Therefore, for Abulafia the act of union will enable the Kabbalist to recover this image, and then the Kabbalist will live life according to the eternal qualities of this image, that is to have eternal life. In addition, in Kabbalistic thought Adam’s fall made his body corporeal. Thus, before the fall he possessed a purely spiritual figure, and the fall made his body corporeal⁸⁹. Yet Adam did not lose his spiritual dimension with the fall. On the contrary, he seems to be composite in nature after the fall. But he lost that sense of perception with the fall, and so he cannot attain knowledge of God. Therefore, for Abulafia the intellectual apprehension is needed in order to recover this image, leading to the union of the soul with God. In the end, the soul is subject to survival, and this survival of the soul and its salvation requires its spiritualisation and transformation into the image and likeness of its Creator.

⁸⁵ Allegory was one of the hermeneutical methods that was popular in Alexandria.

⁸⁶ This *man* is called by the name *Adam kadamon* or Primordial Man.

⁸⁷ Philo, *On the Creation*, 134. Cited in James Kugel (1998), “Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As it Was at the Start of the Common Era”, Revised ed., (Cambridge Mass, London) p.80.

⁸⁸ See the previous page.

⁸⁹ Adam’s sin is interpreted by most Kabbalists as introducing separation between above and below, or heaven and earth. For further information see Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p.124.

The Intellect (*Sekhel*)

-What is *Sekhel*?

The human intellect or mind is a very complex system. It is characterised by its functional capacities to apprehend knowledge and its ability to think for itself. However, the intellect is far more complex than this straightforward definition. The mind is ontologically different in nature from the soul, and is able, like the soul, to undergo mystical transformation. This capacity of the human intellect to apprehend mystically represents the main thesis of Abulafia's system of thought, and this aspect of the Mystical Intellect will be analysed and isolated below. However, a brief description of the philosophical understanding of the intellect will be helpful at this stage.

The first philosopher to provide a systematic study of the intellect, from a cognitive point of view, is Aristotle. In his book *De Anima*, Aristotle distinguished between two activities of the mind. The first, is the act of *perception*, which he identified as something external. The second, is the act of *thinking*, which is something internal in the soul. This mind of Aristotle is described as unmixed with anything and unrestricted in range, because one can think as one wishes. In addition, mind is characterised by potentiality. Because it is not actual until it thinks, and this actual thinking of the mind is produced by another object of thought. The Aristotelian understanding of the human mind or intellect is based on its functions and activities: namely *thinking* and *perception*.

In the Bible the term intellect (*sekhel*) as a faculty does not appear. However, there are references to the word *sekhel*, but is more connected with understanding and wisdom. For example, in Job 22:2 *sekhel* is seen in terms of wisdom ascribed to the one "who is wise", and in II Kings 18:7 *sekhel* is conveyed as the "prosperity" of king Hezekiah. So the Bible lacks any specific reference to *sekhel* as a distinct faculty.

In Kabbalah, and particularly in the intellectual Kabbalah, the intellect was defined in terms of its ability to perceive the divine mystery. Thus the intellect as a phenomenon became associated with mystical intuition, and one of the proponents of this view is Abulafia. What is so distinctive about Abulafia's thought, is the adoption of the Aristotelian system of thought which distinguishes between three concepts: intellection, intellect, intelligibles. According to this thought system the intellect is divided into human intellect, which is internal, and an external one. This external intellect is identified as *sekhel*, and Abulafia describes this in *Or ha-Sekhel*:

"*Sekel*" is the name given to thing which guides all, which is the first cause of all, and it is the name of a thing which is separate from all matter, which is the [intellectual] influx (*sefa*) which emanates from the first cause... and it is that which emanates from the separate [things], which is called the *sekel* which cleaves to the hylic [elements].⁹⁰

Sekhel here refers to two things. The first is described as the entity that "guides all", and the "cause of all"; and refers to God who is the cause of all creation. Secondly, *sekhel* is a name of the *influx* of the first cause. This *influx* is the Active Intellect, as we shall see below.

However, *sekhel* can also be ascribed to humanity, in the sense that humanity possesses *sekhel* or is something internal to them. In *Or ha-Sekhel*, Abulafia characterises the human *sekhel* as a gift from God "The human intellect is the first fruit of God, may He be blessed, and by way of simile is His seed, and he is in truth His son"⁹¹. What is so interesting here is that God and humans have *sekhel*, and in this respect human's *sekhel* has a divine origin because it is the "fruit of God". Here Abulafia makes explicit connection between human and divine intellects in order to pave the way for the union of the soul and God.

So, *sekhel* could refer to things in addition to the human intellect, and it is the human *sekhel* which is the subject of perception. Human *sekhel* can grow into the likeness of divine *sekhel*; therefore, it is necessary here to look closely into these two intellects.

-Human and Divine Sekhel

To speak of human and divine *sekhelim* is not to suggest that these are two equal types of intellects, having the same essence. But this is not the idea that Abulafia wants to convey here. Rather, he wants to show that all human thought proceeds from God, as *sekhel*. What is vital for the understanding of Abulafia's thought is that the human *sekhel* can be in union with divine *sekhel*. However, a problem that might arise from this premise is that, two entities cannot be in union if they are not similar in nature, and this is true of human and divine intellects. To solve this, Abulafia postulated that it is not God in his pure essence⁹² that cleaves to the soul, but the *influx* of God's *influx*, which is similar in nature to human *sekhel*, that cleaves to the soul. This is spelled out in *Or ha-Sekhel*:

⁹⁰ Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.129.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.130.

⁹² Note that in Jewish thought God's essence cannot be known.

And they are therefore three levels, and the three of them are one essence, and they are: God, may He be blessed; and His separate [i.e., non-material] influx, and the influx of his influx (*sefa sefo*) which cleaves itself to the soul.⁹³

In the above passage there are three levels, where the human soul is said to cleave to the *influx* of God's *influx*. So, a hierarchy of intellects is posited, but they are all similar in nature. In order for the soul to achieve this union it must be similar in essence to the *influx* of God's *influx*, which is the Active Intellect. It is this intellect that brings the human soul into actualisation. Thus, the transformation of the soul into that which is similar to the Active Intellect's essence will cause the soul to comprehend all knowledge available to it. Apparently, this comprehension of the intellect is a prerequisite act for union to take place, and this is expressed by Abulafia in *Or ha-Sekhel*, "And behold the comprehension of the human intellect, which flows from the separate Active Intellect, causes the cleaving of the soul to her God"⁹⁴. Furthermore, this comprehension of the human intellect is invoked through the intellection of the Divine Names as objects of thought. So, perception is arrived at when the Active Intellect actualises these thoughts contained in the human intellect. Therefore, the unity of the knower with his/her object of thought is achieved through this actualisation of the intellect, and this act of union is a mystery and is beyond human apprehension.

Both the human and divine *sekhelim* play their role in the mystical experience. However, the whole aim of this experience is to transform the soul into its divine image and likeness, as discussed above. Furthermore, the role of *sekhelim* is interpreted by Abulafia both as the descent of the Active Intellect on the soul, and also with the ascension of the soul towards this entity. This act of descent/ascent is portrayed in terms of human desire, and Abulafia captures this movement graphically in *Or ha-Sekhel*:

This is the great power of man: he can link the lower part with the higher [one] and the lower [part] will ascend and cleave to the higher, and the higher [part] will descend and will kiss the entity ascending towards it, like the bridegroom actually kisses his bride out of his great real desire characteristic to the delight of both, from the power of the name [of God].⁹⁵

The portrayal of the mystical union as the union of the bridegroom and the bride is so explicit that the outcome of this union is pure pleasure, because the desire for union is

⁹³Cited in Idel M, op cit. p.130.

⁹⁴Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.130.

⁹⁵Cited in Idel M (1988), *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (State University of New York Press, Albany, New York), p.67.

PART TWO
SHAYKH SUHRAWARDI

sought by both parties. Therefore, it is not only the desire of the mystic to be in union with God, but also it is God's desire to be in union with humanity. The above desire, of both God and the mystic is the outcome of pure love between the two. Abulafia plainly characterises this love as Intellectual Love:

The name [of God] is composed of two parts, since there are two parts of love [divided between] two lovers, and [parts of] love turn one [entity] when love became actuated. The divine intellectual love and the human intellectual love are conjoined being one. Exactly, so the name [of God] includes [the words] one one, because the connection of the human existence with the divine existence during the intellection-which is identical with the intellect in [its] existence-until he and he become one [entity].⁹⁶

Abulafia here mentions two parts of the name of God, and each part includes the word 'one' *ehad*⁹⁷. Thus, it is possible to perceive of two stage union here; the first conveyed in terms of intellectual love, and the second of the total fusion of the soul with God. This is seen in the spiritual elevation of humanity to the level of divinity, based on the premise that "God as intellect, intelligibles, and act of intellection, and separate intellects-all of which are various aspects of the spiritual"⁹⁸.

We saw above that the act of intellection, according to Abulafia, causes the cleaving of the human intellect with the divine. So, we conclude from this that both the human and divine *sekhelim* are needed here. It is this feature of the intellectual nature of Abulafia's kabbalah that made it distinctive, and it could be labelled as intellectual mysticism. Added to that, this type of mysticism is portrayed as the love between the mystic and God, which will ultimately lead to the identification of the human soul to the *Zelem Elohim*, and to its deification.

Thus, union (*devekut*) in Abulafia's thought is the total union of the soul, in its essence and existence, with God.

⁹⁶Cited in Idel M, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p.67.

⁹⁷Idel numerically calculated this, and *one* has the numerical value of 13, *one one* is equal to 26, which is the numerical value of the Tetragramaton YHWH. See *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p.70, n.13.

⁹⁸Ibid, p13.

-The Role of the Active Intellect in the Act of Intellection

The act of mystical union, as described above, is conceived of as the total fusion of the human intellect with God via the above mentioned intellectual intermediary. The act of union is not a spontaneous act; rather, it must follow certain techniques, especially meditation on the Divine Names. This type of meditation strips off all the physical ideas contained in the human mind aiming to separate the soul from any material objects attached to it. The Active Intellect plays an important role in the act of union, for it is with this intellect that the human soul is actualised and detached from any material objects.

The term Active Intellect is a philosophical notion and not Biblical, and is associated with Aristotle, although "Aristotle did not even expressly coin the term active intellect"⁹⁹. However, Aristotle's remarks on the existence of such a powerful intellect led many to investigate this notion, among them Avicenna and Averroes. The former identified the Active Intellect as "the last rung in the hierarchy of incorporeal beings"¹⁰⁰. This intellect is able to "give forth from itself, through forces of emanation, the material substratum of the entire sublunar world, all natural forms in the sublunar world, and all human thought"¹⁰¹. Therefore, we can say that the Active Intellect is an external power outside the physical world, which is able to affect entities in the cosmos. One entity affected by the Active Intellect is the human thought, or the human soul.

One of the affects of the Active Intellect on the human soul is to enable it to look and to discover the true essence of things. Because, everything has a unique essence, which is exclusive to it. Abulafia identified this role of the Active Intellect in *Or ha-Sekhel*, which he defined in terms of intellectual attainment:

And when one's intellectual attainment includes all of the areas of intellectual pursuit under his domain, it is to be expected that he would receive abundant effluence from this attainment. Through this he will also be able to give partial form for a short duration to aspects of the material world, in the form of natural functions, within the domain of existence that rises and passes away. And because nature in and of itself continues to subsist, this person's effect on an aspect of the natural plane will last longer than the amount of time of that mental function of the prophet, which is not continuous with him. Therefore, it is fitting to associate the function that changes nature in accordance with the mental function of the prophet, to the One who is the

⁹⁹Davidson II, 'Averroes on the Active Intellect as a Cause of Existence' in *Viator*, vol.18(1987), p.191.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

first cause of this change, i.e., to God.¹⁰²

The Active Intellect, in the above passage, must be associated with the power that changes nature, this intellect links God and humanity. Because, it is the Active Intellect that affects the soul, and Kabbalists always speak of such an effect in terms of the human impregnation, which leads to the birth of a son. Abulafia designates the intellect by the term 'son', and symbolises the appearance of this intellect within the human soul. Thus, Abulafia writes in *Ozar 'Eden Ganuz*:

The seed is a matter that which exists through the existence of the Active Intellect, which is the influx by which the soul receives it, and it is like the image of the seed born from the man and woman. Of this it is likewise said by way of parable, "and choose life, that you may live, you and your seed", which is the life of the world to come..."Who is wise? He who sees the future life [lit.: "That which is to be born"]" He sees the seed which we have mentioned, which is the son that is born.¹⁰³

The above images of seed and son, used for the intellect, are very interesting images, and Idel postulates that "The seed is an image for the influx which reaches the intellectual soul, transforming it into intellect in actuality"¹⁰⁴. Note also, that the image of seed is connected with matter which is only in existence, because it is brought by the Active Intellect. Therefore, we can say that the Active Intellect transforms things from the state of potentiality to the state of actuality, and bringing these things into existence.

Moreover, Abulafia's thought is so fertile that he employs two other philosophical concepts related to the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect seems to be in relation to the intellect and the imagination. Both of these concepts are Aristotelian¹⁰⁵, and both were discussed by Avicenna, who thought that the imaginative faculty is related to perception¹⁰⁶. Abulafia saw this imaginative faculty in the same manner as Avicenna, and emphasises that this faculty must be controlled by the intellect. All the feelings and the mystical intuition are invoked on the imagination by the Active Intellect. However, this faculty is also dangerous if used wrongly, and that is why it should be controlled by the intellect. Abulafia elaborates on this in *Ozar 'Eden Ganuz*:

And his intellect is greater than his imagination, and it rides upon it like one who rides upon a horse and drives it by hitting it with [a whip] to run before it as it wills, and his

¹⁰²Cited in Idel M, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, p.64.

¹⁰³Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.191.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵See page 27.

¹⁰⁶See Davidson H, 'Avicenna on the Active Intellect' in *Viator*, vol.3 (1972), p.162.

whip is in his hand to make it[i.e., the imagination] stand where his intellect wills.¹⁰⁷

In another place in *Or ha-Sekhel*, Abulafia looks at the relation between the intellect and the imagination, in relation to the intellectual apprehension produced by the Active Intellect. In *Or ha-Sekhel*, Abulafia describes in steps the flow of the *influx* from the Active Intellect:

And because man is composed of many powers, it is necessary that he sees the influx in his intellect, and that vision is called by the name Intellectual Apprehension. And the influx will further jump to the imagination, and require that the imagination apprehend that which is in its nature to apprehend, and see in the image of corporeality imagined as spirituality combined with it; and that force will be called Man or Angel or the like.¹⁰⁸

Here the imaginative faculty has the role of apprehending the corporeal objects by giving them a spiritual substance. However, Averroes viewed the imaginative faculty as the passive dimension of the intellect, and he identified it with Aristotle's *Phantasia* (imagination). Averroes also postulated that this faculty receives intelligibles from the Active Intellect, and its time span is limited because it perishes with death. However, when comparing Abulafia's thought to that of Averroes, one cannot fail to notice the similarity in perspective, indicating that Abulafia is affected by philosophical thought. Moreover, Averroes, like Avicenna, thought of the Active Intellect as the cause of human thought. In his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, he identifies three types of intellect and their nature. He says:

There are three types of intellect in the soul, one of these is the receiving intellect, the second is the producing intellect, and the third is the produced intellect. Two of these intellects are eternal, namely the agent and the receiving intellects, but the third is generable and corruptible in one sense, eternal in another sense.¹⁰⁹

As expected from Abulafia, the above Averroestic classification of the intellect into many types is found in *Or Ha-Sekhel*. Abulafia writes "... And the intellects are many, the separate [ones] and the ones receiving the flow, and the many souls, and only the Active Intellect is one essence"¹¹⁰. Thus, the Active Intellect's role is defined in terms of bringing everything into actualisation, that is, into their true nature.

As we saw, Abulafia never fails to spot a good philosophical argument, and he advances his thought using these valid arguments. He and Averroes agree that the Active Intellect

¹⁰⁷Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.76.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, n.84, p.152. Note that the term Angel here refers to the *Active Intellect*.

¹⁰⁹Cited in Leaman O (1988), *Averroes and His Philosophy* (Clarendon Press, Oxford), p.99.

¹¹⁰Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.130.

is one and has one essence, it is this intellect that produces thought in the human intellect.

In conclusion, the subject of the Active Intellect is very complex and can be viewed from many angles. However, what concerned us here is the idea that the Active Intellect, which is a philosophical concept, appears in Abulafia. The basic role of the Active Intellect is summed up in its deification of the human intellect because it reflects the divine influx on this human intellect.

The Relation of the Soul to the Intellect

We have seen above that the Active Intellect's role in Abulafia's mystical system is interpreted by means of bringing the soul into intellection first, and then into union with God. However, both the soul and the intellect seems to be in a kind of relationship to the Active Intellect. So, here we have to ask the question: Is it possible to perceive of a relationship between the soul and the intellect, based on their relation to the Active Intellect?

It was postulated above that both the soul and the intellect are the two vital components of the mystical transformation. Therefore, any understanding of a relationship that might exist between the two must be based on this assumption. And perhaps it is a good exercise to identify and exploit such a relationship from a purely hypothetical aspect. Because what we are dealing with here is not tangible objects. Rather, we are dealing with very mysterious concepts that have a metaphysical structure.

The confusion that might have arisen from the previous section is: Does the Active Intellect actualise the soul or the intellect? And are the soul and the intellect two hostile powers in the human makeup?

Both the soul and the intellect were seen as two different powers, and these were analysed and identified by both Plato and Aristotle. On the one hand, they described the soul as eternal, while on the other they characterised the human intellect as being limited and subject to decay. Yet, Aristotle postulated that actual thinking is an activity of the soul; thus the soul is rational at some point. But, rationality and intellectual apprehension are two activities of the intellect. So is there a relationship between the soul and the intellect? And if such a relationship exists, of what type it is?

These are the kind of questions that might be asked when investigating a relationship, and such a relationship will be constructed (which is purely hypothetical) from the previous discussions we had on the intellect and the soul.

While investigating Abulafia's system of thought, many concepts that appeared in his writing needed clarification. For example, in some places he consolidates the role of the human intellect in the mystical transformation, and in other places he views this role as part of the soul. The notion of the intellectual apprehension of the soul is one of these. Sometimes, the intellect is seen as the subject of mystical union, and sometimes it is the soul. For example in a passage in *Or ha-Sekhel*, Abulafia talks about the cleaving of the soul to God, "...The comprehension of the human intellect, which flows from the Active

Intellect, causes the cleaving of the soul to her God”¹¹¹. However, in another place in the same book, Abulafia describes another type of *devekut*, saying, “...And when your mind (*da’atka*) comes to cleave to His mind, which gives you knowledge...”¹¹².

The above unions of the soul and the intellect with God are not two separate unions, but constitute one act of *devekut*. This act of union does not involve a single stage, but is described in many stages leading to the complete union of the soul with God. Therefore, it is possible to follow these stages, in order to detect whether a relationship between the intellect and the soul can be established. The first stage in Abulafia’s Kabbalah is the stage of the contemplation on the Divine Names. This is a purely mental activity whereby these names are transformed from the text into the whole thinking of the Kabbalist, that is into the spiritual state. After having internalised these names, the intellect will be in control of the imagination, and so able to unite with God’s mind. This will lead to the actual intellection of the Active Intellect, as identified in *Hayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba*, “The benefit of the knowledge of the name of [God] is in its being the cause of man’s attainment of the actual intellection of the Active Intellect”¹¹³.

It is at this stage that the human intellect will be transformed into a spiritual power which is able to comprehend divine knowledge. Perhaps it is in this stage the intellect will become part of the soul, that is the soul will become intellectual. Note that this transformation of the soul is invoked by the Active Intellect, which releases all the rational and intellectual powers of the soul from the state of potentiality to the state actuality. Having reached the stage of the Intellectual soul, this soul then is able to unite with the Active Intellect because it becomes similar in nature to it. The sharing of this essence or nature is alluded to in *Or ha-Sekhel*:

They are therefore three levels, and the three of them are one essence, and they are: God, may He be blessed; and his separate [i.e. non-material] influx; and the influx of his influx (*sefa sifo*), which cleaves itself to the soul. And the soul will cleave to it with a strong cleaving, until the two of them are likewise one essence.¹¹⁴

This stage is the stage of the transformed human soul which becomes similar in essence to God, Idel describes it as a “A process which transforms the intellectual soul into the object of her intellection, which is God, whereby the perfect unity is attained”¹¹⁵. Thus,

¹¹¹Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.130.

¹¹²Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.132.

¹¹³*Ibid*, p.128.

¹¹⁴*Ibid*, p.130.

¹¹⁵*Ibid*.

the relation of the intellect to the soul is identified with the process leading to the transformation of the soul, as well as its union with God.

This relationship could be interpreted as the synthesis of the soul and the intellect, because it is only by this synthesis of the two dimensions that a simple or spiritual state can be reached.

We may conclude from the above discussion that the intellect and the soul as two mystical dimensions are not two opposing powers. Rather they are the two human dimensions that are subject to a transformation, leading to the state of perfection.

Conclusion

The above study examined Abulafia's system of thought which was influenced by the philosophical systems and philosophical terminology. Abulafia lived in a very fertile period in respect of the spread of philosophical systems of both Aristotle and Plato. At the same time, his geographical location in relation to the Muslim philosophers meant that their writings were available to him. Although this study is not concerned with historical matters, but this fact must be noted.

Abulafia's system of Kabbalah is altogether different from the main Kabbalah, and is very complex in nature. It involves certain techniques for attaining mystical experience. One of these techniques (in addition to breathing, bodily posture, the closing of the eyes) is the meditation on the Divine Names. These names of God are found in the Torah, and Abulafia's hermeneutics point out to the supremacy of Torah. Its role in the attainment of God's knowledge as contained in these names. However, there is another requirement for this attainment of knowledge, and that is the self.

Abulafia saw self in its true nature as a mixture of soul and intellect. He identified these two dimensions as essential for leading to the transformation of humanity. The soul was seen as able to ascend into higher stages of consciousness, and these stages were connected in Abulafia with the divine qualities (*middot*). Thus Abulafia's Kabbalah is not concerned with bringing harmony to the *Sefirot*, but is concerned with the ethical transformation of the personality. By attaining the *middot*, the individual might be closer to the stage of the perfection of the soul. One way of perfecting this soul is through the intellectual apprehension invoked by the Active Intellect, and this activity involves the human intellect. Thus for Abulafia, the intellect plays an eminent part in this apprehension. His arguments are based on his philosophical convictions adopted from the Aristotelian system of intellect, intelligibles, and act of intellection. Since intellect was ascribed to both God and humans, in that sense humans can reach divinity by uniting

the soul with God. In addition, Abulafia employed the philosophical concept of the Active Intellect as an integral part of his Kabbalah.

He saw the role of this intellect as a means of transforming the soul from the state of potentiality into the state of actuality. This stage involves the bringing of the soul and the intellect into some kind of synthesis, whereby the intellect becomes part of the soul leading it to become intellectual. This intellectual aspect of the soul is achieved through the mystical path known by Abulafia as the way of the Divine Names. Abulafia introduced these philosophical concepts and terms into his Kabbalah transforming it into intellectual one.

Shaykh Suhrawardi

In describing Shaykh Suhrawardi in his book *Sayyir A'lam al-Nubala'* "Memoirs of the Eminent Nobility"¹¹⁶, Imam¹¹⁷ Shams al-Din al-Thahabi honours Suhrawardi with a prominent place among the great nobility. He describes Suhrawardi thus:

The Shaykh, the Imam, the Scholar (*al-'Alim*), the model (*al-Qudwa*), the ascetic (*al-Zahid*), the gnostic (*al-'Arif*)¹¹⁸, the *Muhadith*¹¹⁹, Shaykh of Islam, who united Sufism.

The above passage reveals the unique position Suhrawardi held and its significance for the next generation. He is the person who, in his book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, defined *al-Sufiyya*. He also made the distinction between a true and a semi-Sufi, as well as establishing some ethical qualities required of the adepts. In addition, in *'Awarif al Ma'arif* he explains the true path in the mystical journey, and this will be discussed below. Thus, Suhrawardi consolidated Sufism and proclaimed its real essence as a way of life. It is for this reason that al-Thahabi can claim Suhrawardi united Sufism.

Another reason for Suhrawardi's appearance in al-Thahabi's writings on prominent personalities is his family background. Al-Thahabi tells that Suhrawardi is a descendant of al-Siddiq (d.634), known as Abu Bakr, the first of the *Sahaba* (Companions) of Muhammad, and the first *Caliph* (vicegerent) after him. Thus al-Thahabi makes a link between the fact that Suhrawardi was a *Muhadith*, and his genealogy as a descendant of Abu-Bakkr al-Siddiq. A range of Suhrawardi's other credentials are listed by al-Thahabi, including his genealogy; his profession (a Sufi, follower the Sufi way of life); details of his association with the tribe of *Quraysh* (a meccan tribe whose form of language was identified as "high Arabic"¹²⁰); and his birth place (Suhraward). Lived in Baghdad, because he finishes with "then al-Baghdadi". This is elaborated further below:

Shihab al-Din abu Hafs 'Abdullah 'Umar bin Muhammad bin 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin 'Abdullah bin Sa'id bin Hussein bin al-Qasim bin al-Nadhr bin al-Qasim bin Muhammad bin 'Abdullah son the city's *Faqih* (Jurist), 'Abdu 'al-Rahman bin Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi-Bakkr al-Siddiq, al-Qushayri, al-Taymi, al-Bakri, al-Suhrawardi, al-Sufi, then al-Baghdadi.

¹¹⁶Written by Imam al-Thahabi, who died in 748H(1374 CE), ed.Bashir 'Awad Ma'ruf & Yihya Sarhan, pp.373-374.

¹¹⁷Imam is a religious leader.

¹¹⁸The word *Ma'rifa* comes from the same root, which means gnosis.

¹¹⁹ *Muhadith* is the scholar of *Hadith*.

¹²⁰For further information see Ahmed von Denffer, *'Ulum al-Qur'an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*, p.111.

It is for these reasons that Suhrawardi's thought is worthy of further investigation and examination, together with the fact that he represents a tradition which had, and still has, an impact on Islamic theology. We shall start by giving a brief introduction to his life.

Suhrawardi's Life

The life and ancestry of Suhrawardi is well documented, in addition to al-Thahabi, he appears in the writings of many other scholars, historians, and some later Sufis. Some information about Suhrawardi's life comes from his own writings, and this helps us to draw a picture of his personality and his thought as a theologian¹²¹. However, all of Suhrawardi's writings are still in manuscript form except '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*', and perhaps that is the reason behind the lack of any study on his thought.

Shaykh Suhrawardi was born in the year 539H (1145CE) in Suhraward (hence the name Suhrawardi) which is a small town near Zanjan in the Persian province of Djibal to the west of Sultaniya. Information about his early years of childhood and education are not available. However, we know that his father Abu Ja'far, was the Jurist of the city. He was educated in Baghdad and killed in Suhraward when Shihab was six months old. Shihab must have learned to read and memorise the Qur'an like any Muslim boy at his age by a local Shaykh or by his father. His education would include all the Qur'anic sciences, such as *Tafsir*. Suhrawardi's life was affected by the qualities his uncle Abu al-Nadjib possessed, and Shihab followed the same path. Abu al-Nadjib was one of the great Sufi masters, and was educated, like Shihab's father, in Baghdad. There in Baghdad Abu al-Nadjib founded the *Ribat*¹²². Shihab later joined this community. Suhrawardi learned from his uncle Abu al-Nadjib Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), preaching and *tasawwuf*, thus bringing Suhrawardi's thought into maturity. He also followed the path of seclusion Abu al-Nadjib followed, and later he emerged as a renowned Sufi. In addition to the above, Suhrawardi studied literature (*Adab*), the art of dispute or debate (*Jadal*), and Belle Letters (*al-Adab al-Mahdh*). He also mentions the names of many great Sufis in his book '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*', such as al-Muhasibi (d.857), al-Makki (d.996), as-Sulami (d.1021), and as-Sarraj (d.988).

Since many people contributed to the development of Suhrawardi's thought and spiritual life, this enables us to locate him in a specific school of thought.

¹²¹ A full study on Suhrawardi's life and work is still lacking, and to my knowledge there are no studies carried out either in English or in Arabic.

¹²² *Ribat* is a general term denoting a community of people.

After the death of his uncle Abu al Nadjib in 1168 CE, Suhrawardi followed in the footsteps of his uncle in the path of seclusion (*khalwa*), remembrance (*dhikr*), and Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*). Suhrawardi later emerged as a Sufi, well learned in literature and jurisprudence, and because of this he preached in his uncle's *Ribat*. In his book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, he describes the people of *Ribat* as "The men, because they attached their souls (*nufus*) to obey God, Most High, and they became secluded to God, so He made the world their servant"¹²³.

Suhrawardi was interested in and attracted to the ethical and moral qualities of an organisation known as the *Futuwwa*. *Futuwwa* as a term came to be known around the eighth century CE¹²⁴, and many movements and organisations seem to have adopted this term¹²⁵. This term is also connected with the ethical quality that was attributed to a *fata* (boy), which had effect on society. In a sense, this ethical quality was seen in the chivalrous acts performed by the *fata*. *Futuwwa* were also affected by Sufi circles. Suhrawardi was attracted to these qualities, and he later brought the *Futuwwa* and *tasawwuf* together under one leadership. This new organisation proved to be of vital importance for the caliphate al-Nasr (1181-1223), who was interested in regrouping all the Islamic organisations under his banner. Therefore, the *Futuwwa/Tasawwuf* was placed under the service of al-Nasr. Suhrawardi was sent, as a messenger, by al-Nasr to many courts of Kings and Princes. In 1221 Suhrawardi was sent as a personal emissary to the Seljuk Sultan of Rum 'Ala al-Din Kay Kubad I¹²⁶. Also, In 1217-8 he was sent as a messenger from al-Nasr to Hamadan, to Khwarazm Shah 'Ala al-Din Muhammad II¹²⁷.

Suhrawardi continued in his path as a Sufi. In his old age lost sight and was carried to the Mosque every day for prayer, until he became very weak and died at the age of 90. He died in the month of Muharram of the year 632H(1234CE), and was buried in the *Wardiya* cemetery in Baghdad.

¹²³ *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.104.

¹²⁴ See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, edited by Bosworth C, Danzel E, Lewis B, Pellat C, (E.J.Brill, Leiden), vol.V, p.961.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p.961.

¹²⁶ See Mason H (9172), *Two Statemen Of Medieval Islam*, (Mouton and Company, The Hague), pp.123-124..

¹²⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol.IX (1997), pp.778-781.

Suhrawardi's Works

Suhrawardi left behind a number of writings which contain much of his teachings and theology. From these it is possible to perceive of him not as a dogmatic theologian, but as a theologian who would appeal to all the factions in his society. Thus, his writings are written with all mystical and religious traditions in view, and his deep theology is reflected in his rich style. He also composed some of his books since he wished to tackle specific issues. For example '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*' was written to solidify Sufism and give it more prominence. His writings reflect his concern for the Muslim values and faith, and his desire to consolidate the path of Truth. In these writings he is guided by the Sufic way of life, and in this respect he cites many of his teachers such as Qushayri (d.1074) and Kalabdhī (d.990?), in addition to those mentioned above.

Suhrawardi's most famous book is '*Awarif al-Ma'arif* (*Gifts of Gnosis*)', which is a Sufi manual of discipline. In the introduction to the book, he explains that the reason for composing the book is to authenticate *tasawwuf* and to distinguish the real Sufi from the semi-Sufi. The book is divided into sixty three chapters including Sufi knowledge and states, their aspirations, the moral and ethical qualities required to become a Sufi. In this book, Suhrawardi describes the relation of the adept (*murid*) to the master (*murad*). He also includes a chapter concerned with ontological issues and a detailed spiritual psychology called "*On the knowledge of the Self, and the Sufi unveilings*". As a compendium, this book received much attention and was copied and circulated in many parts of the Islamic world. It has been translated into Turkish, Persian, and Urdu languages, and the Arabic version was published by Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, 1966 and 1986. There are many manuscripts of this book in the British Library and in the Sulaymaniya library in Turkey.

Suhrawardi wrote many other treatises such as *I'lamu'l-Huda wa-'Aqidat Arbabit-Tuqa*¹²⁸ (*The Notification of Guidance and the belief of the Lords Piety*), which is concerned with the basic principles of Jurisprudence. He wrote an exegesis on the Qur'an called *Nughbat al-Bayan fi-Tafsir al-Qur'an* (*The Manifestations of Eloquence in Qur'anic Exegesis*), and a synopsis on Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) called *Hiliyatu'n-Nasik fi al-Manasik* (*The Ornaments of the Ascetic in the Rituals*)¹²⁹. He also wrote a commentary on his book '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*' called *Hashiya 'ala- al-Ma'arif* (*Commentary on the Gifts*)¹³⁰.

¹²⁸A manuscript of this book is found in the British Library, catalogue no.OR 9289/6

¹²⁹A manuscript of this treatise is found in the Sulaymaniya Library in Turkey.

¹³⁰A manuscript of this treatise is found in the British Library, catalogue no.OR 8260/2

In addition to the above, Suhrawardi wrote other books in which he attacks those who employ Hellenistic thought and warns against the intrusion of this Greek philosophy. Among them is *Rashf al-Nasa'ih al-Imaniya wa Kashf al-Fadha'ih al-Yunaniyah* (*The Absorption of the Faithful Exhortations and the Exposure of the Greek Scandal*)¹³¹. In this, Suhrawardi attacks the innovators, the philosophers, and the diviners who follow the path of Greek thought. Another book in the same genre is *Idalat al-'iyan 'ala al-Burhan* (*The Witness of the Eyes above Evidence*)¹³², where he refutes philosophy.

Finally, Suhrawardi wrote many epistles and short letters, such as *Risalat al-Sayr wa al-Tayr* (*Epistle on the Spiritual Journey*), and *Risalat al-Najat Min Shar al-Sifut* (*Epistle on the Deliverance from the Evil Attributes*). And he also wrote *Wasiya* (*Testimony*), which is addressed to his son Ahmad¹³³. There exist a number of books which are attributed to Suhrawardi, but only a thorough examination of these books would enable us to ascertain their authorship.

Suhrawardi's Hermeneutics

The Islamic tradition, like any religious tradition, is full of methods which enable the student to understand the Qur'an. However, any sound interpretation of the Qur'anic passage must be in accordance with the Qur'an and the *Sunna*¹³⁴ of Muhammad. Thus, every interpretation is subjected to these two verifiers of sound understanding. These are the two criteria for distinguishing a learned scholar (*'Alim*).

For Muslims the Qur'an contains all the knowledge of God and creation. One way to attain this knowledge is through a proper explanation or interpretation of a Qur'anic passage. This view of the sacredness of the Qur'an is based on the conviction that it was brought down to Muhammad by Gabriel showing the right path (*al-Sirat al-Mustaqim*) to God. For every Muslim the Qur'an represents the Will of God for humanity to follow this right path. Yet, this Will of God is in need of a further explication in order for the laity to understand it. The practice of explicating and expanding on the text was practised by Muhammad himself. People would ask him to expand on certain passages, on some words and details, on matters historical and spiritual. For this reason the *Sahaba* (companions) of Muhammad followed the same practice, and would explain to

¹³¹ A manuscript of this book is found in the Berlin Library and in Turkey

¹³² A manuscript of this is found in the Border Library in Turkey.

¹³³ A manuscript of this epistle is found in the British Library, catalogue no. OR4273/4.

¹³⁴ Muhammad used to interpret to the ordinary people any uncertainties that might arise from any Qur'anic passage, for further information see Helmut Gatjen (1997), *The Qur'an and Its Exegesis*, 2nd ed., pp.16-17.

people ambiguities that might arise from any passage. Consequently there arose an established method to expand on a Qur'anic text, based on this *Sunna* (tradition) or way of Muhammad. Of course, this tradition was purely an oral one, but after a period of time there arose a need to memorise and keep the tradition of Muhammad and the *Sahaba* alive. Later, all the sayings of Muhammad and the Companions were collected and written down, and this large collection of the sayings was called the *Hadith*. The *Hadith* was subsequently classified into topics such as theology, ethics, and exegesis, and the latter became an independent science by itself and is known by the name Commentary (*Tafsir*). Thus the tradition of Muhammad developed into an established science on its own, and was concerned with the story of these Qur'anic passages. This led to the appearance of a group called *Mufasssirun* (commentators), who commented on the Qur'anic passages through reporting (*Naql*) and expanding on what is found in this tradition. As a science of expanding on the text, this meant there was much room for various interpretations of a single passage, and in fact this led to the appearance of four legalistic and theological schools: Abu Hanifa (d.767), Ibn Anas (d.795), as-Shafi'i (d.820), and Ibn Hanbal (d.855)¹³⁵.

In addition to *tafsir* which was transmitted through *naql*, there arose another tradition that propagated flexibility in interpretation, and thus introduced intellectual arguments. This type of school spread rapidly, and it employed the method of *ta'wil*. Sufis are among those who advocated this method, considering it to be an extra hermeneutical method which would enable them in their search for meaning in life. The word *ta'wil* comes from the word *Awwala* which means "to take it back to the first (*awwal*)". This stage of *awwal*, for Sufis, is reached by extracting the esoteric (inner) meaning of a Qur'anic passage. While the orthodox tradition would claim that a Qur'anic passage has one exoteric (*Zahir*) meaning, and Sufis believed that the Qur'an has another aspect, the esoteric (*batin*). Thus, the Qur'an for Sufis has two dimensions: exoteric and esoteric. The exoteric is related to the *tafsir* method, and the esoteric is related to the *ta'wil* method. Sufis were free to employ each of these methods in their spiritual journey, and Suhrawardi in his '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*' advocates both:

And *tafsir* is the science of the descent of the verses (*ayat*); its concern and its story, and the reason behind its descension. This is transmitted through hearing and report. As for *ta'wil*, it is the conjugation of the verse to a bearable meaning, if this meaning is in accordance with the Kitab [i.e. the Qur'an] and the Sunna.¹³⁶

¹³⁵Helmet Gatjen, op cit. p.18.

¹³⁶'*Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.25.

It is significant that Suhrawardi affirms here the value of *tafsir*. However, he raises the issue of going beyond the text, and to stretch this text to its limits in order to arrive at an understanding. What he meant was that there is no one *ta'wil* of the Qur'an. Rather, one can speak of many *ta'wils* of the Qur'an. Suhrawardi points out that the difference in *ta'wil* depends on:

Ta'wil differs from *mu'awil* (interpreter) to another, and is dependant on their purity of thought, the degree of their knowledge, and the rank of nearness (*qurb*) to God, most High.¹³⁷

Suhrawardi identifies this stage as the rank of nearness or proximity (*mahall al-qurba*), which Sufis used to ascribe to their saints.

It was explained above that *tafsir* is the science concerned with the specifications of a passage, and this was transmitted through the *naqli* tradition. Suhrawardi adds in the same passage that "It is prohibited to expand on *tafsir* except through *naql*"¹³⁸.

However, to speak of the rational (*'aqli*) tradition is to speak of the explication of a passage through the use of intellectual methods. Thus, the intellect plays a vital role in the process of expanding on a Qur'anic verse, and Suhrawardi affirms this by saying:

Ta'wil is the stretching of an ayah to a bearable meaning through the use of intellectual thought. Thus, every saying has a face (*wajh*) and a bearing (*mahmal*) value.¹³⁹

Suhrawardi wanted to emphasise that the Qur'an has two dimensions, and every passage has an apparent meaning and a deeper meaning which is hidden. For Sufis the latter is extracted through the employment of intellectual argument. What is of more importance is the *mahmal* value of a passage, that is the deeper meaning, and this value is gained through *ta'wil*. This is the difference between the Orthodox tradition, which upholds the importance of *tafsir*, and the Sufi tradition which is concerned with the inner value of a Qur'anic passage. Sufis concentrates on the inner aspect of things, and for them this aspect could be known through *ta'wil*, which leads to Truth.

In addition to these hermeneutical methods, Suhrawardi employs another, which is presented in his book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*. This method enables the Sufi to reach the level of enlightenment by *Shar'*, which may be described as the way of the mystical *'aql*.

¹³⁷ *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.26.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p.445.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*.

The intellect, without doubt, was a faculty highly valued by Sufis, and is able to be transformed into a state of mystical '*aql* through a specific path. This mystical '*aql* is said to attain divine knowledge because of the above transformation. The role of this '*aql* in the mystical journey will be analysed below. This role seems to be associated with the spirit (*Ruh*). It is necessary to examine first Suhrawardi's spiritual psychology.

Suhrawardi's Spiritual Psychology

-The Spirit (*Ruh*), Soul (*Nafs*), And Body (*Jism*) in the Qur'an

The Islamic way of life is centred around the Qur'an and what is revealed in it, and the Qur'an plays a significant role in the process of understanding the Will of God. The Qur'an also tells of the wonders of creation as the signs (*ayat*) of God's tremendous power in bringing everything into existence. Therefore everything has a cause in God and is brought into existence by His Will. The Will of God in bringing everything into existence testifies to the fact that creation has something of the Creator. This something is also displayed in human beings, as the recipients of God's spirit (cf.38:72).

The notion of the Spirit of God is common to all theistic religions, and is related to humanity as the source of their being. However, in Islamic thought God is never characterised as a Spiritual Being, but as the source of their being. In 32:9 it says that God gave Adam of or from (*min*) His spirit¹⁴⁰. Thus, God is the source of the two human dimensions: the spiritual and the physical. These two dimensions represent the spirit (*ruh*) and the soul (*nafs*), respectively. The body (*jism*) is more physical than these. However, humanity has something of the Spirit of God, and one way to come to know this Spirit of God is through self knowledge. Knowledge of one's self, in essence knowledge of God, comes from the famous *hadith* by Muhammad "*He who knows himself, knows his Lord*"¹⁴¹. The epitome of this saying is found in the Sufi way of searching for the meaning of existence which is reached through the inward search of the self. To understand in a clear way what Sufis mean by this inward search, we have to isolate the concepts of *ruh*, *nafs*, and *jism*, and to define them from the Qur'anic perspective.

Spirit (*ruh*) is a basic Qur'anic term which is ascribed to both God and human beings, but not as two equal terms. When the Spirit of God is mentioned in the Qur'an, it is always ascribed to human beings, so that a polarity exists between this Spirit and the human spirit. For example in 32:9 it says that "And breathed [God] into Him [Adam] something of His spirit". Therefore, the breath of God constituted Adam a living being because it is this Spirit of God that gave Adam the breath of life. Thus the connection between God's Spirit and Adam's spirit is established with the emphasis on the breath of God as a life-giving spirit. The term *ruh* is never presented on its own as an entity, in an isolated

¹⁴⁰It is important to stress here that in 32:9 God breathed into Adam "something of His spirit", God did not give His spirit as such to Adam. The problem lies in translating the term *min*, which could mean either *from* or *of*.

¹⁴¹Cited in Nurbakhsh J(1983), *Traditions of the Prophet* (Khaniqahi Nimatullah Publications, New York), p.167.

sense in the Qur'an. However, there are references to *ruh* connected and related to something else. For example in 2:87, 2:53, and 4:171 it is given to Jesus. In 10:2 it is sent down as the spirit of inspiration on Muhammad, and in 17:85 it is seen as God's affair. So we see that this term is not used in an abstract way in the Qur'an.

Moreover, the story of human creation is found in many places in the Qur'an, and in each place it signifies the giving of something new. The creation story in the Qur'an is told in many stages, and each stage told in terms of giving the various faculties. For example in 23:12-14 the process of the development of humans from sperm into a full human being clothed with flesh and bones is recorded. Then the breath of God is breathed into this flesh and bones, transforming it into another creature. This represents stage one. In 32:9 the creation story continues by describing the giving of the faculties of hearing, sight, and understanding, after the fashioning of the human being. It is interesting to find such a detailed description of creation taken step by step, and each step has a significance. It should be observed here that the stage where different faculties are given can be interpreted as referring to the imparting of some kind of awareness to humans so that they will be able to know God. This is still midway between the creation of the full human being. In 38:72 the final stage is recorded, where the breathing of *ruh* is mentioned. In relation to the breathing of *ruh* human beings are given status above that of the angels, and in 38:73(also 2:34) all the angels are asked to prostrate themselves before Adam. All of this indicates that humanity has a special status in relation to the rest of creation. Added to this, in 2:31 God gave Adam an extra bonus by teaching him all the names. This passage is interpreted by many commentators as referring to the knowledge given to Adam of the inner meaning or the real essence of things¹⁴². But knowledge and wisdom are two of the divine attributes which are connected to each other. Thus, the passage of 2:31 speaks of the wisdom, in addition to knowledge, that is inherent in humanity. From the above creation stories we can conclude by saying that humanity possesses a double nature characterised by the two dimensions: the spiritual and the physical. The spiritual dimension comes from the breath of God breathed into humanity, and this means that human beings carry within them the signs of life, power, and wisdom of God. However, another dimension to humanity, is characterised by the nature of its physical structure (*jism*). This physical structure is recorded in many passages (cf. 7:12, 15:26, 28, 38:76), where the body is characteristically made of clay (*tin*). The physical aspect of humanity, which is made of clay, represents the dimension

¹⁴²Abdulla Yusuf 'Ali (1989), The Qur'an, Text, Translation, and Commentary, Amana corporation, Maryland), p.24.

where all evil and bad traits are attributed to. These evil traits are characterised as arrogance, jealousy, and seeing the self, and they are attributed to *jism*.

We have discussed above the Qur'anic notion of *ruh*, and found out that it is attributed to both God and humans, and there is a sense of it giving humans it gives them a status above that of the remainder of creation. At the same time, humans are made of clay too, which they share with other creatures. Consequently, it is possible to postulate that there exists a polarity not only between God's spirit and humanity, but also between the human spiritual and physical natures inherent in humanity.

The other Qur'anic term which is related to human beings is *nafs*, which has many nuances and connotations in the Qur'an. For example, in 12:54 the human ego is described as *nafs*. In 51:21 the human *nafs* is said to possess the signs (*ayat*) of God that are "As also in your own selves: will you not then see". However, these signs of God are not visible to the eye. They are hidden, and only those who are enlightened are able to discern these signs. *Nafs* can also be referred to God as well, but not with the same qualities of human *nafs*. God's *nafs* is (whatever God's *nafs* is) related more to the attribute of mercy (*rahma*). For example, in 6:12,54 God "Has inscribed for Himself mercy". Therefore, when talking about God's self one should think of God's mercy. *Nafs* is also a term ascribed to the other gods who have no control whatsoever over creation. In 25:3 it says "Yet, have they taken, besides Him, gods that can create nothing, but are themselves created; that have no control of hurt or good to themselves; nor can they control death, nor life nor resurrection". These *nafs* of other gods are compared to the *nafs* of God's, who is full of mercy. This stands in contradistinction to gods' *nafs* that are useless in themselves. The issue here is that God's providence and might (cf.13:16, where God's unity and supremacy is affirmed), is compared to that of the gods who have no power to create anything. Finally, *nafs* is attributed to *Jinns* (creatures similar to human beings, created from fire)¹⁴³. God has created the *nafs* of both *Jinns* and humans, but they are two different creatures (cf.38:76).

When *nafs* is ascribed to human beings it is always described as dark, thick and undifferentiated, because it carries all the evil thoughts, as described above. We saw that *nafs* is a middle term between *ruh* and *jism*, and in this sense it possesses the qualities of both. *Ruh* is described as the most luminous and pure light, while *jism* is described as pure darkness. Thus, *nafs* could be seen as existing in a position between pure light and pure darkness. At the same time, *nafs* as created by God possesses divine qualities, but only to a degree. From the above description it can be seen that *nafs* can be aware of

¹⁴³See S.Murata(1992), The Tao of Islam, (State University of New York Press, Albany, New York) p.15.

itself and all its activities, but only to a certain level. In this respect, *nafs* is able to identify all the evil traits in itself. In the Qur'an *nafs* is described in three stages or states. Each state is characterised with certain qualities, as follows: These are:

- The evil soul (*al-nafs al-ammara b'l-Su'*) (12:53): This soul commands to evil, and is almost characterised with the bodily characteristics, i.e. being dark and is open to desires and caprice. This soul must always be kept in check, and it must be controlled all the time because of its evil characteristic.
- The blaming soul (*al-nafs al-Lawwama*) (75:2): This soul is conscious of its evil traits and tries to resist it. The blaming soul acknowledges its own evils and seeks God's forgiveness and mercy, and in doing so it will amend all its evil ways, aiming for salvation.
- The soul at peace (*al-nafs al-Mutma'ina*) (89:27): This soul is considered the highest stage of the soul, and it is reached when the blaming soul acknowledges its own evils, and it will amend its ways and purify itself of all the evil desires, thus reaching the stage of soul at peace. This stage of the soul has no evil inclination whatsoever, and is always ascribed to the Prophets and Friends of God.

These stages show that *nafs* is able to undergo a spiritual development in her journey towards perfection, aided by the mercy of God.

All the human aspects mentioned above are well attested in the Qur'an, and their qualities are highlighted so that one is able to know one's *nafs*, in relation to God. We saw that *nafs* is made of *ruh*, which is of divine origin, and *jism*, which is inorganic matter. Thus, *nafs* is a mixture of both divine and worldly qualities.

-The Sufic and the Philosophical Understanding of 'Spirit'

The Qur'an depicts the human structure as consisting of *ruh*, *jism*, and *nafs*. In Islamic thought the spiritual dimension of humanity is always mentioned in relation to its physical dimension, and is always connected with God's Spirit. For Sufis, the human structure is viewed from a different perspective, in addition to the above identification. Sufis would emphasise the two realities inherent in human beings. These two realities are based on 57:3, which describes God as the "The First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden, and He has knowledge of all things". Because human beings resemble God in some sense, as discussed in the introduction¹⁴⁴, so they are made of an outer reality (*Zahir*) represented by the physical body, and an inner reality (*batin*) which is hidden. At the same time, we can say that the Evident God can be seen in creation, but the Hidden God, for Sufis becomes the subject of mystical contemplation. Furthermore, the Hidden God is identified by Sufis with the *batin* aspect of humanity, and so to know one's *batin* is to know God. Sufis would always look inwardly, that is, into their *batin* to find the true essence and meaning of human beings. And al-Ghazali explains these two realities in his book, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*:

If you want to know yourself, you should know that when you were created, two things were created: One is this outward frame, which is called the body. It can be seen with the outward eye. The second is the inward meaning, which is called the soul, the spirit, and the heart. It can be recognised through inward insight but cannot be seen with the outward eye. Your reality is that inward meaning. Everything else follows upon it.¹⁴⁵

Al-Ghazali identifies three aspects related to the true meaning of humanity, *ruh*, *nafs*, and *qalb* (heart), and these contain the essence of humanity. For him body has no essence at all, and thus the outward reality is not real at all. The human reality lies in their *ruh*, *nafs*, and *qalb*. For Sufis these are connected to God. Therefore, they are the only real dimensions of humanity (*nafs* can be said to be less real than the other two).

Another Sufi wrote about these human realities, was Nasafi¹⁴⁶. In his book *Kashf al-Haqa'iq* (*Unveiling of Realities*), he describes them in the light of Divine attributes:

The human being has a manifest dimension and non-manifest dimension. In other words, he has a body and a spirit. The spirit is truly simple and cannot be divided into

¹⁴⁴See p.14.

¹⁴⁵Cited in Murata, *The Tao Of Islam*, p.231.

¹⁴⁶He is a Persian Sufi who died before 1300CE.

parts. It belongs to the World of Command. The body is compound and can be divided into parts. It belongs to the World of Creation.¹⁴⁷

Nasafi, like al-Ghazali, speaks of two dimensions: the manifest (*Zahir*) and the non-manifest (*batin*). The characteristics and the origin of each dimension is given above. For example, *ruh* is simple and is subtle, and is originated in the World of Command (cf.17:85). On the other hand, *jism* is compound and is thick, and it originates in the World of Creation. These two worlds are represented in humanity by the spirit and the body, and both struggle to take control of *nafs*. Since *nafs* is more inclined towards the body, then it will be characterised by density and darkness, but if it is inclined towards the spirit, then it will become more subtle and simple. Nasafi asserts these two human realities as essential for self identification.

In addition, a third reality should be mentioned here, and that is *barzakh*. This is identified by Sufis as between the spirit proper and the body proper. Thus, *barzakh* is associated with the grave: between death and resurrection. This term occurs in the Qur'an, but not in the same sense as above. For example, in 55:19-20 *barzakh* is the barrier between two seas, and these two seas are merged together. For Sufis, this *barzakh* represents human beings in their mixed nature as between God and creation. In other words, human beings are living in *barzakh*, because they are not real. *Barzakh*, as a Sufi term alludes to the World of Imagination, which is between World of Command and World of Creation.

These worlds; Creation, Command, and *barzakh* are similar in nature to human's *nafs*, *ruh*, and *jism*. This reinforces the view that all worlds are present in humanity. At the same time, it is argued that the human structure is conceived of as a miniature of the cosmic structure. Added to this, the hierarchy of worlds is perceived to be similar to the hierarchy of the human structure. *Ruh* is at the top and it comes from the world of Command, so it is luminous and simple. *Jism* belongs to the world of Creation, below the world of Command; therefore, it is dark and dense. *Nafs* is between *ruh* and *jism*, and is a mixture of pure light and darkness, like the world of *barzakh*.

In conclusion, we see that being and existence are two totally different concepts for Sufis, but they are connected to a certain degree. If someone exists in the spirit, then they are closer to the Real Being (God), but if they are more inclined towards the body, then they are less real and at a distance from God, the Real. Yet, to exist between the spirit and the body, which represents the being of humanity, is to be midway in reality,

¹⁴⁷Cited in S.Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, p.235.

and this is the state of *nafs*. This structure is conveyed through a hierarchy where the spirit is at the top, and the body is at the bottom, and the soul is between the two.

In connection with the two attributes of the spirit, existence and being, knowledge for Sufis is also connected with the state of becoming. For example, in 20:14 all the Muslims are called to pray "My Lord increase me in knowledge", and in 39:9 knowledge is the quality that divided "Those who know, and those who do not know". Furthermore, the search for knowledge is one of the duties incumbent upon every Muslim, and Muhammad encouraged all Muslims to "Seek knowledge, even unto China"¹⁴⁸. Thus, every Muslim has a duty of acquiring knowledge. However, the problem is that knowledge is not of a single type that can be identified and acquired. Knowledge is of many kinds. There is the knowledge of the Philosophers reached through the use of rational enquiry, and there is the knowledge theologians searched for in the Law. This knowledge of the theologians is to be found in creation and in the stories of the Prophets recorded in the Qur'an. For Sufis, these two types of knowledge are useful and good, but the most useful and real knowledge one can gain is the knowledge taught by God Himself (like the knowledge given to Khidr). This idea goes back to the Qur'anic passage where God taught Adam all the names¹⁴⁹.

Knowledge for Sufis is differentiated into types; knowledge as the result of reflective thought and rational enquiry, and knowledge as the result of unveiling (*mukashafa*). The first is considered by Sufis to be limited and cannot reach God, while the second is deeper and more meaningful, because it comes directly from God. This knowledge is called *ma'rifa* to differentiate it from the more scientific knowledge (*'ilm*), *ma'rifa* is attained through unveiling (*kashf*), witnessing (*nadhr*), and tasting (*dhawq*).

The Qur'an rarely employs the word *ma'rifa* for knowledge, the term *'ilm* is used more in this sense and it is knowledge ascribed to God. For Sufis *ma'rifa*, although a non-Qur'anic term, is realised through spiritual practice. Ibn al-'Arabi describes *ma'rifa* for the people:

For the Tribe *ma'rifa* is a path (*mahajja*). Hence any knowledge which can be actualised only through practice (*a'mal*), godfearing (*taqwa*), and wayfaring (*suluk*) is *ma'rifa*, since it derives from a verified unveiling, which is not seized obfuscation. This contrasts with the knowledge which is actualised through reflective consideration (*al-nadhr al-fikri*), which is never safe from obfuscation and bewilderment, nor from rejection of that which leads to it. Our companions among the *Folk of Allah*

¹⁴⁸Cited in Nurbakhsh, op cit.p.67.

¹⁴⁹See introduction p.14.

apply the name *Gnostics* to the knowers (*al-‘ulama’*) of God, and they call the knowledge of God by way of tasting *gnosis*.¹⁵⁰

Ma‘rifa and *taqwa* are known and followed by every Muslim. The third one is a Sufic definition of the spiritual path of unveiling. Ibn al-‘Arabi compares two important ways that human beings would know something. The first is reflective consideration or rational thought, which could lead to the conclusion that human beings are unable to reach knowledge of God through this type of exercise. The second is tasting, which a Sufic term for tasting and knowing God, and is one of the paths that leads to happiness. So, for Sufis, knowledge is only that which leads one to know God in His Oneness (that is to unite all God’s signs and attributes). This knowledge is never obscure or epistemic and is eternal.

There exists another type of knowledge connected with *ruh*. In 17:85 it states that this type of knowledge is not given, “They will ask you about the spirit, say ‘the spirit is of the Command of my Lord, of knowledge it is little that is communicated to you’”. This type of knowledge will be discussed below.

Finally, the knowledge that Sufis strive to attain is never undertaken solely as a theoretical exercise; but has a practical aspect as well, which is connected with existence. Ibn al-‘Arabi describes the two types of practice:

There is an outward practice, which is everything connected to the bodily parts, and an inward practice, which is everything connected to the soul (*nafs*). The most inclusive inward practice is faith in God and what has come from Him in accordance with the words of the Messenger, not in accordance with knowledge of it. Faith embraces all acts which are to be performed or avoided.¹⁵¹

Knowledge of something is not enough to motivate a person to do good works. Faith is the motivator of good works, and it is outward behaviour that distinguishes the believer from the non-believer. Thus, knowledge without acts is deficient and limited, and knowledge, which is the result of faith, leads to perfection of the soul. Therefore, knowledge is expressed through the good traits of the personality.

We have discussed thus far the Sufic understanding of the human dimensions that are related to their view of existence and being. In this connection, we saw that knowledge for Sufis represents knowledge of God, which is the result of faith in what has been revealed through the Prophet.

¹⁵⁰Cited in Chittick(1989), *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, (Sunny Press, Albany, New York), p.149.

¹⁵¹*Ibid*, p.152.

Another group of people which, like Sufis, were concerned with ontology and epistemology are the philosophers. The philosophers sought to understand human nature and the essence of the cosmos and God through rational reflection, and found the Sufic explanation of human existence and essence appealing. However, the Sufic way of life was less attractive to them, and they found it difficult to follow these ways.

Many Muslim philosophers appearing between the tenth and thirteenth centuries wrote many commentaries on Aristotle's works. As a result, the Islamic world was influenced by Hellenistic thought and philosophy, so that many works in this period were coloured by these philosophical thoughts. Among the most well known philosophers are al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes. The latter two adopted the Aristotelian tripartite division of the soul. Aristotle's and Plato's philosophical arguments concerning the spirit are explained in the previous part¹⁵². However, Avicenna's view of the soul will be discussed here. Avicenna is considered the first Muslim philosopher to write a compendium on the soul. This was his first philosophical treatise¹⁵³. In it he discusses the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiqa*)¹⁵⁴, which he saw as able to possess intelligible forms either through divine inspiration or through syllogism and demonstration. And in his last work *On the Rational Soul*, Avicenna sometimes calls this soul the *soul at peace*, which is the same Qur'anic term explained above. Moreover, knowledge for Avicenna is the result of the enlightenment of the human intellect by the Active Intellect¹⁵⁵. This act is described as "The light of the Active Intellect enters into a kind of conjunction with [forms in the imagination]"¹⁵⁶.

Knowledge is attained through the union of the human intellect and the Active Intellect, this is purely mental activity. Averroes follows the same line as Avicenna in interpreting the Active Intellect's power over the human mind. It is worth noting here that these philosophers perceived the soul as receptive to knowledge, and acquisition of knowledge is seen as leading to happiness. Happiness, for Avicenna, is reached when the soul becomes intellectual, or when it is at peace.

Thus, from the above discussion and from the previous discussions on the philosophical understanding of the spirit, we can conclude that these philosophers believed that human beings have two dimensions. The first is matter, and the second is the essence of humanity, which is the soul. They believed the soul becomes rational when enlightened

¹⁵²See pp. 27-28.

¹⁵³See Gutas D, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp.82-87.

¹⁵⁴The eighth chapter of this treatise is translated by Gutas.

¹⁵⁵For further information on the *Active Intellect*, see p.42.

¹⁵⁶Gutas D, *op cit*, p.164.

by the Active Intellect, would lead to knowledge being passed to the human intellect in the form of light.

We can conclude that existence, being, and knowledge encompass ontological and epistemological notions and are central to both Sufism and philosophy. However, human existence and being for Sufis are identified by the outer and the inner realities, while for the philosophers being includes contingency and necessity. For Avicenna these are *priori* notions of the mind. Moreover, knowledge for both is desirable, yet for the philosophers it is the product of the rational faculty, while for Sufis knowledge is that of God, and this is connected with existence and the being of humanity.

-The Human Spirit as One, but with Different Gradations

We have seen that being and existence are connected. However, in Islamic thought, human being and existence are centred around God. Because, God created human beings, and gave them shape and form. This type of knowledge is essential to the Islamic psyche, because it is related to the belief that God is the Creator and Protector of humanity. For Sufis, this knowledge of God is connected with the knowledge of one's self, which is the inner reality. This reality was identified above as the spiritual dimension of humanity, that is humanity's *ruh* (the invisible aspect). Self knowledge means that one has to know every aspect of one's self, that is the soul, spirit, and the body.

One aspect of self knowledge is the knowledge of the human development. The process of human development in the womb is found in the *hadith*, in addition to the Qur'an. The Prophet said:

One of you will collect his being in his mother's womb forty days a sperm, then it will become a clot of blood, then it will become a foetus like that. Then God will send to him a messenger with four words; it will write down his [the servants] work, fate, share, and whether he will be wretched or happy. Then He [God] will blow the spirit into him.¹⁵⁷

This *hadith* is based on 23:12-13, where it says "Man we did create from a quintessence (of clay), then we placed him as (a drop of sperm) in a place of rest, firmly fixed". This is the first stage in the development of the person. In 23:14 it says, "then we developed out of it another creature", that is a human being with body and soul, where the soul comes from the breath of God.

The above *hadith* became a *priori* for understanding the development of the human being, and is alluded to by many commentators, among them Suhrawardi. In addition, it also alludes to the fate of the person, which is connected with the idea of predestination.

Suhrawardi cites the above two Qur'anic passages and the *hadith*, and in doing so he wanted to affirm the belief that humanity is grounded on God's power and mercy, as one of the signs of God. Perhaps we can add to this by saying that these passages define the two dimensions of humanity, the physical and the spiritual, both of which belong to God. Thus, one has to know more about one's self, starting with the human development which tells of the mystery of creation. Part of this mystery is the mystery of *ruh*, and to define *ruh* Suhrawardi starts with the above passages.

¹⁵⁷Cited in Wensinck (1943), Early Muhammadan Tradition, (E.J.Brill, Leiden, London), vol.II, p.74.

However, there is another passage in the Qur'an mentioned above, where the ambiguous nature of *ruh* is affirmed¹⁵⁸. The problem we are faced with here, which is related to the above passage, is the absence of a clear description and reference to *ruh* in any other place in the Qur'an. Besides, it is not clear whether *ruh* in the above passage represents God's *ruh*, human *ruh*, *ruh* in general, or the *ruh* of inspiration, which was given to Muhammad. The latter was the preferred interpretation by many commentators¹⁵⁹, because inspiration, like *ruh* "is one of the highly spiritual mysteries which cannot be explained in terms of every day human experience"¹⁶⁰.

This is true for Sufis too, whose understanding was that *ruh* of inspiration is undisputed and cannot be known or understood. However, the type of *ruh* that Sufis speculated and investigated is the human *ruh* as the essence of humanity, where some knowledge of it is discernible. Many Sufi writings speculate on this spirit, what it is made of, its quiddity (*mahiyya*), and its origin. One of these Sufis is Suhrawardi, which this study is concerned with. In his chapter "*On knowledge of the Self, and the Sufi unveilings*", he investigates *ruh*. We shall examine his views next.

As explained above the philosophers were investigating the spirit too. One aspect of their enquiry is the issue of the spirit's quiddity (*mahiyyat al-ruh*). Suhrawardi, in his book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif* explains that "There exists no difference of opinion between those with traditional (*naqli*) views, and rational (*'aqli*) views like the difference on the issue of the spirit's quiddity"¹⁶¹. This passage clearly confirms the difference between the two views, because the philosophers argued whether *ruh* was eternal, body, form, or accident. Included in this category are the *mutakallimun*, who adopted a rational method in their interpretation of the Qur'an. Suhrawardi continues:

When the *mutakallimun* were told: All existents are limited to; eternal, body, form, and accident, so which of these is the spirit (*ruh*)? Some have chosen that it is an accident, others have said it is a subtle (*latif*) body, while others have said that it is eternal because it is a command, and the command is a speech, and speech is pre-existent.¹⁶²

The confusion caused by the philosophical arguments is apparent in this passage, and Suhrawardi says that *ruh* is not a 'corporeal' entity subject to the above rational investigations¹⁶³. Suhrawardi would counteract the above views by postulating that the

¹⁵⁸See p.65.

¹⁵⁹Like 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, p.698.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹*'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.444.

¹⁶²Ibid, p.449.

¹⁶³Ibid, p.444.

place where one should start to investigate *ruh* is with the *Shari'a* (Law). Even those who follow the *Shari'a* spoke of *ruh* in two ways:

As for those who hold the Laws (*Shara'i'*), who spoke of the spirit one group spoke through conclusion (*istidlal*) and consideration (*nadhr*). While the other spoke through taste (*dhawq*) and ecstasy (*wajd*), and not through rationality (*fikr*). Even the Sufi masters spoke about it.¹⁶⁴

Suhrawardi gives his own interpretation of *ruh*, which represents the views of people of taste (*ahl al-dhawq*), after citing the interpretations of other Sufis¹⁶⁵. He divides the soul into three parts, similar to the Qur'anic division of the spirit explained above, and he mentions the origin of each part and the relation of different parts of *ruh*:

The human, high and heavenly spirit (*al-ruh al-'ilwi al-samawwi*) pertains to the world of Command (*'alam al-amr*)¹⁶⁶, while the mortal animal spirit (*al-ruh al-haywani al-bashari*) pertains to the world of Creation (*'alam al-khalq*). The mortal animal spirit is the locus where the high spirit comes down and alights on it. The animal spirit is a subtle corporal thing, that carries the faculties of sensation and movement. The animal spirit arises from the heart. By the heart I mean the lump of flesh deposited on the left side of the body.¹⁶⁷

From the above passage we can identify two types of soul, and these are portrayed in a hierarchical order from higher to lower:

- The high, heavenly and human spirit, which is at the top of the hierarchy. This spirit originates in the world of Command, the invisible world. Thus it can not be seen or limited to a concept.
- The animal spirit, which is the lower one, is responsible for all the physical and sensual activities in humanity. Its origin is the world of Creation, because one can identify this spirit from the feelings and acts that arise from it. From its name, this spirit indicates that it is shared by both humans and animals. In a sense this spirit is not spirit proper, and could be labelled *bodily spirit*.

Between these two spirits, there exists another stage which is attributed only to humans, and this is identified as *nafs*. *Nafs*, Suhrawardi explains, is the result of:

When the high, human spirit arrives at the animal spirit, the animal spirit gains a certain kinship with it and becomes distinct from the spirits of other animals. It

¹⁶⁴Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.445.

¹⁶⁵For further information on these interpretations, see 'Awarif al-Ma'arif, pp.445-449.

¹⁶⁶See 7:54, where it speaks of both worlds of Command and of Creation.

¹⁶⁷'Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.449.

becomes a soul (*nafs*), a place for rational speech and inspiration.¹⁶⁸

Nafs here, is the result of an amalgamation or union of the high spirit and the animal spirit, and will possess the qualities of both spirits. On the one hand, it will become aware of all the bodily needs; and on the other, it will become aware of the divine. Added to these attributes, *nafs* is described by rationality in the above passage, Suhrawardi employs the word *natiqa* to denote this rational aspect of the soul. However, the word *natq* could also mean 'speech', and 'speech' is perhaps a reference here to the communications between *nafs* and God. This type of communication represents a spiritual exercise which is reached through unveiling, and is thus interpreted as divine inspiration.

By comparing the above division of the soul to the philosophical tripartite division of the soul, one cannot fail to note the similarities between the two divisions¹⁶⁹. This leads us to conclude that Suhrawardi adopts the philosophical division of the soul, although he does not mention the *vegetative soul*. Perhaps this soul is included in the *animal soul*. Such a division of the soul is not found in the Qur'an, and this reinforces the view that Suhrawardi adopted the philosophical division after a considerable reflection.

Furthermore, *nafs* plays an important role in the process of the transformation of the human nature; thus, perfecting this nature to match that of the high spirit. Thus, a union between *nafs* and the high spirit must take place in order for transformation to happen. This act is portrayed as the union between Adam and Eve. This union leads to the birth of the heart. Suhrawardi expands on this by stating that:

From the resting of the ruh in the soul (*nafs*), the heart is engendered. By this I mean the subtle (*latif*) heart whose place is in the lump of flesh. But, this lump of flesh is from the world of creation ('*alam al-khalq*), and this subtlety is from the world of Command ('*alam al-amr*').¹⁷⁰

Suhrawardi provides us here with a positive description of *nafs*, which is in union with the spirit leading to the birth of the subtle heart. The state of subtlety, for Sufis, is the state between the spirit and the soul. The subtle heart (*al-qalb al-latif*) is a mystical term, and is perceived as being the seat of God's knowledge. Thus, to reach this state is to attain this knowledge of God. Therefore, the role *nafs* plays in the birth of this heart is so important, that one has to know *nafs* in its all aspects. One of the characteristics of

¹⁶⁸Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.450.

¹⁶⁹See pp.27-28.

¹⁷⁰Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.450.

this *nafs* is that it is full of dispositions, which affect *nafs* in a negative way. Suhrawardi alludes to this aspect:

If anyone knows the roots of the soul and its innate dispositions (*jiblatiha*), then they will know that they have no power over it without resorting to the help of its Creator and Liberator. The servant will not realise his humanity until he governs the animal motivations within himself through knowledge and justice (*i'tidal*). Justice is to make sure neither to fall short, nor to go too far. Thereby, the persons humanity and essence will gain strength, and will perceive the satanic and blame worthy attributes within himself. And the perfection of his humanity demands that he would not be pleased with his soul in this. Then there will be unveiled for him the attributes contending with Lordship, that is pride, mightiness, seeing the self, and being pleased with the self, and so on. He sees that pure serventhood (*'ubudiyah*) is to abandon contention with Lordship (*Rububiyah*).¹⁷¹

To know one's own self is to identify all the positive and the negative qualities that one's *nafs* has, and in the above passage the negative qualities are highlighted. These qualities are the barriers to the realisation of the person's humanity, which for Sufis represent a stage in the process of perfection. This stage is important because the person will be aware of all the innate dispositions of the soul, which are "the attributes that contends with Lordship". These attributes lead to the imbalance in the personality, and one has to balance *nafs* with justice and knowledge. The former leads to the perfection of the human soul. The latter is the result of the former, and will enable the person to acknowledge these attributes in order to reach the stage of serventhood.

Suhrawardi shows that although the soul is the carrier of bad traits, these traits can be amended. He explains these traits and the remedy for them in detail, because one cannot amend an aspect of one's self without knowing what is wrong with it in the first place. Finally, we saw that Suhrawardi's knowledge is so wide that he employs many resources in his psychology of the soul, including the philosophical tripartite division of the soul.

¹⁷¹ *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.453.

The Intellect ('Aql)

-What is 'Aql?

The human intellect is considered as the cause of all rational thought and intellectual apprehension. However, the problem facing the scientists and the psychologists today is *how* the human mind works. Philosophers, like the scientists and psychologists, were also concerned with unravelling the mystery of the human mind, and the intellect at large. As explained above¹⁷², Aristotle was the first philosopher who investigated the intellect, in a sense *what* it is and *how* it is related to human beings. From an Islamic perspective, the intellect is understood through the Qur'anic passages that alludes to it.

For Muslims the intellect ('aql) is viewed in contrast to ignorance (*jahl*), and in the Qur'an 'aql is a highly praised quality. However, the Qur'an lacks any reference to it in the noun form, and what we find instead is the verbal and the adjective forms of this word. In this respect, 'aql is represented through the actions and works of a person (cf.5:58), and is connected with understanding. For example, in 2:164 understanding is the dividing line between those who understand and use this understanding to apprehend the signs of God, and those who do not understand. Thus, 'aql in the Qur'an is portrayed in the act of understanding the signs of God, and is not identified as a faculty. Consequently, we have to look at other sources to identify this faculty.

'Aql in its lexical definition means 'fetter' *'iqal*, because 'aql constrains and limits ignorance. *Jahl*, as a Qur'anic term, is not the absence of rational knowledge. Rather, it is the outcome of a failure in not recognising God's signs in creation. This type of knowledge stands in contrast to the rational knowledge of the philosophers. Furthermore, 'aql has another meaning in the sense of 'to hold' and 'to grip', and in this sense 'aql is endowed with an ability to hold *nafs* back from its evil attributes. It should be noted that the context will define what meaning 'aql has in a specific passage.

In addition to these sources, 'aql is mentioned in the *hadith* and the most famous one is that of the notion of the intellect as the first reality to emerge:

The first thing God created is 'aql, and said to it "Turn toward me", so it turned towards Him. Then He said "Turn away from me", and it turned away from Him. Then He said "sit" and it sat, and He said "speak" and it spoke, then He said "be silent", and it became silent. Then He said "by my might, majesty, glory, sovereignty,

¹⁷²See p.38.

and omnipotence I have created no other creature more loved to me, nor more precious to me than you. Through you I shall be known and praised, and through you I shall take and give. Condemnation and forgiveness are through you. And I have not honoured you with better thing than patience.¹⁷³

Suhrawardi cites the above *hadith* in his discussion of '*aql*' to emphasise its supremacy¹⁷⁴. In one passage he describes the role of '*aql*' as "God's proof (or plea) to guide and misguide people..."¹⁷⁵. Thus '*aql*' is viewed as God's instrument to guide some and misguide others. Of course, it is said in relation to the rational inquiry of *ruh*. Therefore, '*aql*' can become a tool for ignorance too, in addition to its role in attaining knowledge. The positive aspect of '*aql*', as enlightened by the Law, is strongly affirmed by Suhrawardi. He emphasises this aspect of '*aql*' in his arguments, which start from the premise that '*aql*' is a gift from God.

- '*Aql* As An Instinct

The subject of '*aql*' is far more complex, and it defies any attempt to restrict it to a single meaning. We saw that there existed many theories of '*aql*'s essence, and as part of the human makeup. One of the main functions of '*aql*' is to acquire knowledge, both discursive and divine. Thus, '*aql*' can cumulate knowledge through the stages of human growth, which is used to perfect the personality. Despite the identification of '*aql*' as the source and container of all types of knowledge, its origin is never discussed or alluded to by many thinkers.

Perhaps it is unintelligible to say that we do not know the origin of the intellect, the reason is that the intellect is part of the human makeup. This means that it is something created by God; in other words, its origin lies with God. This statement is true of Suhrawardi as well, who views '*aql*' as an 'instinct'¹⁷⁶. The concept of 'instinct' is interesting because instinct represents a specific bodily need (sexual, appetitive, etc).

To say '*aql*' is an instinct is to show its need for knowledge, and with this knowledge it grows and matures. This definition of '*aql*' Suhrawardi adopts from al-Muhasibi, who defined '*aql*' "as an instinct placed by God in most of his creatures"¹⁷⁷. This instinct is given by God for a specific purpose, this purpose Suhrawardi says is to "prepare for the

¹⁷³ Cited in Nurbakhsh, *Traditions of the Prophet*, p.151.

¹⁷⁴ *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.455.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.444.

¹⁷⁶ Suhrawardi explicitly states that al-Muhasibi has postulated that '*aql*' is an 'instinct' (*ghariza*). See *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.456.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Muhasibi, *Kitab al-'aql* (Book of '*Aql*', which is in Arabic), Found in "Al Masa'il fi A'mal al-Qulub wa al-Jawarih wa al-Makasib", ed. 'Abdull Qadir 'Ata (1985), ('Alam al-Kutub, Cairo), p.237.

perception of knowledge”¹⁷⁸. Before arriving at this definition of ‘*aql*’, Suhrawardi criticises the opinions of two groups of people, which identify ‘*aql*’ with knowledge. He explains that:

Some people said “‘*aql*’ is from knowledge, he who is devoid of all knowledge is not described with ‘*aql*’”. But ‘*aql*’ is not all knowledge, for the one who is devoid of most of knowledge is described with ‘*aql*’.¹⁷⁹

The idea ‘*aql*’ is part of knowledge is obviously refuted here by Suhrawardi, because ‘*aql*’ as an instinct is not confined to specific knowledge. It is not specified against whom this criticism is made. However, it becomes clearer that Suhrawardi is refuting the position of the rationales, who view ‘*aql*’ in a scientific way. He continues in the same passage:

And they say “‘*aql*’ is not part of speculative knowledge, for the progression towards perfection of ‘*aql*’ must begin from consideration (*nadhhr*)”. So, it is part of practical knowledge (*al-‘ulum al-dharuriyah*), but not all of it. Because the mentally disordered person is rational (‘*aqil*’), even though some perception of practical knowledge is lost.¹⁸⁰

The type of knowledge which Suhrawardi is refuting is the rational and speculative knowledge of the philosophers, which is limited. Knowledge, for Suhrawardi, is the knowledge of God conceived intuitively through the Mystical ‘*Aql*’ (this term will be discussed below).

The other position Suhrawardi criticises is the opinion of those who say ‘*aql*’ is an attribute (*Sifa*). Again, he does not say who he is refuting here, and it is arguable whether he is refuting the position of the *mutakalimun*. The *mutakalimun* saw ‘*aql*’ as the antithesis of *naql* (tradition), and they pointed out that this ‘*aql*’ contains in a natural way what is right and wrong. Thus ‘*aql*’ is defined by the *mutakalimun* as an ‘attribute’ distinguishing between the good and the bad. This ‘*aql*’ is seen as independent from the authority of revelation. Suhrawardi adds:

And some have said “‘*aql*’ is not part of knowledge, for if it were, then we should say that the bewildered person is not rational when mentioning the possible and the impossible”. And we see that the rational person most of his time is bewildered, and they say “this ‘*aql*’ is an attribute to prepare for the reception of all knowledge”.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Awarif al-Ma‘arif, p.456.

¹⁷⁹ Awarif al-Ma‘arif, p.456.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.456.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

The difference between Suhrawardi's identification of '*aql*' and this identification is that knowledge is the result of '*aql*', and for Suhrawardi knowledge is not '*aql*'. In addition, to postulate '*aql*' is an 'attribute' is to deny its divine origin. The idea of '*aql*' as an attribute is strongly opposed by Suhrawardi, who wants to originate '*aql*' with God. Consequently, '*aql*' as an instinct is able to grow and be transformed into a mystical state, which be able to apprehend divine mysteries. This is the subject of the next discussion.

-The Mystical '*Aql*'

One of the most established sciences of the Sufis is the 'science of the heart'. The heart, for Sufis, is the place where God's knowledge is encountered. Moreover, the heart in the Qur'an is connected with wisdom. In 22:46 the heart is said to learn wisdom. Furthermore, for Sufis the heart is seen as the seat of consciousness (*sirr*), and through the *sirr* the soul becomes aware of all its activities in relation to God. However, knowledge of the heart represents one aspect of the saying "*He who knows himself, knows his Lord*". The other aspect of self knowledge can be found in the knowledge of '*aql*'. This type of knowledge is one of the hermeneutical methods employed by Suhrawardi to reach God's knowledge.

The interpretation of the mystical experience by the mystics has been the subject of much criticism¹⁸². These experiences are remembered and told with a precision, and it makes us wonder how can the mystics remember all these details. The above assumption should lead us to conclude that mystics believe that the rational faculty continues with the mystic throughout the mystical journey. Their minds are at the peak of its apprehension to the extent they become aware of everything happening around them. Therefore, the rational aspect of mysticism can be defined in terms of the intellect's role in these experiences. This role indicates that the intellect can think rationally in the mystical experience. Consequently, mysticism is not followed to escape the rationality of this world. This aspect of the mystical intellect is the subject of this analysis.

The notion of the mystical '*aql*' is based on the assumption that it is an instinct, and is able to obtain and apprehend knowledge. The role this '*aql*' plays in the mystical experience is significant, and it is preferable to give some characteristics of this '*aql*', which will enable us to understand it better. These characteristics include:

¹⁸²See for example Ninian Smart, "Interpretation and Mystical Experience", in Religious Studies 1(1965), pp.75-87.

First: This 'aql when in the mystical state is connected with *ruh*. Suhrawardi defines 'aql as 'the spirit's tongue' (*lisan al-ruh*). This definition of 'aql cannot be taken literally, for in Sufi terminology *lisan* is a metaphor for the "explication of the gnosis of realities"¹⁸³. So mystical 'aql explicates what is seen and experienced spiritually, and it gives these experiences definite meaning. Therefore, it is the explicator of the true reality of the spirit.

Second: This 'aql is able to apprehend mystically not only what is seen and felt, but also what is heard. Sufis point out to a station in their mystical journey called the station of '*alastu bi-Rabakum*'. In this station the phrase 'Am I not your Lord' (7:172) is heard loudly and clearly. This station is reached through unveiling.

Third: The most important characteristic of this 'aql is that it is aided with an extra power, namely, *basira* in order to reach *malakut*. *Malakut* is the world above the world of matter, and is described as the inner aspect of creation. It is also the world of the unseen and the spirits. Thus, the concern of mystical 'aql is *malakut*.

Fourth: It is with this 'aql that the mystic is able to know God, and all mystical apprehension is attributed to it. Knowledge flows from *ruh* on 'aql to enlighten and illuminate it; thus, transforming it into mystical 'aql. Suhrawardi describes the flow of knowledge in the form of light:

'Aql is *ruh*'s tongue, because *ruh* is from the command of God, and it communicates the message heaven and earth refused to communicate. From *ruh* the light of 'aql flows, and in the light of 'aql all knowledge is shaped.¹⁸⁴

The above light of 'aql is paramount for mystical apprehension, and all mystical forms are given appropriate meaning in the light of this *light of 'aql*.

In conclusion, mystical 'aql is not another kind of species attributed to the supernatural, but is the normal human 'aql aided by the light of *ruh*.

¹⁸³ Khalidi al, A (1997), *al-Mu'jam al-Sufi*, (Mu'asat al-Intishar al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon), p.212.

¹⁸⁴ *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.456.

-The Role Of *Basira* in the Mystical Experience

The act of reading the Qur'an is one of the duties incumbent upon every Muslim, because, it contains God's self revelation first. Secondly, the Qur'an contains all the commandments required to live life according to God's will. These commandments have to do with every day dealings from a moral and ethical perspectives. However, the first reason for the act of reading the Qur'an has to do with one's faith in God. The Qur'an points out to the reality of God, which is both hidden and manifest (57:3). The manifest (*dhahir*) aspect of God is seen in creation including that of human beings, and in the wonders and beauty of this creation. The hidden (*batin*) aspect of God is more difficult, if not impossible, to capture. It is this aspect of God which the mystic strives to attain. Accordingly, everything in creation has an inner (*batin*) and an outer (*dhahir*) aspect like God. Consequently, the Qur'an has an inner and an outer aspect¹⁸⁵. The outer aspect of Qur'an is extracted through *tafsir*, whereas the inner aspect might be reached through sound *ta'wil*. For Sufis, *tafsir* is reached by following the tradition (*naqli*) way of knowing all about the Qur'an. But *ta'wil* is the preferred way by Sufis on the interpretation of the Qur'an leading to its understanding. The latter method of interpretation is more flexible, and it gives room for many interpretations including the rational and the most extreme ones. Suhrawardi employs a third one to reach knowledge of God, which is the mystical '*aql*. But '*aql* as a rational faculty cannot reach knowledge of God unless it is enlightened by an external power causing its transformation. This power is called insight (*basira*), and it is *basira* that transforms '*aql* from its normal nature to a more mystical one. What is *basira*, and how it is understood by Sufis? To investigate *basira* we will search for a description of it in the Qur'an first, and then we will see how Sufis understood it. This will help us in the identification of its role.

Basira is a Qur'anic term, and is something internal to humanity. For example, in 12:108 Joseph in this passage is asked to say "This is my way, I do invite unto Allah on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes". What is expressed here in this verse is a central Islamic belief, the unity of God. Therefore, it is possible to conclude from this passage that *basira* enables the believer in an evidential way to see and experience this unity of God. Furthermore, in 75:14 *basira* literally means one is aware of one's self and all its actions. Thus *basira* is a spiritual power inherent in humanity, yet not every one is aware of it. Only those who are righteous, like Joseph, will actually be able to possess *basira* in

¹⁸⁵See p.14.

their search for God. Note that *basira* appears only in these two places, and the Qur'an does not specify exactly what it is.

For Sufis *basira* is more associated with one's faith, and with their spiritual state in relation to the spiritual journey. However, there are few Sufis who wrote about *basira*, and those who did, wrote about it in a passing reference. This makes it even harder to understand how Sufis perceived *basira*. One of the famous Sufis who mentioned *basira* in his writings is Ibn al-'Arab. In his book *Futuhat al-Makkiyya* he says:

There are slaves of God who acted according to their faith (*iman*) and were truthful in their states (*ahwal*); hence God opened the eyes of their insight (*basira*) and disclosed Himself to their inmost consciousness (*sirr*). So that their knowledge of Him is by direct witnessing (*shuhud*), and in their knowledge they are upon insight and a clear proof from within themselves.¹⁸⁶

For Ibn al-'Arabi *basira* is opened by God Himself, enabling the mystic to receive knowledge experienced through witnessing. In other words, *basira* is the authenticating proof of God's self disclosure. At the same time, the mystic is aware of his/her inmost consciousness, and that is why is labelled 'direct witnessing' which is one aspect of unveiling.

Basira for Suhrawardi has a more definite and more subtle role in the mystical experience, and is linked to *ruh* and '*aql*. On the one hand, *basira* is defined as the *ruh's* heart, and on the other hand, it is connected with '*aql* where it is called the "interpreter of *basira*"¹⁸⁷. The above interconnections suggest a hierarchy ranging from top to bottom. *Ruh* is at the top, and '*aql* is at the bottom of this hierarchy. *Basira* is the intermediate power between *ruh* and '*aql*. *Basira* receives knowledge from *ruh* and transmits it to '*aql*. For this reason, Suhrawardi says if '*aql* is not aided by *basira*, then it will be limited to worldly affairs:

The '*aql* of the person that is inclined towards the soul (*nafs*) will differentiate Him (God) in the parts of creation that leads to instability. Then '*aql* will miss the path of guidance.¹⁸⁸

In the same passage Suhrawardi explains the other state of '*aql*, when it becomes aware of this imbalance "When a person's '*aql* becomes upright and straight, then it will be

¹⁸⁶Cited in Hirtenstein and Tiernan (1993), Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi, (Elements Books Limited), p.69.

¹⁸⁷See '*Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.454.

¹⁸⁸Ibid, p.456.

upheld by the *basira*"¹⁸⁹. So the role of *basira* can be identified here in terms guiding 'aql towards the more stable and straight state.

The next stage is that of guidance which is the result of the stability and straightness as described above. Suhrawardi writes:

Then it ('aql) will be guided to the Creator (*al-mukawwin*), and will know creation (*al-kawn*) through the Creator, thus, satisfying all the gnosis (*ma'rifa*) through the Creator and creation, and will be called 'aql of guidance (*'aql al-hidaya*).¹⁹⁰

The end result is that *basira* will lead 'aql to the right path-the path of guidance. Not only that, *basira* will also enable 'aql to grow into maturity, and as an instinct it is able to do so. Suhrawardi points out that "The more 'aql is straight and upheld by *basira*, the more it will show its maturity, and will abstain from doing wrong"¹⁹¹. Hence, the role of *basira* is not only to lead the individual to God, but also to participate in the process of 'aql's maturity. Thus strengthening the sense of doing the right things or thinking right thoughts.

In addition to these roles of *basira*, there exists another connected with the law (*Shari'a*). For Sufis, the light of the law is important in the process of enlightenment. It descends upon 'aql leading it to unveil the inner aspect of *Shar'a*. In this sense, *basira* is considered as a spiritual power like unveiling (*kashf*) and taste (*dhawq*), enlightening 'aql. About this enlightenment Suhrawardi writes:

If it ['aql] is upright and straight, then it will be upheld by *basira* that will lead to its stability and will place everything in its proper place. This 'aql is the enlightened by the light of *Shar'*, because its straightness and stability guided it to be enlightened by this light.¹⁹²

A further role of *basira* is to lead the mystic into *malakut*: the unseen world. This state is a stage higher than the stage of enlightenment. However, the whole process is achieved through the light of *Shar'*. This is described by Suhrawardi:

The person who has used abstract 'aql without enlightenment by the light of *Shar'* will attain knowledge about creation, which is *mulk*, and *mulk* is the outer aspect of creatures.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.456.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid, p.457.

Note that 'Abstract 'aql' is a reference to the rational faculty used to discern rational arguments and discussions. This type of 'aql is confined to knowledge of creation; *mulk*, and in a sense is considered limited and deficient. About this limitation of *abstract 'aql*, Suhrawardi explains that "Discernment (*fitra*) and intelligence (*dhaka*') are the outcome of 'aql, and if 'aql is devoid from the light of *Shar'*, then it will not enter *malakut*, and will be hesitant in *mulk*"¹⁹⁴.

In Sufi thought a spiritual link should exist between the adept and his master. The process of linking the adept to *malakut* by the Sufi master involves a kind of spiritualisation of the adept. Interestingly, Suhrawardi cites the saying by Jesus in John 3:3 "No one will enter the kingdom of heaven who is not born twice"¹⁹⁵. These two births are mentioned by Suhrawardi in connection with adepts. The first birth links the adept to the rest of creation, while the second connects him with *malakut*. The latter type of birth connects the adept spiritually with his master; and thus, his 'aql to be enlightened by *Shari'*:

The person whose 'aql is enlightened by the light of *Shar'* will attain *basira*, and will ultimately attain *malakut*. *Malakut* is the inner aspect of creation, and its unveiling is only known to those with *basa'ir* [plural], and 'uqul [plural].¹⁹⁶

The importance of *basira* in the transformation of 'aql into the mystical as described above, enables it to reach *malakut*. This quality is possessed by those masters in unveiling, who use their insight and their intellects.

In conclusion, the role of *basira* in the mystical unveiling is essential. Because, it is through *basira* that the inner aspect of the Qur'an is apprehended, ultimately leading to Truth.

¹⁹⁴Awarif alMa'arif, p.85.

¹⁹⁵Ibid, p.456..

¹⁹⁶Ibid, p.457.

The Relation of *Ruh* to 'Aql

Relationships are one of the fundamental principles of the Qur'an, and their importance is conveyed in the model of God's relationships with creation and human beings. It also states that God created everything in the cosmos in pairs (51:49), and some of these can be seen to exist in a complementary manner; such as the relation of man to woman.

The same is true of spirit and the body which are set together in a relationship that forms a human being. We can also identify a relationship between the three parts of the soul forming one soul. On the level of the human body a relationship exists between the heart and the soul, and 'aql is related to the heart as well. All of these relationships must be seen as part of God's establishing order and perfection.

It is appropriate here, after exploring and isolating the concepts of *ruh* and 'aql, to try to establish some kind of a relation between the two.

In many places in his book *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*¹⁹⁷, Suhrawardi identifies 'aql as *ruh's* tongue (*lisan al-ruh*). This relation is described as "'Aql is *ruh's* tongue and the interpreter of *basira*, and *basira* to *ruh* is like the heart (*qalb*), and 'aql is like the tongue (*lisan*)"¹⁹⁸. Three physical organs are mentioned in this passage 'aql, *qalb*, *lisan*, as well as two spiritual powers, *ruh* and *basira*. All are linked together. The relationship can be broken into smaller bits. 'Aql is related to both *ruh* and *basira*. In relation to *ruh* 'aql is its tongue, and it explicates all the knowledge of *ruh*. In relation to *basira* 'aql is the interpreter, but in this respect it can only interpret what is communicated to it by the *basira*. *Basira* is related to *ruh* in a sense that it is the heart that contains knowledge. Thus, *basira* contains knowledge of *ruh*, and communicates this knowledge to 'aql, whereas 'aql will apprehend this knowledge of *basira*, which is contained in *Shar'*. It can be concluded therefore that what is described is the mystical 'aql, because only in this state 'aql can apprehend what is communicated to it in the mystical sense. In the end, all knowledge contained in *basira*, which belongs to *ruh*, is passed on to 'aql in the form of light.

In another place Suhrawardi links 'aql to *ruh*, through the use of the term of 'substance'. Suhrawardi explains that "'Aql is the substance (*Jawhar*) of the high spirit, its tongue and that which points to it"¹⁹⁹. *Jawhar* here is not to be confused with the philosophical term 'substance' as 'form' or 'matter', but denotes something else. Perhaps we can identify *jawhar* with the light that descends upon 'aql from *ruh*. Suhrawardi postulates

¹⁹⁷In pages 85, 454, 456.

¹⁹⁸*'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.454

¹⁹⁹*Ibid*, p.450.

that this light is important because "From it (*ruh*) the light of '*aql*' does flow, and in this light of '*aql*' all knowledge is shaped"²⁰⁰.

Knowledge descends on '*aql*' in the form of light, and this light causes the enlightenment of '*aql*'. Thus, the substance that '*aql*' contains is the light which belongs to *ruh*. Therefore *jawhar* is the light that exists in the mystical '*aql*'. Therefore through this mystical '*aql*' that this *jawhar* is attained, and knowledge of *ruh* will be available. This unveiling might be called Intellectual Unveiling. It is this type of unveiling which Suhrawardi advocates in his book.

Conclusion

Shaykh Suhrawardi is one of the most learned personalities of the medieval Islamic tradition, and his influence on that tradition is undisputed. He was born into a family whose learning and education supplemented the knowledge he acquired from his teachers. It is unfortunate that his thinking has not been the subject of previous thorough study, since his ideas and arguments add a further dimension to the pursuit of the mystical path.

Suhrawardi's thought is linked to his spiritual psychology. This psychology is traditional because it is based on the Qur'anic view of the soul. However, his religious thought is complemented by the philosophical division of the soul, with an added emphasis on the characteristics of each part of the soul. We do not know whether or not he studied philosophy, though it is possible that both Aristotle's and Plato's ideas were available to him. This assumption is based on the fact that many of the philosophical arguments presented by Avicenna and Averroes were known to the religious leaders of the time. However, the probability that Suhrawardi was interested in the whole philosophical system of thought is very unlikely, for the simple reason that he would have been attacked by other Muslim theologians and decried as heretic.

The different gradations of the soul imply some kind of a hierarchy, with the apex representing the level of perfection. The process leading to perfection is described in terms of acknowledging and knowing the self. In the end this process will lead to attaining the knowledge of God's required for happiness.

In addition to *ruh*, '*aql*' plays an essential role in the process of perfection. This '*aql*' is viewed as an 'instinct' inherent in humanity. Instinct, with the aid of the spiritual power

²⁰⁰ Awarif al-Ma'arif, p.456.

basira, is able to reach the state of the mystical '*aql*', which is enlightened by the light of *Shar'a*. *Basira* is a Sufic term and is perceived as a power enabling the Sufi to look into the essence of things and their inner aspects. This view of *basira* is analogous to the idea of the eye and its function of seeing visible things. Therefore, '*aql*' and *Shari'a* become the tools of the mystical transformation leading to the state of perfection. Added to this, there seems to be a link between *ruh* and '*aql*' in Suhrawardi's thought. However, he refers to *ruh* as the high spirit (*al-ruh al-'ulwi*), which is not of this created order. This seems to reinforce the view that he is thinking here of the relation between the mystical '*aql*' and the high spirit.

Finally, such a knowledge of the self leads to the knowledge of God who is beyond any rational and intellectual confinements. God is only known through the mystical contemplation on the self.

Suhrawardi's thought is very traditional, but his Sufi path is unique because he gives a prominent role to the intellect in Sufi self knowledge.

Conclusions

-Preliminaries

As stated in the introduction, this study was concerned exclusively to establish some kind of understanding as how mystics view the intellectual dimension of humanity. We tend to think that mysticism and rationality have nothing in common and that mysticism is concerned with confirming the existence of a higher reality. Furthermore, It is generally perceived that the mystical experience is nothing more than a display of a set of emotional and psycho-physical exercises which have no rationality whatsoever. These exercises are seen from the perspective of enabling the mystic to attain a higher reality, that is beyond the reach of most of us. These presuppositions indicate a shortfall in understanding the true meaning of the mystical claim, that human nature undergoes mystical transformation with these set of exercises. This study has shown that mystics have a clear understanding of what constitutes a true human being. Understood from this perspective mystics always refer to the unseen part which is personal and unique to the individual and called the spirit or the soul. The spirit or soul exerts an immense influence in the process of becoming in the mystical experience. Thus, for the mystic there is a spiritual drive in each individual identified as having no relationship with religious conviction, cultural background, or ages. It is this drive which cultivates a sense of bonding with Reality. One aspect of this bonding might be considered is the intellectual apprehension experienced through mystical contemplation. Interestingly, this intellectual apprehension is characterised as the activity of the mystical mind as one of the ways to unveil Reality, which is ultimately and fundamentally one. Accordingly, it is reasonable to postulate that mysticism is 'rational' in the sense that the intellect plays an important part in the mystical apprehension.

It is an unrealistic claim to state that this study has fully exposed the hidden reality of the mystical mind, because this reality is not confined in time and space. However, what this study has shown is that there is an essential part played by the human intellect or mind in mystical apprehension. The role played by the intellect is related to the spirit or the soul. Thus mystical apprehension was identified as confined to the intellect and the soul, and these two dimensions were highlighted by both mystics. Therefore, it was essential to expose the thought system of each mystic separately, and to place each of them in their own tradition which proved to be beneficial in the process of understanding. At the same time, throughout the study it has been necessary not to confuse and mix the two thought systems together. For example, it was important to understand Abulafia's view of *unio mystica*, in terms of intellectual union and what it entails. Equally, it was essential to

know more of Suhrawardi's understanding of '*aql*' as an 'instinct', which is able to receive illumination from *ruh*. Thus transforming the intellect from a mere physical faculty, to a more spiritual and mystical one.

From the start there has been an attempt to structure the two parts in an identical way in order to make comparisons easier. Thus, in the first part an attempt was made to expose Abulafia's spiritual psychology and his understanding of the role of *sekhel* in the mystical illumination. This included a detailed analysis of the spirit in all its gradations, with the characteristics of each level of the spirit. An exposition of his understanding of *sekhel* was also included, as ascribed to both humans and God. Finally, the relation between the spirit and *sekhel* was examined in an attempt to understand the concept of *unio mystica*.

The second part, concerning Suhrawardi's understanding of the mystical '*aql*' can be considered as a separate study, which can be read on its own. Thus, the two parts resemble each other in their structure and also in regard to the subject headings. However, in the second part, the preparations for comparisons were already at work as a methodological preliminary.

Much of the work done in this study was concerned exclusively with the text of a specific book for each thinker. However, other references were also included in the study. As a result, it was necessary to be familiar with the symbolic and mystical language employed by these two mystics in their writings. This proved to be difficult and time consuming task. In addition, crucial to the analysis was the task of knowing both the Hebrew and Arabic language, and it must be admitted that the present author found less problems with the Arabic text than with the Hebrew. As expected with any study, each mystic presented a new thought and much of information came from their own writings. Despite the confusion these texts created they later communicated much of the information needed for this study. Needless to say much work is further needed to be carried out on these texts.

Finally, it is important to stress that this study was not concerned with matters of historical nature in the sense of the precedence of one tradition over the other. On the contrary, when it comes to mysticism it is nearly impossible and indeed inappropriate to do this because each religion has a mystical tradition that is unique to itself. Having said that, however, it was important for the two mystics explored in this study to share the same era with as little gap in time as possible between the two. The reason for this confinement lay in the desire to identify, as closely as possible, the effect of philosophical thought systems of both Aristotle and Plato on these mystics. So Abulafia and

Suhrawardi were chosen since both lived in a very fertile and interesting period following the spread of these philosophical thoughts through the works of Avicenna and Averroes and many other Muslim philosophers. 'I

he task of choosing a specific mystic for this study was a difficult one. However, Suhrawardi was in view before Abulafia. In connection with this, Suhrawardi was chosen because of the lack of any study on his thought. Also, Suhrawardi is considered one of the eminent Sufis, and is regarded as a great theologian who was steeped in Islamic faith. On the other hand, Abulafia was chosen among many other Kabbalists because of his controversial views, and because of the role he played in the advancement of ecstatic Kabbalah. The advantage the present author had in choosing Abulafia's system of Kabbalah lay in the detailed studies carried out on his thought by Professor Moshe Idel, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This study would have failed without the benefit of his work.

One aspect of attempting to understand the uniqueness of each mystic has been the problem of locating each in his own tradition. Thus the introduction included a general description of both Kabbalah and Sufism, in order to be familiar with their thought systems. It was also essential to identify the uniqueness of each mystic, and to locate them in their own traditions.. In addition, the two parts contained an introduction to the life, works, and hermeneutics of each mystic. Such information paved the way for more thorough and analytical work done in the two main parts of the study.

With the above preliminaries the conclusions of this study can be defined under the following headings.

1- The Intellect As the Essence Of Humanity

One of the basic ideas in both Kabbalah and Sufism, is the idea that a direct and intimate relationship between God and humanity can exist and is essential. Ultimately, it is this relationship that leads to the perfection of human beings. One aspect of this link, is the spiritual and the physical link between God and humanity, and it is more rational for most of us to think of a spiritual bond between us and God. However, to think of a physical link or bond between limited human beings and non-delimited Holy God seems an absurd and weird thing to think of. Yet these mystics claim that such a link is possible based on their interpretation of human nature as containing a divine element, since humanity is made in the *image* of God (Genesis 1:27, Qur'an 7:11, where God is said to have given Adam specific shape or form, cf.82.8). What this means is that human beings have some inherent element that enables them to perceive and actualise this *image*. Mystics took the

two declarations mentioned in the Bible and the Qur'an as the basis for their investigation of the concept of Man. Seen from this perspective, the unique position occupied by human beings, in relation to the rest of creation, is the consequence of the view that human beings carry within them the divine element. Their souls, fashioned by God in the *image* and *likeness* of God (whatever that *image* and *likeness* is) represent the true humanity. In the end, what is conveyed here is that the human soul contains something of the Creator which enables them to know God. However, is it possible to identify this something inherent in humanity?

This mystery of human nature appealed to many mystics who were fascinated by it, and spent nearly all their life speculating on this mystery. For some the mystery of human nature was narrowed down to the conviction that human nature consists of an intellectual capacity, which is divine, and enables humanity to know the true meaning of human life in relation to other things. Accordingly, the intellect was seen as that something linking human beings to God, and intellect became the tool for mystical unveilings, characterised as intellectual in nature.

Both Abulafia and Suhrawardi point towards this direction by emphasising the role of the intellect in the mystical contemplation. However, as may be expected, the two differ in their subject matter. While Abulafia looks at the Names of God contained in Torah as the key to mystical unveiling, Suhrawardi sees this mystical unveiling as the result of the enlightenment of '*aql*'. For Abulafia the path of the Divine Names leads to the union of the soul with God. Thus resulting in the attainment of divine knowledge. This human and divine union is portrayed in terms of the union between the male and the female. On the other hand, for Suhrawardi the enlightened '*aql*' is able to apprehend the *Shari'a* elevating '*aql*' to the level of *malakut*, which represents the inner aspect of humanity, that is God. The end result for both is enlightenment. However, the path leading to enlightenment differs in both mystics. For Abulafia, the process of enlightenment involves an intellectual union between the human soul and God through the intermediary of the Active Intellect. God For Abulafia is the intellect, the intelligible, and act of intellection all at once. For Suhrawardi enlightenment is achieved when '*aql*', aided by *basira* is able to reach *malakut*. Thus the mystic becomes nearer God, but is not in union. Both Abulafia and Suhrawardi portray the mystical ascent in terms of the ascension of the intellect into the divine domain, where this domain is invisible.

What is the reason that led both mystics to formulate this view of the mystical intellect? What is the evidence behind such a convictions?

Perhaps it is better to isolate and identify these views separately. The intellect for Abulafia has a special status in comparison to other human capacities. He characterises

the human *sekhel* as a gift from God. This *sekhel* must be similar in nature to divine *sekhel* in order for union to occur. In an interesting passage, Abulafia describes human *sekhel* as God's fruit, seed, and Son²⁰¹. The reason behind this analogy is the attestation of the origins of human *sekhel*. At the same time, it points to the potential capacities embodied in *sekhel* in terms of its ability to know God. *Sekhel* is given to humanity in order to enable it to know God as the source of all truth and reality. It is with *sekhel* that the *image* and *likeness* of God is realised through *unio mystica* or *devekut*. However, in order for *devekut* to take place a transformation of the human nature from a more complex and differentiated form, to a more simple and undifferentiated aspect must occur. This simplicity is the origin of humanity, and God is, in Jewish thought, simple or spiritual. So perhaps we can think of this state as something achievable through the mystical intellect: the state of simplicity is reached through the union of the soul with God. Abulafia explains the dual nature of humanity as the subject of mystical contemplation:

It is known that all the inner forces and the hidden souls on man are differentiated in the bodies. It is, however, in the nature of all of them that when their knots are untied they return to their origin, which is one without any duality, and which comprises multiplicity.²⁰²

It is this dual nature of humanity which is transformed into that which is similar to God's nature (that is the spiritual) which represents the true meaning of humanity. Therefore, *sekhel* is the true essence of humanity actualised by the power of God to reach knowledge of God.

In Islamic thought the word of God revealed in the Qur'an represents the supreme authority in discussions of matters of a theological nature. For Suhrawardi the words of God contain specific power enabling the Sufi to obtain knowledge of God. This power is called *basira*, which is extracted from the word of God causing '*aql*' to be enlightened by the light of this *basira*. It is important to point out that *basira* is only available to those who are willing to embark on the spiritual journey, and it is *basira* that imparts knowledge to '*aql*'. '*Aql*' is portrayed as "the interpreter of *basira*". Thus, the role of *basira* becomes clear as the agent which transforms human nature from its ignorant state to the state of knowledge.

Suhrawardi identifies '*aql*' as an 'instinct', which is interesting because by this he establishes a kind of link between God and humanity. Furthermore, an instinct is

²⁰¹See pp.43.

²⁰²Vi-Zot Li-Yhuda, cited in Idel M, "The Mystical Experience In Abraham Abulafia", p.132.

something given and can be considered as an indicator of a special kind of need (for example, the appetitive and the sexual desires). However, what is so special about this particular instinct, is that it is not concerned with bodily needs as such. Rather, it is concerned with spiritual needs. These spiritual needs can only be identified in relation to knowledge of God, that is when the soul is totally immersed in this knowledge.

In other words, 'aql can only be seen as a gift of God, and when is enlightened by *basira* this will lead to the transformation of human nature from its physical aspect to a more spiritual one. In addition, it is with this mystical 'aql that the Sufi is transformed from the physical plane to the level of *malakut*. Thus 'aql had to be developed in order for perfection to be achieved. For Sufis, *malakut* is the world of the unseen and the angels. Thus the mystical 'aql is associated with the inner or esoteric dimension, and ultimately with God. Therefore, to suggest 'aql can reach *malakut* is to implicate a spiritual capacity for it. Suhrawardi consolidates this suggestion by claiming that 'aql is "the *ruh*'s tongue". But, 'aql is also "*basira*'s interpreter". Through this analogy 'aql is linked to both *ruh* and *basira*, thus affirming the uniqueness of 'aql. Thus it is possible to distinguish a role for 'aql in the mystical experience as it bridges the gap between the seen/unseen world, and ultimately bridges the gap between God and humanity.

Another characteristic of 'aql comes from the etymology used to describe it. 'Aql is called *Wahid* by Suhrawardi²⁰³. *Wahid* is derived from the same root as *tawhid* (unity). Thus it is reasonable to say 'aql is able to unite all things when is aided by *basira*. At the same time, 'aql was described as *Awwal*, as the first reality to emerge²⁰⁴. Consequently, it is possible to conceive of 'aql as able to return to that state of precedence over other created things, which is the stage nearest to God. What this entails is that when 'aql is detached from all physical reality (that is when enlightened by *basira*) it is elevated to the level of unity which represents the stage of recognising the true reality of being. This level of knowledge is reached when the present reality is compared to Truth and Reality. What is implied here is that the affirmation that what represents the true essence of humanity has nothing to do with the physical or the outer aspect. Rather, it is the inner aspect or 'aql that represents the true essence of humanity. All thought, whether worldly or spiritual, proceeds from this 'aql, and one aspect of this thought is the attainment of God's knowledge.

²⁰³See *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.457.

²⁰⁴See p.73.

In conclusion, both Abulafia and Suhrawardi testify to this reality of the intellect, claiming to be able to go beyond the letter of the Law, to the more serene and pleasurable reality.

II-Perfection of the Soul, the 'Ideal Human Being'

In every religious tradition there arose a typology of the '*ideal human being*', which was seen as the exemplar and model of how to live life according to the commandments laid down by the Law of that specific religion. One type of the '*ideal human being*' are the Prophets, who are considered to be at the top of a hierarchy which extends down to those considered to be ordinary people. However, in addition to the Prophets there arose other types of the '*ideal human being*' typology who exerted immense influence on the life and thought of individuals. These models or '*ideal human beings*' played a major part in the transmission of a plethora of ethical and moral qualities required for right behaviour.

In Judaism the notion of '*ideal human being*' was crystallised in the form of the *tsadik* (the righteous one), the *Talmid Kahham* (the scholar of sacred texts), and the *Hasid* (the pious person)²⁰⁵. Each had a specific function and duties towards society, especially in the area of transmitting and consolidating religious and moral requirements of the Law. It is inappropriate here to go into details of the function of each form. However, what concerns us at this point is the identification of the existence of a religious hierarchy that existed in a religious society that was characterised by set functions.

In Kabbalah the above models were viewed from a different perspective, particularly that of the *tsadik* and the *hasid*. The *hasid* is described by Scholem as "the radical Jew who goes to an extreme in attempting to realise his destiny", whereas the *tsadik* is "the ideal embodiment of the norm"²⁰⁶. Yet, for the Kabbalists *tsadik* played a major role in their view of the '*ideal human being*'. *Tsadik* was associated with the *Sefirot* and its position was identified as the next to last. This means that *tsadik* was seen as an attribute of God, which can be acquired through the mystical contemplation on the *Sefirot*. The function of this *Sefirah* (*tsadik*), according to Kabbalah, is to establish harmony and peace and this is linked with the concept of *Shalom*. *Shalom* is not the absence of war, it is the state of perfection and completeness. Therefore, *tsadik* in the Kabbalah is linked with concept of the '*ideal human being*'.

In parallel to the above typology, in Islam these ideals are shaped by the idea of *Salih* (the righteous one), the *Faqih* or *Shaykh* (the scholar who is an expert in the exegesis of

²⁰⁵The above classification is borrowed from Scholem G (1991), *On The Mystical Shape of The Godhead*, (Schocken Books, New York), p.88.

²⁰⁶*Ibid*, p.90.

the Law), and the *Anbiya'* (the Prophets or the Messengers who proclaimed God's Truth).

But in Sufi thought there appeared a kind of a hierarchy which gave a prominent place to the *Awliya' al-Allah* (Friends of God). This level or station is known in Sufi terminology as the station of *Awliya' al-Allah*, and is believed to be acquired through *mukashafa* (unveiling) and *mushahada* (witnessing).

The purpose behind the above detour is to posit that a concept of a state of perfection is present in the thought of both Kabbalah and Sufism, and is thus present in Abulafia and Suhrawardi. This state is thought to be achieved through the progression of the soul into the highest levels of consciousness. Progression of the soul will lead to the attainment of knowledge of God. Therefore, the mystical experience, for the mystic, represents the process leading to the perfection of the soul. In fact, in the qualities of both the *hasid* and the Friend of God there are many similarities which enable us to conclude that they point out in one direction: perfection. One aspect of the ascent of the soul towards this level of perfection is through the identification of all human imperfections. Consequently, we find many mystics including both Abulafia and Suhrawardi, portraying a duality in human nature by constructing a particular psychology matching this nature. For example, Abulafia does not say much about the division of the soul into three parts. Rather, he is concerned with human potentiality to reach perfection by way of intellectual apprehension. In a passage in *Ozar 'Eden Ganuz*, Abulafia writes:

Man is [tied] in knots of world, year and soul [i.e. space, time, and persona] in which he is tied in nature, and if he unties the knots from himself, he may cleave to Him who is above them...²⁰⁷

This passage stresses that human nature is dual in character. It is only when this nature is transformed and perfected is it able to be in union with God. This is the whole aim of the mystical contemplation.

The same can said of Suhrawardi's thought. For him the ascent of the soul to the stage of *al-nafs al-mutma'ina* (the soul at peace), is the aim of the mystical contemplation. Suhrawardi describes the three stages of *nafs* mentioned in the Qur'an, and ascribes to each stage special characteristics²⁰⁸. The journey towards perfection involves the identification of all the soul's imperfections. Suhrawardi writes:

When *nafs* becomes troubled with *jiblatiha* (its dispositions) and its natural

²⁰⁷Cited in Idel M, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, p.135.

²⁰⁸See p.70.

inclinations aspiring to the stage of *tuma'nina* (peace), then it is *lawwama* (the blaming soul).²⁰⁹

Notice here that the blaming soul is midway to perfection. It is a position between the troubled soul and the soul at peace. However, only the souls of the Prophets and Friends of God are said to be in the stage of soul at peace. Yet that did not prevent Sufis from meditating on the human soul, because it is that through this meditation the Sufi will reach the station known as station of *'ubudiya* (servanthood). About this station Suhrawardi writes:

Then there will be unveiled for him the attributes that contend with *Rububiya* (Lordship), that is pride, mightiness, seeing the self, and being pleased with the self, and so on. He sees that pure servanthood is to abandon contention with Lordship.²¹⁰

For both Abulafia and Suhrawardi the actualisation of the human soul presupposes knowledge of the innermost and the true essence of human nature. Thus, it is possible to say that both would agree with the saying "*He who knows himself, knows his Lord*". For Abulafia knowledge of God means the actualisation of the *image* and *likeness* of God inherent in humanity, where this *image* and *likeness* represent the parameters for the '*ideal human being*'. On the other hand, knowledge of God for Suhrawardi represents the stage of realising true humanity (*insaniya*), which is a stage beyond servanthood. Accordingly, the '*ideal human being*' is the one who governs all the naturalistic and animalistic inclinations with justice and knowledge²¹¹. It is only through self knowledge this knowledge of God is attained. Therefore, the ideal and perfect state must be isolated and achieved by mystics.

Perhaps it is also possible to say "*He who knows his Lord, knows himself*", in the sense that what is at work in the awakening of human potentiality is not only an awakening down below (an awakening in the individual), but also an awakening and overflowing of God's power from above. This divine overflow can be identified as the Active Intellect for Abulafia, and the *basira* for Suhrawardi. It is through these powers that the peace and tranquillity of the *Shekhina* and the *Sekina* are felt²¹². Both the *Shekhina* and the *Sekina* as spiritual powers have spiritual affects of transforming the faith of the individual to bring peace, harmony, and perfection into their lives.

²⁰⁹ *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.453.

²¹⁰ *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p.453..

²¹¹ See p.72.

²¹² Note that both *Shekhina* and *Sekina* denote the same thing, the presence or Spirit of God.

Finally, both Abulafia and Suhrawardi would find the ideal or perfect being not so much by following what is commanded only by the Torah and the Qur'an, but also by that which extends beyond the letter of the Law: the image, likeness, and God's Lordship.

III-Philosophy Or Mystical Interpretation?

Hellenistic philosophy played an important role in medieval religious thought, and it is apparent in both Judaism and Islam²¹³. The role philosophy played in medieval thought is characterised as that of Aristotle, Plato, and Plotinus. Philosophy's effect extended to both Kabbalah and Sufism, and these two traditions were attracted to philosophical speculations. Thus, philosophy is considered as a common element to both traditions; where such influence became deeply rooted to the extent that it was impossible to separate philosophy from mysticism. Consequently, mystical literature became a fertile ground for many philosophical terms and concepts that students of philosophy could easily read and understand. This has led to the integration of Greek philosophy on the one hand, and Jewish and Islamic theology on the other. Part of this can be seen in areas of ontological and epistemological investigations. The reason behind this lay in the shared interest of both philosophers and mystics to unravel the mystery of God, creation, humanity, and so on. The above argument proved true throughout this study, and philosophical terms and concepts kept recurring all the time. One might be tempted to say that before the spread of Aristotle's and Plato's systems of thoughts perhaps there were no such systematic mystical speculations. There is some truth in this claim; however, it is important to bear in mind that mystical thought is based on religious faith. Yet, this faith is expressed in the most extreme and unorthodox way. For example, the Jewish mystical tradition is based on the Hebrew Bible, *Talmudic* literature, and the *Aggadic* or *Haggadic* literature. The Islamic mystical tradition, in the same manner, derives its basic ideas from the Qur'an, the *hadith* literature, and the *Sunna* of Muhammad. What is unique about these two traditions, especially as far as a more orthodox and traditional approach is concerned, is their response to the questions of God, the creation, the world, the problem of evil, and Man, is different from the above traditions. At the same time, these two traditions adopted a peculiar method of investigation to a degree that these investigations were told in the most bizarre way. Now, here lies the problem: How can a mystic interpret and communicate in an intelligible manner what s/he has experienced?

The temptation is to say: there is no way to express the inexpressible. However, mystics would say: yes there is a way to express this reality. Yet, these claims of mystics were not always clear, and sometimes were controversial. Throughout the study this positive claim was expressed all the time, because there is indeed a way to communicate the mystical experience and that is through a religio-mystical language with the aid of

²¹³See Rudavsky, T, *Medieval Jewish Neoplatonism*, in 'Routledge History of World Philosophies', ed. Frank D and Leaman O, 1997, vol.II.

philosophy. This language is so colourful and symbolic that it provoked hostility and resentment from the established traditions. We can conclude then that philosophical terminology provided mystics with wider and much more affective use of language.

Thus, if there exists any philosophical thought in mystical literature it is not an indication that this thought is purely philosophical. Rather mysticism is presented in a philosophical garb.

When comparing Abulafia and Suhrawardi, Abulafia might be considered more philosophical than Suhrawardi. In fact Abulafia brought Kabbalah and philosophy closer to each other. In addition, Abulafia adopted a whole philosophical system of thought, and is rightly labelled Kabbalist/Philosopher. However, the backbone of his theology and mystical thought comes from Torah. Therefore, his Kabbalah cannot be labelled as purely philosophical in character.

With Suhrawardi it is even more difficult if not impossible to label him philosopher, because he is more orthodox in his theology than Abulafia. Yet he does employ the tripartite division of the soul, ascribing to each part specific qualities and functions. In the same section Suhrawardi describes the origin of each part of the soul. For example, the high, heavenly and human spirit is from the world of Command, whereas the animal spirit is from the world of Creation. These two worlds are mentioned in the Qur'an in 7:54. However, there is no clear reference in the Qur'an to the tripartite division of the soul. Hence, we can conclude by stating that the reason behind the use of philosophical terminology in these texts by these two writers is due to the fact that both the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an lack a clear reference to the spirit and the intellect in their functional capacities.

In conclusion, we can say that philosophy's role must be seen not as opposing religious beliefs. Rather, philosophy helped these two mystics to formulate and shape these beliefs. Furthermore, philosophy should not be viewed over and against mystical interpretation. Viewed from this perspective, it is better to assert that philosophy made mystical language and mystical interpretation more understandable. It is for this reason that it is nearly impossible to separate philosophy and mysticism, and for that reason alone we should not try to do so.

Bibliography

- Almond, P C (1982) The Epistemology Of Religious Experience
(Cambridge University Press, Cambridge)
- Altmann, A (1969) Studies in Religious Philosophy And Mysticism, .
(Routledge And Kegan Paul, London).
- Ansari, M (1986) Sufism And Shra'at: A Study Of Shaykh Ahmed Sirhindi's
Effort to Reform Sufism
(The Islamic Foundation, Leicester).
- Arberry, A J (1952) The Poem of the Way: Translated into English Verse
From the Arabic of Ibn al-Farid,
(Emery Walker, London).
- Biale, D (1979) Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah and Counter Kabbalah,
(Harvard University press)
- Bokser, B Z, (1981) The Jewish Mystical Tradition
(The Pilgrim press, New York)
- Chittick, W C (1983) The Sufi Path Of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi,
(SUNY Press, Albany, New York).
- _____ (1989) The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics
Of Imagination,
(SUNY Press, Albany, New York).
- _____ (1992) Faith And Practice Of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century
Sufi Texts,
(SUNY Press, New York).
- _____ (1994) Imaginal Worlds: Ibn 'Arabi And the Problem of Religious
Diversity
(Albany Press, New York).
- Chittick, W C, and
P L Wilson (1982), Fakhruddin 'Iraqi: Divine Flashes,
(Paulist Press, New York).
- Corbin, H (1969) Creative Imagination in the Sufism Of Ibn 'Arabi, Translated
from the French by Ralph Manheim

- (Routledge And Kegan Paul, London).
- Davidson, H (1972) 'Al-Farabi And Avicenna On the Active Intellect', Viator, vol.3, pp.154-173.
- _____ (1987) 'Averroes On the Active Intellect as a Cause Of Existence', Viator, vol.18, pp.191-225
- Denffer, A (1994) 'Ulm al-Qur'an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an. (Islamic Foundation, Leicester).
- Ernst, C (1985) Words of Ecstasy in Sufism (Suny Press, New York).
- _____ (1996) Ruzbihan Baqli, (Curzon, London).
- _____ (1997) The Shambhala Guide To Sufism, (Shambhala Press, Boston & London).
- Fenton, P.B (1996) 'Judaism and Sufism', in History of Islamic Philosophy, Routledge History of World Philosophies, vol.I, Part I (ed.) Nasr S and Leaman O, pp.698-767. (Routledge, London).
- Frnak, D and Leaman O (ed.)(1997) History of Jewish Philosophy, Routledge History of World Philosophies, vol.II. (Routledge, London)
- Gatje, II (1997) The Qur'an And Its Exegesis (Oneworld Publications, Oxford).
- Gutas, D (1988) Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition (Leiden, E.J.Brill, London).
- Hallamish M (1999) An Introduction to the Kabbalah, Translated by Ruth Bar Ilan and Ora Wiskind-Elpen. (State University of New York Press, New York).
- Hirtenstein S and Tiernan M (ed.)(1993) Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi

(Element Books Limited, London)

- Hyman, A (1996) 'Jewish Philosophy in the Islamic world', History of Islamic Philosophy, Routledge History of World Philosophies, vol.I, part,(ed.) by NasrS and Leaman O, pp.677-697.
- Idel, M (1988) The Mystical Experience In Abraham Abulafia
(State University of New York Press, Albany, New York).
- _____ (1988) Studies In Ecstatic Kabbalah
(State University of New York Press, Albany, New York).
- _____ (1988) Kabbalah, New Perspective
(Yale University Press, New Haven & London).
- _____ (1989) Language, Torah, And Hermeneutics in Abrarham Abulafia,
Translated from the Hebrew By Menehem Kallus,
(State University of New York, Albany, New York).
- Inge, W.R (1899) Christian Mysticism
(Meuthen, London).
- Isutzu, T (1984) Sufism and Taoism
(University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles).
- Jellinek, A (1853) Ginzei Hokhmat ha-Kabbalah (German and Hebrew),
(Leipzig).
- Kats, S (ed.)(1978) Mysticism And Philosophical Analysis
(Oxford University Press, Oxford).
- _____ (ed.)(1983) Mysticism And Religious Traditions
Oxford University Press, Oxford).
- Khalidi, al, A (1997) Al-Awliya' wa Awsafahum (Arabic)
(Mu'asasat al-Intishar al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon).
- _____ (1997) Al-Mu'jam al-Sufi (Arabic)
(Mu'asasat al-Intishar al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon).
- _____ (1997) Jami' al-Usul fi al-Awiya' (Arabic)
Edited by Nasr-Allah Adeeb
(Mu'asasat al-Intishar al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon)
- Khatib, al, A (1981) Al-Tasawwuf wa al-Mutasawwifa fi al-Islam (Arabic)

(Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon).

- Kugel, J (1998) Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it was at the Start of the Common Era (Cambridge Mass, London)
- Leaman, O (1985) An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge).
- _____ (1988) Averroes and His Philosophy (Clarendon Press, Oxford).
- Martin, J.D (1993) Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar , 27th ed. (T&T Clark, Edinburgh)
- Matt, D (1997) The Essential Kabbalah, The Heart Of Jewish Mysticism, (Castle Books, Harper, San Francisco).
- Modrak, D (1987) Aristotle: The Power Of Perception (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago).
- Moline, J (1981) Plato's Theory Of Understanding (The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison).
- Muhasibi, al, A 'Kitab al'Aql' (Arabic), in Al Masa'il Fi A'mal al-Qulub wa al-Jawarih wa al-Makasib, (Arabic), edited by 'Atta A, 1984. ('Alam al-Kutub, Cairo), pp.247-259.
- Murata, S (1992) The Tao Of Islam (State University of New York Press, Albany, New York).
- Murata, S , and Ernst, C (1994) The Vision of Islam (Paragon House, New York).
- Nasr, S (ed.) (1987-1990) Islamic Spirituality, I. Foundations, II Manifestation (Crossroad, New York).
- Neusner, J (ed.)(1983) Take Judaism For Example: Studies Toward the Comparison of Religion. (the University of Chicago, Chicago).
- Nicholson, R.A. (1967) Studies in Islamic Mysticism

(Cambridge University Press, Cambridge).

- Nurbakhsh, J (1981) Sufism, Meaning, Knowledge, and Unity
(Khaniqahi-Nimatulla Publications, New York).
- _____ (1982) Sufism
(Khaniqahi-Nimatullah Publications, New York).
- _____ (1983) Traditions of the Prophet
(Khaniqahi-Nimatullah Publications, New York).
- Otto, R (1932) Mysticism East and West, Translated by Bertha, C and
Payne, R, (Macmillan, London).
- _____ (1936) The Idea of the Holy
(Oxford University Press, Oxford).
- Pines, S (1997) Studies in the History of Jewish Thought, edited by
Harvey W and Idel M.
(The Mahness Press, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
Jerusalem).
- Radtke, B and
O'Kane, J (1996) The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism
(Curzon Press, London)
- Ridgeon, L (1998) 'Aziz Nasafi
(Curzon Press, London).
- Sells, M (1996) Early Islamic Mysticism, edited by Ernst C.
(Paulist Press, New York).
- Schimmel, A (1975) Mystical Dimensions of Islam
(Chapell Hill: University of North Carolina Press)
- Scholem G (1978) Kabbalah
(Meridian Book, New York).
- _____ (1995) Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 3rd ed.
(Schocken Books, New York).
- _____ (1996) On the Kabbalah And Its Symbolism, Translated by
Manheim, R, (Schocken Books, New York).

- Shah, I (1979) The World of the Sufi
(The Octagon Press, London)
- Shalabi, al, K (1997) A Concise Study On the History Of Sufism (Arabic)
(Dar al-Manahil, Cairo)
- Smart, N (1965) 'Intepretation and Mystical Experience', in
Religious Studies 1 (1965), pp.75-87.
- Smith, M (1935) An Early Mystic of Baghdad: A Study of the Life and Teaching of Harith b. Asad al-Muhasibi
(Shekdon Press, London)
- Suhrawardi, S (1986) 'Awarif al-Ma'arif
(Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, Beirut)
- Tishby, I (1989) The Wisdom of the Zohar, 3 parts, translated into English
by Goldstein D.
(Oxford University Press for Littman Library, Oxford)
(
- Trimingham, J.S (1971) The Sufi Orders in Islam
(Oxford Press, Oxford).
- Underhill, E (1912) Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness, 4th ed.
(Mcuthen, London).
- Wainwright, W (1981) Mysticism
(University of Wisconsin Press, Madison).
- Wedin, M(1988) Mind and Imagination in Aristotle
(Yale University Press, New Haven and London).
- Wensinck, A.J.(1927-1965) Early Muhammadan Tradition, 5 volumes
(Leiden: E.J. Brill, London).
- Wilcox, L (1995) Sufism and Psychology
(Abjad, London).
- Wolff, H (1974) Anthropology of the Old Testament
(SCM Press, London).

Zachner, R.C. (1957)

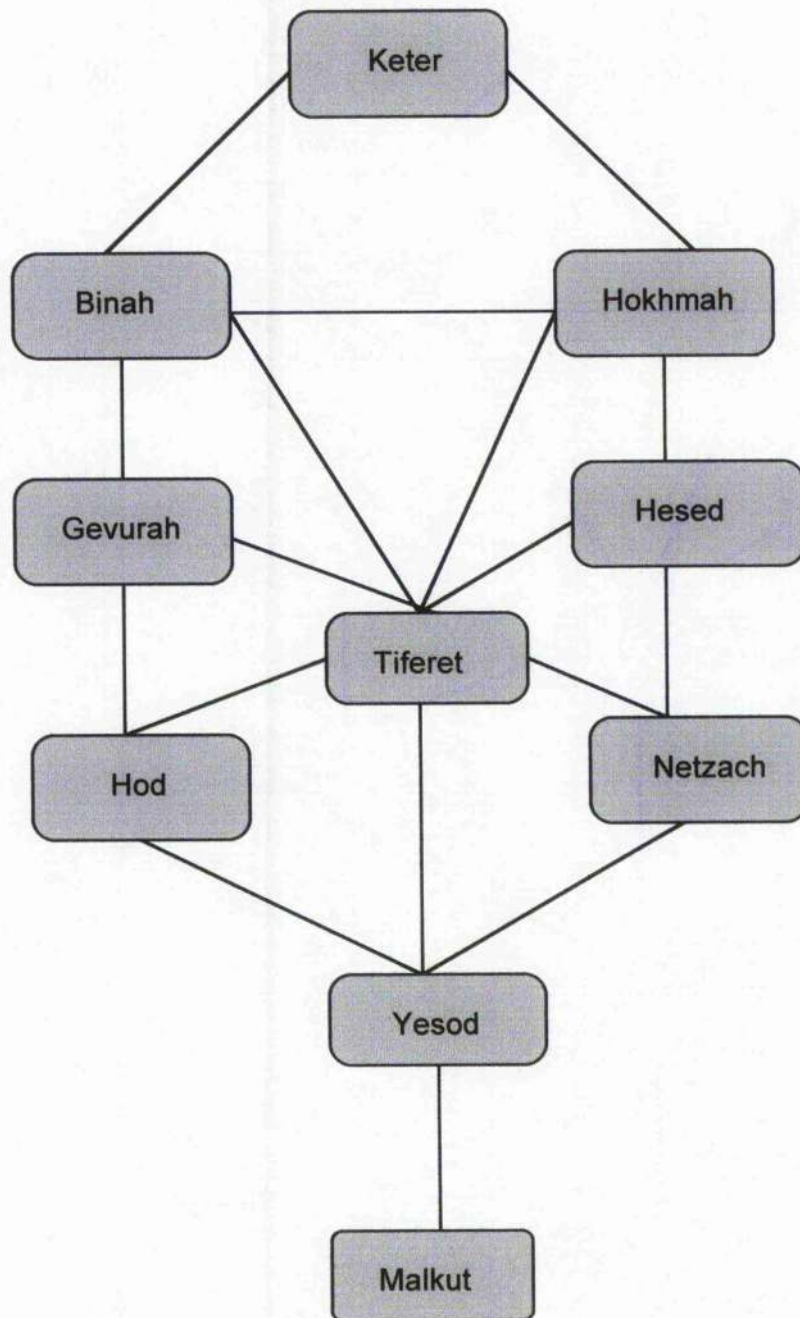
Mysticism Sacred and Profane
(Clarendon Press, Oxford).

Encyclopedias and Dictionaries

- * *Encyclopedia Judaica*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971-1972. Vols.1 and 2.
- * *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Edited by Bosworth C E, Danzel E, Lewis B, and Pellat C. London: Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1978, 1986, and 1997. Vols. IV, V, and IX.
- * *Al-Mawrid: A Modern English-Arabic Dictionary*. Baalabaki M, 33rd ed. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar El-Ilm Lil-Malayan, 1999.
- * *Al-Mawrid: A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary*. Baalabaki R, 10th ed. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar El-Ilm Lil-Malayan, 1997.
- * *A New Concordance of the Old Testament*. Shoshan A E, ed., 2nd ed. Jerusalem, Israel: Kiryat-Sefer, 1990.
- * *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*. Wigram. Massachusets: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984.

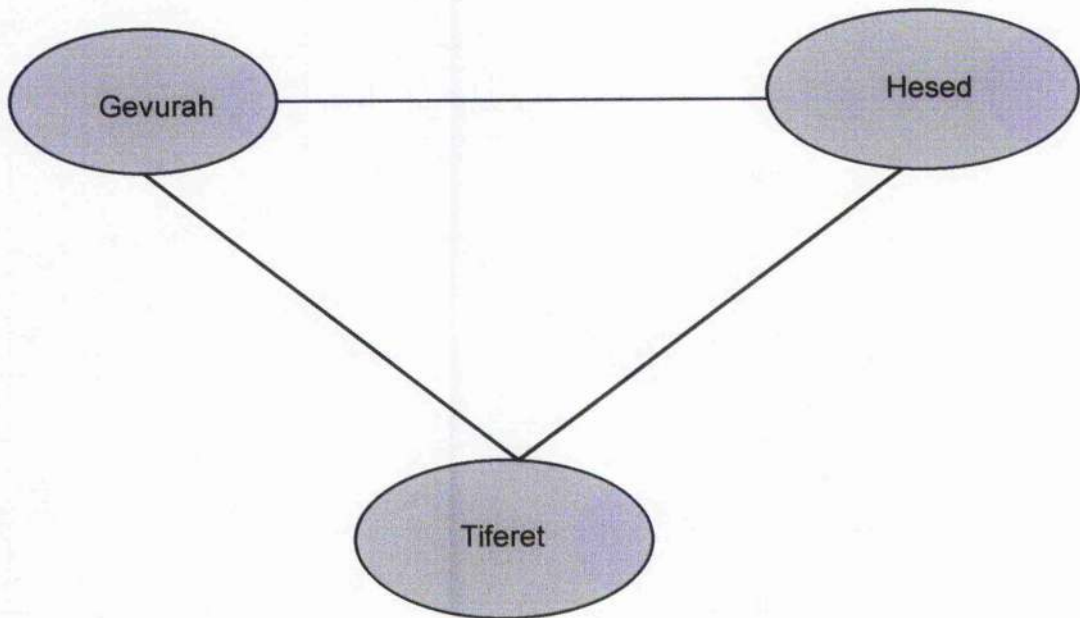
APPENDICES

Appendix A



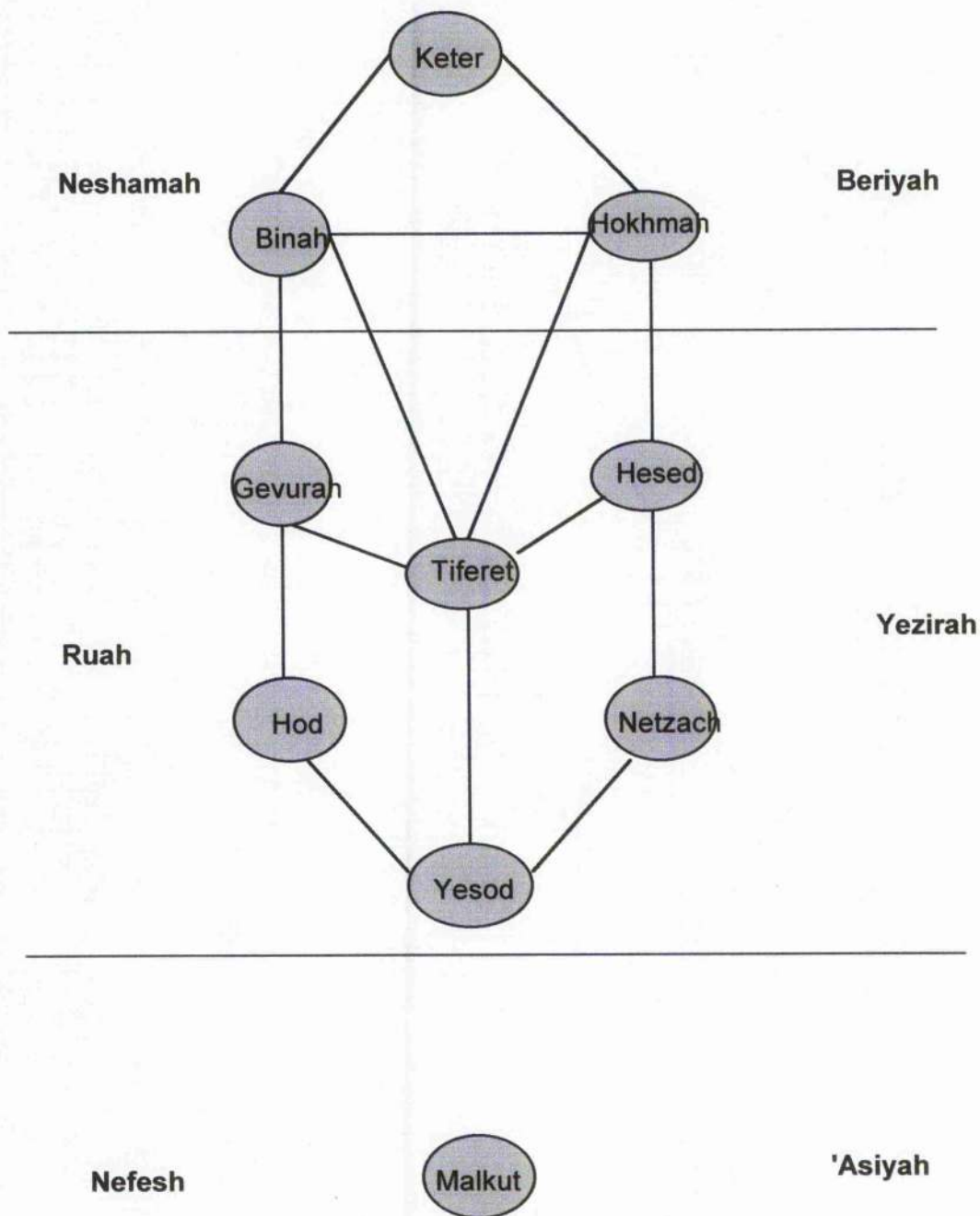
The Ten Sefirot

Appendix B



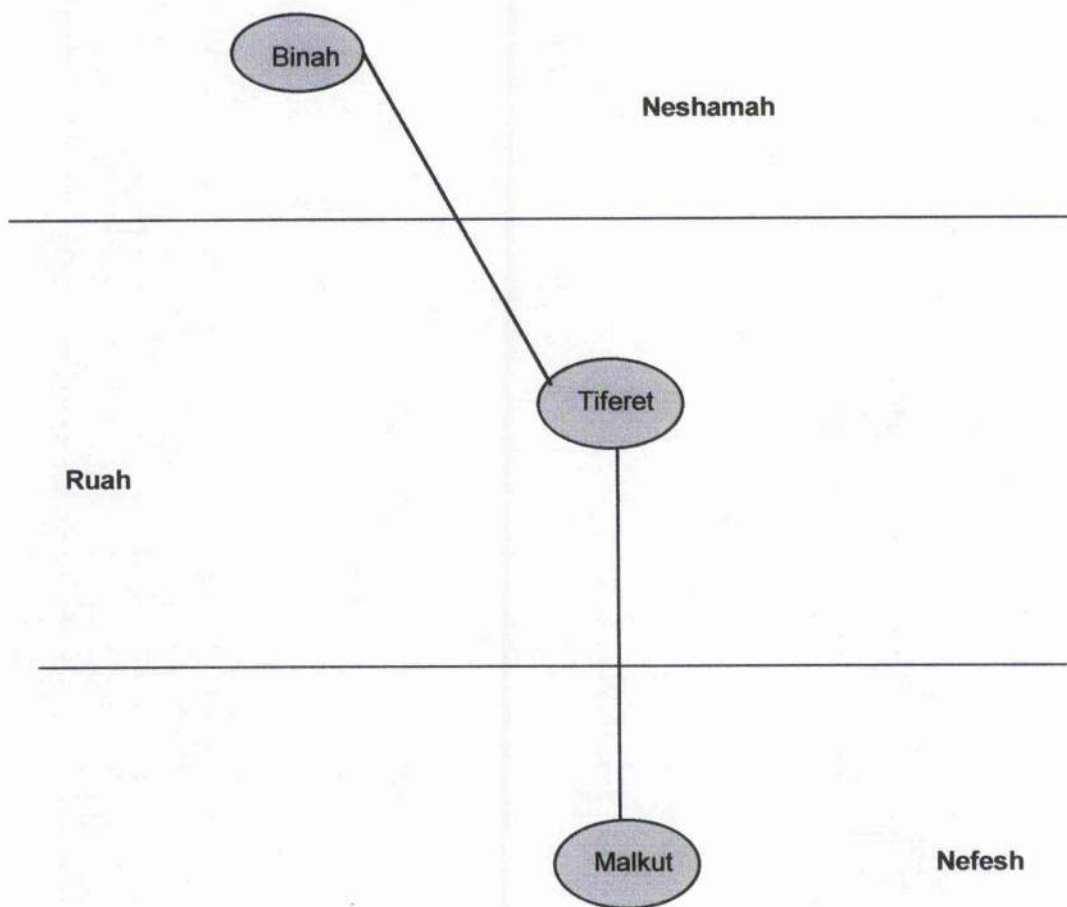
The hierarchy of the three parts of the soul in relation to the *sefirot* *Hesed*, *Gevurah*, and *Tiferet*

Appendix C



Model B1
The hierarchy of the souls in relation to the three worlds

Appendix D



Model B2

The hierarchy of the three parts of the soul
in relation to the three *sefirot*