



***Keter Malkhut* (Kingly Crown) and Ibn Gabirol's philosophical mystique**

Keter Malkhut (Coroa Real) e a mística filosófica de Ibn Gabirol

Cecília Cintra Cavaleiro de Macedo*

Abstract

Ibn Gabirol was a Spanish Jewish poet and philosopher who lived in the 11th century. His rational philosophy, written in Arabic, seems to be completely disconnected with his Hebrew religious poetry, regarded as mystic. Some scholars understand that there's an insurmountable antagonism between mystique and philosophy. Written within the *Kabbalah* formulation period, the poem *Keter Malkhut*, due to the close relation between its content and some philosophical elements used by the author, was frequently interpreted as a mere aesthetic allegory of the metaphysical system developed in his philosophical work *Fons vitae*. This paper aims to offer an introductory reflection on the Jewish mystique and, under its light, analyze the first part of the poem in face of the metaphysical model presented in *Fons vitae*. Through a discussion on language and symbolism, there emerges the idea that both Ibn Gabirol's religious poetry and rational philosophy are different fruits from a single initial intuition, inspired by the millenary mystic speculation on the Throne of Glory (*Merkabah*), but where we can already glimpse certain neo-Platonic elements which will characterize the new *Kabbalah* model.

Key words: Kabbalah. Throne of Glory. Ibn Gabirol. Neo-Platonism. Jewish mystique.

Resumo

Ibn Gabirol foi um poeta e filósofo judeu espanhol que viveu no século XI. Sua filosofia racional, redigida em árabe, parece ser completamente desvinculada de sua poesia religiosa hebraica, considerada mística. Alguns estudiosos entendem que entre mística e filosofia existe um antagonismo insuperável. Redigido no período de formulação da *Kabbalah*, o poema *Keter Malkhut*, pela estreita relação que seu conteúdo mantém com alguns elementos filosóficos usados pelo autor, foi frequentemente interpretado como mera alegoria estética do sistema metafísico desenvolvido em sua obra filosófica *Fons vitae*. Este artigo visa a oferecer uma reflexão introdutória sobre a mística judaica e, à luz desta, analisar a primeira parte do poema diante do modelo metafísico apresentado no *Fons vitae*. A partir de uma discussão sobre linguagem e simbolismo, surge a ideia de que tanto a poesia religiosa quanto a filosofia racional de Ibn Gabirol sejam frutos de uma única intuição inicial, inspirada na especulação mística milenar sobre o Trono da Glória (*Merkabah*), mas nos quais já podemos entrever certos elementos neoplatônicos que caracterizarão o novo modelo da *Kabbalah*.

Palavras-chave: *Kabbalah*. Trono da Glória. Ibn Gabirol. Neoplatonismo. Mística judaica.

Translated text. Original article in Portuguese.

Article received on August 1, 2012, and approved on August 30, 2012.

* PhD degree in Religious Sciences obtained from Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP) (2011). MA degree in Philosophy obtained from Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas (PUC-Campinas) (2006). Graduated in Sociology (1989) and Political Science (1989) from Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP). Adjunct Professor at Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP). Country of origin: Brazil. Email: cavaleirodmacedo@uol.com.br.

Introduction

The Jewish mystique, historically confined to the religious environments and Jewish wise men circles, transcended its borders by taking the form which became known as Kabbalah. An understanding of this transition requires in-depth studies, whose onset took place at the second half of the 19th century and they went on to the present day. The scholars who don't completely agree with regard to the definition of the mystic movement or the timing of its inception, but the fact is that something different was developed during the Middle Ages which led to a mystic format that eventually transcended the sphere of Judaism, influenced Christians to join, during the Renaissance, a kind of speculative syncretic mystique which associated this material developed within Judaism to Christian sources and the Pagan speculation.

This fact leads us to wonder what is so different and attractive in the Kabbalistic model proposed so that it aroused the interest of thinkers from many origins at the same that, within Jewish circles, it turned the mystic speculation, previously restricted to circles of scholars deeply versed in the Scriptures and the rabbinic literature, so popular. In our view, this answer will be found in the early formulation of the very foundations of this mystic aspect, i.e. in the literature corresponding to the period prior to the publication of *Sefer ha-Zohar*, regarded as milestone of the Sephiroth Kabbalah in its fully developed version¹. Unfortunately, this period tends to be poorly studied.

The time of actual construction of the Kabbalah was extended between the publication of *Sefer Yetzirah* and *Sefer ha-Zohar*, and it expands and develops itself more openly and in a more popular way thereafter. The big problem for studying the development of the Kabbalah's ideas within this period lies on the fact that those who dedicated themselves to these mystic speculations remained

¹ In general, it's considered that "the first Kabbalistic text with a known author which came to us is a brief treatise, a comment on *Sefer Yetzirah* written by Rabbi Isaac Ben Abraham, 'The blind man, in Provence', around the turn of the 13th century" (DAN, 2007, p. 27, our translation). This might have been the first author to use the term Kabbalah in the sense it took later on (SCHOLEM, 1994).

restricted to a narrow circle and dissociated from practice and everyday life action (BUBER, 2000). Surely, Kabbalah and Philosophy are different, but ignoring the Jewish neo-Platonic philosophers' production prior to the formulation of Kabbalah as a mystic speculation system seems to be a rather hasty option. Munk (1927) had already raised the issue of Ibn Gabirol's importance in the posterior Kabbalistic thought; Vajda (1950) states that both Ibn Gabirol and Ibn Paqûda² are crucial to the development of that mystic line, precisely through the devotional and ethical dimension and the mystic ardor of their works. And Wach (1951) even mentions the name of Gabirol beside Luria as the great medieval Jewish mystic men.

Obviously, this paper, due to its length, won't engage to deepening this general issue, but it will be restricted to present a text of that period, the poem *Keter Malkhut*, by Schlomo Ibn Gabirol, with a special attention to its first part. It's worth noticing that the very poem's title indicates the relation between its content and the formulation of Kabbalah, since it refers to the names which were assigned to the first and last of the Sephiroth.

The most common and used periodization of Jewish mystique follows the work by Gershom Scholem. Although it presents the term Kabbalah in its most general sense, i.e. of a continuous religious movement within Judaism³, it believes that the medieval formulation has certain characteristics which differ it from the mystic expressions both of the Talmudic Judaism that preceded it and the Hasidism⁴ that followed it:

² The issue of characterizing Ibn Paqûda as a mystic one isn't consensual. Wach (1951), for instance, regards Ibn Gabirol, undoubtedly, as a mystic one, but Ibn Paqûda is classified by this author in the field of fideism.

³ The term Kabbalah itself simply means tradition or reception and it's understood by many as the set of the Jewish esoteric wisdom passed down through the centuries since the Patriarchs. In the strictest sense, it designates the medieval mystic movement. "Kabbalah, one must remember, isn't the name of a certain dogma or system, but rather the general term attributed to an entire religious movement itself. This movement, whose main stages and trends we'll need to get familiarized with, has developed itself since the Talmudic times until the present day, its development was uninterrupted, although by no means uniform, and often dramatic" (SCHOLEM, 1995, p. 20).

⁴ In this case, we're referring to the Polish Hasidism, under the emblematic figure of Baal Shem Tov.

There's little resemblance between the oldest remaining mystic texts, from the Talmudic and post-Talmudic times, the writings of ancient Spanish Kabbalists, those from the school which subsequently flourished in Safed, the holy city of Cabalism in the 16th century and, finally, the Hasidic literature from the modern era. However, it's worth asking if there isn't more than a purely historical connection uniting these *disjecta membra*, something which indicates us in what sense this mystic movement within Judaism differs from non-Jewish mysticism (SCHOLEM, 1995, p. 21).

Scholem, like many other scholars of the theme, appreciates the relation of Kabbalistic thought to the so-called Merkabah mysticism, a visionary model situated by him between the centuries I B.C. and X A.D. and regarded by him as some kind of Jewish Gnosticism, and internally divided into three stages, according to the historical material available:

The anonymous covens of the ancient apocalyptic men; speculation on the Merkabah by the Mishnaic masters whose names have come down to us; and the Merkabah mysticism of the last decades in the Talmudic era and the immediately subsequent step, reflected in the literature we have (SCHOLEM, 1995, p. 45).

Also according to Scholem, the Merkabah mysticism's essence is "the perception of its appearance in the Throne described by Ezekiel and the knowledge of mysteries of the world of heavenly throne" (SCHOLEM, 1995, p. 45); it's characterized by the complete absence of any divine immanence feeling, always enhancing the infinite abyss appearance between the soul and God: "The mystic man who transposed all gates during his ecstasy, defied all dangers, now stands in front of the Throne; he sees and hears – but that's all" (SCHOLEM, 1995, p. 62). The aim of the Merkabah era mystic men was, essentially, achieving an ascent of the soul through the angels and planets spheres and the return to their divine place under God's light, something which would correspond to redemption (SCHOLEM, 1995). Techniques such as physiognomy and palmistry also weren't strange to the Hekhalot mysticism, and they were associated to an early Pythagorean influence

(SCHOLEM, 1994) and to certain neo-Pythagorean and neo-Platonic variants that they used⁵.

Although they're separately presented to us as differential mystic movements (SCHOLEM, 1995; BLUMENTHAL, 1978), the scholars of Jewish mystic thought emphasize the continuity of themes and discussions observed in the Merkabah mysticism. Traditionally, the Jewish mystic disciplines are separated into *Maaseh Bereshit*, or the Creation Work, and *Maaseh Merkabah*, the Car or Throne Work, which, developed together, complement each other, the first consisting in understanding the world and man emergence process and the second in the possible return to soul. Due to these characteristics, the association to certain pagan doctrines and the subsequent penetration of the Platonic and neo-Platonic thought seems natural, and they shared with this thought a world view from procession and return (*proodos/epistrophe*) which greatly influenced the Kabbalistic thought. Perhaps, this relation to the neo-Platonic thought made easier the subsequent appropriation of this material by extra-Jewish currents of thought and the formulation of certain syncretic doctrines in the Renaissance, to which we referred earlier.

This way, the interpretation of *Maaseh Bereshit*, the esoteric doctrine of Creation, was always a major concern of Cabalism. It's here that Cabalism came closest to the neo-Platonic thought, about which one has rightly said that "the progression and reversal constitute together a single process, the diastole-systole, which is the universe's life". This is also exactly the Kabbalists' belief (SCHOLEM, 1995, p. 22).

However, let's try to get a little bit closer to our object, i.e. the poem by Schlomo Ibn Gabirol. The author, immortalized by the Latin Scholastic, under the Latinized nickname Avicebron or Avencebrol, was a Spanish Jewish philosopher and poet in the 11th century. Born in 1020 or 1021, according to what is currently known, he hasn't lived more than forty years. Little is known about the last period

⁵ Jamblico (2003, p. 65) reports that Pythagoras, when choosing the disciples, "also examined their figure and their walk and every movement of their body, and performed a physiognomic examination, analyzing their natural traits, since he regarded them as evidence revealing the hidden character of their soul".

of his life, and 1058 is the probable year of his death. Ibn Gabirol is the author of a metaphysics work written in Arabic, as well as texts on ethics and, also, a vast poetic work in Hebrew. With his expulsion from the Jewish community of Zaragoza, the two facets of his work were separated. For Judaism, Ben Gabirol might have been only a religious poet, although among the greatest ones, if not the most ardent of his time. His poetry has been incorporated into the Sephardic liturgical service due to its beauty, quality, and religious fervor, and there's virtually no Jewish festival without remembrance of passages written by him. In contrast, his philosophy, rejected by his supporters, was translated into Latin under the title *Fons vitae* and thoroughly debated by the Christian scholastics in the 13th century, who, in most cases, didn't have much clarity with regard to the author's actual religious origin, who was hidden under the Latinized nickname *Avicebron* or *Avencebro*⁶.

In face of this seemingly disconnected production, we must ask who this author was, indeed, and how we can classify him. Was he a philosopher who wrote religious poetry or a mystic man who studied philosophy? And this leads to another related question: were these facets necessarily conflicting?

Many scholars would say yes. Some, such as Graetz (1949), argue that the Kabbalah emerged as a reaction to philosophical thought. Blumenthal (1978) separates the purely mystic or Kabbalistic tradition (Zoharica-Lurianic) from the mystic-philosophical production, each in one out of the two volumes of his work. However, within the latter tradition, he takes into account only what he names Maimonidean paradigm, the Yemenite production and the Abulafia's outcomes. Therefore, there's a need to pay attention to the fact that, by referring to philosophical thought, the scholars point more specifically at the Aristotelian-rationalist tradition, represented by Maimonides and his followers, instead of the neo-Platonism dominant in the 11th and 12th centuries. If we thought in situating Gabirol's religious poetry through these categories, we would tend to despise his

⁶ This text survived only through the Latin translation, *Fons vitae*, and a summary in Hebrew, organized by Shem Tov Falaqera. The original text in Arabic has been lost and, as far as one knows, there has never been a full translation into Hebrew.

philosophical production and situate him close to the block he names the Merkabah tradition, where one also finds the *Sefer Yetzirah*. Scholem also sees an antagonism between the philosopher and the Kabbalist. Despite the common goal between the Kabbalist and the philosopher, i.e. discovering the universe's truths,

the philosopher can only fulfill his specific task after having, successfully, converted the *concrete realities* of Judaism into a bundle of *abstractions*. The individual phenomenon, for him, is never the object of his philosophical speculation. Conversely, the mystic man avoids destroying the vivid texture of the religious narration, by allegorizing it, although the allegory plays an important role in the writings of many of the great Kabbalists. His essential thinking way is what I'd like to name *symbolic* in the strictest sense (SCHOLEM, 1995, p. 28).

1 Reality, abstraction, allegory, and symbolism

It's precisely in the relation between these elements surveyed by Scholem – concrete reality, abstraction, allegory, and symbolism – that we can understand the development of Ibn Gabirol's thought. If we observe only the formal level, i.e. the language level, we'll understand that it's not surprising that the author's identity has been lost over history. The styles used by the author in philosophy and poetry are so radically different that it costs us too much, at first glance, to associate the contents of these different facets. In his major work, *Yanbu' al-Hayat*, or *The fountain of life*, Gabirol dedicates himself to three issues: God; the created world, consisting of matter and shape, or everything which isn't God; and, finally, what's intermediate between them, the Will which makes the creation possible. In this volume, the author focuses more on the issue of the created world composition. It's believed that he has written one or two additional volumes, in which he devoted himself to other issues, but, unfortunately, these, if they were actually published, didn't went through the fires of Middle Ages unharmed. His only surviving work is arranged in the shape of dialogue and the language used is strictly philosophical and rational, according to the rules of that time, and we can say that he exaggerates in the logical rigor. There isn't a single religious allusion indicating the author's confession. At that time and, especially, within the Jewish thought, it was unusual,

if not unprecedented, that an author didn't use any quotes or biblical references or deriving from the *Talmud*⁷ to support his thesis. His utmost sources are the Greek philosophers, from whom he specifically quotes Plato, borrowing elements from the Islamic through the Arabic translations from that time and the Islamic philosophical production itself. His philosophy follows the Neo-Platonic emanations model adapted to the Abrahamic creationism, presented in a language with strong Aristotelian points. Thus, with regard to philosophy, the author is classified within the movement which constitutes the *Falsafa*. Along with the Islamic thinkers, such as Al-Farabi, Avicena, and Al-Kirmani, and their supporters, such as Isaac Israeli, he dedicates himself to create his philosophy through the composition between Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Abrahamic creationism.

On the other hand, his religious poetry, written in Hebrew, may be regarded as a true exegesis arranged in verse. As in a mosaic of biblical passages, Ibn Gabirol delicately weaves his worldview and his mystic speculations. In his poetry, besides the strong presence of the esoteric interpretation of creation and the Scriptures⁸, we notice the huge strength of the Merkabah⁹ images symbolism. But these images aren't displayed exactly as they're drawn in Ezekiel's book. They're expressed through a presence of the immanence of God's Glory (*Kavod*¹⁰), as it appears in the prophet Isaiah's vision and how it's incorporated by the subsequent Kabbalists (associated to the *Shekinah*). Isaiah's influence is also noticeable in angelology, especially through the constant mention of Seraphs. According to our view, this composition not only follows the frequent custom of large medieval *paytanim* as perfectly suited to the Neo-Platonic emanations system. These emanations are presented in successive levels, creating different worlds, following, once more in accordance with the esoteric reading, the indications which can be extracted from

⁷ Lomba Fuentes (apud IBN GABIROL, 1990, p. 26) shows this peculiarity in comparison to his predecessor Saadia Gaon, who often uses these allusions.

⁸ Heavily influenced by *Sefer Yetzirah*, but they certainly gathered other Jewish elements and traditions, such as the *Book of Enoch*, and others to which we have no access anymore or, perhaps, might never have transcended the oral tradition.

⁹ On the theme see our papers *Merkabah e Kabbalah na poesia mística* (IBN GABIROL, 2006) and *A imagem do trono em Ibn Gabirol e a mística da Merkabah* (IBN GABIROL, 2012).

¹⁰ In the symbolism of *Hekhalot*, "*Kavod* refers to the terrible heavenly hierarchy, the car-Throne structure and the enthroned God's image, as well as the fixed relations between the heavenly hierarchy which is observable and definable" (ELIOR, 1989, p. 101, our translation).

Isaiah 43, reinforced by *Sefer Yetzirah* itself, and also expressed by the Kabbalists as the four worlds: *Aziluth*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyjah*.

Discussing whether his metaphysical work, the *Fons vitae*, is a “mystic philosophy” or whether his religious poetry, especially the *Keter Malkhut*, is a “philosophical mystique” doesn't matter, since it adds nothing to us, and it doesn't lead to an understanding of the author's thought. They're parallel literary productions which develop in this universe using different languages to refer to the reality that isn't necessarily closed in the concrete, but it has a portion of what is beyond language and, therefore, it's accessible only through the symbol, it's understood in the sense described by Scholem (1995, p. 28-29):

If we can define the allegories as the representation of something expressible through another expressible thing, the mystic symbol is an expressible representation of something which is beyond the realm of communication and expression, something which comes from a sphere whose face, so to speak, is turned inward and away from us. A hidden and inexpressible reality finds its expression in the symbol.

Thus, we understand that both the images used in poetry and the abstract concepts which make up his philosophy, according to Gabirol, are symbols which, although not strictly representative of everything he wants to communicate, indicate somehow an underlying hidden reality. According to Bergson (1978, p. 197), “what the mystic man finds before him is a humanity which was prepared to hear him through other mystic men, invisible and observed in the religion he teaches”. When talking to his own supporters, Ibn Gabirol used not only the Hebrew language, but, also, the set of traditional images found in the Jewish millennial reservoir. He modeled his new composition through the figures which sounded old and familiar to the ears of his community, since “mankind doesn't actually understand a novelty, except when it immediately follows the previous thing” (BERGSON, 1978, p. 196). What's presented, here, is a single mystic intuition leading Ibn Gabirol to express his original thought itself in two different

languages (logical/rational and image-driven/religious), in order to adapt his message to two distinct publics (half philosophical/Islamic and half religious/Jewish), which were separated by the preparation which they had to receive this message; thus, it's directly reflected on the presentation form of that content.

This way, the author's characterization as a mystic man seems undeniable and extremely accurate to us, from any angle it's looked at, both through the neo-Platonic heritage and the theme and symbolic presentation of the contents of his poetry. If "a mystic is a man who was favored by an immediate experience and, for him, real, of the divine, the utmost reality, or that which at least strives to achieve such an experience" (SCHOLEM, 2002, p. 12), there's no reason to doubt that Ibn Gabirol is a mystic man. As already mentioned, according to Wach, if there're two names within the Jewish thought which may be regarded as the great mystic men within the period, they're Schlomo Ibn Gabirol and Isaac Luria¹¹.

2 Keter Malkhut: the meeting between metaphysics and mystique

The composition between the biblical material and philosophy, concentrated as a common reservoir of mankind experiences, is delicately arranged into the poetic form by Ibn Gabirol's art mastery and it may be enjoyed through his longest poem: *Keter Malkhut*. The relation that this poem has to his philosophy is especially remarkable throughout its 40 songs and 640 lines and it has been widely pointed out by scholars. This led many to understand there's a dependence of his poetry with regard to his metaphysical work, using the poem *Keter Malkhut* to illustrate this idea. From this viewpoint, the poem would be a mere illustration of his philosophical thought. However, because of its importance and length, the poem deserves a more accurate attention. Dujovne (1961, p. 23, our translation)

¹¹ Wach states that, during the medieval period, there were three distinct trends with regard to the issue of Greek philosophy appropriation and its connection to the religious contents, namely: naturalist, fideistic, and mystic. The one he names "third school" includes those who, by themselves or influenced by others, propose to deepen the traditional religion and philosophy according to mystic lines (WACH, 1951, p. 79, our translation).

states that “if we want to discover the thought behind this poetic work, we could say that it’s the same which penetrates and inspires *The fountain of life*”. Following what has been expressed above, we understand that, for Ibn Gabirol, both poetry and philosophy are symbolic languages to indicate an inexpressible reality inspired by the *Merkabah* mystic tradition, but already transformed towards the Kabbalah model.

In the “Kingly Crown”, as the title was preferentially translated, Ibn Gabirol talks of God’s unit and other attributes, the wonders of creation and, finally, his personal humility and submission relation to the Highest one.

The “Kingly Crown” has a wider dimension, where the believer can express his religious adventure through the general knowledge of God the Creator in his works until his most personal and direct relation to the God of history and of his own life (SAENZ-BADILLOS, 1992, p. 102, our translation).

Gabirol collects in *Keter Malkhut* a prayer of the *Yom Kippur* liturgy, but he turns “*Anahnu*” (we – which originally referred to the Israel’s people) into “*Ani*” (I). The use of the first person is one of Gabirol’s peculiarities, a fact which wasn’t usual among the poets of his time. “In the following paragraphs he also speaks in the first person singular, about his troubles, the fight against instincts, and his smallness” (PAGIS apud IBN GABIROL, 1978, p. LIV, our translation). By turning lamentation and praise into something of himself, internal and personal, instead of restricting the influence sphere of his ideas, he causes the opposite: increases its size and turns the need of his individual soul into a reflection of the universal human need, regardless of origin or religious affiliation. Thus, he transcends the political, cultural, and religious barriers, addressing a crucial longing of the human condition. This way, similarly to what occurs with many other mystic men, his appeal is universal *because* it’s individual; he speaks of himself, not as a member of a people or religious community, but as a member of a higher universality: mankind.

According to Sáenz-Badillos (1992, p. 101, our translation), this poem “doesn’t have much in common with the kind of poems having a sacred theme usual in the East and in the Sefarad itself”. Millás Vallicrosa (1948) points out that, in the development of Hebrew poetry, within this period, the *piyutim* started presenting a freer character, more personal and poetic, and that might have been the consequence of some influence from the lyrical Christian schools. Whether Christian or Muslim influences, the coexistence with other communities played an important role in the changes which took place and we believe that, particularly in Ibn Gabirol, this was also due, on the one hand, to the relation to the author’s own philosophy and, on the other hand, to changes which started occurring within the Jewish mystique towards Kabbalah. It’s worth noticing that, although we can highlight these points as two distinct sides, they’re closely related, since, as already mentioned, the Kabbalah model has a deep relation to the Neo-Platonic emanations model.

For analytical purposes, the poem is usually divided into two major blocks: the first reveals a character which we could name laudatory, as it’s a worship and praise of the wonders of creation, and the second has a penitential nature, by confessing its smallness and supplicating for the divine aid. The first part of the poem, which opens with stanzas beginning with “To Thee”¹² and “Thou” is considerably different from the second, which is characterized by a sequence of stanzas, almost all beginning with “My God”. Chouraqui (1956) states that there’re three parts making up the poem: the first part is devoted to God and his attributes; the second to creation, through the will emanating from God; and the third consists in supplication.

Ibn Gabirol opens the poem with a brief introduction, where he explains his purpose, common to many medieval poets:

¹² “To thee” is used in the Spanish translations, both that by Millás and by Dujovne. The English translation by Lewis uses “Thine”.

That man can benefit from my prayer.
 With it he'll learn righteousness and purity,
 In it I tell the wonders of the living God,
 Briefly, without delay,
 I put it on top of my praise,
 And gave it the name of Kingly Crown.
 (Sta 1,2)

Then, the poem's text itself begins, with the laudatory part, listing God's attributes. But, instead of starting directly with their enumeration, the first line refers to the works, from which, in accordance with his philosophy exposed in *Fons vitae*, he draws the only possible pathway to Divinity. So, he tell us: "Wonderful are your works and my soul knows it well!", in an allusion to Psalms (139,14). Subsequently, he starts listing the major attributes, such as Greatness, Power, Magnificence, Victory, Splendor, and other ones:

To thee, O Lord, Greatness, Strength, Magnificence, Splendor, and Majesty
 To thee, O Lord, Royalty, Supremacy over all heights, Plenitude, and Glory¹³
 To thee the upper and lower creatures witness shall perish, and
 Thou shall endure.
 (Ps 102,27)

One should notice that several out of these will be names assigned to the *Sephiroth*.

From the second song on, he starts listing the attributes as adjectives or God's names; Unit is the first attribute separately sung. One notices he reinforces that Creation isn't due to overabundance, i.e. he radically departs from the traditional Neo-Platonic emanationist necessitarianism, something which undoes the pantheistic image that some early commentators tried to impute him:

¹³ We may compare this passage to the biblical text of Chronicles (29,10-12), where we read: "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee".

Thou art one and your unit doesn't decrease or increase
 Thou art not deficient or overabundant.
 Thou art one, not as a created unit or a numerical unity
 Because multiplicity or change doesn't reach thee, neither shape nor
 quality.

Here, we have the poetic expression of a concern which is also found in the *Fons vitae*, by differing the One itself, or perfect unity, i.e. God or First Essence, from the created unit, the Will:

Since this unit was created by the first, true unity, which has neither beginning nor end, nor change, nor diversity, it was needed that the unit created by her had a beginning and an end and that it led to change and diversity, becoming unlike the perfect unit which created it (*Fons vitae*, II, 20).

And, in turn, he also distinguishes the created unit (Will) from the numerical unit number (Shape): “As the first unit is the true unit which acts by itself, there's a need for a unit that follows it, and this is the origin of the numerator numbers” (*Fons Vitae*, IV, 13).

In the third song he refers to God as Existence, though to His existence one doesn't apply “neither how, nor where or why” – i.e. there's, here, an allusion to the four questions (*an est, quid est, qualis est, and quare est*) whose answers, in *Fons vitae*, make up the definition. God is, therefore, undefinable, according to the criteria applied to the created world. His existence precedes creation, as well as the establishment of time and space; thus, Ibn Gabirol states: “Before there was time thou were already time, and having no place, thou dwelt”.

In the fourth song he describes God as Living, but “neither since a given time, nor from a known time”. In the fifth song the author refers to Him as Great, in face of whose greatness “all other greatness is humiliated and all excellence annihilated”.

In the sixth song he praises the attribute of Strength. God is strong, but having an unparalleled strength and above change or transformation.

In the seventh song, the praised attribute is the Highest and Eternal Light, “veiled in this world and manifested in the upper world”, by which human intelligence is distressed, but it can't be reached.

The eighth song is dedicated to the attribute of Deity, “God of gods, and Lord of lords, Sovereign between the heavenly and earthly beings”. The song ends with the completion of the indissoluble unity of his attributes:

Thou art God and there's no distinction between thy divinity and thy unit,
Between thy life and thy eternity.
Because all this is an only mystery,
And even if the names and places of each vary,
“All go unto one place”.

(Ecl 3,20)

In the last song of this sequence he reaches Wisdom. In this ninth song of his poem he utters the image used as title for his philosophy; thus, God's Wisdom is, according to Ibn Gabirol, the true Fountain of Life, where everything already existed before being created by the Will: “Thou art wise and thy wisdom is the Fountain of Life which emanates from Thee”. In this section we notice that, here, one presents an explanation that we lacked in his metaphysics exposed in rational terms. In *Fons vitae*, Wisdom, somehow, seems to be confused, sometimes, with God's Will. Here, we realize that Wisdom, despite being the Fountain from which everything comes to be, because it contains everything before creation, is distinct from Will. Although the allusion “emanating from Thee”, there's nothing neither in the poem, nor in philosophy, indicating it's something like a separate hypostasis; it seems to be inherent to God and coeternal, like its attributes described above in its unity, even playing a distinctive role with regard to Creation. In turn, Will is a differential power, emanating precisely from Wisdom. Will is presented in the poem not as an attribute itself, but as a creative power derived from the preexisting

Wisdom in God. Thus, he refers again to Will in this song, describing the beginning of Creation, once again reaffirming his belief in *ex nihilo* creation:

Thou art wise and from thy wisdom emanated the determined Will,
 As a craftsman and architect.
 In order to extract being from nothing, as the light which comes from the
 eye.
 And he extracted Light from the Fountain, without instruments,
 And he did all things without tools;
 He drew, carved, purified, and perfected.
 He called nothing and this was split;
 And the being affirmed itself and the world expanded itself.
 He meted out heaven with the span (Isa 40,12),
 And with his hand he gathered the abode of the heavenly spheres.
 And with power ties he knotted the creation curtains
 And his strength reaches up to the limit of the most humble and last
 creature,
 “the uttermost edge of the curtain in the coupling” (Ex 36,17).

After presenting those who, according to his doctrine, are the main attributes of God (Unity, Existence, Life, Greatness, Power, Light, Deity, and Wisdom) reveals his creation image, i.e. that from God’s Wisdom came the Will which extracted the Light, led the nothing to cleave, created, carved, and shaped the world, from the skies, the heavenly spheres up to the smallest of creatures. Then, he goes on to a part of the poem where he sings the wonders and marvels of God’s works. In this part, the first excerpt, which specifically goes from song X to song XXII, describes the heavenly riches, coming closer to an Astronomy treatise than to a religious poem itself.

He opens the tenth Song by referring to the elements Earth, Water, Air, and Fire. “Who will tell thy accomplishments? Thou divided the globe: one half, aridity, the other waters”. Created as the two halves of the globe, land and water were circumscribed by two spheres: one dominated by Air and another by Fire (which goes beyond the air). According to Ibn Gabirol, “these four elements have only one foundation, one origin / From it, they go out and renew themselves and split up

into four”¹⁴. This may be understood as a reference to the universal matter, as well as a specific type of matter – a sensitive and bodily matter – which even the stars share. Regardless of the philosophical foundation, we read in *Sefer Yetzirah* the following passages which may be enlightening to analyze this excerpt (from song X to XXII):

The twenty two letters are the foundation of three basic, seven double, and twelve elementary ones. The three basic ones, *Alef*, *Mem*, and *Shin* are a big, hidden, mystic, and exalted secret, out of which emanate the fire, wind, and water from which everything was created (SEFER YETZIRAH, 2001, p. 304).

The three basic ones are fire, water, and wind. The heaven's offspring is fire, the air's offspring is breath, and the land's offspring is water. Fire is above, water is below, and breath is the decree deciding between them (SEFER YETZIRAH, 2001, p. 305).

From the eleventh to the twenty second song, he goes on with the heavenly spheres structure which moves beyond the realm of fire, according to the basic model adopted at the time: this is the place of planets and stars¹⁵. Meanwhile, after describing the three basic letters, *Sefer Yetzirah* describes the functions of the seven double and the twelve elementary ones. The seven pairs are associated to seven astronomical objects: *Bet* to Saturn; *Guímel* to Jupiter; *Dalet* to Mars; *Caf* to Sun; *Pê* to Venus; *Resh* to Mercury; and *Tav* to Moon. Among this cast of the planets and the twelve elementary ones there's the following observation: “He separated the witnesses and put them alone, one by one: the Universe alone, the Year alone, and the Soul alone” (SEFER YETZIRAH, 2001, p. 307). Then, he presents the twelve elementary ones which are associated to the constellations: *Hê* to Aries; *Vav* to Taurus; *Zayin* to Gemini; *Chet* to Cancer; *Tet* to Leo; *Yud* to Virgo; *Lamed* to Libra; *Nun* to Scorpio; *Samech* to Sagittarius; *Ayn* to Capricorn; *Tsade* to Aquarius; and *Kuf* to Pisces, associating to each letter one day in the week, one month in the year, an organ in the body, the characteristics and blessings and curses associated to each planet. Ibn Gabirol also describes each of the spheres

¹⁴ Allusion to Genesis (2,10): A river went out of Eden to water the garden and there it was split, making up four arms.

¹⁵ Ibn Gabirol adopts the spheres model in which the Earth is located at the center, surrounded by the spheres of air and fire, the spheres of the planets, the stars and, finally, the intellect.

pointing the physical characteristics ascribed to them at the time, the revolution period and the supposed astronomical objects dimension, as well as the influence they exert on Earth and on the socio-psychological traits found in the human world¹⁶.

The first sphere is described by the author as “the sky’s sphere, where lies the Moon which shines through sunlight and resplends”. Ibn Gabirol insists that the movement of astronomical objects is due to God’s will, they aren’t movable by themselves, an idea which he has also defended in the text of *Fons vitae*. Thus, the Moon traces its itinerary through the skies “by the Creator’s will, to proclaim Thy powers to men”. Even its cycle, which conceals for some time (the New Moon) has a purpose. This occurs “so that all peoples on Earth know that even on the heavenly creatures there’s a judge who abashes and encourages them”. At the time of their conjunction, it’s what obscures Sunlight, which also has this purpose:

They recognize that Lord’s hand accomplishes this marvel
And the Sun has no power at all;
He is the one who obscures sunlight, and the power is just His.
He sends the Sun as one of his servants, bringer of his graces.
Obscuring its light, destroys its idolatrous worship and withdraws his kingdom.

The second sphere is that of Mercury, which raises quarrels and discord in the world, but it’s also, according to the author, the intelligence and wisdom star. Besides, it acts in accordance with God’s Will, “under the orders of the One who created it for his service as a servant in front of his Lord”. Then, he describes the sphere of Venus, which goes through the skies “as a queen among her followers and as a bride adorned with her galas”. The fourth sphere is where the Sun lies, “it radiates its light to all stars in the sky and pours victory, majesty, royalty, and glory”. It also follow God’s Will, since “every day it prostrates himself in front of his king, stopping in the middle of his route”.

¹⁶ This presentation of the astronomical objects with their characteristics and influences on the human realm is also in his ethical work *Tikkun Midot ha-nefesh*. See Ibn Gabirol (1990).

The fifth sphere is chaired by the planet Mars, “like a king in his palace”. Planet of the wars, wounds, fighting, famines, and bloodshed, “[its] feet run to evil, and [its] makes haste to shed innocent blood” (Is 59,7).

The sixth ball is abode of the planet Jupiter. In its immensity, it's associated to justice: “It stopped the struggles, appeases hatred and grudges [...] Its role in the world is restorative ‘because he judges the world with righteousness’” (Ps 98,9).

In the seventh sphere Saturn shines, the planet of misfortunes and prisons, but all its action is in accordance with the Will of the One “who created it serve Him; strange is his work” (Is 28,21). This was the last planet known at the time, since they only consisted of those visible to the naked eye.

The trans-Saturnian planets, unknown at the time, are lost in the eighth sphere, among the Zodiac stars, fixed, but not that fixed¹⁷, since the next sphere makes them move. The mobility of stars should be part of the author's conviction, expressed in *Fons vitae*, that an intermediary can't transmit to something subsequent an attribute that it doesn't have, or a property which isn't, somehow, similar. Thus, motion must be passed on from the first creation to the smallness creature in an unbroken chain.

The eighth sphere “holds the twelve constellations over a harmonious line”. Ibn Gabirol, here, accepts the astrological principles of his time, not only echoing what he might have stated in his ethical work, but also deepening and increasing their commitment to astrology. According to the poem,

these constellations emanate the strength of all inferior creatures, according to the species, by the will of the Creator who formed them. And created each of them in accordance with its particular disposition and, with its name, called each one arranged by its work and burden (Nm 4,49).

¹⁷ See *Keter Malkhut*, songs XXI and XXII.

He lists, here, the zodiac signs, calling them “princes” and naming the constellations as the “twelve palaces” with regard to the seven planets. One needs to observe that in *Sefer Yetzirah* to each of the letters associated to planets and constellations a crown is given, since He led them to “rule” (SEFER YETZIRAH, 2001, p. 308).

Ibn Gabirol’s spheres model is also crowned by two other, appearing as constituent parts of his metaphysical thought: the ninth sphere, which circumscribes all spheres and their creatures. “It leads all stars and orbs of the skies, from East to West, in the pace of their march”. It goes through its way in a single day, lying in the West. All creatures are infinitely small when compared to it, “like a mustard seed”. Still, “it and all its greatness, in turn, seems nothing in front of the sublimity of its king and creator: all its highness and greatness seems nothing before Him” (Is 40,17).

Beyond the ninth sphere, which closes in itself, moves, and contains all the previous spheres, Ibn Gabirol presents a tenth sphere, the Intelligence sphere, which is also understood as the *place* of the Throne of Glory: “This sphere lies high over all heights, and thought can’t reach it. There lies the secret place of the Throne of Thy Glory. “It’s difficult to understand the idea of *place*, here, according to Ibn Gabirol, since in the subsequent songs he’ll claim that the Throne is above the Intelligence sphere. We believe that, here, he refers to the issue of subsistence, where the Intelligence sphere is somehow “matter” to the Throne of Glory, as explained in *Fons vitae*: “It’s said that matter is the place of shape, through understanding, i.e. which supports it and is supported by it” (IBN GABIROL, 1895, V, 31, our translation). Or, also:

Therefore, it’s needed that a kind of these substances is a place to the others, since it supports them. And when thou want to imagine the existence of a simple substance in another simple substance and how one is the place of the other, imagine the existence of colors and figures on surfaces, the existence of surfaces on the bodies, and what is even more subtle, the existence of simple accidents in simple substances, such as the accidents which subsist in the soul, because the soul is their place; and

thou must do so in accordance with the principle we've already established, i.e. that the manifested things are the image of hidden things and, according to this principle, the lower manifested place must be the image of upper secret place and, in the same way, things in the middle between the extremes. But this will become much clearer when we address the simple substances (IBN GABIROL, 1895, II, 15).

From the tenth sphere, that of the Intellect, come the eminent souls and spirits. However, it isn't to the human souls that he refers. He uses the terms souls and spirits to refer to the highest angels: "They're the angels of thy Will, the ministers of thy face". Ibn Gabirol describes, here, the Seraphs, the highest servants of God, with their flaming swords¹⁸: "They're the masters of strength and the powers of Kingdom / In their hands is 'the vibrant sword's flame'" (Gen 3,24) [...] "Burning Seraphs, some are embers, some are rays, or sparks / And all legions prostrate themselves in front of the One who rides the skies".

However, even if they're the highest creatures, directly proceeding from the tenth sphere, the Seraphs are still located in the world / place of the Throne of Glory, something which is perfectly consistent with the rest of his poetry¹⁹. The Throne of Glory itself is elevated above the Intellect sphere, and God is even higher:

Who will reach thy mansion?
Thou lifted up above the intellect sphere the Throne of Glory,
Where is the abode of secret and Majesty
Mystery and foundation.
Until then, it reaches the spirit and stops.
But thou hast lifted up thyself upon the Throne of Thy power,
And "no man shall come up with Thee" (Ex 34,4).

Interpreting this sequence from a religious perspective, we notice that even the Seraphs are unable to directly contemplate God's face and, therefore, they should be located at the level of the Throne. By understanding how beings are created, according to the metaphysical model expressed in Ibn Gabirol's *Fons vitae*, these should be far below God – and without keeping resemblance to Him – like

¹⁸ What may indicate that, according to Ibn Gabirol, the term Cherubim, in the Bible, is understood as a generic name for the angels, or also that the Seraphs of Isaiah are the same creatures that the cherubs in Genesis, philosophically explained by Philo of Alexandria.

¹⁹ Ibn Gabirol wrote other poems addressing the theme of the Throne.

fruits of the Creative Will. Thus, even the Seraphs, beings from the highest order, are created in the same way and, as they're situated in the Intellect sphere, should also consist of Matter and Shape.

Let's notice that, here, in *Keter Malkhut*, the image which accompanied the Jewish mystique throughout its history, the Throne of Glory, appears with all its strength and details, incorporating into Ezekiel's vision of the Throne the Isaiah's Seraphs. Although it can't be regarded as privileged by the author in his philosophy, since it's invoked only once at the end of *Fons vitae*, this image is, undoubtedly, a mediating key between the author's philosophical thought and poetic production: "That's why it's said that matter is like the One's throne and that the Will which provides it with shape is sitting on it and rests on it" (IBN GABIROL, 1895, V, 42, our translation)²⁰.

This image is reflecting the author's original inspiration for his entire literary work, albeit in *Fons vitae* he has used the philosophical and rational language which, seemingly, has no relation to the mystic Jewish religion. The Throne of Ezekiel and Isaiah, perpetual target of the mystic search of the Jewish visionaries of *Merkabah*, is the highest point that man can reach. According to Gabirol, the Throne is the foremost universal matter, matter of intelligence, where the fully purified and developed man can contemplate the figure who is seated on it: the Creator (the Will). Ibn Gabirol provides here the actual meaning of anthropomorphism in the biblical language, and with the equivalence established between the image of the Throne of Glory and his rational metaphysics, opens to us the possibility that the conceptual language used in his philosophical work also isn't a truth, but other way for getting closer to transcendent and indescribable realities. Since we can't believe that Ibn Gabirol *saw* the Will sitting on a throne of matter to rest, we can't also believe that, literally, the Prophets and mystic men *saw* the images exactly as described – something which would make them close to a

²⁰ According to Schlanger (apud IBN GABIROL, *La Source de la Vie*, p. 319, nota 1), this idea is observed in *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 3. It's also interesting to compare it to "The sixth word is the Throne of Glory – crowned, glorified, and blessed – the House (*bait*) of Future World and its place is in *hokhmah*, wisdom, such as it's written in Genesis (1.3): 'and God said: "Let there be light", and there was light"' (SEFER HA-BAHIR, 1992, p. CXLVI, our translation).

concrete reality as we understand it in the sensible world. Both of them would constitute approaches to the ineffable, indescribable, but able to be experienced. So are many others which the author uses: *Light, Word, Wisdom, Fountain* and how many we want to list from God's Names and Attributes, as well as Gabirol's philosophical terms, the Aristotelian concepts and categories, also extended by the Jewish man to the intelligible: *matter, shape, substance, place, duration*.

After reaching in *Keter Malkhut* the culminating point of his speculation, beyond which nothing else is understandable, he starts the mystic descent into religious language, but he also maintains the resemblance to the above mentioned in *Fons vitae*. Just below the Throne is the place reserved by God for pure souls and Saints' souls, comprised by Eternal Life. This is the real world to come, the promised happiness in which the servants eternally rest in peace:

The abodes and visions of blissful souls,
They gaze through the female guardians' mirrors,
To see Lord's face and to be seen by him (Ex 38,8).
Inhabiting the King's palaces and sitting at the King's table.
Rejoicing with the sweetness of the Intelligence fruit,
Which will provide the King with delight.
It's peace and inheritance, kindness, and endless beauty;
And "it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it" (Num 13,27).

Then, it addresses the human soul, "formed from the intellect fire". Once more, we see, here, the idea, parallel to that exposed in *Fons vitae*, that from Intelligence – first simple substance – comes out, without any loss, the soul. He describes the soul creation as: "Through the splendor of thy Glory, thou created a flash of light on the rock-hewn, extracted from the purity mine" (Is 51,1). "Thou sent it to the body in order to serve this and save this. The soul is within the body like a fire which doesn't consume it". Thus, "the body is created through the soul's fire, from nothing by being manifest, because The Lord descended upon it in fire" (Ex 19,18). The soul (rational) has, granted by God, as a property inherent to it, the faculty of knowledge, and this is the source of its glory. Due to this characteristic

the soul won't perish: the pure soul will obtain mercy and "the intelligent soul won't see death, but, because of its sin, it'll receive a sentence bitterer than death". The soul should guide the body, provide it with life, teach it, and save it from evil. Knowledge through the rational soul distinguishes man from animals. The senses make man realize the wonders of God and reason makes him understand them, and all this exists so that man can sing his praises:

Who will know the mystery of your works?
 Thou created the body which corresponds to the needs of thy creatures.
 With eyes one can behold the signs
 And with the ears one can hear thy wondrous
 Thou gave him reason to understand thy mysteries
 And the mouth to sing thy praises;
 And a tongue to utter thy power to those which are to come.
 (IBN GABIROL, *Keter Malkhut*, XXXII).

It's in this same song, determined by the number XXXII, which occurs the transformation of the poem, ending the first part. It's the time when Ibn Gabirol departs from his praise to the wonders of creation and he begins his personal lament. In first person, he intones his misery in front of the marvels of his Creator. It's worth noticing that he describes the Creation up the song number 32, faithfully following what is established in *Sefer Yetzirah*: "With thirty two mystic pathways of Wisdom, recorded..." (SEFER YETZIRAH, 2001, I, 1) Gabirol repeats the idea, adapting it to "Behold: these are some of your pathways, which will be the culmination. In the life through which people meet, they'll be able to recognize Thee".

At the end of his 32 pathways, Ibn Gabirol stops describing the wonders of God and starts talking of his misery, his impotence and weakness, at the same time he puts himself at the service of his God. And, from the song XXXIII on, he opens his lines with "my God". After the climb to the highest degree which man can find – the Throne of Glory –, Ibn Gabirol is in the closest place one can get to God, i.e. the "face" of God. And he sings this way:

I'm confused and ashamed for standing in front of Thy face, because I know
 That like the magnitude of Thy greatness, so it's my lowness and misery.
 And that the weakness of my strength is in accordance with the strength of Thy Power.
 And that according to Thy Perfection is the deficiency of my knowledge.
 Since Thou art One, Thou art Alive; Thou art Strong; Thou art Eternal;
 Thou art Infinite Thou art wise, Thou art God;
 And I... I'm earth and worms, dust from the earth, dumb stone, a glass full of corruption,
 Ephemeral shadow, "a wind which goes forward and doesn't go back" (Ps 78,39)
 Snake venom.

(IBN GABIROL, *Keter Malkhut*, XXXIII).

We realize that, here, Ibn Gabirol mentions again the seven attributes which he sung in the first nine songs of the poem. In this part, it becomes clearer how these attributes are combined to the qualities he uttered in the first song, since, here, they make up ten with the only three mentioned before: Greatness, Power, and Perfection. After the 32 pathways expressed in *Sefer Yetzirah*, Ibn Gabirol uses this repetition as a new invocation, since this is a new beginning.

Through this bridge built by the image of the Throne of Glory, we infer that the creation structure presented in *Fons vitae* refers to that portion of creation (or to those worlds) which is reached by the visionaries of *Merkabah*, and which would correspond, in this case, to the first world below God and his attributes, which would be higher, in turn, to other two: that of the heavenly spheres and the sub-lunar. Its correspondent, therefore, in allegorical religious language of *Keter Malkhut* can be found precisely between the songs XXIV and XXXII, where Ibn Gabirol finishes the description of creation and starts his lament and his supplication. It's in these nine songs where we find the Throne of Glory, Intelligence, and Soul, as well as the pure souls' place and the heavenly creatures. God's *Glory*, which accompanies the Throne in the language of the visionaries of *Merkabah*, refers to the whole set of heavenly creatures. Among these angelic creatures, those to which Ibn Gabirol gives greater prominence are the Seraphs who, though not present in Ezekiel's vision, nor in any other biblical passage,

appear in Isaiah's visions and present themselves as integrated to the other angelic creatures in other very ancient apocryphal texts, such as in the *Book of Enoch*.

According to this explanation, we believe that the first part of the poem *Keter Malkhut* effectively seems to be the mystic-religious counterpart of *Fons vitae*. From the passage on the Throne, seemingly unrelated to the rest of metaphysics, we had already commented that Matter is the Throne of Glory and on it lies the Will. Intelligence is the secret place of the Throne, since its matter is the Foremost and Universal Matter and, at the same time, the edge which man can reach on his return. And between Intelligence and Soul extend the angelic legions which populate the world of *Merkabah*. The association between metaphysics and angelology isn't unique to Ibn Gabirol. We have a clear precedent in Philo, for instance, in the passage where he presents the exegesis of the two cherubs with flaming swords guarding Heaven, where the cherubs are the two powers and the sword between them is the *Logos*. We have, thus, both in the emanationist theory of Matter, Intelligence, and Soul in *Fons vitae*, and the songs XXIV to XXXII of *Keter Malkhut*, parallel allegorical descriptions, in different languages, where the Throne and the Intelligence sphere correspond to the world of *Beriah*. Let's also notice that, if by a path the Throne of Glory is our mediating image for Gabirol's metaphysical doctrine, the other way around, Gabirol's metaphysics itself will provide mediating concepts for understanding the meaning of images in the Throne of Glory.

Conclusion

If some scholars insist that *Keter Malkhut* is a mere illustration of the originally philosophical impulse presented in *Fons vitae*, we can, likewise, advocate the reversed possibility. Perhaps *Fons vitae* is an explanation in philosophical language – i.e. for the lay people with regard to the Jewish mysticism – of originally religious speculations. In our view, *Keter Malkhut* can't be understood as an allegorization with purely aesthetic purposes of the philosophical model of *Fons vitae*, especially because we believe that the explicit content of the poem is more comprehensive than that exposed by philosophy. But we also prefer to understand both productions by Ibn Gabirol as supplementary materials aiming to expose a whole mystic doctrine of Creation and return formulated and improved over millennia within Judaism.

When we think of the mystic tradition of Jewish allegorical interpretation and, especially, of issues related to Creation and the tradition of allegorical exegesis that followed the author – first in Spain, in Girona, then extended to several other centers – we fail to take into account this far away possibility. If the enigmatic and Neo-pythagorean language of *Sefer Yetzirah* is regarded by scholars as a typical specimen of *Maaseh Bereshit* (BLUMENTHAL, 1978), the possible variations in this mystic discipline are wide. And we must agree that, when compared to the language of *Sefer Yetzirah*, the language of Ibn Gabirol's poem seems to be an example of orthodoxy and simplicity. By analyzing the similarity which Gabirol's has to the great mystic books whose publication followed his work – especially *Sefer Ha-Zohar*, closely linked to the mystic speculation on creation, we realize that we can easily situate them in the same line of thought and interpretation. Between Philo of Alexandria and the legitimate representatives of the speculative Kabbalah, Ibn Gabirol gives his particular contribution to the philosophical exegesis with this poem, becoming a milestone in what we can name a Judaized Platonism or, perhaps, a Platonized Judaism.

According to Munk, Ibn Gabirol's doctrines were well preserved in the trend which came to be named speculative Kabbalah, whose great development will become observable from the 13th century on. Although Gabirol's name isn't mentioned by the Kabbalists, as well as by later Jewish philosophers, Munk believes that this doesn't invalidate the importance of this author with regard to the formation of Kabbalah: "The Kabbalists might perfectly have attributed pseudonyms to the Arabic books of which we've spoken, as well as to Ibn Gabirol's book, and the latter should perhaps be regarded as being among the founders of speculative Kabbalah" (MUNK, 1927, p. 283, our translation).

REFERENCES

- BERGSON, H. **As duas fontes da moral e da religião**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1978.
- BLUMENTHAL, D. R. **Understanding Jewish mysticism**. Nova York: Ktav, 1978. 2 v.
- BUBER, M. **As histórias do Rabi Nachman**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2000.
- CHOURAQUI, André. **La couronne du royaume de Salomon Ibn Gabirol**. Paris: PUF, 1956.
- DAN, Joseph. **Kabbalah, a very short introduction**. Nova York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- DUJOVNE, León, Prólogo. In: IBN GABIROL. **La fuente de la vida/corona real**. Buenos Aires: Sigal, 1961.
- ELIOR, Rachel. The concept of God in hekhalot literature. In: DAN, J. **Binah: studies in Jewish thought**. Nova York: Praeger, 1989. v. 2.
- GRAETZ, Heinrich. **History of the Jews**. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949. v. 3.
- IBN GABIROL. **Avencebrolis (Ibn Gabirol) Fons vitae ex arabico in latinum translatum ab Iohanne hispano et Dominico Gundissalino**. Münster: Aschendorff, 1895.
- IBN GABIROL. **Livre de la source de vie (Fons vitae)**. Introduction, traduction et notes par Jacques Schlanger. Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1970.

IBN GABIROL. **Poesía secular**. Prólogo de Dan Pagis; selección, traducción y notas de Helena Romero. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1978.

IBN GABIROL. **La corrección de los caracteres**. Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 1990.

IBN GABIROL. *Merkabah e Kabbalah* na poesia mística. **Revista Agnes**, São Paulo, v. 4, p. 83-106, 2006.

IBN GABIROL. A imagem do trono em Ibn Gabirol e a mística da Merkabah. **Revista Mirabilia**, Lisboa, v. 14, n. 1, p. 35-56, 2012.

JAMBLICO. **Vida pitagórica/protréptico**. Introducción, traducción y notas de Miguel Perigo Lorente. Madrid: Gredos, 2003.

MILLÁS VALLICROSA, J. M. **La poesía sagrada hebraico-española**. Madrid: CSIC, 1948.

MUNK, Salomon. **Mélanges de philosophie juïve et arabe**. Paris: J. Vrin, 1927.

SÁENZ-BADILLOS, Ángel. **El alma lastimada: Ibn Gabirol**. Córdoba: Almendro, 1992.

SCHOLEM, G. **Desarrollo histórico e ideas básicas de la cábala**. Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1994.

SCHOLEM, G. **As grandes correntes da mística judaica**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1995.

SCHOLEM, G. **A cabala e seu simbolismo**. São Paulo: Perspectiva. 2002.

SEFER HA-BAHIR. **El libro de la claridad**. Traducción de Mario Satz. Barcelona: Obelisco, 1992.

SEFER YETZIRAH. **Sefer Ietsirá: o livro da criação**. Tradução de Erwin Von-Rommel Vianna Pamplona. São Paulo: Sefer, 2001.

VAJDA, G. **La teología ascética de Bahya Ibn Paqûda**. Madrid: Instituto Arias Montano, 1950.

WACH, Joachim. **Types of religious experience, Christian and non-Christian**. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1951.