



Colloque international
La métempsycose en Islam
International Conference
Metempsychosis in Islam

10-12
OCTOBRE
2024

UNIL
AMPHIPÔLE 319 & 340
Lausanne, Suisse

Organisateurs :
Fâràs Gillon (AMU-IREMAM), Wissam Halawi (UNIL), Mathieu Terrier (LEM-PSL)

Photo : plaque de verre pour lanterne magique (fânûs-i khayâl), Iran, époque qâjâre (XIX^e s.) (c) The Trustees of the British Museum

La métempsycose en Islam

Colloque international
10-12 octobre 2024, Université de Lausanne (Unil)

Metempsychosis in Islam

International symposium
October 10-12, 2024, University of Lausanne (Unil)

PROGRAMME / PROGRAM

Organisateurs / Organizers

Prof. Dr. Fâres Gillon
Institut de recherches et d'études sur les mondes arabes et musulmans (IREMAM)
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Université Paris Sciences Lettres (PSL), France

THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER – UNIL, Amphipôle 340

Welcome & coffee (9:45-10:00 am)

Introduction (10:00-10:30 am)

Farès Gillon (Aix-Marseille Université)

Morning Session (10:30-12:00 am)

Chair: Mathieu Terrier (CNRS-PSL)

Jari Kaukua (Finlande, University of Jyväskylä), Transmigration as an ishrāqī doctrine?

Maxime Delpierre (Paris, EN), La palingénésie paradoxale de la question de la métempsychose : naissance d'un problème

Lunch (12:00-2:00 pm)

Afternoon Session 1 (2:00-3:30 pm)

Chair: Carmela Baffioni (Université de Naples « L'Orientale »)

Mathieu Terrier (Paris, CNRS-PSL), Métempsychose, métamorphose et résurrection imaginaire : la mise au point ambiguë de Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī

Sajjad Rizvi (UK, University of Exeter), Imagining Body and Soul in the Resurrection: Mullā Ṣadrā and Majlisī on Human Survival

Coffee (3:30-3:45 am)

Afternoon Session 2 (3:45-5:15 pm)

Chair: Godefroid de Callataÿ (UCLouvain)

Cécile Bonmariage (Belgique, FNRS-UCLouvain), Avicenna at the center: How Avicenna's arguments against metempsychosis permeate later discourse on tanāsukh

Cornelis Van Lit (Pays-Bas, Utrecht University), A soul to another body, a body to another soul: Cannibalism as a unifying discussion among Muslim theologians throughout the centuries

Dinner 8:30 pm

FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER – UNIL, Amphipôle 319

Morning Session 1 (10:30-12:00 am)

Chair: Farès Gillon (Aix-Marseille Université)

Godefroid de Callataÿ (Belgique, UCLouvain), The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' on metempsychosis

Carmela Baffioni (Italie, Université de Naples « L'Orientale »), Hints at Metempsychosis in the *Risāla al-Jāmi'a*

Lunch (12:00-2:00 pm)

Afternoon Session 1 (2:00-3:30 pm)

Chair: Sajjad Rizvi (University of Exeter)

Alessandro Cancian (Londres, IIS), Metempsychosis of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Ni'matullāhī Sufism in early modern and modern times: Remarks on an Anti-Sufi Polemical Trope

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (London, IIS), Food, Actions, and Impressions: Metempsychosis or Metamorphosis in Hurūfī Texts

Coffee (3:30-3:45 am)

Afternoon Session 2 (3:45-5:15 pm)

Chair: Cécile Bonmariage (Belgique, FNRS-UCLouvain)

Daniel De Smet (Paris, CNRS), *Rijs, waks, 'aks, kharas, najas, nuks et raks* : les sept degrés de la métamorphose dans l'ismaélisme tayyibite

Pierre Lory (Paris, EPHE), La réincarnation dans le corpus de Jābir ibn Hayyān – doctrine marginale, ou la clé d'un système ésotérique ?

Dinner 8:30 pm

SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER – UNIL, Amphipôle 319

Morning session (09:30-12:45)

Chair: Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (EPHE/CNRS)

Roy Vilozny (Israël, University of Jerusalem), The Souls' Pre-Existence: Between Condemned Metempsychosis and Legitimate Imāmī-Shī'ī Tenet of Faith

Paul Walker (USA, University of Chicago), Ismaili Neoplatonism and Metempsychosis: a reappraisal of allegations and evidence

Coffee (11:00-11:15 am)

Mushegh Asatryan (Canada, University of Calgary), The Transmigration of Souls and the Architecture of the Cosmos in the Ghulāt Corpus

David Hollenberg (USA, University of Oregon), Listening to the animals: Exempla of metempsychosis from medieval Nusayrism

Lunch 1pm

Titres & Résumés (10-12 octobre 2024, Unil, Lausanne)

Classement par ordre alphabétique

Titles & Abstracts (October 10-12, 2024, Unil, Lausanne)

Sorted alphabetically

Asatryan, Mushegh (Canada, University of Calgary), The Transmigration of Souls and the Architecture of the Cosmos in the Ghulāt Corpus

The belief in transmigration of souls is frequently used in the Muslim heresiographic discourse as the epitome of “un-Islamic-ness.” Most heresiographies have sections on sects who believe in this phenomenon, duly noting that they are unbelieving heretics. Still, one finds evidence in the belief among Muslims going back to the first and second Islamic centuries. The fullest, most detailed account of the transmigration of souls is found in a group of texts produced in the 2nd-3rd Islamic centuries by the so-called Ghulāt. Several full-fledged treatises, including *Umm al-kitāb*, *Kitāb al-sīrat*, *Kitāb al-haft*, and others, elaborate the notion of metempsychosis in great detail, by placing it within the larger architecture of the cosmos.

The Ghulāt notion of the transmigration of souls can be properly understood within this larger cosmological context. For the Ghulāt, the world in which they lived was utterly “enchanted,” in that the boundary between the divine and the human, matter and spirit, was easily permeable and sometimes nonexistent. Humans could, thanks to effort, ascend into the divine realm, acquiring superhuman abilities, and even becoming god-like. God, in his own turn, every now and then descended upon earth and socialized with humans, taking the form of prophets and imams, and sometimes of regular mortals. Humans could also descend into lower realms, as a punishment for their sins.

The transmigration of souls in Ghulāt thought plays the role of a mechanism of rewards and punishments. This plays out in a couple of different ways. First, depending upon one’s behavior, one is punished by being reborn into increasingly lower forms (horses, dogs, frogs, plants, or worse, inanimate objects), or rewarded by being reborn into another human body or, better still, into a spiritual being. Second, the cycle of rebirth functioned as a balancing mechanism: if one mistreated a mule, in the next cycle of rebirth the mule was reborn a man and the man a mule, enabling the wronged animal to take revenge on its former oppressor.

In my talk I will analyze the representation of the transmigration of souls in the Ghulāt corpus. I will begin by situating it in the larger context of early Islamic popular beliefs, and, larger still, of pre-Islamic intellectual currents (Platonism, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Manicheanism, etc.). I will then explore the logic underlying the passages on *tanāsukh* in Ghulāt thought. In particular, I will focus on what they reveal about the Ghulāt’s views of gender, of the human and non-human world, and their notions of sin and virtue.

Baffioni, Carmela (Université de Naples « L'Orientale »), Hints at Metempsychosis in the *Risāla al-Jāmi‘a*

It is commonly believed that the encyclopaedia of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ or Brethren of Purity (which is placed in the 10th century with considerable date fluctuations) strenuously opposed metempsychosis. Nevertheless, some passages would seem to defend this doctrine against the prevailing Islamic teaching. Several studies have been devoted to this topic, starting with the seminal ones by Yves Marquet. On the contrary, it seems that the presence of terminology (*tanāsukh* and *naskh*; *nuqla*, *tanaqqul* and *intiqāl*; *maskh*; *faskh*) or considerations related to metempsychosis is to be further investigated in the *Risāla al-Jāmi‘a*, the “crown” of the epistles of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ (currently placed mostly in the 12th century), which is believed to offer their esoteric interpretation. All the relevant passages of this work in the sense now clarified will be examined in my study and will then be compared with the corresponding passages in the encyclopaedia. In this way, I will hopefully be able to offer a complete overview of the subject, also accompanied by an in-depth analysis of the relevant scientific literature. If it can be shown that the *Risāla al-Jāmi‘a* shares positions ascribable to some form of metempsychosis, its connection to radical Islamic contexts will be further proven. I shall try to assess the same hypothesis with regard to the encyclopaedia of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’.

Bonmariage, Cécile (FNRS-UCLouvain), Avicenna at the center: How Avicenna's arguments against metempsychosis permeate later discourse on *tanāsukh*

In this paper I will explore how the arguments given by Ibn Sīnā in *Shifā. Fī l-nafs* V.4 against reincarnation, in particular the two-souls argument, are central in later discourse on *tanāsukh*, as a subtext or upfront. Case-studies will include Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (who phrases the passages on *tanāsukh* in the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* as a response to Avicenna), commentators of the *Qaṣīdat al-nafs* (where the question is: do they really engage with the question or do they repeat unquestioningly a common discourse on *tanāsukh*?), Ṣadrā and representative *Kalām* texts (still to be explored) if time allows.

de Callataÿ, Godefroid (Belgique, UCLouvain), The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' on metempsychosis

In this paper I shall be concerned with two different representations of metempsychosis as found in the corpus of *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. One is the doctrine ascribed to the Ṣābi'ans of Ḥarrān in Epistle 52b, one of the three mutually exclusive versions of the Epistle on Magic on which the Ikhwānian encyclopaedical corpus concludes according to some manuscripts. Although it is has now become doubtful that this epistle was ever part and parcel of the Ikhwān's original compilation, this passage from 52b offers valuable insight on one aspect of the magical-philosophical conceptions of the Ṣābi'ans, on a par with other descriptions in Islamic literature such as those by Shahrastānī's and others. Although more implicit, the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* also include another conception of metempsychosis, indisputably more Ikhwānian than the Ṣābi'an doctrine. This conception is part of a broader mechanism, involving certain astral conjunctions over long periods of time, which the authors of the *Rasā'il* set out to back up their own eschatological views. According to such a mechanism, the human souls are not the only ones in the universe that have the potentiality to rise to a superior rank, namely, the angelic status. At the end of millennial cycles, the authors suggest that the souls of animals (and possibly also those of plants and minerals) may also hope to move up in the hierarchy of being by one rank at time. It is to this latter, more complex and more original conception of the transmigration of souls that the present paper will be mainly dedicated.

De Smet, Daniel (Paris, CNRS), *Rijs, waks, 'aks, kharas, najas, nuks et raks : les sept degrés de la métamorphose dans l'ismaélisme tayyibite*

Les auteurs tayyibites du Yémen, en particulier al-Hārithī, ont élaboré une doctrine du *maskh* (métamorphose) selon laquelle les âmes damnées doivent se réincarner en sept degrés successifs dans des espèces humaines, animales, végétales et minérales d'une impureté croissante. Ils ont ainsi donné une nouvelle vie à une ancienne doctrine déjà professée dans les cercles des *ghulāt* aux premiers siècles de l'islam.

Cancian, Alessandro (Londres, IIS), Metempsychosis of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq and Ni'matullāhī Sufism in early modern and modern times: Remarks on an Anti-Sufi Polemical Trope

Given the status of metempsychosis as marker of heterodoxy in most normative Islamic literature, Sunni as well as Shi'i, it is not surprising that anti-Sufi writings are punctuated with accusations to Sufis of professing, or surreptitiously accepting, reincarnationist doctrines. Modern Sufism within Twelver Shi'i contexts represents no exception to this trend. In this paper, I will specifically look at the case of Ni'matullāhī order, in the phase after its return to Iran from India in late eighteenth century. The Ni'matullāhiyya, and in particular its Gonābādī branch established in the second half of the nineteenth century, represents a peculiarly interesting case for its insistence on the necessity of adhering to the exoteric tenets of Twelver Shi'i Islam. While this affirmative stance presents nuances, Ni'matullāhī masters have repeatedly distanced themselves from a number of symbolically heterodox doctrines, including *tanāsukh*, in a number of their written works. This apparently unequivocal stance did not prevent the order's detractors from accusing them of indirectly professing reincarnationist beliefs, by ascribing this belief to the influence of the Ahl-e Ḥaqq. By reading relevant polemical literature produced from the nineteenth to the twenty first century dealing with the subject against the backdrop of Ni'matullāhī-Gonābādī religious writings, I intend to assess the nature and consistency of these accusations of *tanāsukh*. By doing so, I will also specifically look at how the order's Masters deal with reincarnationism and cognate beliefs over time beneath the surface of the expected disownment of the *tanāsukhiyya*, and to what extent some of their beliefs regarding the destiny of the soul after death resonate with ideas circulating among the Ahl-e Ḥaqq.

Delpierre, Maxime (Paris, EN), La palingénésie paradoxale de la question de la métempsychose : naissance d'un problème

On peut admettre que la question de la possibilité, sinon de l'existence, de la métempsychose, renaît en philosophie avec la psychologie et l'eschatologie avicenniennes, sur le fond d'une double question : en psychologie, celle des modes d'être de l'âme (naissance et immortalité), en métaphysique, celle de la survie et du bonheur de l'âme des idiots. Au premier point de vue, il est notable qu'Avicenne n'affirme ses propres thèses, naissance et immortalité, que de manière négative, par la réfutation préliminaire des doctrines concurrentes, et étroitement liées, à savoir respectivement la préexistence des âmes du côté de l'origine, et la transmigration proprement dite du côté de la fin (ou plutôt de l'absence de fin). A partir de là, la réfutation de la métempsychose devient un article incontournable chez tous les philosophes avicenniens. Or, voici ce qui ne manque pas de retenir l'attention : alors que la métempsychose est l'objet d'une réfutation résolue et constante, non seulement chez les avicenniens, mais de manière générale chez à peu près tous les musulmans, un savant, philosophe avicennien lui-même, et qui plus est théologien ash'arite, Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī, qui devrait donc exécrer la doctrine de la métempsychose et par conséquent abonder dans le sens de la réfutation avicennienne, au contraire la met en doute et par conséquent refait droit à la possibilité de la métempsychose. Bien que selon toute apparence il n'en veuille pas et conteste le fait, il en restaure la possibilité, faisant entrer la question de la métempsychose dans une nouvelle dimension : on pourrait dire qu'il transforme la question en problème et, ce faisant, met au défi les philosophes d'inventer de nouvelles preuves. En effet, la preuve avicennienne repose sur un cercle vicieux, elle n'est donc pas probante. Si l'on y ajoute que vers la même époque, le maître de l'école philosophique naissante et concurrente de l'avicennisme, celle de l'*ishrāq*, Suhrawardī, qui ne veut pas davantage de la métempsychose, propose cependant des preuves en faveur de celle-ci, on aboutit évidemment au résultat suivant : après Rāzī, le problème de la métempsychose, ne pouvant plus se formuler dans les mêmes termes qu'autrefois, se recompose au sein même de l'école avicennienne, et, de surcroît, selon ce paradoxe que ce sont ceux qui réprouvent le fait qui en avouent la non-impossibilité, malgré son invraisemblance.

Hollenberg, David (USA, University of Oregon), Listening to the animals: Exempla of metempsychosis from medieval Nusayrism

As is well known, the Nusayri Shi'a embraced a highly developed doctrine of metempsychosis that they inherited from their Kufan Shi'a forebears. The Nusayri savants held that while those on the path of Nusayrism eventually graduate from this process of transmigration and ascend to the world of light, sinners continue to be punished with rebirth, variously, as sick people, women, particular animals, insects, and inanimate matter such as gold, iron, or stone. In his useful description of Nusayri metempsychosis, Yaron Friedman contrasts Nusayri views with those of the Druze. Friedman writes that while the Druze primary concern is divine justice, the Nusayris' doctrine demonstrates their commitment to pre-destination, for, as a Druze polemicist points out, according to Nusayris, sinners who are reborn as animals or minerals have no opportunity to escape their fate. In this paper, I will assess this claim by analyzing exempla of metempsychosis in Nusayri treatises by the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh century savants Ibn Hamdan al-Khasibi, al-Hasan b. Shu'ba al-Harrani, Maymun al-Tabarani, and 'Ismat al-Dawla. Rather than focusing on statements of doctrine, I shall privilege narrative traditions in which animals and inanimate objects speak for themselves. My aim is both to assess Friedman's hypothesis, and, more broadly, to consider the ideological force and purposes of metempsychosis for the Nusayri savants who told these stories.

Kaukua, Jari (Finlande, University of Jyväskylä), Transmigration as an *ishrāqī* doctrine?

Despite citing the Avicennian arguments against the possibility of the transmigration of souls, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191 CE) neither rejects nor endorses the theory *in expressis verbis* in his *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, the foundational text of *ishrāqī* philosophy. Suhrawardī's vagueness notwithstanding, transmigration was frequently associated with *ishrāqī* philosophy in the later tradition. In this paper, I will consider the role of one of Suhrawardī's first commentators, Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī (d. 1288 CE), in making the doctrine of transmigration a part of the *ishrāqī* system. I will focus especially on Shahrazūrī's lengthy and analytical discussion of the doctrine's credentials in the encyclopaedic *al-Shajara al-ilāhīya*.

Lory, Pierre (Paris, EPHE), La réincarnation dans le corpus de Jâbir ibn Hayyân – doctrine marginale, ou la clé d’un système ésotérique ?

Le corpus attribué à Jâbir ibn Hayyân comprend des allusions parfois discrètes, parfois explicites à l’idée de l’évolution des âmes par des réincarnations successives dans des corps de plus en plus nobles. Il n’est pas toujours facile de démêler ce qui y serait de l’ordre d’une doctrine religieuse, de ce qui pourrait être symbolique du travail alchimique. La clé pourrait en être de lier les deux perspectives : la libération progressive de l’âme humaine individuelle ne pourrait se concevoir hors de la lente purification de l’Âme du monde.

Rizvi, Sajjad (UK, University of Exeter), Imagining Body and Soul in the Resurrection: Mullā Ṣadrā and Majlisī on Human Survival

Despite the often agonistic but positive reception of the ‘divine Plato’ in Islamic philosophy, most philosophers seem to have been either hostile or lukewarm about the doctrine of the soul and its transmigration beyond the death of the body. At the same time, there was an unease with the scriptural account of the resurrection of the body *ex nihilo* (in the same way as creation of bodies *ex nihilo* and *tempore* was rejected) due to the Aristotelian scientific principle that once something was non-existent, it could not revert to existence (*al-ma’dūm lā yu’ādd*) but rather would be another thing. The Safavid period was one in which thinkers grappled with these theological *aporiae* seeking a philosophically robust yet theologically coherent and acceptable solution. In this paper, I will examine two case studies that consider the problem from different perspectives, allowing for different regimes of authority whilst opening up the possibility of reconsidering metempsychosis, which, in this case, merely means the transfer of the immortal soul from one receptacle into another, albeit a cognate and somewhat ‘cloned’ version of the original. The first case is well known to specialists in Safavid thought, all the while its meaning is contested – the account given in the section on the nature of the soul in *al-Asfār al-arba’a* by Mullā Ṣadrā Ṣīrāzī (d. 1045/1636) of the creative imagination of the human soul as instrument of divine will producing the body of resurrection. The second is less well known; this is the account of the soul and its relationship to the body expressed in the cosmology section (*al-samā’ wa-l-‘ālam*) of the encyclopedic *Biḥār al-anwār* of Muḥammad Bāqir Maḡlisī (d. 1111/1699). By taking the example of this latter case, I want to suggest how we might philosophically read arguments that do not self-identify as such. Indeed, as we shall see, and even if we return to the classical period and the early *kalām* formulations, the fundamental problem in metempsychosis concerned the nature and essence of humanity: what does it mean to be human?

Mir-Kasimov, Orkhan (UK, IIS), Food, Actions, and Impressions: Metempsychosis or Metamorphosis in Hurūfī Texts

The texts belonging to the mystical and messianic tradition founded by Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394), also known under the somewhat confusing title of Ḥurūfism (that is, “lettrism”, from *harf* pl. *hurūf* meaning “word”, or “letter” in Arabic) contain some fragments suggesting an idea of metempsychosis or metamorphosis. This paper will focus on such fragments from two different works of this tradition, the *Jāvidān-nāma* (“Book of Eternity”) of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī and the *Maḥram-nāma* (“Book of Confidence”) of one of his direct disciples, Sayyid Iṣḥāq Astarābādī.

The elements of these works coming close to what could be called a theory of metempsychosis can be divided into two distinct categories. The first, mainly developed in the *Jāvidān-nāma*, outlines evolution and involution of body forms in the food chain, also with reference to the rituals such as animal sacrifice. The second, only fleetingly mentioned in both works, suggests the role of impressions (*idrākāt*) and actions (*a’māl*) in the formation of the prototypes of physical bodies.

The general idea supporting the Ḥurūfī theories of metamorphosis and metempsychosis is the fundamental unity of all objects and beings, since they are all manifestations of the divine creative Word. According to Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī, the Word contains 28 and/or 32 elements of sound (described as “words”, *kalimāt*), corresponding to the same number of elements of form (described as “letters”, *hurūf*). The combinations of sounds constitute the ontological names, the innermost essence of the things, while the corresponding letters determine their external forms.

The death is described as the moment when the actual knowledge of the ontological names attained by any being during its lifetime is removed from the physical body and the corresponding “letters” generate a prototype of a new physical body. Degradation or evolution towards higher forms of existence are determined by this re-balancing (*istiwā’*): loss of knowledge during lifetime leads to less perfect human bodies or even to sub-human

forms of life, such as animals, plants or minerals, while acquisition of knowledge results in a manifestation of a more perfect human body. The highest possible form of existence is the perfect human form, which expresses the totality of the divine Word.

Terrier, Mathieu (Paris, CNRS-PSL), *Métempsychose, métamorphose et résurrection imaginaire : la mise au point ambiguë de Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī*

Dans son *Fānūs al-khayâl fī irâ'at 'âlam al-mithâl* (La lanterne magique faisant voir le monde imaginal), un traité anthologique sur le monde imaginal, le philosophe shi'ite de l'Iran safavide Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkevarī (m. ca 1090/1679), ancien élève de Shaykh Bahâ'î (m. 1030/1621) et de Mîr Dâmâd (m. 1040/1631), défend la doctrine d'une résurrection mineure dans des corps imaginaires (*abdân mithâliyya*) et dans le monde imaginal, identifié au *barzakh* ou à la tombe. Dans ce cadre, il s'emploie à défendre les tenants de la résurrection imaginaire, philosophes et soufis, contre l'accusation (imaginaire ?) de partager la doctrine honnie de la métempsychose indienne (*tanâsukh, naskh*), voire de la transmigration en corps d'autres espèces (*maskh, faskh, raskh*). Sa stratégie est toutefois paradoxale puisqu'il n'hésite pas à rappeler des traditions imâmites anciennes attestant des cas précis de métamorphose et de métempsychose, mais encore à soutenir la réalité du *burûz*, prodige psychique analogue à la métempsychose, attribué notamment au soufi Muḥammad Nûrbakhsh (m. 869/1464), maître éponyme de la confrérie Nûrbakhshiyya. En fin de compte, la « mauvaise » métempsychose apparaît comme un repoussoir commode pour justifier des formes acceptables de métempsychose, de métamorphose et de transfert de l'âme, et sur un point capital, la doctrine de la résurrection imaginaire défendue par Ashkevarī s'avère tout aussi inquiétante pour la théologie « orthodoxe » que la métempsychose « au sens indien » elle-même.

van Lit, Cornelis (Pays-Bas, Utrecht University), *A soul to another body, a body to another soul: Cannibalism as a unifying discussion among Muslim theologians throughout the centuries*

While metempsychosis normally considers the case of a soul transferring to another body, the parallel discussion of transferring body (parts) to another soul found equal if not more attention among Muslim scholars. It seems that a rallying point of such discussions was the (hopefully) hypothetical case of cannibalism. What if one person eat another person? What happens to the body parts of the eaten person: are they absorbed into the personal identity of the eater? If so, how would this hold up at the Day of Resurrection? In understanding the thinking of classical Islamic philosophy and theology on the relationship between body and soul, and body and continuity of existence, this discussion on cannibalism cannot be ignored. Drawing from no less than 68 sources ranging from the 9th century up until today from virtually all schools of thought, this contribution shows the main outlines of the discussion and the various solutions that have been proposed. In particular will we focus on the solution that holds that each person has 'essential parts', perhaps mere atoms, that always and invariably belong to only one person. This solution seems to be favoured but often without much explanation. A first attempt at tying back this solution to its source will be attempted. Notable parallels with Christian theology will be made.

Vilozny, Roy (Israel, University of Jerusalem), *The Souls' Pre-Existence: Between Condemned Metempsychosis and Legitimate Imāmī-Shī'ī Tenet of Faith*

The Imāmī-Shī'ī corpus of *ḥadīth* contains numerous references to the idea that human souls were created prior to the bodies. Like other fantastic and mythical ideas in the Imāmī corpus, the belief in the souls' pre-existence became a bone of contention between traditionalist and rationalistic Imāmī scholars over the generations. A famous example is al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's (d. 413/1022) harsh criticism of his teacher, Ibn Bābawayh al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 380/991), for adhering too blindly to the literal layer of Imāmī teachings that convey this idea. In so doing, al-Mufīd argued, Imāmī-Shī'ī scholars like al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq have in fact introduced unintentionally metempsychosis views into the Imāmī belief-system.

In my talk I propose to investigate in greater detail al-Mufīd's accusation of his teacher for introducing metempsychosis ideas into the Imāmī religious discourse. What was it about al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq's understanding of *ḥadīths* concerned with the souls' pre-existence that agitated al-Mufīd to the degree of leveling at his teacher such a severe accusation? Did al-Mufīd's use of the term "*al-tanâsukhiyya*" in this context allude to a specific group, the echoes of whose beliefs he was able to trace in al-Ṣadūq's interpretation of the relevant *ḥadīths*? If so, who were they? Or, alternatively, was "*al-tanâsukhiyya*" used as general pejorative to denote deviation from the desired mainstream, "orthodox" path? Al-Mufīd, we know, did not dismiss all *ḥadīths* bearing on the idea of

the souls' pre-existence as weak or untrustworthy. What was then according to him their correct interpretation? In other words, where exactly does the line which separates condemned metempsychosist approach from a legitimate understanding of the Imams' teaching pass in this context?

The Imams teachings about the souls' pre-existence form integral part of the Imāmiyya's canon and the correct way to understand them continued to preoccupy Shī'ī scholars long after al-Ṣadūq and al-Mufīd. Another question to be addressed in my proposed talk is whether or not accusations of adopting a metempsychosist approach in this context remained part of the discourse.

Walker, Paul E. (University of Chicago), Ismaili Neoplatonism and Metempsychosis: a reappraisal of allegations and evidence

An essential source for Islamic views of various doctrines upholding some form of metempsychosis is ironically al-Bīrūnī's study of Indian religion. In it, while describing Indian notions of the transmigration of souls, he provides also a detailed account of its parallel among the ancient Greek philosophers, most notably Plato. In addition, he comments on Muslims, one of whom is the Ismaili al-Sijistānī whose *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, according to him, supposedly advocated or allowed for the movement of souls from one body to another within the same species. How Bīrūnī knew about this reference is not clear but it appears to be confirmed by a report from a later Ismaili author Nasir-i Khusraw in his *Zād al-musāfirīn*. He reports that Sijistānī had accepted *tanāsukh* in that work but later changed his view and denied it under pressure from higher authorities. In fact, surviving treatises by Sijistānī, including what remains of the *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, all deny metempsychosis. His work *The Keys (al-Maqālīd)* contains a separate chapter (#44) entitled "That metempsychosis is absurd" (*fī anna al-tanāsukh bāṭil*). Still, we also know that Sijistānī was a committed Neoplatonist having proposed a fairly sophisticated interpretation of Islamic (Ismaili) doctrines thoroughly imbued with Plotinian thought, including the hypostatic universality of soul of which the individual human soul is merely a part. A doctrine like that might readily lead to some form of transmigration or at least a theory thereof (as with Plotinus himself). What happens to a disembodied soul, for example? How are the soul and body joined together in the first place? Significantly, Sijistānī did not believe in bodily resurrection; only the soul survives death. Ultimately, a full analysis of the problem requires a careful reappraisal of all that we can prove he said about it, with, along the way, particular attention to nuances of meaning. Finally, we need make clear that other Ismaili authorities, those less Neoplatonically inclined, like al-Kirmānī, understood the issue quite differently and thus avoided any taint of metempsychosis.