

Where is Paradise? Eschatology in Early Medieval Judaic and Islamic Thought

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INTRODUCTION

Maimonides was accused of heresy almost immediately after his death in 1204. His books were burnt by the 'orthodox' members of the Jewish community in Spain, who claimed that Maimonides did not believe in the doctrine of bodily resurrection. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) levelled the same charge against the Muslim philosophers, namely, al-Farabi and Avicenna, in his book *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Both Avicenna and Maimonides considered the state of ultimate happiness as the eternal bliss of the soul that leaves the body untouched, and they viewed it as the union between the individual and the active intellect.¹

In this paper I will establish that the twelfth- and thirteenth-century controversy concerning bodily resurrection was prefigured in both Jewish and Islamic thinkers of the tenth century. I will rely on four sources: 1) Saadya Gaon's *Book of Beliefs and Convictions*;² 2) Al-Qirqisani's *Book of Lights and Watchtowers*;³ 3) *The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren*;⁴ and the treatise written by Elkhanan ben Abraham, entitled *The Foundation of the World*.⁵

In the tenth century, two basic models were dominant in both the Jewish and Islamic reflections on Paradise (i.e., the ultimate undisturbed happiness of the human soul). The first model regards paradise as a physical realm created in the future wherein body and soul are rewarded together; the second

1. The most recent article comparing the notion of paradise in the works of Avicenna and Maimonides is S. Stroumsa, "'True Felicity': Paradise in the Thought of Avicenna and Maimonides," *Medieval Encounters* 4 (1998): 51–75.

2. Saadya Gaon al-Fayyumi, *Kitab al-Amanat wa-l-I'tiqadat* [Judeo-Arabic text with Hebrew translation], ed. Yosef Qafih (Jerusalem, 1970).

3. Ya'qub al-Qirqisani, *Kitab al-Anwar wa-l-Maraqib*, Code of Karaite Law, edited from manuscripts in the State Public Library in Leningrad and the British Museum, ed. L. Nemyo (New York, 1940).

4. *Rasa'il Ikhwan as-Safa' wa-Khillan al-wafa'* (Paris-Beyrouth, 1995).

5. Elkhanan ben-Abraham, *Yesod 'Olam* [treatise in Hebrew], *Studien über Salomon Ibn Gabirol* (Budapest, 1899).

model considers it as a purely spiritual realm which co-exists with the visible world, although in a manner that is inaccessible to most. The first model can be characterized as cosmological, since it implies a whole new creation at the end of time; whereas the second can be described as psychological, given the fact that it affects the individual soul as a kind of illumination, and does not imply visible physical changes. Otherwise said, the Jewish and Muslim thinkers, theologians and philosophers discussed the topic of the afterlife in two basic manners: (1) using temporal-spatial categories in terms of an *afterlife*, and (2) in terms of a purely spiritual realm which co-exists with the physical world, i.e., in terms of an *otherworld*.

The two pairs of words used in Arabic and in Hebrew reflect this duality. The first opposition, that of the **visible and invisible realms** (Arabic: *`alam ash-shahid*, *`alam al-ghayb*, Hebrew: *nir'eh*, *nistar* 'visible and hidden [realm]') is based on a distinction of an epistemological nature, which entails the fact that human knowledge is limited. The invisible world refers to things and events remote and unknowable in terms of space and time. The realm of future, i.e., the time that is hidden or the world of angels, can be described as both 'hidden' or 'invisible,' given that both are inaccessible to our knowledge.

The second distinction, that between 'this world' and 'the hereafter' (Arabic: *dunya*, *akhira*, Hebrew: *ha-`alam ha-ze*, *ha-`alam ha-ba* 'this world and the world to come'), is of an ontological nature. In Arabic, these terms have both temporal and spatial implications: 'this world below and the one that is beyond it, hereafter.' The Hebrew equivalents, on the other hand, reflect a purely temporal distinction: 'this world and the world to come.'

One final methodological consideration must be mentioned. In medieval thought, no independent speculation about the nature of the afterlife is possible. At each instance the Hebrew Bible or the Qur'an, and the post-Biblical or post-Qur'anic traditions, is taken into consideration.⁶ In the Qur'an, there are approximately 1700 verses that refer to the joy of the true believers in the hereafter, descriptions of which are largely worldly in nature. The Hebrew Bible, on the other hand, appears to be somewhat reticent about this topic. Thus the mediaeval Jewish thinkers and their Muslim contemporaries were facing different methodological problems in their discussions of the afterlife. The Jewish authors had first to prove that the afterlife exists in the case of the individual soul. The Muslim authors, in their turn, had to consider the question of the eternal existence of a material world, or had to find ways to justify an allegorical interpretation of the Qur'an.

6. The close relationship between Jewish and Islamic scriptural traditions is demonstrated by the fact that in the Hebrew Bible and in the Qur'an two etymologically related words refer to the afterlife. The Qur'anic *ganna(t `adan)* 'Garden (of Eden)' is equivalent to the Hebrew *gan `eden*. The other frequently used word for Paradise, the Arabic *firdaws* and Hebrew *pardes*, are both derived from Old Persian.

The Notion of Afterlife in Saadya's Book of Beliefs and Convictions

This first masterpiece of Jewish rational theology (*kalam*), composed in 933, devotes three treatises to the topic of afterlife. Treatise 7, 'Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead in This World' (*fi ihya' al-mawta fi dar ad-dunya*, [218–36]), has survived in two versions. The Medieval Hebrew translation of Yudah ibn Tibbon⁷ can be traced back to a version differing from that of the extant Judeo-Arabic manuscripts. This treatise concerns the demonstration of the necessity of the resurrection of the dead at the time of Israel's redemption. Herein, Saadya also outlines the laws according to which the Biblical text needs to be interpreted, and he proves that the Bible contains explicit indications of the doctrine of bodily resurrection which must be understood in a non-allegorical sense.

The eighth treatise (*fi-l-furqan*, 'About [the Notion of] Redemption,' [237–60]) considers the topic of redemption. It enumerates the Scriptural passages dealing with the duration of the exile and the promises made concerning Israel's redemption. In Saadya's view, history will proceed in one of two directions, dependent upon the repentance or non-repentance of Israel: if Israel repents, the Messiah descended from David will redeem the people for all their sufferings in the past. In the event that the foreordained term of the exile is completed and Israel has not repented, God will send the Messiah descended from Joseph, who will lead the Israelites in war against the nations and be slain, whereupon great misfortunes will come upon the Jewish nation. At the end of the fifteenth chapter, arguments are enumerated against the Christians who claim that the Messiah had appeared in the days of the Second Temple.

The ninth treatise (*fi-th-thawab wa-l-iqab fi dar al-akhira*, 'About Reward and Punishment in the World to Come,' [261–96]) concerns the nature of reward and punishment in the world to come. After having established the inevitability of the existence of a hereafter in which men will be required for their conduct on earth, Saadya depicts in detail the world to come. This treatise tackles the notions of place and time in the hereafter, the differences of gradation among the righteous and the wicked, and the corresponding gradation of their reward and punishment.

For Saadya, the differentiation between the notions of [worldly] *redemption* (Arabic *furqan*, Hebrew *yeshu'a*) and *resurrection* in the hereafter (Arabic *ihya' al-mawta*, Hebrew *tehiyyat ha-metim*) appears to be of paramount importance. He notes that certain people confuse the two concepts, and thus asserted the necessity to give them appropriate definitions. In his view, *redemption* refers to the positive end of human history, i.e., the Messianic Age brought about by the repentance of Israel. Its eventual occurrence is established

7. *Sefer ha-Emunot we-ha-De'ot* (Leipzig, 1859) 132–46.

on the basis of prophecies and it is seen as parallel to the ‘first redemption’ (the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt).

Resurrection, on the other hand, implies the occurrence of a “new creation” wherein God recreates all humans by reuniting their souls and bodies. According to the opinion of both Jewish and Muslim rationalist thinkers, the *resurrection* of the body appears to be an absolutely necessary event, in the sense that the justice of God necessitates the recompensation of the apparent injustices in this world. Between these two groups though, there is one noteworthy difference: amongst the Jewish thinkers, the act of the *redemption* appears to be necessary only in the case where the people of Israel repent their sins and return to God. Without this repentance, and as opposed to the ushering in of the Messianic Age, a series of catastrophes and apocalyptic scenes are predicted which would put a violent end to the existing world.

According to Saadya, the Messianic Age implies neither a radically new creation, nor the introduction of a ‘new space’ and of a ‘new time.’ It simply means a kind of a Paradise on earth, the return of the Jews to the Biblical land, the rebuilding of the Temple, the existence of widespread prophecy inside the Jewish nation, and the visible appearance of the Divine Light (*shekhinah*).

The following passages represent the essence of Saadya’s view on the world to come:

[T]his reward and punishment [in the next world] will take the form of two very fine substances that our Master, exalted and magnified be He, will create at the time of the retribution, applying them to each of His servants in accordance with his desert. They will both consist of the same essence, an essence resembling the property of burning, luminous fire, that will shine for the righteous but not for the sinful, whilst it will burn the sinful but not the righteous How apt, indeed, is the likening of the retribution in the hereafter to the two activities of the sun, which is the cause of the heat of the day as well as of brilliant light!⁸

The two most significant features of the afterlife indicated by this passage are its occurrence in the undefined future and its being understood in terms of a perfect recompensation for the human deeds committed in the past. Thus, the ‘afterlife’ appears to function as a continuation and completion of the life in this world. The notion of time underlying both this world and the hereafter exhibits two main characteristics in Saadya’s thought: (1) it is linear and (2) it is connected to bodily existence.

8. *The Book of Beliefs and Convictions* 271–72. All English translations of this work are taken from S. Rosenblatt’s *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (New Haven: Yale U Press, 1948). Hereafter page references will appear in the body of the text, following the abbreviation *B&C*. Translations of other sources are my own.

(1) Time as such is composed of three periods: past, present and future. As the present is shorter than any moment of time, it is best represented as a point (*B&C* 38). The present is in a constant forward motion, in such a way that "every day that elapses of the time of the revolution of the sphere constitutes an increase in past time and a diminution of the time to come" (*B&C* 63). (2) The very definition of time is connected to physical existence: it is defined as 'the duration of existing things' (*baqa' al-mawgudat*) [*B&C* 73] or as the 'period of the duration of the bodies' (*muddat baqa' al-agsam*) [*B&C* 106–07]. Time is also finite, at least concerning its beginning: it did not exist prior to the creation of the world.

The two characteristics of time described above will prevail in the period of the hereafter as well: it will be linear and since the bodies of humans will be recreated in an unperishable form, it will be of an eternal duration. In a general way, we may state that the afterlife is represented by Saadya as a perfect replica of this world, perfect in the sense that the elements will be recreated in an indestructible form:

... time will be composed entirely of light uninterrupted by darkness. I mean there will be no alternation of night and day following each other successively. For the reason that motivated [divine] Wisdom, when it caused men to dwell on earth, in making the distinction between night and day, which is the result of the peregrination of the sun and its movement, was merely in order that they might employ the daytime in working for their livelihood and other occupations and spend the night in relaxation, rest, cohabitation, the practice of solitude, and similar pastimes. Since, however, in the world to come none of these things have any place, the divisions of night and day can very well be dispensed with. (*B&C* 276–77)

The notions of place and time are interconnected in Saadya in such a manner that time always refers to the duration of the existence of a certain body which occupies a certain place. In the infinite period of the hereafter, this interconnection will remain unchanged. Thus, while the elements constituting the world will be radically altered, time, as such, will remain an auxiliary notion, i.e., that which measures their existence.

In a conclusive way it can be argued that Saadya, like the Muslim rationalist theologians, views the afterlife as a result of compelling logical necessity. It can be characterized as a perfect recompensation for all deeds, good or bad, committed in the life on this earth. In opposition to Paradise, the place of reward, Hell will be created as an eternal punishment of the sinful, proportionate to the degree and the nature of their transgressions. The judgement will be of an egalitarian nature, i.e., each single person will be judged according to the same measure, namely, according to his or her obedience displayed towards God's commandments. It will be communal as well, i.e., each human will be judged together and at the same time. As a result of the recreation of the

physical elements in a perfect, i.e., indestructible, manner, deep cosmological changes will take place and the totality of the natural laws valid in the realm of generation and corruption will be replaced by the eternal subsistence of each individual. According to Saadya, the main Biblical evidence for this are the verses of Isaiah referring to a new creation: “For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth / and the past will not be remembered ...” (Isa. 65:17, or 66:22).⁹

The Concept of Afterlife in Ya`qub al-Qirqisani

Ya`qub al-Qirqisani, the most prominent Karaite thinker of the tenth century, composed his main work in 936, three years after Saadya completed the *Book of Beliefs and Convictions*. The *Book of Lights and Watchtowers* (*Kitab al-Anwar wa-l-Maraqib*) is a comprehensive code of the Karaite law. A large part of this book survived and was published in four volumes by Nemoj. In the second volume a passage of some seventy pages treats the topic of the afterlife. Given the fact that both Saadya and al-Qirqisani are considered to be leading rationalist thinkers of their time, a comparison of their respective thought systems is fruitful.

In general, it can be said that al-Qirqisani's basic tone in the *Book of Lights* is much more exegetical in nature than that of Saadya. This may be due to the fact that al-Qirqisani belonged to the group of the Karaites, a purificationist movement inside Judaism, which disregarded the religious importance of the oral post-Biblical tradition and suggested rather that each believer should read and comment on the text of the Bible.

At the beginning of the passage dealing with the topic of the afterlife, al-Qirqisani remarks that both the Torah and the works of the great philosophers, e.g., Aristotle, needed commentaries. Just as the text of the Pentateuch was commented upon by the prophets, so Aristotle was introduced by Alexander Aphrodisias, Porphyry and by John the Grammarian.¹⁰ This remark of al-Qirqisani suggests that in the subsequent part of his book he presents us with his view on the notion of afterlife which, on the one hand, is justified by the text of the Bible and, on the other hand, by analogical conclusions (*qiyas*). For instance, one of his arguments for the existence of a hereafter is similar to that of a rationalist approach to the problem: he asserts that the existence of a hereafter, wherein each soul gets its recompensation, can be justified by the apparent fact that the life of the wicked person may be longer and more pleasant than that of the pious.¹¹

9. *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York, 1985).

10. *The Book of Lights and Watchtowers* 223. Hereafter, page references will appear in the body of the text, following the abbreviation *L&W*.

11. *B&C* 262–63. Saadya argues that all the apparent injustices on God's part in this world necessitate recompense in the afterlife.

Al-Qirqisani also argues for the existence of the hereafter based on the exegesis of the text of Genesis which describes Paradise (*ganna*). Significantly, according to this passage, God did not demolish the Garden of Eden after the first couple was expelled from it. Moreover, the fact that God placed guardian angels at the gate of the garden means that one day it will be repopulated (*L&W* 224–25). According to al-Qirqisani, the *Garden of Eden* is the place of eternal life which no mortal may enter. But as God does nothing in vain, that the garden is prepared and ready, although well guarded, implies that at some point in the future immortal people will dwell it. Conversely, according to Saadya, the place of the pious in the afterlife is called *Garden of Eden* only in an allegorical way:

Now the reward of the hereafter has been called *Garden of Eden* only because there does not exist in this world anything more magnificent than this garden in which God caused *Adam*, peace be upon him, to dwell. (*B&C* 274)

Another conclusion al-Qirqisani draws from the same Biblical passage is highly dualistic in nature. He asserts that the dust out of which man was created did not belong to the Garden,¹² which implies that humans belong to two realms: to the realm of life (*dar al-hayat*), which is equal to Paradise to which they eventually return; and to the realm of death (*dar al-mamat*), which is the material world of generation and corruption.

Furthermore, he claims that in the language of the Bible *death* (*maveth*) means ‘punishment [in the afterlife]’ (*iqab*),¹³ while life (*hayyim*) means ‘[eternal] reward’ (*thawab*) (*L&W* 230). Thus, he presupposes the existence of a physical world of temporality, that of constant changes and death, which is opposed by a spiritual, eternal world wherein the angelic souls (*al-arwah al-malakiyya*) reside. In short, in the view of al-Qirqisani humans have a double origin: their body is created from the dust of the earth, while their spirit comes from God.¹³ In fact, the existence of humans can be divided into two periods: the period of work and duty (*waqt al-`amal wa-at-taklif*) and the time of reward and punishment (*waqt ath-thawab wa-l-`iqab*), which follows (*L&W* 271). “Real life,” which is not subjected to changes and corruption, belongs to the realm of the hereafter (*akhira*) which never ends (*L&W* 229).

12. *at-turba ma kharaga `an ag-ganna*. *L&W* 225.

13. *L&W* 227. Here, al-Qirqisani relies on the three following Biblical verses: “God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils ...” (Gen. 2:7); “By the sweat of your face / will you earn your food, /until you return to the ground ...” (Gen. 3:19); and “the dust returns to the earth from which it came, /and the spirit returns to God who gave it ...” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Dualism in the Eschatology of al-Qirqisani

The most important difference between the eschatology of Saadya and that of al-Qirqisani appears to be the fact that for Saadya the realm of the hereafter can be described as one endless period of time; whereas for al-Qirqisani, after the resurrection of the bodies, the hereafter consists of two distinct periods. While both periods can be termed the 'hereafter' (*akhira*), they are significantly different. During the first phase, bodies and souls will be reunited and punished and rewarded together; in the second period, which follows the collapse of the physical realm, only God and the souls of the virtuous remain in a timeless, eternal state:

The recompensation of the individuals happens in two ways, both of which [occur] in the hereafter. The first [recompensation] takes place after the return of the souls (*arwah*) to their bodies, in Paradise or in Hell, as we have explained above. This period will last until the end of the time ordained to the world, at which time all the bodies will be destroyed, as will be the space and time which are connected to the bodies. The second [recompensation] consists of the eternal survival of the souls belonging to the above mentioned bodies in a timeless state (*baqa' fi-'l-dahr*) which is not cut by motion and will never end, since it is one single eternal potential (*quwwa wahida sarmadiyya*). There the righteous [souls] will join the order of angels and become one of them and will dwell with the heavenly host. And they will enjoy the most perfect happiness by the proximity of their Creator, be He praised and exalted. (*L&W* 241)

Thus, in agreement with Saadya, al-Qirqisani states that the injustice in the visible world necessitates some kind of a recompensation which will take place in the afterlife. This recompensation is twofold: (1) after the resurrection, body and soul participate together in the joy of paradise, or in the sufferings of hell (*gabannam*); then, (2) after the collapse of all time and space, the souls of the virtuous will remain with God for ever in a timeless, motionless manner.

We may conclude that in the view of al-Qirqisani, the life of humans can be divided into the following six stages: (1) life in the visible, physical world united with the body; (2) death, which is the separation of the body from the soul; (3) an interim period wherein the soul remains separated from the body; (4) the time of the resurrection, during which the body and soul are reunited; (5) judgment, which allocates the souls to Hell or Paradise according to their good or bad deeds; and (6) at one point all motion will cease and only the face of God will remain together with the virtuous souls.

(1) According to both Saadya and al-Qirqisani human life is an opportunity to perform good or bad deeds and to serve God or to turn away from Him. Given free will, human beings are considered to be responsible agents whose acts are remembered and preserved for the judgement in the hereafter. In the view of al-Qirqisani, life in this world often functions as

a reverse of the afterlife in the sense that righteous people are punished for their few sins committed in this life, while the wicked are rewarded for their good deeds (*L&W* 251).

(2) Death means the decomposition of body and soul. The body, subjected to the laws of nature, is reduced to its particles while the soul is stored up in an undefined place.

(3) This period of the life of the soul, that is, after death and before the time of the resurrection, is the most obscure topic, and thus the subject of various speculations. According to Saadya, 'the place, where the pure souls are kept is up on high, while that of the turbid is down below' (*B&C* 212); and 'during the first period after its separation from the body, the soul exists for a while without a fixed abode until the body has decomposed ... , it consequently experiences during this period much misery, occasioned by its knowledge of the worms and the vermin and the like that pass through the body, just as a person would be pained by the knowledge that a house in which he used to live is in ruins and that thorns and thistles grow in it' (*B&C* 213). In al-Qirqisani's view, the death of the person is followed by a kind of spiritual recompensation (*gaza' ruhani*) during which the soul, although separated from the body, knows what it can expect and can be happy or desperate about it (*L&W* 271, 279).

(4) Resurrection, which implies the reunification of the body and soul, takes place at the time when God has accomplished the creation of all the souls He intends to create. Both authors claim that it will be a communal event wherein each human will participate.

(5) In the hereafter body and soul will be reunited, judged and granted the appropriate reward or punishment. The idea of Divine justice implies the gradation of reward and punishment allowing that people differ according to the number of their good and bad deeds.

Both Saadya and al-Qirqisani agree upon the fact that reward and punishment will be of a public nature. In Saadya's opinion, those whose ranks are close to one another will meet, whereas those who are distant from each other in station will either not meet or will only be able look at one another with their eyes.¹⁴ According to al-Qirqisani, the Bible asserts in a clear and evident way that each will be able to see the persons on the diverse grades.¹⁵ As such, the oppressed will have the occasion to take vengeance on his oppressor and the pious will have the opportunity to enjoy the suffering of his enemy (*L&W* 281).

14. *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* 272–73. Hereafter, page references will appear in the body of the text, following the abbreviation *B&O*.

15. *L&W* 280. "you will see the difference between the upright person and the wicked one" (Mal. 3:18); "on their way out they will see / the corpses of those / who rebelled against me ..." (Isa. 66:24).

In a conclusive way, it can be argued that the views of both Saadya and Al-Qirqisani on the nature of the afterlife can be considered as rationalist in nature. Their arguments are built on the evidence of the Biblical text, on the one hand, and on rational insights on the other hand. However, they differ on three points, one of which is of major philosophical importance. The first minor difference touches upon the situation of the evildoer who repents all the sins committed in his life immediately before his death. In al-Qirqisani's view this person will join the realm of reward (*dar-ath-thawab*), since the last deed annihilates the previous ones (*L&W* 232). In Saadya's view, repentance before death may produce a cancellation of demerits, but it does not provide a guarantee for absolution from all sins. The second minor difference, as noted above, is that of the understanding of the notion of the *Garden of Eden*—Saadya interprets it allegorically, whereas al-Qirqisani opts for a literal understanding of the Biblical passage. It is in their respective understanding of the notion of eternity that a significant philosophical difference shows itself.

Al-Qirqisani notes that the "place (*makan*) in the hereafter will be the same, but the notion of time (*zaman*) will be different from that in this world" (*L&W* 226). What does he mean by this? The 'sameness' of the place undoubtedly refers to his understanding of the *Garden of Eden*, the place of Paradise, as a real and concrete geographical locus which will exist after the resurrection in the same manner as now. Time, on the other hand, will be different from what it is now, since it will be eternal. The assumption that the recompensation of God is perfect (*tamm*) means that it is eternal and not temporal (*L&W* 227). Arguably, al-Qirqisani makes use of a different notion of eternity than that of Saadya. As opposed to Saadya's notion of eternity as an everlasting duration of linear time, al-Qirqisani speaks about an eternal, timeless bliss. According to Saadya then, eternity can be understood in terms of mere quantity, i.e., the infinity of linear time; conversely, for al-Qirqisani eternity implies a qualitative change in the notion of time.

(6) In light of this, it is clear why al-Qirqisani refers to that period in the hereafter where bodies and souls are reunited as the 'interim period' (*al-mar-taba al-wusta*) (*L&W* 257). According to him, it is nothing but a preparation for the ultimate spiritual world ('*alam ruhani*, '*alam al-arwah*) or for what can be denoted as the 'otherworld.' In the spiritual world or 'otherworld,' neither body or change, nor temporality will exist and the soul of the upright will enjoy the proximity of God in a timeless manner. This eternal spiritual bliss, however, cannot be reached during one's lifetime according to al-Qirqisani. It will occur only after the destruction of the physical world when, after the cessation of all motion, the angelic souls (*arwah malakiyya*) of the true believers will enjoy timeless redemption (*furqan*) and joy (*farag*) (*L&W*

238). According to al-Qirqisani, this timeless notion of eternity is described in the text of Psalm 102¹⁶ and in Isa. 51:6.¹⁷

Another Model: Philosophical Techniques for Reaching Paradise

This spaceless and timeless spiritual world of eternal bliss, as described by al-Qirqisani (stage 6), is not entirely unlike another model of the hereafter. In opposition to the notion of the ‘*afterlife*’ which implies the continuation of a linear time-sequence, this timeless state of eternity may be referred to as the ‘*otherworld*,’ as noted above. With a modern terminology one could refer to it as a kind of ‘**mental state**’ in which the mind of the thinker resides, or as a type of intellectual bliss attained by the philosopher. Dissimilar to the notion of the ‘*afterlife*’ of the rationalists, this ‘*otherworld*’ is uncreated and in religious terms can be described as ‘**the proximity of God**’ (*qurb allah*) or as a ‘**spiritual world**’ (*alam ruhani*).

In the Middle Ages, this representation of the hereafter as the ‘*otherworld*’ was peculiar to the ‘**philosophers**’ (*falasifa*) who stated that the hereafter does not succeed this world in a temporal way, but exists simultaneously with it. Generally speaking, it is inaccessible to humans with the exception of those whose souls are so purified that they have the ability to reside in this purely spiritual realm while still living in the body. In fact, the ultimate aim of human existence is to reach this stage of loftiness where one no longer belongs to the everchanging world. This understanding of eternal bliss is the standard description of the ultimate happiness of the soul in Neo-Platonism and in Neo-Platonized Aristotelianism, which is the basic approach of medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophy.

In opposition to the first model of the hereafter (that of Saadya’s and of the so-called ‘interim period’ of al-Qirqisani, wherein bodily resurrection plays an important role), this second model, that of the purely spiritual ‘*otherworld*,’ displays the following characteristics: (1) It exhibits a kind of *elitism* as opposed to the egalitarianism of the first model. Only the few whose souls are purified are able to reach this spiritual realm. (2) The ‘*otherworld*’ can be reached by *individuals*. Thus, its attainment does not take place in the form of a universal judgment on the last day. (3) It is by a kind of internal illumination, which occurs in the soul separated from the body, that people gain access to the ‘*otherworld*.’ Thus, it is *psychological-spiritual* and not physical or cosmological in nature. (4) Finally, and as noted above, neither linear time

16. *L&W* 239: “Long ago you laid Earth’s foundations, / the heavens are the work of your hands. / They pass away but you remain; / they all wear out like a garment, / like outworn clothes you change them; / but you never alter, and your years never end” (Verse 25–26).

17. “Raise your eyes to the heavens / ... / for the heavens will vanish like smoke /... / but my salvation will last for ever.”

nor time in general plays a role in the attainment of this purely spiritual or intellectual bliss. Rather, this model is best characterized as *a-temporal*, as opposed to temporal which is a mark of the first model.

‘Afterlife’ and ‘Otherworld’ in the Epistles of the Sincere Brethren

‘The Sincere Brethren and the Loyal Friends’ (*Ikhwan as-Safa’ wa-Khillan al-Wafa’*) was a secret society in the tenth century, in Basra and Baghdad. Most of their epistles are written in the first person plural, and they appear to have functioned as a type of secret society, that of the ‘elect.’ Their fifty-two epistles are structured around one topic, the ‘vision of God,’ which is the source of everlasting felicity. They can be characterized as having a ‘gnosticizing’ nature, but they offer much more than a quick way to salvation via a special type of knowledge. In fact, the Brethren attempt to build a bridge between the philosophical sciences of late Hellenism and the young Islamic culture.

In the third section of the epistles which treat the topic of the ultimate aim of all knowledge (Epistles 28–41), an entire epistle (Epistle 38) is devoted to the problem of eschatology. The core of their theory is encapsulated in the following passage:

And know, my brother, that the word ‘**resurrection**’ (*ba`ath*) has a complex meaning in the Arabic language and can be used in three ways. In the first place it means to ‘**send**’ (*arsala*), as God says: ‘**And Allah sent Messengers**,’¹⁸ in the meaning that ‘**He sent them**’ (*arsalahum*). The second meaning refers to the resurrection of the dead corpses from the graves and to the coming alive (*nashr*) of the bodies from the dust, as it is promised to the unbelievers and to those who reject God: ‘**When we die and become dust and bones, could we really be raised up again?**’ (23:82), and God, exalted be He, said: ‘say thou: yea.’ Another [the third] meaning refers to the resurrection of the ignorant soul from the slumber of negligence and to her revival from the death of ignorance, as God, praised be He, mentioned: ‘Can he who was dead, to whom we gave life, and a light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out?’ (6:122); or as the Exalted [God] says: ‘Then we raised you up after your death, Ye had the chance to be grateful’ (2:56); and as God said to Muhammad, praise be upon him: ‘soon will thy Lord raise thee to a station of praise and glory’ (17:79).¹⁹

Herein, and in the first instance, the Brethren explain the literal meaning of the word ‘resurrection’ (*ba`ath*, *qiyama*). Next, they assert that in its second and third senses, it refers to the historical-cosmological and individual-psychological realms, respectively. Thus, on the first and more superficial level resurrection connotes a future event, i.e., when the heaven and earth collapse and all beings will be judged according to their deeds. In the second and allegorical sense, the notion of resurrection intends the enlightenment

18. Qur’an, 2:213.

19. Epistle 38, 246.

or illumination of the individual soul, that is, when it sees the real nature of things, not their bodily cover, but their spiritual essences.

In this passage then, we find the two models used to describe the hereafter: the physical-cosmological model of the 'afterlife' and that of the psychological-spiritual model of the 'otherworld.' As outlined above, al-Qirqisani also makes use of both models. However, there exists a major difference between his view and that of the Brethren: for al-Qirqisani, the two models follow each other in a temporal succession; whereas in the view of the Brethren, the two models coexist. According to al-Qirqisani, the collapse and destruction of the physical world precedes the formation of the purely spiritual 'otherworld' in a temporal manner. For the Brethren, on the other hand, the two models function as the expression of the views of the general population and of the elect: the rationalists (*al-muwahhida*) and those who have an understanding of the notion of the afterlife based on simple belief or on intellectual endeavours adopt the first model; whereas the 'elite,' i.e., those few who have had a direct experience of the 'hereafter' (*afdal al-'ulama'*, or *awliya' Allah*), understand it in terms of an 'otherworld.'

The 'otherworld' is described as the luminous, purely spiritual world of the soul. This world, situated in the heavens, among the stars (*'alam al-aflak wa-sa'at as-samawat*), is identified with Paradise as depicted in the Qur'an.²⁰ Those whose souls are awakened from the 'slumber of negligence' (*nawm al-ghafila*) see God everywhere with their internal vision in a timeless and spaceless manner. The knowledge of how to gain access to this spiritual world constitutes the noblest of all sciences, and although it is alluded to in about 1700 Qur'anic verses, only a few are able to understand its real meaning (*haqiqa*).²¹ Dualism constitutes an essential part of the thought of the Brethren:

And know, my brother, that those who expect (*mntazirun*) the world to come can be divided into two groups: one of them expects its happening in the future, when the heavens and the earth collapse. These people do not know but the sensible things (*al-mahsusat*) and the corporeal substances (*al-gismaniyyat*), and they do not see but the apparent state of things (*ma zahara*). The other group, on the other hand, expects it as an illumination, a manifestation and as a clear knowledge (*kasfan wa-bayanan wa-ittila'an alayha*). And these people know the intelligibles (*al-ma'qulat*), the spiritual substances (*al-gawahir ar-rubaniyya*), and the states of the soul (*al-halat an-nafsaniiyya*).²²

Dualism pervades the thought of the Brethren. The basic ontological, epistemological and psychological concepts are lined up in pairs. The two parts of the pair are related in one of three manners: (1) in an hierarchical

20. *Ibid.* 244.

21. *Ibid.* 245.

22. *Ibid.* 241.

nature, (2) in a tension, or (3) in a complementary relation. For example: (1) human society can be divided into the group of simple believers ('*amm*) who take the Qur'an in its literal meaning; and an 'elite' (*khass*) which reads the text in an allegorical way. (2) A well-defined tension exists between the notion of body and the soul insofar as the purification of the soul necessitates the denial of all bodily desires; and (3) the concepts of form and matter stand in a relation of complementarity as the existence of the physical world relies upon both equally.

This basic dualist stance offers an opportunity for the Brethren to incorporate two traditions which otherwise would exclude each other: (1) the cosmological-temporal understanding of the 'afterlife' which is expressed by the rationalists and is based upon a literal reading of both the Qur'an and the Bible; and (2) the psychological notion of the invisible spiritual realm, in terms of 'otherworld,' which is hidden, immaterial, uncreated and attainable only for exceptionally purified souls.²³

Elkhanan ben Abraham: Eschatology Now

The fourth view on the notion of the 'afterlife' to be examined is that of Elkhanan ben Abraham, a Neo-Platonic Jewish philosopher from fourteenth-century Spain. Little is known of his life and works as there remains only one extant treatise entitled *The Foundation of the World*. The text is mystical in nature and univocally negates the future aspect of the afterlife. He claims to follow the Empedoclean²⁴ tradition in asserting that:

Indeed, who thinks that there is a gap between the destruction of this world and the beginning of the hereafter, by saying this, commits a mistake. On the contrary, the one is linked to the other²⁵

In comparison with the three thinkers examined above, this opinion appears to be the most extreme. Unlike the Sincere Brethren, Elkhanan ben Abraham refuses the notion of the 'afterlife' which is supported on the basis of the testimony of the Scripture. Rather, he argues that the 'otherworld' is attained only through the return of the individual soul and intellect to God, and their continuous contemplation of the divine essence as He pours his light on the soul, thereby unifying the individual soul with the divine intellect.

23. Although this concept of the 'otherworld' prevails in Neo-Platonic authors, the motif of the so-called 'heavenly trips' (purely spiritual journeys to the divine realm) equally exists in the Jewish and Islamic traditions untouched by Neo-Platonic thought, e.g., the story of *isra'* in Islam, and the *ma'ase merkabhab* literature in Judaism.

24. The most recent monograph on Pseudo-Empedocles is D. De Smet, *Empedocles Arabus, Une lecture neoplatonicienne tardive* (Brussels, 1998).

25. *The Foundation of the World* 220, par. 22.

The contemplation of one's soul detached from all corporeal pollution is the manner by which the soul reaches the divine world. Thus, the dualism of body and soul or of the physical and the spiritual realms plays a decisive role in his thought:

We have the duty to examine our soul which resides in us and to observe its nature. But this does not mean the investigation of the soul situated in a body full of desires and of perverse inclinations The soul, after its renouncement of these vices, becomes pure in this body, and it is so as if it were not there [in the body], and detached from it. (230, par. 39)

This extremist model did not begin with Elkhanan ben Abraham, although he appears to present the clearest formulation of it. Yudah ibn Gabirol (1058–1070), the leading Neo-Platonic thinker of Judaism, presents a similar view of the 'otherworld,' though without overtly negating the validity of the model of the 'afterlife' based on Biblical exegesis.

According to Elkhanan ben Abraham, the other world consists of pure light:

In the other world there is no shadow, since it is a luminous world, full of radiance, and the world of radiance embraces all darkness. The light there does not have an opposite, and that is why no animal soul exists there (221, par. 24)

Furthermore, it is timeless in the same way as the **'spiritual world' in the Sincere Brethren**, and stands in a sharp opposition to the visible material world. Elkhanan ben Abraham argues that the very existence of time generated by the constant changes in the physical world means trouble and suffering:

we can state that felicity, joy and happiness are in the eternity and this implies a world without time and without instants. But in this world this is not the situation

(214, par. 11)

In a conclusive way, we may state that the four authors examined above present the notion of the hereafter according to two distinct models: that of the 'afterlife,' as a continuation of this world in time after a universal judgment, and that of the 'otherworld,' being a purely spiritual perfect realm timelessly co-existing with the physical world. The models outlined by Saadya and that of Elkhanan ben Abraham can be considered as exclusive and univocal: Saadya pictures the hereafter exclusively in terms of 'afterlife,' while according to Elkhanan ben Abraham only the 'otherworld' model appears to be valid. Conversely, Al-Qirqisani and the Sincere Brethren attempt to establish a harmony between the two apparently exclusive models. In Al-Qirqisani 'afterlife' and 'otherworld' follow each other in a temporal

succession, while the Sincere Brethren attribute the two views to the two basic layers of the society.

The history of both Jewish and Islamic thought exhibits a constant tension between the two models. The temporal-cosmological representation of the hereafter has always been the mainstream version used by the theologians, while the purely spiritual model has been attributed to a relatively small numbers of mystics and philosophers. In a purely philosophical way, we may argue that this duality in the representation of the notion of the 'hereafter' corresponds to the existence of two traditions in which the notion of time is understood, not only in Judaism and in Islam, but in a general way: (1) the understanding of time as linear, flowing from past to future, which implies the existence of one single reality, and (2) the concept of a multi-layered time, in the sense that beyond the linear time marked by the constant changes of the physical world there exists a realm of motionless eternity.

In the second part of this paper, I argue that the psychology of the authors, i.e., the way in which they understand the notion of the human soul, plays a decisive role in the representation of the hereafter. In other words, there exist two distinct models in the description of the human soul, each corresponding to a different model of the hereafter. Those authors who define the notion of the human soul in an Aristotelian way, i.e., as the form, or the perfection of the human body, will adhere to the understanding of the hereafter in terms of a physical-temporal unity, given the fact that according to them body and soul form an integral unity, thus, the concept of a purely spiritual 'otherworld' appears to be simply senseless. Opposed to this idea, those who define the notion of the soul based on its duality, i.e., that it is an agent in two worlds, one being physical-imperfect and the other spiritual-perfect, will describe the hereafter as the timeless spiritual realm of ultimate felicity.

Below, I offer a short presentation of the notion of the soul according to the four thinkers discussed above. I argue that the more the idea of body-soul duality pervades their thought, the more they tend to describe the hereafter in terms of an 'otherworld,' i.e., the simple spiritual world undisturbed by time and motion.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SAADYA AND AL-QIRQISANI: THE UNION OF BODY AND SOUL

Saadya

The concept of the individual soul, described in detail in Saadya's *Book of Beliefs and Convictions*, is understood both epistemologically and ontologically. It is epistemological in the sense that it figures as the place and instrument of all cognition, and it can be stated as ontological in the sense that its 'real existence' (*haqiqa*) needs to be proven. Thus, the soul connects

the physical and the metaphysical realms.

The human soul, created simultaneously with the completion of the form of man,²⁶ is the place where the process of cognition, and thus the establishment and the absorption of convictions, occurs.²⁷ It is endowed with intellect (*'aql*) and wisdom (*bikma*), and therefore is charged with the observance of divine commandments.²⁸

As an agent endowed with free will, it has the capacity to perform the commandments or to desist from their performance, thereby collecting merits and demerits and so becoming subject to divine reward and punishment. Dependent upon its acts it is either pure luminous, transparent and clean, or turbid and obscure. After the death of the person, the state of the soul determines whether it will sit below the throne of glory or wander about purposelessly in the world (*B&C* 206).

In the *Book of Beliefs and Convictions* Saadya overtly asserts that the soul and the body constitute a single agent (*B&C* 209). The Talmudic parable of the two watchmen, one of them lame, the other blind,²⁹ serves as a proof for this assertion. Thus, the body serves as a necessary instrument for the performance of both good and bad deeds and both are equally subjected to eternal reward and punishment.

Al-Qirqisani

According to the view of al-Qirqisani the soul (*ruh*) can by no means be considered as an accident of the body, rather it is a living substance (*gawhar hayya*), which can be described as eternal (*L&W* 227). He insists that in the hereafter they have to be punished, or rewarded together, since in this world as well they exist in a united form (*L&W* 228). Thus, certain souls will dwell in the bundle of life (*sirar al-bayat*) in the highest heavens, in the proximity of God, while other souls will be wandering about (*gawwal*) (*L&W* 240). On

26. *ma kamal surat al-insan*. *B&C* 199.

27. *Ibid.* 111. On the highest level of the process of cognition the soul becomes united with the truth it absorbs: "When a person has achieved the knowledge (*ma'rifā*) of this lofty subject by means of rational speculation (*bi-tariq an-nazar*) and the proof of miracles and marvels ..., his soul believes it as true and it is mingled with his spirit and becomes an inmate of his innermost recesses."

28. *Ibid.* 262. Moreover, the concept of the Creator is implanted in the soul as immediate knowledge (*ma'qul*), although, *Ibid.* 111. Intellectual speculation is necessary for its articulation and understanding.

29. According to the story a king who had an orchard stationed two watchmen, one a lame man and the other a blind man in the orchard. The two guardians decided to steal from the fruits of the orchard, but the blind was unable to see the fruits, while the lame was unable to reach them. Finally, they succeeded, while the lame stood on the shoulder of the blind. The king, after having discovered their deed punished both of them equally, since they performed the misdeed in cooperation (*Sanhedrin*, 91a).

the other hand, as we have mentioned above, the hereafter according to him consists of two periods: first divine recompensation takes place in a physical manner in the *Garden of Eden*, which is a concrete geographical place. But after the collapse of heaven and earth and the ultimate destruction of the categories of space and time, the soul of the virtuous will remain with God in the same manner as the angelic souls (*arwah malakiyya*), thus in a pure spiritual state (*L&W* 241).

But if the soul remains with God in an immaterial way, can she experience ultimate happiness? Saadya would certainly negate this possibility, but al-Qirqisani affirms the opposite. In the last part of his treatise on the nature of the hereafter, he consecrates two pages to the refutation of the argument according to which the soul detached from the body is unable to experience pain or happiness. He argues that the fact that no one has experienced the state in which the soul resides after the collapse of heaven and earth means that no one can make valid statements about it. On the other hand, we see that in this world each person is able to enjoy the sweetness of hope, or that of ownership (*mulk*), or to suffer from the pain caused by fear or by bad memories. Furthermore, all of us have pleasant and unpleasant dreams. According to al-Qirqisani these experiences serve as clear evidence for the assertion that the soul does not need the body in order to feel felicity and sorrow (*L&W* 277–78).

Saadya describes the virtuous and the sinful soul as transparent or opaque, since good deeds purify its substance, while rebellious acts make it less transparent. Al-Qirqisani, on the other hand, speaks about the wicked soul in terms of its being agitated and in a constant motion, similarly to the stone in the slingshot, and about the virtuous soul as residing in a total tranquillity and peace (*L&W* 240).

In spite of some minor differences, Saadya's model of the soul is not completely dissimilar from that of al-Qirqisani. Both authors are labelled as rationalist as far as they exhibit a vivid interest in the role of sensual experience. The difference they display when they touch upon the topic of the hereafter corresponds to the differences between their respective psychologies: al-Qirqisani emphasizes more the dualistic nature of the soul and its ability to experience felicity and pain while detached from the body, while Saadya univocally negates the possibility of the disembodied soul to feel sorrow and pain.

The following two models of the notion of the soul are of an 'internalist nature,' i.e., they claim that it is through the observation of its own substance that the soul can reach the purely spiritual 'otherworld,' which is its natural home and the place of ultimate felicity. In the two thought-systems investigated below, the primary characterization of the soul and the description of

its faculties are in a general way similar to Saadya's and al-Qirqisani's views. However, one crucial difference prevails: the Sincere Brethren and Elkhanan ben Abraham prefer to highlight the inward orientation of the soul, instead of the accent put on its external acts, merits and demerits.

THE SEPARATE SOUL: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SINCERE BRETHERN AND OF ELKHANAN BEN ABRAHAM

The Sincere Brethren

According to the Brethren, the soul is a "spiritual substance living from its essence, potentially knowing and active by nature. If the forms of the objects perceivable to the senses, called species and genus, are conceived by it, their forms remain [in its substance] after the disappearance of the objects from the senses. And [the soul] classifies them, contemplates them and speculates upon them, gets to know them in their concreteness, recognizes their usefulness and their harm, [furthermore], it tests them and evaluates them, and therefore it is called intelligent, knowing in actuality."³⁰ Elsewhere the soul is defined as "a celestial spiritual substance living from its essence, potentially knowing and perceiving, active by nature, which does not halt and does not stop moving as far as it exists."³¹ It is indestructible,³² and as it is a spiritual substance it is beyond temporality, since time is linked with physical changes.³³ It never becomes sick, hungry or thirsty.³⁴ Although it is potentially knowing, it still requires education [*ta'lim*] to become a knower in actuality (*'allama bi-'l-fi'l*).³⁵ It is able to contemplate pure forms deprived of matter, and sometimes it looks at the world in such a way as if it were outside it and other times it looks at it so as if it were inside it.³⁶ The substance of the soul functions as matter for the forms (*rusum*) of the object,³⁷ and while

30. *gawhara ruhaniyya hayya bi-dhat 'allama bi-'l-quwwa fa`ala bi-'t-tab`*. *Fa-idha hasalat fiha rusum al-mabsusat allati tusamma anwa'an wa-agnasan musawwara ba'd gaybat al-mabsusat`an musahadat al-hawass laba fa-mayyazatha wa-ta'ammalatha wa-nazarat fiha wa`arafat a`yanaha wa-manafi`aha wa-madarraha wa-garrabatha wa-i`tabaratha summiyat`inda dhalika`aqila`allama bi-'l-fi'l*. *Epistle* 42, 457.

31. *gawhara samawiyya ruhaniyya hayya bi-dhatiha`allama darraka bi-'l-quwwa, fa`ala bi-'t-tab`la tahda`wa-la taqarr`an al-gawlan ma damat mawguda*. *Epistle* 40, 373. The definition of the concept of the soul occurs frequently in the Epistles as it is one of the crucial notions of the Brethren. See also *Epistle* 32, 186; *Epistle* 43, 6; *Epistle* 46, 84; and *Epistle* 49, 243.

32. *la tamut wa-la tafna*. *Epistle* 38, 290.

33. *Epistle* 15, 16.

34. *Epistle* 15, 21.

35. *Epistle* 42, 424.

36. *taratan tanzur ila-'l-alam wa-ka-annaba khariga minhu wa-taratan tanzur ilayhi wa-ka'annaba dakhila fihi*. *Epistle* 15, 12.

37. *Epistle* 8, 294.

the soul contemplates the objects, the genera, the species and the specific differences are presented as accidents attached to the substance of the soul. Thus, the soul is a substance, since accidents do not subsist (*la yakun laha qiwam*) but are joined to a substance.³⁸ Human souls differ from each other in the sense that the soul of the prophet is more receptive to the forms of spiritual beings, given that because of its purity it is much more open to the radiation of the universal soul.³⁹

The Sincere Brethren make a direct connection between the knowledge of the hereafter and the soul's knowledge of its own substance. They say that the knowledge of the real nature of spiritual existents (*haqiqat al-asya' ar-ruhaniyya*), that of the Creator and of His angels and the [knowledge] of the resurrection resides in the knowledge of the soul and in the acquaintance with its substance.⁴⁰

In another place they state that the knowledge of the real nature of the hereafter is in the knowledge of the real nature of the soul's substance.⁴¹ In the same way as al-Qirqisani, the Brethren consider Paradise as the place wherein the soul's tranquillity resides,⁴² thus they also connect the soul's turbidity to its unstability and its lucidity to its stability.

The Internalism of the Brethren

The main difference between the psychology of those who line up with the spiritual 'otherworld' model of the hereafter and those who believe in the material temporal model is that the first group attributes a paramount significance to the introspection of the soul. In fact, they claim that the Creator and the soul share the same nature, thus, the knowledge of the Divine can be realized exclusively by the knowledge of the soul.

The Delphic maxim⁴³ is frequently and extensively quoted in the Epistles: "who knows himself knows his Lord";⁴⁴ "the first degree in divine sciences is the knowledge of the substance of the soul";⁴⁵ or, "the beginning of all real science stands in man's knowledge of his soul."⁴⁶ In fact, the human soul

38. *Epistle* 1, 75.

39. *Epistle* 15, 10.

40. *Epistle* 83, 237.

41. *ma' rifa haqiqat al-akhira fi ma' rifa haqiqat gawhar an-nafs. Epistle* 83, 244.

42. *al-ganna dar qarar an-nafs. Ibid.*

43. A. Altmann, *The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Jewish and Arabic Philosophy*. In *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, 1963) 196–232.

44. *man `arafa nafsahu fa-qad `arafa rabbahu. Epistle* 40, 375, or "the more one knows his soul the more he knows his Lord," *Epistle* 48, 193.

45. *awwal darajat al-`ulum al-ilahiyya ma`rifat gawhar an-nafs. Epistle* 2, 76.

46. *iftitah gami' al-`ulum al-haqiqiyya huwa fi ma`rifa al-insan nafsahu. Epistles* 29, 34, and 26, 462.

contains all the knowledge of the world⁴⁷ and, at the same time, the soul is the closest subject to man.⁴⁸ The one who does not know his soul is like the one who feeds someone else while he is hungry,⁴⁹ and if he is not cognizant of the substance of the soul it is equal to unbelief.⁵⁰ Moreover, the knowledge of his soul enables man to measure all sensible objects (*mabsusat*) and to infer (*yastadill*) on all the intelligible notions (*ma`qulat*) in both worlds.⁵¹ The smartness of the soul and the purity of its substance are the bases of all knowledge,⁵² and at a certain point the soul may gain an insight into its essence and thus know its own substance.⁵³

Body and Soul

Dualism appears to be the natural concomitant of such internalist epistemological structures as that of the Epistles of the Brethren. According to them, the justification of the mere fact that the soul exists is realized by a distinction between the body and the soul, thus it necessarily leads to some sort of dualism. In their view, the substance of the soul is simple, spiritual (*ruhaniyya*), intelligent (*natiqa*), brilliant (*nuraniyya*), weightless (*gayr thaqila*), incorruptible (*gayr fasida*), moving (*mutaharrika*), and eternal (*baqiya*). It perceives the forms of the things and their real nature (*darraka li-suwar al-asya' wa-haqai'iqiha*).⁵⁴ Moreover, it is living (*hayya*), knowing (*`allama*), and active (*fa``ala*), whereas the substance of the body is dead (*mayyita*) and passive (*munfa`ila*).⁵⁵ The substance of the body is said to be similar to that of the air in that just as air is originally dark but may figure as a vehicle for light, in the same way as the body carries the soul.⁵⁶ Metaphorically, the body/soul relation is variously described house and dwellers, shop and seller, boat and sailor, animal and rider, and tablet and scribe.⁵⁷ Lastly, the body is understood as the prison of the soul, and the prophet's task is to teach liberation.⁵⁸

47. *al-`ulum kulluha fi-`n-nafs bi-`l-quwwa fa-idha fakkarat bi-dhatiha wa-`arafatha sarat al-`ulum kulluha fiha bi-`l-fi`l*; "potentially, all knowledge is in the soul and if the soul thinks of its essence, and gets to know it, all the knowledge contained in it becomes actual," *Epistle* 24, 416.

48. *nafs al-insan aqrab ilayhi min kull qarib*. *Epistle* 48, 193.

49. *Epistle* 23, 378.

50. *Epistle* 29, 61.

51. *Epistle* 32, 188.

52. *dhaka`an-nafs wa-safa`gawhariha wa-hiya-`l-asl fi gami`al-ma`arif*, *Epistle* 46, 63.

53. *an-nafs tastabsir dhataha wa-ta`raf gawharaha*. *Epistle* 48, 185.

54. *Epistle* 23, 380.

55. *Epistle* 26, 461.

56. *Epistle* 29, 40.

57. *Epistle* 48, 182.

58. *Epistle* 44, 27.

Parallel with the Brethren's twofold description of the hereafter, is a twofold description of the soul. They depict the soul as both tripartite, containing (1) the vegetative (*nabatiyya*), (2) the animal (*hayawaniyya*) and (3) the human logical (*insaniyya, natiqa*) faculties,⁵⁹ and as being composed of five parts: (1) vegetative appetitive (*nabatiyya shahwaniyya*), (2) animal emotional (*hayawaniyya ghadbaniyya*), (3) human logical (*insaniyya natiqa*),⁶⁰ (4) the intellectual soul as desiring wisdom (*'aqila hikmiyya*), and (5) the moral angelic soul (*namusiyya malakiyya*) which desires to be close to its Lord (*qurb rabbiha*).⁶¹ The first, tripartite account of the nature of the soul, the model preferred by the *mutakallimun*, is probably used by the Brethren to describe the soul of the common man, whereas the five-part account, which puts the accent on the 'supernaturally' inspired activities of the rational faculty, arguably provides an account of the soul of the elected. The soul of the common man, according to the Brethren, is tuned to the experience of the senses which inform him about the external physical world. The elected, on the other hand, tends to investigate the internal spiritual world of his soul through introspection. The two versions in the understanding of the notion of hereafter extant in the Brethren appears to correspond to these two orientations: the physical 'afterlife' version reflects the externalist rationalist approach, while the spiritual 'otherworld' model corresponds to the internalist orientation.

The Psychology of Elkhanan ben Abraham

The treatise entitled *The Foundation of the World* [*Yesod 'Olam*], the only work attributed to Elkhanan ben Abraham, is only thirty-seven pages long. However, it provides sufficient proof that the author appears to be more gnosticizing and much more a dualist in nature concerning the connection between soul and body than the Sincere Brethren. While the Brethren fully accept the external sensual and rational activities of the soul, Elkhanan ben Abraham univocally discredits them. In his view the soul has a simple option: either it observes its own luminous and radiant substance which is 'its own world,' or it becomes intermingled with the physical world and thereby lost in it.⁶²

Elkhanan ben Abraham agrees with the Brethren upon the fact that the soul has a unique and uncomposite nature and that the physical world of multiplicity and complexity serves as a prison for the soul (230, par. 40). The soul, being a noble and eternal substance without accidents (225, par. 28)

59. *Epistle* 30, 68.

60. This type of soul is equal to the immediate knowledge of the intellect described by the *mutakallimun*. The *Brethren* characterize it as the "innate intellect" (*al-'aql al-garizi*), meaning the immediate intuitions existing in each human. *Epistle* 9, 316.

61. *Epistle* 9, 313.

62. *The Foundation of the World* 230, par. 38.

does not feel well in the world of constantly changing accidents and craves for its own permanent spiritual world. On an individual level, the human body and soul correspond to the two basic realms: the everchanging physical world and the purely spiritual timeless world of the intellect.

The soul in the world of the Intellect has all the senses that she has in this world. But the senses she disposes in the other world [the world of the Intellect] are more noble than the ones she has in this world. In fact, the senses belonging to the soul in this world are divided and they attain divided things which change constantly. There, in the world of the intellect, on the other hand, sensation is united, pure, spiritual and simple. And in the same manner, the soul in the otherworld is more noble and exalted than in this world (213, par. 11)

Furthermore, as a result of the inward orientation of the soul, it perceives itself to contain the wholeness of space:

... the soul is not situated in a defined moment and in a concrete space, but rather the space is situated in it, while it is larger and vaster than the space. The proof for this is the dream: when one dreams he sees the spiritual beings and his own soul joining that other world (218, par. 17)

It is a characteristic tenet of the thought of Elkhanan ben Abraham and of the Neo-Platonizing and mystical authors as well that the luminous spiritual world attained by the introspection of the soul plays the same role as the concept of the 'afterlife' in the more externally oriented rationalists and orthodox theologians. The apparent injustice, pain and suffering of this world is counterbalanced and corrected in an other realm. This realm is described by the rationalists in temporal and physical terms as 'afterlife,' while the Neo-Platonic authors describe it in spatial terms as located in the soul and being identical to it.

There [in the other world], the space and the object situated in the space are one and the same. This means that the soul is radiant and its world consists of simple light as far as it is directed towards this other world. In its world there is neither time, nor motion. And since there is no time and no motion there, there is no change from one thing to the other either, and the fact that there is no change there implies that it [the soul] is both space and substance, given the fact that the soul and its world are one single existent (222, par. 25)

At this point, the notion of eternity loses its temporality; it is no more the endless continuation of physical time, but it becomes the motionless entirely spiritual realm which is represented by al-Qiriqisani as the state of the existents after the collapse of the physical world, and by the Sincere Brethren as the view of the elected about the concept of the hereafter.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have argued that in Muslim and Jewish medieval thought the two models applied to the representation of the hereafter correspond to the two orientations the soul may take. On the one hand, if the soul is represented as having an outward orientation focusing on the external world, the notion of the 'hereafter' will be described as physical and temporal. Or, if the soul is engaged in the observation of its own substance, the 'hereafter' is depicted as purely spiritual and timeless. To put it in other words, the apparent opposition between the two images applied in the description of the hereafter can be solved by the fact that when describing the 'hereafter,' the soul applies the same language as it applies in its more 'ordinary' investigations. Thus, if the soul is directed towards the external world, it uses the same terms used for the description of the physical world when it describes the 'hereafter' as well, whereas, if the soul's dominant activity is introspection, it tends to represent the 'hereafter' as being a non-temporal, purely spiritual realm.

I have also attempted to prove that in the works of both Maimonides and Avicenna, the differences from one work to the other in describing the 'hereafter' reflect a problem which already existed in the tenth century. Undoubtedly, both authors were familiar with both traditions described above and with the tensions existing between them. It is likely that both philosophers recognized that the purely spiritual, timeless view of the 'otherworld' is highly elitist in nature and that as such it could not represent a general outline for all the members of the community. They were, no doubt, also aware of the fact that the purely inward orientation of the soul entails ethical difficulties because it neglects interpersonal relations. Therefore, while in the case of certain individuals it may serve as a viable method to attain the 'other world,' it does not represent a general model for an entire community.