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PHILOSOPHY OF FLOATING FOUNDATIONS:

THE ISLAND AND ETHICAL FORMATION
IN IBN TUFAYL'S ḤAYY IBN YAQẒĀN

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Abstract: Whereas Al-Jāhiz and Al-Mas'ūdi place final authority in the Qur'an, in Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, Ibn Tufayl submits even Scripture and Tradition to the validation of the experience of the rational intellect, philosophical knowledge and intuitive wisdom. Consequently, Hayy's (Life's) journey is a philosophical endeavor which privileges rational experience and intuition over the symbolic veils of societal tradition and imitates the scientific methods of the geographer, who holds the primacy of personal experience over oral and written testimony. The imagined WāqWāq Island of Ibn Tufayl's text, as an antipode to the philosophical space of authoritative knowledge (civilization), is thus inextricably linked to a growing knowledge and imagination of the sea, facilitated by advancements in cartography and extensive networks of maritime exchange. As such, the beginning of philosophy and reason, and the purest path of ascent toward the divine, is perhaps possible only on floating foundations, in the midst of the sea.

Ibn Tufayl's knowledge and pursuit of Eastern Philosophy, his use of "oriental" sources, *a la* Ibn Sīna, and his twelfth-century reimagining of WāqWāq Island, reveals a world of Islamic trade, travel and cross-cultural exchange which inevitably affected Hispano-Arab spatial consciousness, and led to the conception of a much broader intellectual Mediterranean space. Moreover, it reveals a world of intellectual travelers who were enchanted not by far off lands, but far off seas, at the very edges of their world, and their imaginations. As such, I argue that the imagined island of Ibn Tufayl's text, as an antipode to the philosophical space of authoritative knowledge (civilization), is inextricably linked to a growing knowledge and imagination of the sea, facilitated by advancements in cartography and extensive networks of maritime exchange. Notably, the place of Ḥayy's philosophical experimentation is an (is)land, not (main)land, and thus, contrary to the assertion of Hans Blumenberg, I contend that solid ground is not necessary for the exercise of philosophy. On the contrary, the maritime space Ḥayy inhabits, distant from the strictures of civilization, reveals that the beginning of philosophy and reason, and the purest path of man's ascent toward the divine, is possible only on floating foundations, in the midst of the sea.

With Houari Touati's study *Islam and Travel in the Middle Ages* as a historical anchor and methodological framework, I contextualize my reading of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* within the narrative and cartographic traditions of travel, as well as the concept of the intellectual journey in medieval Islam, with which an Andalusī Muslim like Ibn Tufayl would have had extensive contact. However, though Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* participates in, and is a product of, Islamic and Mediterranean traditions of travel, where the pursuit of knowledge is linked to the voyage, at times it clearly breaks with this tradition by questioning the intellectual value of travel. Though much of the text narrates Ḥayy's spiritual journey and describes the process and path of his union with the divine as a voyage, it ultimately problematizes Islamic and broader Mediterranean traditions of travel which intimately connected the pursuit of truth with the physical journey, as seen in the tradition of the *rihla fi talab al-'ilm* (travel in search of knowledge). Instead, Ibn Tufayl's



text claims that Truth and pure knowledge can be achieved without the voyage, without the wisdom of men of learning, and indeed without society. Such mediated truth is insufficient for ascent into pure wisdom, which can be achieved only through a clear vision of things (*tabayyun*). But this symbolic physical voyage has not altogether lost its purpose in the text. While dangerous for Ḥayy, for others like Asāl –and, perhaps, Salāmān– it may prove beneficial.

Consequently, and contrary to Sami Hawi's characterization of the text as two stories resulting from "a confusion between his artistic and philosophical needs", I contend that including Asāl and Salāmān (and the polis) into the narrative serves not only the philosophical and theological purpose of the work, but also shapes how Ibn Tufayl maps the space of knowledge, and in particular the intellectual space of the medieval Mediterranean for a twelfth-century Andalusī Muslim philosopher. Here I examine the ethical implications of the symbolic spaces and movements of Ḥayy, Asāl and Salāmān, and how they exemplify variant socio-theological practices of travel. Moreover, I am concerned with how these represent divergent philosophical approaches to the notion of travel in relation to the intellectual journey as understood and articulated by a twelfth-century Andalusī Muslim philosopher and theologian writing on the western edge of the Mediterranean but steeped in philosophical, maritime and cartographic traditions which stretched from Persia to Iberia, to the Indian Ocean and back again.

Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān is a twelfth-century philosophical treatise written by Ibn Tufayl (Abu Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Tufayl al-Qaysi al-Andalusī) in the form of an allegorical novel enclosed within a letter (*risāla*) addressed to a dear friend in which he responds to a request to reveal "the secrets of the oriental philosophy" mentioned by the great Persian physician and theologian Ibn Sīna (Abu 'Alī ibn Sīna, or Avicenna by European scholars, 980-1037) (95).¹ In it, Ibn Tufayl recounts the story of Ḥayy, a castaway human child who is raised by feral animals

¹ All citations of the original Arabic text of Ibn Tufayl's *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* are from Léon Gauthier, *Ḥayy ben Yaqdhān: Roman philosophique d'Ibn Thofail*. All English translations are from Lenn Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, unless otherwise noted.

on a deserted but bountiful island. After describing Ḥayy's fifty years of solitude and achievement of a transcendent union with the divine, we are then introduced to the inhabitants of another island, a wise sage named Asāl and his cousin and king Salāmān. Thinking the island deserted, Asāl goes to the island searching for a life of solitude to pursue Truth similar to Ḥayy. There, he encounters Ḥayy and recognizes that Ḥayy's beatific visions not only agree with the tenets of his own religious tradition, but unlock many of its heretofore hidden secrets.

The Arabic name of the protagonist Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān can be translated as "Life Son of Awake."² In contrast to Ibn Sīnā's *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, from which Ibn Tufayl borrows the title of his treatise and the name of his protagonist –not to mention its allegorical dimension– Ḥayy is no longer the Active Intelligence and incorporeal emanation of the First Cause; rather, he is human and more resembles the solitary being of Ibn Bajja (1095-1138), though pushed to its extremes. In Ibn Sīnā's allegorical tale, Ḥayy is an elderly sage who instructs the narrator (human reason) about the nature of the universe. In Ibn Tufayl's original adaptation, the narrator as theologian and philosopher, attempts the dangerous task of "describing" the reconciliation of revealed religion (*kalām*) and philosophy (*falsafah* or *al-hikma al-mushriqiyya*). Moreover, Ibn Tufayl explicitly conveys an interest in the geographic implications of the itinerancy of philosophy (Eastern Philosophy). From the very beginning he reminds the reader that there is a wealth of knowledge in the East that has not yet made it to the West (al-Andalus), including the works of Al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), Al-Farabi (872-950) and Ibn Mu'tazz (861-908).³ Such knowledge, "put into words and set down in books . . . is rarer than red sulfur, especially in our part of the world" (99).⁴ It is of little surprise, then, that Ibn Tufayl speaks so often of the intellectual and spiritual journey in the language of

² This can be alternately translated as Life (or the Living One) son of the Awake (or Aware). See Iraj Dehghan, "Jāmi's Salāmān and Asāl" 118.

³ See Goodman 96-97.

⁴ يحتمل ان يوضع في الكتب و تنصرف فيه العبارات . . . اعدم من الكبريت الاحمر ولا سيما في هذا [الصنع] الذي' (11). To this he adds, "Do not suppose the philosophy which has reached us in the books of Aristotle and Fārābī or in Avicenna's *Healing* will satisfy you" 'ولا تظن ان الفلسفة التي' (99; 11-12). 'وصلت الينا في كتب ارسطو وابى نصر وفي كتاب الشفاء تفي بهذا الغرض الذى اردته



travel. In fact, he equates Ḥayy's surname Yaqzān "Aware" with the concept of travel through the notion of "arrival." That is, his vision of ecstasy and union with the divine is for Ḥayy the end of a journey. We read of this union: "In himself and in other beings of his rank, Ḥayy saw goodness, beauty, joy without end...known only by the aware, who arrive" (153).⁵ One could argue that Ḥayy is returning to his source; as the son (*ibn*) of Awake (*Yaqzān*), the aim of Life's (*Ḥayy's*) journey is to seek and ultimately abide with the singular divine primogenitor of all being, the Aristotelian Prime Mover (as conceived of by Avicenna). Consequently, Ḥayy's tale appears to articulate this ontological process in the rhetorical vestments of travel, particularly in and of the Andalusī philosophical tradition, itself an intellectual space steeped in a broader Mediterranean, and "Eastern" tradition of knowledge and travel.⁶

The link between knowledge and travel can be found in early Greek writing. Though George Rawlinson's translation of Herodotus renders *theoria* only as "one who sees" (from the verb *theorein*, to observe), scholars such as Roxanne Euben have suggested that in the *Histories*, Herodotus uses the term *theoria* simultaneously to define the journey as well as the knowledge one gains from it.⁷ For example, Herodotus describes Anacharsis the Scythian as having "traversed much of the world on a *theoria* and throughout this had given evidence of his great wisdom" (James Ker 314). And though Aristotle would emphasize the distinction between theory and praxis, Plato allowed for the notion of *theoria* to include practical applications, where, for example, one uses the wisdom from theory to interact better in daily

⁵ 'ورأى لذاته ولتلك الذات التي في رتبته من الحسن والبهاء واللذة غير المتناهية . . . يعقله إلا الواصلون العارفون' (130-31).

⁶ Greeks, Romans, and medieval Christians, Muslims and Jews all shared similar notions of travel throughout the Mediterranean space, in both figurative and literal terms. As Hans Blumenberg contends in *Shipwreck with Spectator*, "Humans live their lives and build their institutions on dry land. Nevertheless, they seek to grasp the movement of their existence above all through the metaphors of the perilous sea voyage" (7).

⁷ Euben further highlights that the etymological possibilities of the Greek *theoros* allows for multiple meanings, which can carry theological implications, such that the prefix *thea* (light) or *theos* (God) is linked to the suffix *oros* (one who sees). She points out, in fact, that an early meaning of *theoros* was an envoy dispatched to the Oracle at Delphi such that "from the very beginning the theorist was sent to bring back the word of god" (36).

life with daily things (*The Laws*, Book 12). But, to “travel and observe” is not “characteristically Greek” as Redfield reminds us (98). The connection between movement and knowledge is similarly suggested in the Arabic root *k-sh-f*, from which we derive the words explorer (*muktashif*) and inquiry (*kashf*). And as Euben suggests, and I must agree, the Islamic notion of travel in the search of knowledge (*rihla fi talab al-'ilm*) recalls the many connotations of the Greek *theoria* where embassies, pilgrimage, sightseeing, knowledge, and observation of others are all closely linked (36).

By the eighth century Islam was forced to deal with the problem of disappearing sources of knowledge and shifting authoritative centers throughout and across the Mediterranean (Touati 25-28). The Prophet and his companions were dead and those who had gleaned knowledge from them were also passing; thus, the difficulty of safe-guarding the transmission of knowledge and *al-hadith* from their sources grew more difficult (“Hadith”). And it is specifically in this period that Islam is becoming a Mediterranean presence. As they had once moved from Mecca to Medina, Muslims were now moving into and across the Mediterranean space. The Muslim *'ilm*, as knowledge related to Islamic tradition, conceived of genealogical knowledge which called for all *hadith* to be authenticated by an unbroken chain of transmission (*isnad*). And as authoritative centers were moving westward (i.e. to Baghdad, Damascus and as far as Córdoba), the gathering of this information required travel, generally eastward. This is carefully and copiously documented in a genre of Islamic literature called *tabakat* (generations) or *'ilm al-rijal* (knowledge of the transmitters of *hadith*). Intended to evaluate the narrators of *hadith*, it is at times necessary for the author to recount their travels in order to verify the authenticity of the *isnad*.⁸

⁸ Though *hadith*, *isnad* and *tabakat* unmistakably connect the search for knowledge with travel, all at times make allowances for intermediary observation and the transmission of hearing (*sama'*). Al-Muqaddassi (940-1000), for example, justifies the use of both hearing and writing as sources of testimony in the absence of the ocular witness in order to avoid *aporia*, a critical impasse. In fact, this is all but explicitly stated by Al-Muqaddasi by the manner in which he organizes his *Ahsan al-Ta'asim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim* (أحسن التقاسيم في معرفة الأقاليم) as a hierarchical categorization of the various sources of witness: “This book of ours, then, falls into three parts: first, what I myself have witness; second, what I have heard

By the end of the ninth century travel had informed geography long enough that the model of Persian historian Balādhurī (ʿAḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, d. 892), which privileged the oral transmission of knowledge, was already being called into question.⁹ Rather, like Masʿudi, many followed the experience-based model of ocular primacy. As Touati reminds us, Muslim scholar Al-Jāhiz (776-868), or “the pop-eyed man” (Abū ʿUthman ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Kinānī al-Baṣrī), “is among those who played an essential role in promoting sight to the dignity of a positive tool for knowledge” (105). In fact, his *Book of the Round and the Square* is a plea for knowledge to be liberated from the tight-fisted grip of the principle of tradition. Touati notes this epistle had a wide circulation and reached as far as Andalusia, discussed by such scholars as Persian philologist Ibn Qutayba (828-885) and Arab philosopher Al-Tawhidi (923-1023) (Touati 106). But like Aristotle, Al-Jāhiz believed that the knowledge of experience, that gained by the senses, must be tempered by the authority of reason, which he saw as a necessary and unique tool with which to validate one’s understanding of the physical world of senses. That is, we should desire to achieve not just direct observation (ʿiyan) but a clear vision of things (*tabayyun*).¹⁰ Did Ibn Tufayl share this notion?

By the start of the tenth century, most Arab Muslim writers of the voyage were following the path first set out for them by Al-Jāhiz, as distilled from Greco-Roman as well as Persian, Indian and Chinese tradition. It was not until the twelfth century with Abu Bakr al-Arabi of Seville that we see the *rihla* emerge as an independent literary genre that narrativized the voyage,

from persons worthy of confidence; and third, what I have found in books devoted to this subject” كُتَابُنَا هَذَا ثَلَاثَةُ أَقْسَامٍ أَحَدُهَا مَا عَايَنَاهُ وَالثَّانِي مَنْ سَمِعْنَاهُ مِنَ الثَّلَاثِ مَنْ وَجَدْنَاهُ فِي الْكُتُبِ الْمَصْنُفَةِ “ (Collins 3; *Ahsan al-Taqaṣim*). See also Jonathan Lyons, “Mapping the World” in *The House of Wisdom* (78-99, especially 90-91); and Houari Touati 133-42.

⁹ See Balādhūrī, *Kitāb Futuh al-Buldan*, or *Book of Conquests of the Lands*, published as *Liber expugnationis regionum* by de Goeje, which opens with the intermediary words: “قال احمد: بن يحيى بن جابر اخبرني جماعة من هل العلم بالحديث والسيره وفتوح البلدان سقت حديثهم والخبرته ورددت من بعضه على بعض ان رسول الله صلعم لها هاجر الى مدينة من مكة” ‘Ahmad ibn Yahia ibn Jabir has said: ‘I have been informed by a group of specialists of traditions of the military action that the Prophet and the [Muslim] wars of conquest, whose words I have followed and summarized” (Balādhūrī 2; Touati 128).

¹⁰ Ar. تَبَيَّنَ and عَيَّنَ, respectively.

but by the end of the 9th century a few important and well-known scholars, such as Al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897), were headed in this direction, giving this new geographical paradigm of sight ('*īyan/autopsia*') primacy over the paradigm of sound. For example, in the *Kitab al-Buldān*, Al-Ya'qūbī's continued emphasis on visual testimony, as Touati contends, set up "an instance of truth saying that permits him to speak more legitimately about the lands that he has visited than someone who speaks of them never having left home" (129).¹¹ A full description of this literary method is beyond the scope of this investigation. What is important, however, are the elements of this tradition which the author of this study inherits and employs to construct and map the space of his philosophical thought experiment. That is, very early on in Arab-Islamic and Mediterranean geography (including both cartography and narrative), the conflation of sight and the voyage became an important if not necessary component to the acquisition of knowledge; the Arabic '*īyan*' (observation) resembled *autopsia* (to see with one's own eyes) of the ancient Greeks, such that a trustworthy witness was an eye-witness.¹²

Whereas for both Al-Jāhiz (d.868) and Al-Mas'ūdi (d. 956) the final authority against which all things must be tested is the *Qur'an*, or that which is attested in the *Hadith*, Ibn Tufayl, by way of his primary protagonist Ḥayy, submits even Scripture and Tradition to the validation of the personal experience of the rational intellect, philosophical knowledge and intuitive wisdom. That is, for this author, a clear vision of things (*tabayyun*) is gained first

¹¹ The tales of Sindbad and the *maqamat* genre deliberately subvert this idea, demonstrating that even first-person accounts or tales of travel are untrustworthy. In Andalusī Hebrew tradition, see Judah al-Harizi (1165-1225), *Sefer Tahkemoni* (The Book of Wisdom); in Arab tradition, see Judah al-Hariri of Basra (1054-1122), *Maqamat al-Hariri* (The Maqamat of al-Hariri); and in the Arab-Persian tradition, see Al-Hamadhāni (967-1007), *Maqamat Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani* (The Maqamat of Badi' al-Zaman al-Hamadhani).

¹² This is, of course, where we derive the English cognate for dissecting a deceased human body: autopsy. This term is particularly relevant to a discussion of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* given that the intellectual journey for Ḥayy begins in earnest when he quite literally performs an autopsy on the lifeless carcass of his gazelle mother in search of what might be blocking her life force. It is worth noting, that whereas for Herodotus (*Histories*) there is no apparent rupture between hearing and seeing, in Thucydides we see a clear privileging of direct or intermediary visual witness for the verification of historical knowledge. See François Hartog, *Le miroir d'Hérodote* 282; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*, I.73.



through direct observation (*'iyan*), first of the physical world and then of the supernal. And though grounded in Ibn Sina's notion that *tabayyun* is possible only through the union of a person with the Necessary Existent, Ibn Tufayl appears to add to this that such clear vision of things is preferable to the Law, Commandments and Scripture, including the words of prophets (i.e. that witnessed through the subordinate sensations of sound or script). Thus, Ḥayy's journey is a philosophical endeavor which privileges rational experience and intuition over the symbolic veils of societal tradition and imitates the scientific methods of the geographer who holds the primacy of personal experience and ocular evidence over oral and written testimony. But whereas for the geographer, knowledge correlates the witness and experience of itinerant travel, for Ibn Tufayl, the pursuit of knowledge as a spiritual journey requires no such voyage.

As the locus of rational inquiry and intellectual development, the island as a philosophical space becomes an essential component and determining factor to the success of Ḥayy's spiritual ascent. But what is the island? Where is it? And, what purpose does it serve in the philosophical and spiritual journey? More importantly, what does the image of this insular space tell us about how a twelfth-century Muslim philosopher and theologian like Ibn Tufayl conceived of his *oikoumene*? That is, how does Ibn Tufayl map the space of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*? Though the toponym "WāqWāq" (*al-jazīra al-WāqWāq*) is not found in the Arabic text of Gauthier's edition of *Ḥayy* (Oxford manuscript), a gloss in the Arabic text of the British Museum manuscript of *Philosophus autodidactus sive Epistola Abi Jaafar Ebn Tophail de Hai Ebn Yokdhan* notes: "and it is [the island] of which Mas'udi spoke, upon which live the Maids of WāqWāq" (my translation).¹³ Like other medieval geographic conceptions of space, namely Christian/European, Arabo-Islamic geography saw the Ocean as the limit of the Earth. For medieval geographers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Jāhiz and Mas'udi, the known world was represented as surrounded by the two bodies of the Embracing Sea: the Sea of Rum (Mediterranean) and the Sea of Fars (Indian Ocean). Mecca was most often at the center (Lyon 78-99). Arab-Islamic geographers also

¹³ (26) 'وهي التي ذكر المسعودي انها جوارى الوقواق'

generally viewed islands in the same manner as their Christian counterparts, inheriting shared traditions from Classical Antiquity, in which islands were inhabited by monsters, cannibals, and flora which gave the bearer everlasting life or eternal youth (Bermejo).¹⁴ However, one of the most important and original Arab-Islamic contributions to medieval cartography was the island of WāqWāq. It has alternately been depicted as a chain of islands by Ibn al-Wardi and Al-Himyari, or a single island by Al-Ya'qūbī and Ibn Tufayl. Though both Ibn Tufayl and Al-Ya'qūbī place WāqWāq somewhere in the Indian Ocean, Ibn Tufayl's deserted island-scape contrasts the inhabited monarchy found in Al-Ya'qūbī's text. In his description of the seven seas one must cross in order to reach China, following oral tradition, Al-Ya'qūbī writes of the second sea called Larwi just east of Fars (India):

It is a big sea, and in it is the Island of WāqWāq and others that belong to the Zanj. These islands have kings. One can only sail this sea by the stars. It contains huge fish, and in it are many wonders and things that pass description. (Lunde 27)¹⁵

Persian geographer Ibn Khurradadhbīh (Abu'l Qasim Ubaid'Allah ibn Khurradadhbīh, d. 912) places the island at the eastern edge of the Indian Ocean as the antipode of Qulzum, a city at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez.¹⁶ Though in the majority of accounts WāqWāq is an uninhabited or

¹⁴ For studies on the continuation of the Latin cartographic tradition in Arabic, see Vallvé Bermejo, "Fuentes Latinas de los geógrafos árabes" (1967) and Molina, "Orosio y los geógrafos hispanomusulmanes" (1930). For Islamic cartography in general, see Maqbul, *A History of Arab-Islamic Geography* (1995); Maqbul, "Cartography of Sharif al-Idrisi" (1987-88).

¹⁵ وهو بحر عظيم، وفيه جزائر الوقواق، وغيرهم من الزنج، وفي تلك الجزائر ملوك، وإنما يسار في هذا البحر بالنجوم، وله سمك عظيم، وفيه عجائب كثيرة وأمر لا توصف (Tārīkh al-Ya'qūbī 207).

¹⁶ See Edmund C. Bosworth, "Ebn Kordadbeh" in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. The literal antipode of ancient Qulzum would be somewhere in the South Pacific Ocean mid-way between Australia and South America. For an interactive map, see <http://www.zefrank.com/sandwich/tool.html>. The Arab tradition of WāqWāq as an usual tree from which women grow and are suspended by their hair from its branches actually finds its earliest known reference (though without a name) in a late 8th century Chinese source known as the *T'ung-tien*, written by Ta Huan. In it he recounts the stories that were told to his father by Arab sailors while he was a prisoner of war in Baghdad. In the 11th century, al-Biruni's *Kitab al-Hind*, based in large part on Sanskrit sources, rejects the wild stories that depict "a tree which produces screaming human heads instead of fruits" (Suárez 53). Al-Idrisi seemed to have similar distain for such fanciful tales and even repudiated al-Mas'udi who he asserts "tells us unbelievable stories



sparsely populated island of strange and marvelous wonders, some versions describe the island as advanced and inhabited by large villages and an industrious population.¹⁷

Given his familiarity with the writings of Al-Ya'qūbī and Al-Mas'ūdī, it is not unreasonable to assume Ibn Tufayl had at least some familiarity with this tradition, and it is perhaps with this model in mind that he places Ḥayy's island in the southern climes of the Indian Ocean.¹⁸ In the first few lines of Gauthier's transcription of the Arabic in the Oxford manuscript of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, Ibn Tufayl writes of:

Our forefathers, blessed be of memory, tell of a certain equatorial island, lying off the coast of India, where human beings come into being without father or mother. This is possible, they say, because, of all places on earth, that island has the most tempered climate. And because a supernal light streams down on it, it is the most perfectly adapted to accept the human form. (103)¹⁹

While it is unclear whether or not the island of Ḥayy is in fact the WāqWāq of historical, literary, and pseudo-geographical legend, the anonymous contemporary marginalia which reads Ḥayy's island as WāqWāq becomes a valuable witness. And it is important and revealing that Ibn Tufayl should use it, however tenuously, as a point of reference. In a philosophical treatise steeped in the Neo-Platonic tradition of experiential rationalism, and

which are not worth telling" (Suárez 53). See also al-Mas'ūdī, *Muruj al-Dhahabi* (Meadows of Gold).

¹⁷ See, for example, Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar, *Kitab al Ajab al Hind*. The cartographic and literary history of the tradition of WāqWāq is much more complicated than I have even shown here. For a more detailed study on the subject, consult Shawkat M. Toorawa "Wāq al-Wāq: Fabulous, Fabular, Indian Ocean (?) Island(s)..." (2000) and F. Viré, "Wakwak, Wakwak, Wak Wak, Wak al-Wak, al-WakWak" (2013).

¹⁸ For Andalusī authors the paradisiacal was general portrayed in the image of the courtly garden or *hortus conclusus*. As a *locus amoenus*, however, it was not apart from society but intimately connected to the urban center and a circle of intellectual elites, who praised the achievement of culture and letters and indulged in the pleasures of the sensory world. Citing Pastor, Baroud suggests the possibility that Ḥayy's island is Sarandib or Ceylon, an island most Muslim theologians suggest is the location of the Garden of Eden or the earthly paradise (101).

¹⁹ ذكر سلفنا الصالح رضي الله عنهم ان جزيرة من جزائر الهند التي تحت خط الاستواء وهي الجزيرة التي يتولد بها (20) الانسان من غير ام ولا اب لها اعدل بقاع الارض هواء اتمها لشروق النور الاعلى عليها استعدادا

composed during a period of advancement in maritime technology and the science of cartography, why employ the image of an island whose existence even Al-Idrisi questioned as unverifiable and whose supposed legendary qualities are worthy of mockery? This question is difficult to answer, and it may not be answered here to the reader's complete satisfaction. But in addressing the issue, we are forced to consider more critically the island and its purpose in the text, and more importantly, the philosophical space of Ḥayy's spiritual ascent.

For Lenn Goodman, the island of *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, though void of any societal strictures, resembles in theory the order of the Aristotelian *politeia*. Ben-Zaken has discussed the island space of Ḥayy's metaphysical awakening as a "no-place" largely irrelevant to geographic and cartographic epistemology. Mahmoud Baroud's pseudo-etymological analysis of the Greek "utopia" (οὐτοπία), which he argues derives from a pun based on the Greek "not" (οὐ) and "good" (εὖ), suggests Ḥayy's island shares the composite meaning of "no place" and "good place". Though somewhat linguistically suspect, this analysis attempts a slightly more nuanced notion of Ḥayy's island home. Baroud suggests, however, it is a utopia which can never be here and must always be nowhere, somewhere we do not know, for a utopia can never truly exist (95). This literary tradition is largely based on Plato's *Republic* which delineates the qualities and characteristics of a perfect society based on equality, justice and tolerance, void of poverty and misery.²⁰ Similar examples in Islamic thought most notably include Al-Fārābī's *Principles of the Views of the Citizens of the Best State*. There are two immediate problems with this model, however. First, the island of Ḥayy's "adventures" is not imagined as an ideal society. In fact, it is not a society at all; it is the absence of civilization and all strictures society offers. Second, according to Al-Fārābī, following Plato and Aristotle, man cannot live in isolation and is incapable of realizing his highest potential except as a member of society. Though they are interested in the ascent of the individual intellect, for these philosophers the highest good of man is to create and govern the ideal polity, *al-madīna al-fāḍila* and *ideodes politeia*, respectively. In contrast, Ibn Tufayl's island

²⁰ See Plato, *Republic* 4.433d-c.



reveals an ethical philosophy which suggests the individual ascent to the Supreme Intellect is the highest aim of man, and is achieved –at least in theory– only in isolation and the absence of the polity.

For many Muslims of the twelfth century, after six centuries of Islamic conquest, “civilization” in the social and religio-political sense of the term is frequently equated with the *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam). That is, civilization meant those lands under the rule of Islam and thus subject to its social, political, theological, and economic authority and influence. As we shall see, Ibn Tufayl appears to suggest that the purest pursuit of knowledge must take place beyond that space, outside of Islam, and therefore apart from the authority of the *Qurʾan*. As an intimate friend and advisor to Abu Yaʿqub Yusuf al-Mansur, the caliph of the Islamic Almohad dynasty, could Ibn Tufayl possibly be saying this? To answer this question, it is necessary to understand Asāl and Salāmān’s motivations to, or not to, travel.

Asāl is a religiously trained and learned man. When he meets Ḥayy, he (Asāl) had decided to renounce the distractions of his society and seek the ascetic life of a hermit in search of Truth. He sets out upon the ocean and happens upon what he believes to be an uninhabited island where he disembarks and begins his life of hermitage. The island is not deserted, however; it is Ḥayy’s island, WāqWāq. Inevitably Ḥayy and Asāl happen upon each other, and though at first Asāl attempts to avoid Ḥayy, believing him to be another ascetic in search of solitude, Ḥayy’s curiosity is overwhelming and he begins to pursue Asāl, who attempts to flee in response. Though Asāl is at first terrified of his captor, and unsure of who or what he is, he eventually attempts to communicate with him, and finding him without language, teaches him his own. In this way both Ḥayy and Asāl are able to share the knowledge and wisdom of their experiences, after which Asāl comes to understand that the state of enlightenment Ḥayy has reached, is that which he seeks. And with Ḥayy’s guidance, he will soon achieve it.

Unlike Ḥayy, however, Asāl’s ultimate enlightenment and spiritual ascent is made possible through travel, only after he journeys across the sea and meets a master (Ḥayy) from beyond his *land*. That is, while Ḥayy begins

his internal journey from a privileged space (discussed above), Asāl must leave his land; that is, travel outside the sphere of institutional influence (religious, social, political). His apprehension of Truth is only possible beyond the ever-present distractions of society and the mediated reality it veils. We would do well to remember that one of these veils is language, the phonic and graphic symbols of thought and meaning. For Asāl was a social being, a man of learning and letters. We read: “[I]n his passion for the study of the more sophisticated level of interpretation, [Asāl] had studied and gained fluency in many languages” (159).²¹ In contrast, Ḥayy had no language. But Ibn Tufayl presents Ḥayy not as ignorant of language and letters, as Baroud contends, but free from them.²² Even language as a system of symbols with which to convey meaning is still nothing more than a veil, an artifice that impedes access to pure knowledge and wisdom. For Plato and Aristotle, in whose philosophy this text is steeped, the philosopher’s experience of the eternal is “unspeakable” (*arrheton*) and “without word” (*aneu logon*), respectively.²³ Consequently, even if the greatest philosopher were to have discovered the eternal as Truth, the moment he attempts to recount or describe the experience by any means other than experience and pure contemplation (e.g., writing, speaking, etc.), his thoughts cease to focus on the eternal.²⁴

As such, the origin story of Ḥayy apart from society *ab initio* signifies that Ḥayy has circumvented this epistemological impasse; Asāl has not. Like Ḥayy, Asāl is an intelligent and contemplative man of advanced philosophical understanding, but Asāl’s awakening thus far finds its foundation within a system of symbols codified by social and political institutions. Thus, when Asāl finally meets Ḥayy, his perspective of this strange hermit is mediated by the strictures of his civilization and culture. As a man without language, in Asāl’s eyes, Ḥayy lacks knowledge or at least a necessary tool by which to gain access to knowledge. This is at first frustrating for Asāl who, as a

²¹ (141-42). وكان اسال قديما لمحبه في علم والتأويل قد تعلم اطر الالسن.

²² See Baroud, Chapter 5, “The Heroes’ encounter with the Other”.

²³ See Plato, *Seventh Letter* (341c) and Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1142a 25ff., 1178a 6ff.

²⁴ In Platonic terms, he has left the *vita contemplativa* and necessarily entered the *vita activa*.



polyglot, is unable to recognize the origin of Ḥayy's animalistic utterances.²⁵ For the lettered and civilized Asāl, Ḥayy is untranslatable. But the attentive reader will have observed, as Ibn Tufayl himself tells us, "Not knowing how to speak did not prevent him from understanding" (149).²⁶ In fact, "he witnessed what no eye has seen or ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive" (149).²⁷

At this point, it becomes clear that Asāl is the convert and Ḥayy is the messenger and guide. But Ḥayy also recognizes that Asāl's religion conveys the truth that he had discovered on his own and that the messenger that brought that truth was rightly guided. As such, Ḥayy willingly witnesses to that truth, which, as Goodman points out, makes one wonder if Ḥayy was not a Muslim all along (231). Baroud writes that the revealed Law under which Asāl lives, "though inaccessible to reason and intuition, was by no means contrary to reason" (180). And it was specifically through Ḥayy and Asāl's meeting that Ibn Tufayl is able to demonstrate this harmony. This answers Hawi's concern that the episodes after Ḥayy has achieved an enlightened state are a confusion of artistic and philosophical needs. Ḥayy and Asāl's meeting is clearly necessary in order for Ibn Tufayl to demonstrate that the teaching of reason and received tradition were in agreement. In fact, such are the words Ibn Tufayl employs to describe Asāl as witness to the unveiled truth of Ḥayy's experience, though these words could not describe Ḥayy nor could Ḥayy have uttered them given his unfamiliarity with Islamic tradition, or any tradition for that matter. Again, "Asāl had no doubt that the traditions of his religion . . . [were] representations of these things that Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān had seen for himself" (160).²⁸ That is, "Reason and tradition were at one" (160).²⁹ Moreover, Ibn Tufayl makes it clear that the wisdom of Ḥayy's experience supersedes that of Islamic tradition, for now "[a]ll his

²⁵ We read that whilst Ḥayy was living with animals on the island he imitated their calls so well that "eventually his voice and theirs could hardly be distinguished" (34).

²⁶ (141). ولم يمنعه عن فهمه كونه لا يعرف الكلام ولا يتكلم.

²⁷ وشاهد ما لا عين رأت ولا أذن سمعت ولا خطر على قلب بشر (141). Compare also 1 Corinthians 2:9 and Isaiah 64:4.

²⁸ (144). لم يشك اسال في ان جميع الاشياء التي وردت في شريعته . . . هي امثلة هذه التي شاهدها هي بن يقظان.

²⁹ (144). تطابق عنده المعقول والمنقول.

old religious puzzlings were solved; all obscurities, clear. Now he had a ‘heart to understand” (160).³⁰

Even after this moment of epiphany, however, Asāl still needs Ḥayy as a guide to improve his intellectual abilities, and seeing Ḥayy as a saint (*walī*) asks him to be his guide and teacher (*imām*). Asāl’s request that Ḥayy be his guide, as Goodman reminds us, reveals that he has not yet completely shed the trapping of his religion and its social conventions, such as the need for human authority (Goodman 230).³¹ Ḥayy, on the other hand, has neither philosophical nor social need of Asāl. When Asāl describes his religious tradition and the divine vision revealed to them by their prophet, Ḥayy is not further enlightened from an internal ontological standpoint, but rather “understood all this and found none of it in contradiction with what he had seen for himself from his supernal vantage point” (161).³² It is true that after Asāl describes the various practices of his religion Ḥayy “accepted these and undertook to observe them”, but it seems reasonable to assume that the outward symbols of Asāl’s religion were either already practiced by Ḥayy or irrelevant based on his higher understanding and application of truth. Ḥayy says as much in his criticism of the Law (*sharī‘ah*) (161).³³ He asks himself why the prophet (*al-rasūl*) “confine[d] himself to these particular rituals and duties and allow[ed] the amassing of wealth and overindulgence in eating, leaving men idle to busy themselves with inane pastimes and neglect the Truth” (161).³⁴ Society’s laws and regulations on

(144) ولم يبق عليه مشكل في الشرع الاثنيين له ولا مغلق الا انفتح ولا غامض الا اوضح وصار من اولى الالباب (144) See *Qur’an* 50:36-37.

³¹ Ibn Tufayl’s final comments regarding Asāl’s spiritual pursuit suggest his imperfection and that he will, in fact, never fully reach the state he seeks: “Asāl imitated [Ḥayy] until he approached the same heights, or nearly so” (165; 154, emphasis mine).

³² (145) ففهم حى بن يقظان ذلك كله زلم ير فيه شيئا على خلاف ما شاهده في مقامه الكريم (145). It is important to note, as Baroud does, the irony for most Muslim readers of Ibn Tufayl’s text, specifically the image of Ḥayy desiring to save a society that had already received and was currently practicing a religion virtually indistinguishable from that of Islam.

³³ (146) فتلقى ذلك والتزمه (146).

³⁴ اقتصر على هذه الفرائض ووظائف العبادات وابعاح الاقتناء للاموال والتوسع في المآكل حتى تفرغ الناس للاشتغال (146) بالباطل والاعراض عن الحق (146).



money, welfare, property, etc. seemed to Ḥayy inane vanities (*bi-al-bāṭil*) and superfluous (*taṭūwilan*).³⁵ They would not need these laws, he contends, if people could understand things for what they are. His criticism is as much of Asāl as it is of the society from which he comes. But Ḥayy's reproach comes from his naiveté, his belief that "all men had outstanding character, brilliant minds and resolute spirits" (162).³⁶ And Ibn Tufayl does not hold back the critical punches; he contends that Ḥayy "had no idea how stupid, inadequate, thoughtless, and weak willed they are, "like sheep gone astray, only worse" (162).³⁷ And the text's criticism is made possible only by the presence in the story of Asāl, and later Salāmān, according to whom Ḥayy is able to make his comparative evaluations. Ḥayy's naïve belief in both the good and the intellectual capacity of mankind is also what awakens in him the misguided desire to enlighten the inhabitants of Asāl's islands.³⁸

Like Ḥayy, Asāl achieves a transcendent union with the divine, and is presented as similarly intellectually curious and spiritually intuitive. However, before his supernal experience, he is an example of the intellectual contemplative soul within society (*musāfirūn*). Salāmān, on the other hand, does not attempt the ascent, either *in sitio* or by way of the journey; he does not travel in search of wisdom. Similar to Aristotle's concern with the notion of *politeia* (constitution) in the *Politics* and *Ethics* – a particular ordering or organization of the city state – Salāmān "believed in living within society and held it unlawful to withdraw" (Goodman 163).³⁹ And though he is a learned man, he is neither *musāfirūn* nor *muqīmūn*. Instead, Salāmān's appearance

³⁵ تطويلا and بالباطل respectively (146, 147).

³⁶ (147) الناس كلهم ذوو فطر فائقة واذهان ثاقبة ونفوس عازمة.

³⁷ (147) ولم يكن يدرى ما هم عليه من البلادة والناقص وسوء الرأي وضعف العزم وانهم كالانعام بل هم اضل سبيلا. He appears to speak here indiscriminately of all non-believers, not just Muslims.

³⁸ Asāl's arrival to Ḥayy's island is necessary for Ibn Tufayl to discuss the relationship between philosophy and religion. Perhaps his travel is necessary to pursue knowledge and wisdom. And one could argue that in twelfth-century Iberian Islamic thought, especially in the conservative Maghreb, a discussion of this topic was obligatory. After al-Ghazali's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, it was perhaps at minimum as a task of self-defense and a defense of philosophy, if not also to assuage reader concerns.

³⁹ المزالة (150). See Aristotle, *Politics* III.1. See also Immanuel Brekker 155.

in the text, during Ḥayy and Asāl's journey and visit to the inhabited island, serves yet another purpose: a discussion of the function or place of religion in society. It becomes clear that as king and spiritual leader of the densely populated (civilized) polis, Salāmān comes to symbolize the "ideal of involvement" or distraction (*inharāf*), or that which is supremely rejected by Ḥayy in pursuit of the self and of the beatific vision. Salāmān, however, appears less concerned with himself as he is with others; that is, he has committed himself to civic affairs and public welfare. As such, Salāmān and his elite circle of religious leaders are suspicious of Ḥayy and his philosophical speculation, preferring the external interpretation of revelation provided by mass religion to Ḥayy's internal and intuitively guided pursuit of pure truth.⁴⁰ We read of Ḥayy's interaction with this elite group:

Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān began to teach this group and explain some of his profound wisdom to them. But the moment he rose the slightest above the literal [*ẓāhir*] or began to portray things against which they were prejudiced, they recoiled in horror from his ideas and closed their minds . . . despite the fact that these were men who loved the good and sincerely yearned for the Truth. Their inborn infirmity simply would not allow them to seek Him as Ḥayy did, to grasp the true essence of His being and see Him in His own terms. They wanted to know Him in some human way. (163)⁴¹

These men prefer literal interpretation to the inner meaning behind existence, which Ibn Tufayl illustrates with an allegory. Salāmān's suspicions, then, concern Ḥayy's method of interpretation, which challenges the king's preference for *ẓāhir* (apparent meaning) over *bātin* (hidden meaning). But his skepticism of Ḥayy's strange philosophical notions is perhaps somewhat warranted. After all, Ḥayy is a foreigner who arrived on their island from the unknown. And to the extent that travel implies an encounter with the other, there are inevitably concerns over its association with corruption.⁴² While

⁴⁰ See Baroud 181-82.

⁴¹ فشرع حى بن يقظان فى تعليمهم وبث اسرار الحكمة اليهم فما هو الا ان ترقى عن الظاهر قليلا واخذ فى وصف ما سبق الى فهمهم خلافة فجعلوا ينقيضون عنه وتشمئز نفوسهم عما يأتى به ويتسخطونه فى قلوبهم وان اظهروا له الرضا فى وجهه اكراما لغريته فيهم ومراعاة لحق صاحبهم اسأل وما زال حى بن يقظان يستلطفهم ليلا ونهارا ويبين لهم الحق سرا وجهارا فلا يزيدهم ذلك الانبوا ونفارا مع انهم كانوا لا يطلبون الحق من طريقه لا يأخذونه بجهة تحقيقه (150-51) ولا يلتبسونه من بابيه بل كانوا يريدون معرفته من طريق الرجال

⁴² Plato gives a warning about the risks of travel which is an echo of the Anacharsis story in



travel had its obvious benefits it was also the means by which dangerous ideas (e.g. *falsafah* in the form of Greek philosophy) could contaminate one's culture. It is also clear, however, that Ibn Tufayl offers his text in the hopes of allaying some of these fears, and skillfully advocates a reconciliation of Aristotelian philosophy and Islamic theology.⁴³ Importantly, by imagining the space of this reconciliation as an island outside of all societal influence, Ibn Tufayl not so subtly addresses scholars' geographic anxieties over leaving the Islamic (perhaps Maliki) sphere of influence. Hayy's presence on the island suggests that the success of the philosophical journey is in fact contingent on a complete separation *ab initio* from civilization, even if the latter takes the form of an Islamic polity. Furthermore, viewing the argument from the opposite direction, when Hayy travels *to* the island of Asāl and Salāmān he does so not to gain wisdom, for this he has already achieved *in absentia*. Rather he travels at Asāl's request so that he might enlighten others by sharing his reasoned and revealed vision of Truth, which can be achieved unmediated by the veil of human interpretation, though admittedly Hayy still has to communicate this to them. Somewhat predictably, then, Salāmān is suspicious of Hayy's extra-terrestrial ideas. But Hayy too is suspicious of Salāmān's religion and the beliefs and practices of his society. And his skepticism is expressed in Aristotelian ethical terms, where virtue is achieved by controlling the passions. "They have made their passions their god", he observes, "and desire the object of their worship. . . . They are engulfed in ignorance. Their hearts are corroded by their possessions" (163).⁴⁴ In fact, Hayy expresses concern over the system of symbols that governs their access to knowledge, and ultimately finds it necessary to leave civilization, perhaps even a society of Muslims, *in order to* successfully continue his journey. Thus we read: "Hayy saw clearly and definitely that to appeal to them publicly and openly was impossible. Any attempt to impose a higher task on them was

Herodotus, who after returning to his homeland is killed for attempting to introduce foreign religious practice and traditions (*The Laws* Book 12; *Histories* 4.77).

⁴³ Indeed, Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yusuf appeared to have no such fears, as the presence of both Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd in his court demonstrates.

⁴⁴ (151). Cf. قد اتخذوا الههم هواهم ومعبودهم شهواتهم . . . قد غمرتهم الجهالة واران على قلوبهم ما كانوا يكسبون Exodus 32; *Qur'an* 25:43 and 45:23.

bound to fail. . . . So, saying goodbye to them, the two [Asāl and Ḥayy] left their company and discretely sought passage back to their own island” (164, 165).⁴⁵

As I have pointed out above, Ḥayy does not contradict the teachings of Salāmān’s religion, but finds both their Tradition and Scripture to be unnecessary: “Ḥayy understood all of this and found none of it in contradiction with what he had seen for himself from his supernal vantage point . . . still there were [things] that surprised him and the wisdom of which he could not see” (161).⁴⁶ That is, he does not question that their prophet was true, in the sense that he had achieved a vision similar to Ḥayy’s, but he finds it peculiar that such a prophet would communicate the knowledge he received in the enigmatic form of symbols. “[W]hy”, he asks, “did this prophet rely for the most part on symbols to portray the divine world, allowing man to fall into grave error?” (161).⁴⁷ Thus, when Ḥayy visits their island, he finds their methods (oral and written testimony) of rational observation and philosophical inquiry unnecessary, but not precisely wrong in a moral sense. When Asāl shares the teaching of the Prophet with Ḥayy, he “believed in this messenger and the truth of what he said” (161).⁴⁸ But the outward practices of worship, such as fasting, the poor tax, pilgrimage and prayer, Ḥayy judges as inane. “If people understood things as they really are . . . They would not need all these laws”, at least as Ḥayy has seen them (162).⁴⁹ Their philosophy, he reasons, is a theology stuck in the world of symbols. In fact, he concludes they are cognitively incapable of accessing pure Truth, and have become so dependent on these symbols that glimpsing beyond the veil may destroy them. Ḥayy concludes (perhaps as did their prophet) they are better left to trust what is heard and written about these things. That is, realizing the state of their ignorance:

والابصار بان له وتحقق على القطع ان مخاطبتهم بطريق الكاشفة لا يمكن وان تكليفهم من العمل فون هذا القدر لا 45 (152, 154) يتفق . . . فودعاهم وانفصلا عنهم وتلفوا في العود الى جزيرتها

فهم حتى بن يقظان ذلك كله ولم ير فيه شيئا على خلاف ما شاهده في مقامه الكريم . . . الا انه بقي في نفسه امران 46 (146) كان يتعجب منهما ولا يدري وجه الحكمة فيهما

(146) لم ضرب هذا الرسول الامثال للناس في اكثر ما وصفه من امر العالم الالهي واضرب عن المكاشفة؟ 47

(145) فآمن به [الرسول] وصدقته وشهد برسالته 48

(147) ان الناس لو فهموا الامر على حقيقته . . . استغنوا عن هذا كله 49

[Hayy] urged them to hold fast to their observance of all the statutes regulating outward behavior and not delve into things that did not concern them, submissively to accept all the most problematic elements of tradition and shun originality and innovation, follow the footsteps of their righteous forbears and leave behind everything modern. (164-65)⁵⁰

Al-Fārābī and Al-Ghazālī had similar concerns. We read in the *Ihyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn* of Al-Ghazālī:

Religious speculation will create only confusion; the unwary navigator in the dangerous sea of monotheism will most likely capsize if he attempts to go it alone. He will become easy prey to heretical scavengers unless somehow his thoughts are salvaged by the suasion of *kalām*" (236-37).⁵¹

For Ibn Sīna, such men live in a "world of falsehood" and their souls are hindered like a man who, though he uses "a mount and gear in order to reach a certain place", is prevented from disposing of them after he arrives (Davidson 105 and 104, respectively). That is, as Matthew Arnold contends, religion is necessary because "moral rules apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as law, are, and must be, for the sage only. The mass of mankind has neither force nor intellect enough to apprehend them clearly as ideas, nor force of character to follow them strictly as laws" (187). Dogmatism, then, is sufficient for the masses. Ibn Tufayl shares this notion, understanding and accepting the function of religion as a civilizing influence and a tool to affirm and strengthen the resolve of its people and maintain social order. But for Ḥayy, that which cures the masses is his poison, and though he does not reject the vision of truth provided by traditional religion, the imagery and symbols civilization construct he sees only as obstacles to higher wisdom.

In contrast to both medieval Christian and Muslims cartographic representations of the *oikoumene* such as those of Al-Idrīsī and Beatus of

⁵⁰ ووصاهم بملازمة ما هم عليه من التزام حدود الشرع والاعمال الظاهرة وقلة الخوض فيما لا يعنيههم والايمان (153-54) بالمتشابهات والتسليم لها والاعراض عن البدع والاهواء بالسلف الصالح والترك لمحدثات الامود.

⁵¹ Paraphrase by Goodman. واسع الأطراف مضطرب الأمواج قريب في السعة من بحر التوحيد فيه غرق طوائف من القاصرين ولم يعلموا أن ذلك غامض لا يعقله إلا العالمون ووراء هذا البحر سر القدر الذي تحير فيه الأكثرون ومنع من إفساء سره المكاشفون والحاصل أن الخير والشر مقضى به وقد كان ما قضى به واجب الحصول (‘*Ulūm ad-Dīn*, XXXV.1). بعد سبق المشينة فلا راد لحكمه

Liébana which depicted monsters, savages and pagans in the margins – specifically on islands– one could argue that in regards to the space of philosophical and ethical awakening, Ibn Tufayl envisions the island at the center of the map, with civilization at the margins. Monsters, then, as mentally inferior and ethically compromised beings distracted by the multiplicity of the world of sensory perception, inhabit the polis; Hayy, on the other hand, who represents the uncorrupted mind awakened to the truth of unity, occupies the center.⁵² It is important to note, however, that even though Ibn Tufayl considers Hayy to have developed a sounder epistemology than the philosophical system of those who are distracted and deceived by a world of shadows and appearances (to use the language of the *Republic*), Hayy is clearly portrayed as unique, not normative. His uniqueness is not an aberration, however, but characteristic of his exceptional mental capacities and extraordinary intuition, by which he is blessed by God with the potential to see beyond the artifice (*tabayyun*), to have a clear vision of things. In this sense, *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* as allegory can be read as a map, where description does not present reality or imitate anything, but is there to suggest meaning.⁵³ This is precisely Ibn Tufayl's critique of institutionalized religion and its practitioners; where the written or spoken Law and Tradition of revealed wisdom is meant to suggest meaning, many mistake it as reality. That is, the mistake of many is to confuse the signified with the signifier, and risk never breaking through the artifice. And, as has been mentioned, whereas Al-Jāhiz and Al-Mas'ūdi placed final authority in the *Qur'an*, against which all things must be tested, or that which is attested in the *Hadith*, Ibn Tufayl submits even Scripture and Tradition to the validation of the personal experience of the rational intellect, philosophical knowledge and intuitive wisdom. A clear vision of things (*tabayyun*) is gained first through direct observation (*'iyān*), first of the physical world and then of the supernal. While grounded in Ibn

⁵² In the Middle Ages, this image is not unheard of. Classical tradition viewed the world as an island or cluster of islands completely surrounded by the Ocean (Lyon 78-99).

⁵³ In *Archipelagos: Insular Fiction from Chivalric Romance to the Novel*, Simone Pinet suggests "This is particularly relevant to the relation between literary and cartographical practices, as description in cartographic writing and, especially, in maps –in the form of symbols that represent a city, a river, or a chain of mountains– is understood as related to meaning rather than to a detailed or precise presentation of anything" (11).



Sīna's notion that *tabayyun* is possible only through the union of a person with the Necessary Existent, Ibn Tufayl adds that such clear vision of things is preferable to the Law, Commandments and Scripture, including the words of prophets, all of which are witnessed through the subordinate sensations of sound or script. In contrast, Ḥayy's journey is a philosophical endeavor which privileges rational experience and intuition over the symbolic veils of societal tradition and imitates the scientific methods of the geographer who holds the primacy of personal experience over oral and written testimony. But whereas for the geographer, knowledge correlates the witness and experience of itinerant travel, for Ibn Tufayl, the pursuit of knowledge as a spiritual journey requires no such voyage. And, as such, the maritime space Ḥayy inhabits, as distant from strictures of civilization, reveals that the beginning of philosophy and reason, and the purest path of man's ascent toward the divine, is perhaps possible only on floating foundations, in the midst of the sea.

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