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Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 1853, f. 186v

Ibn Tufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaḡzān Enters the Renaissance and the Enlightenment

Lenn E. Goodman

Abstract

Translating a work gives it new readers, and perhaps new meanings. Ibn Ṭufayl, the Andalusian physician/philosopher (ca. 1100-1185), wrote his Arabic philosophical novel *Ḥayy Ibn Yaḡzān* as thought experiment.¹ Where Avicenna had sought, notionally, to isolate his self-awareness from all bodily sensations, aiming to show that thoughts of consciousness presume no physical object, and therefore that the seat of consciousness, depends on nothing physical – not even one's body² – Ibn Ṭufayl sought, fictively, to isolate a single human being from all human exposure, assigning him, as he grew to maturity, no parental or other human contact, no language, communal upbringing, or religious tradition, seeking to determine what a brilliant, curious, and dedicated man could discover without societal support – or interference.

Ibn Ṭufayl telegraphs his findings from the outset, by relating two accounts of his hero's origins. One version, lightly parodying the language of the Arabic philosophical tradition and the sciences sheltered under its wing, leans heavily on cosmological and physiological dicta and terms. Here the protagonist, Ḥayy ibn Yaḡzān, the Living son of the Aware, comes to be by spontaneous generation, made possible by the ideally equable climate of the equatorial island where he emerged from the perfect blend of elements in a mass of clay, bubbling and working in the supernal light streaming down on that special place (21-24, 27-33/104-5, 106-9). In the alternative account, now lightly parodying scriptural parlance, Ḥayy was born to human parents but had to be spirited away, Moses-like, in a tiny box, his birth being unacceptable to the regnant powers. Here, in place of bubbling masses of clay, the key variables are human emotions and social structures and pressures. Here there is a mother, whose petitionary prayer appeals to the mercy and grace of God, who formed and fed her infant in the womb; and a rare current bears the infant to the island where he will reach maturity (24-26/105-06).

God is active in both versions of the story, but is seen in different guises: In the “scientific” version, besides that supernal light, the “fine gaseous body” that will energize the new living being as its “animal spirit” is joined at the critical moment by “the spirit which is God's” (Qur'ān 15:28-29, 32:6-9, 38:71-72), in a bond “virtually indissoluble, not only in the purview of the senses but also in that of the mind” (28/106-7). In the more scriptural sounding

¹ Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy Ibn Yaḡzān*, tr. L.E. Goodman, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2009 updated edition (first edition, Twayne, New York 1972); the parenthetic citations here cite this translation, preceded by the page numbers in Léon Gauthier's Arabic text (cf. *Ḥayy Ibn Yaḡzān: roman philosophique*, Texte arabe et traduction française par L. Gauthier, Imprimerie Catholique, Bayrūt 1936²), also shown in the margins of my translation.

² See L.E. Goodman, *Avicenna*, Cornell U.P., Ithaca 2006, pp. 149-62.

narrative, the rare current and unusual tide that cast the little ark ashore are readily viewed as providential answers to a mother's fervent prayer. Ibn Ṭufayl's clear subtext: Both stories recount the same realities, but in different idioms.

Ibn Ṭufayl's message is irenic. He hopes to reconcile (12-17/99-102) the philosophical outlook championed by Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, 980-1037) with the Islamic orthodoxy and sober Sufism of al-Ġazālī (1058-1111). Ġazālī, deeply admired by the Almohad rulers of Islamic Spain and North Africa, has long been celebrated for his 40-book summa of Islamic faith and practice, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, Reviving the Religious Sciences*. But equally famous among his many books is his hard-hitting critique of the Islamic philosophical school, *Tabāfut al-Falāsifa, The Incoherence* (or, perhaps better, *Downfall*) of the Philosophers.³ Avicenna, long known as the Prince of the Philosophers, is the chief target of the *Tabāfut*. But it does not spare the brilliant philosophical logician, social and linguistic theorist, and metaphysician al-Fārābī, honored to this day as The Second Teacher – after Aristotle.

In a commentary, now lost, on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Fārābī, seems to have had the temerity to deny man's eternal reward, calling it, in effect, an old wives' tale – making “mankind at large”, Ibn Ṭufayl writes, “despair of God's mercy” (14/100). As for Avicenna, beyond his vast and long-lived medical corpus, his voluminous philosophical writings bore a durable argument for the existence of God, based on the idea that all finite beings (the world included) are contingent. No contingent being would exist, he argued, unless there were a necessary (and thus divine) being, underwriting every chain of causation, the ultimate source of being in all contingent things.⁴ Yet Avicenna, like Fārābī, balked at thoughts of absolute creation and read Qur'ānic references to God's creative act as poetic acknowledgments of the world's dependence on God, a dependence that he and other philosophers of the Islamic school thought better described in terms of eternal emanation. The *falāsifa*, the men of that persuasion, with Fārābī and Avicenna at their head, Ġazālī branded as atheists: If the world is eternal, he reasoned, it has no need of God.

Reconciliation would not be easy across so stark a boundary, marking the impasse between a created and an eternal world that Kant would one day name as the first of his four antinomies, aporias generated by the overreach of pure reason, and in principle insoluble by it. The barriers barring the Philosophers' eternalism were fiercely picketed by the militantly intolerant Almohads. And Ġazālī was the regime's favored theological theorist. On seventeen of the twenty theses he pinions in the *Tabāfut*, he charged the Philosophers with heresy (*bid'a*). But, singling out three counts – their denial of physical resurrection, their denial of God's knowledge of particulars, and their affirmation of the world's eternity – he branded them guilty of *kufr*: They were miscreants, deserving death in this world and damnation in the next.

Ibn Ṭufayl hoped his tale of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan* would help traverse the crevasse marked by Ġazālī's condemnation. Could Ḥayy's unsullied intellect make rational sense of man's eternal destiny? And would this thinking icon of Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophical imagination somehow find a middle ground between affirming and denying the world's creation?

³ The work is cited below as *TF*, by discussion number and page in M. Marmura's bilingual edition: *The incoherence of the philosophers*, A parallel English-Arabic text, translated, introduced and annotated by M.E. Marmura, Brigham Young U.P., Provo, UT 1997.

⁴ Goodman, *Avicenna* (above, n. 2), pp. 49-122

As Ibn Ṭufayl confides to the reader addressed in the letter dedicatory of his book, the synthetic/irenic sort of philosophy he aims for is “rare as red sulfur” (11-12/99) – that is, the Philosopher’s Stone, the catalyst of alchemy.

Ḥayy’s Discoveries

Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan, as Ibn Ṭufayl paints him, is innately gifted, but still a natural human being. The narrative of his childhood and emergence as an adult on his unpeopled island recapitulates the rise of humanity, whom he typifies at its best, and tracks the milestones of human material and intellectual culture. By tracing the progress of this lone individual toward the highest truth and ultimate communion with the Divine, Ibn Ṭufayl hopes to show readers how natural philosophy, in an able and inquiring, divinely given intelligence, can bear one to the peak of human perfection without access to language, myth, dogma, or even parental guidance. By retracing that journey, the reader, too, is expected to see how rational and wise each of its steps can be.

Ḥayy thus becomes, as Edward Pocke put it in the title he gave his Latin translation of the work,⁵ a Self-taught Philosopher. As his awareness grows, Ḥayy learns to cope for himself and to care for and care about others, the animals and plants of his surroundings. Alongside his stewardship of his milieu, as he grows to adulthood, Ḥayy’s self-directed meditative, ascetic, and even ceremonial practices advance beyond practical, intellectual, and moral mastery of his environment. He comes to know the highest and deepest truths that prophetic scriptures clothe in human language. Only at age fifty does he meet another human being, Absāl, a mystic, who has sought seclusion on Ḥayy’s isolated island.

Ibn Ṭufayl smiles at the spiritual provincialism of the newcomer. Discovering how little Ḥayy knew, “Absāl became eager to teach him to speak, hoping to impart knowledge and religion to him, and by so doing earn God’s favor and a greater reward” (143/160).⁶ But once the two men can communicate, Absāl soon realizes that the scriptural truths he hopes to share are “but symbolic representations” of what Ḥayy “had seen for himself”. It is Absāl now who becomes enlightened: “The eyes of his heart were unclosed. His mind caught fire. Reason and tradition were at one within him. All the paths of exegesis lay open before him. All his old religious puzzlings were solved; all the obscurities, clear. Now he had a heart to understand” (144/160).⁷

⁵ The translation is nominally attributed to Edward Pocke’s son, also named Edward (1648-1727), who had collaborated with his father and was hoped to succeed him as Professor of Arabic, although he was not chosen for that post. I am among those who doubt that the work was his and incline to believe it was largely if not wholly his father’s.

⁶ Ibn Ṭufayl smiles again when he speaks of Absāl’s study of many languages, anticipating Voltaire’s definition of the Theologian, a man who had mastered “the languages of the Orient... the ancient rites of nations... the diverse creeds and sacraments, “how the Christian Church was divided, after its birth, into different parties, and how the dominant society called all the other heretics.... he distinguished between politics and wisdom, between pride which wishes to subjugate minds and the desire to enlighten oneself, between zeal and fanaticism...”. cf. *Voltaire: Philosophical Dictionary*, s.v. “Théologien”, tr. P. Gay, Harcourt Brace, New York 1962, p. 480.

⁷ Ibn Ṭufayl echoes Qur’ān, 2:179, 2:269, 3:190, 5:100, etc.; cf. 22:46. The mention of exegesis here alludes to the problematic of harmonizing reason and tradition, at the heart of Ibn Ṭufayl’s motivation in writing *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzan*.

Absāl, now Ḥayy's disciple, journeys with his friend back to his settled island, hoping Ḥayy will share his wisdom with its people. But the people prove unready to entertain any truths in unfamiliar garb, and the two men return to Ḥayy's island to share their quest in isolation. Only experience could teach Ḥayy what he has now learned: that scriptures are critical to the masses, who lack his penetrating intellect and moral self-demand. He sees now why revealed laws ask so little morally or intellectually of ordinary human beings. The received tradition is authentic in its inspiration and sound in its message, but inevitably a come-down from the heights a perfect mind can reach by God-given reason and personal quest, open to inspiration from above.

An inseparable friend of Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, the Almohad caliph, Ibn Ṭufayl lived in the eye of the storm wrought by that oppressive regime. His case for the necessity of mass religion for the masses was doubtless sincere. Yet it was he who introduced the Averroes to the caliph who commissioned his extensive three-tiered commentaries on Aristotle's works.⁸ For the ruler had confessed his need for a guide to the dense and (as he suspected) perhaps imperfectly translated texts of the Stagirite. Abū Ya'qūb loved to talk philosophy with Ibn Ṭufayl in the inner sanctum of his court and was at ease in discussing the burning issue of the day, the dispute between close followers of the Qur'ān, who believed the world created, and close followers of Aristotle, who deemed creation an unscientific, illogical, even irreligious idea, and believed it proven that the world, the heavens, and all species of things are eternal.

Near the peak of his philosophical explorations, Ḥayy discovers that (*pace* Ḡazālī) theism is just as compatible with the world's eternity as with its creation (81-86/130-33). By dint of reason, Ḥayy is able to prove to himself that the world is one great organism. Having mastered the core truths of (Ptolemaic) astronomy, he "wondered whether all this had come from nothing, or ... always existed". Here "he had many misgivings. Neither position seemed to prevail. For whenever he assumed the eternity of the universe, numerous difficulties arose due to the fact that any actual infinity could be shown to be impossible". For reason had taught Ḥayy that the cosmos was finite in size, given the paradoxes generated by the posit of an infinite magnitude (76-77/128-29). And Ibn Ṭufayl accepts Ḡazālī's reasoning that an infinite temporal duration is just as paradoxical as an infinite spatial magnitude.

But "When, on the other hand, he assumed that the universe arose in time, other objections assailed him", not least among them, that the finite age of the cosmos seemed to lead to the paradox of a time before there was time – although "time itself is an inseparable part of the universe". Still, if the universe had begun, it must have had a Maker. And if it were eternal, some Mover must have kept it in motion from all eternity. In either case, Ḥayy reasons, the world's Mover or Maker must be incorporeal, all-knowing, and all-powerful – "So this train of thought brought him exactly where the other had". As a result, Ḥayy "was no longer troubled by the dilemmas of creation versus eternity" (81-86/130-33).

On the thorny question of immortality, Ḥayy similarly binds a fillet around the horns of the dilemma. For philosophers of the Aristotelian/Neoplatonic school, immortality was the province of the rational soul, won insofar as that soul regains its connection to its divine source. But souls dragged down and held in these lower depths by their bondage to the sensory objects of carnal appetites and passions can mount to no such heights. What, then,

⁸ See Abd al-Wāhid al-Marrākūshī, *Al-Muḡīb fī talḥī aḥbār al-Maḡrib*, ed. R. Dozy, Luchtmans, Leiden 1847; repr. Oriental Press, Amsterdam 1968, p. 172.

of the Qur'anic hereafter, the hundreds of verses promising sensory rewards to the faithful and corporal torments to the faithless?⁹ Here allegory comes to Ibn Tufayl's rescue. Clearly, he cannot take scriptural sensualism literally. Like Kindī, Rāzī, and others of the *falāsifa*, he follows Plato in making intellectual attachment the key to spiritual immortality. Ḥayy, having discovered the soul and its incorporeality and immortality, realized that its fulfillment lay in regaining its linkage to the divine. So he could readily regard undisrupted contemplation of its Source as its eternal bliss. The condign punishment warned of in scripture would be the pain of loss and alienation suffered by any so rash or foolish as to turn their backs on Divinity. For what pain could be greater than the loss of such ecstasy? (66, 73, 92-97, 130-32 /124, 127, 135-38, 153-54). It's worth recalling that when he condemns Fārābī for scouting affirmations of an afterlife, Ibn Tufayl speaks of the Second Teacher's making "mankind at large despair of God's mercy" (14/100). He finesses the warnings of eternal, pain, the other side of the Qur'anic doublet of God's promise and threat.

Even Ġazālī's works, Ibn Tufayl writes, "because he preached to the masses, bind in one place and loose in another. First he says a thing is rank faithlessness, then he says it's permissible. True Ġazālī charges the philosophers with unbelief, in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, for denying resurrection of the flesh and affirming that only souls are meted out eternal reward and punishment. But at the beginning of *A Scale of Actions* he definitely attributes this belief to the Sufi masters, while in (his spiritual memoir) *Rescue from Wrong and Discovery of Ecstasy* he says that he accepts the Sufi teaching although he came to it only after long searching" (15-16/101). So there is license for Ibn Tufayl's liberties, and for Ḥayy's freedom, even in Ġazālī's texts – just as Avicenna allows himself latitude by peeking or peering beyond syllogistic palings and toward mystic enlightenment (7, 14-15 /97, 100-1), not least in the spiritual allegories where he introduced the figures of Ḥayy and Absāl, brought so vividly to life by Ibn Tufayl.

Truth be told, Ġazālī himself had trodden some of the same ground as Ibn Tufayl. For, in preparing to write *Tabāfut al-Falāsifa*, he had scrutinized the book Avicenna wrote in Persian for his patron 'Alā' al-Dawla, *Danesh Nameh 'Alā'ī*, the *Book of Science* for 'Alā' al-Dawla.¹⁰ Ġazālī recreated Avicenna's book in Arabic, under the title *Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*, *The Aims of the Philosophers*. Clearly, he learned much from study of Avicenna's work. For the *Danesh Nameh* mounts devastating geometrical refutations of the distinctive doctrine of the occasionalist kalām that the world is composed of dimensionless atoms. Ġazālī quietly drops that atomism in his own works.¹¹

At the climax of the *Tabāfut* Ġazālī demolishes the rationalist philosophers' logicist account of causality. But he saves a form of causal naturalism. For although he sees no logical necessity in the nexus between what are familiarly deemed causes and effects, he retains the Philosophers' idea that God is the source of natural forms. He retains, too, the idea that

⁹ For a philosophical allusion to those hundreds of graphic cautions, see *The Case of the Animals vs Man before the King of the Jinn*, ed. and tr. L.E. Goodman and R.J. McGregor, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2009, pp. 311-12.

¹⁰ The *Danesh Nameh* is translated into French by M. Agha and H. Massé as Avicenne, *Le Livre de Science*, Les Belles Lettres, Paris 1955-58 (repr. UNESCO 1986 and Frankfurt Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science 1999).

¹¹ For Ġazālī's tactful dismissal of kalām occasionalism, see *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, ed. and tr. F. Jabre, UNESCO, Bayrūt 1959, pp. 16-17; tr. W. Montgomery Watt in *The Faith and Practice of al-Gazālī*, Allen and Unwin, London 1953, pp. 28-9.

things cannot overstep the natures those forms lay out – although God can still work miracles by altering the forms of things.¹²

Ġazālī had lavished nearly three years in study of the work of philosophers he would ultimately condemn. But he was not the man, he urged, to refute ideas he had not studied.¹³

I knew of a certainty that one cannot refute what is rotten in any science without fully understanding its basis at least as well as its exponents, and then surpassing them, going a step beyond, so as to see the rocky bottom that the masters of that science have not seen.¹⁴

So faithfully did Ġazālī convey the thoughts and arguments he learned from Avicenna that when the *Maqāsid* was translated into Latin, by Dominicus Gundissalinus and one Johannes Magister, it became a handbook of Avicennan philosophy; and Ġazālī, now known in Europe as *Algazel*, was read as an exponent of that philosophy.

The *Maqāsid* retraces Avicenna's Aristotelian argument that the source of abstract concepts (and prophetic inspiration) cannot be anything physical but must lie in the Active Intellect.¹⁵ Ġazālī knows that Avicenna had identified the Active Intellect with the *lawḥ mahfūz*, the “well-guarded tablet” mentioned in the Qur'ān (85:22), traditionally seen as God's book of destiny where every event and decision are inscribed – and/or, as the locus of the logos, or the cosmic Qur'ān. Fārābī, as Van Den Bergh notes, had long since affirmed that the tablet, like the supernal pen that inscribes it, was not a concrete entity.¹⁶ Rather, it would be emblematic of the primal source of all insight – a point of departure for Avicenna's allegorical exegesis.¹⁷

Ghazālī takes vehement exception to Avicenna's reduction a revered Qur'ānic fixture to a mere celestial hypostasis, indeed aligned with the lowest of the spheres. Predictably, he writes in the *Tabāfut* that Avicenna's gloss does not match religious understandings of the *lawḥ mahfūz*.¹⁸ Averroes, defensively, will stress that, as best he knows, that treatment was Avicenna's alone.¹⁹ Yet the esoteric works ascribed to Ġazālī seem more

¹² *TF* 17, esp. §§ 5, 8, 17, 23, 29-36, Marmura, pp. 171-72, 175, 177, 179-80. See Goodman, “Al-Ġazālī and Hume On Causality”, *Vostochnaya Literatura*, Moscow 2013 (Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook, 4), pp. 448-72; or in A. Paya, *The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue*, ICAS Press, London 2013, pp. 49-80.

¹³ Ġazālī, *Munqidh*, p. 18 Jabre; tr. Watt (above, n. 11), 29-30; cf. Ġazālī's defense of his study of Ismā'īlī teachings, in *ibid.*, 28-2 Jabre 9; tr. Watt, pp. 44-46.

¹⁴ Ġazālī, *Munqidh*, p. 18 Jabre; tr. Watt (above, n. 11), p. 29.

¹⁵ Ġazālī, *Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*, ed. S. Dunya, Dār al-Ma'ārif, al-Qāhira 1961, pp. 372-3. Aristotle makes his case for the Active Intellect as the prime mover of thought in the *Eudemian Ethics* 1248 a 17-28.

¹⁶ Fārābī, *Gems of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam)*, p. 77 Dieterici (cf. F. Dieterici, *Alfarabis philosophische Abhandlungen aus Leidener und Berliner Handschriften*, Brill, Leipzig 1890, repr. in *Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science* ed. by F. Sezgin, Vol. XII, Frankfurt a.M. 1999, pp. 66-83, German trans. vol. XIII, pp. 108-38); Averroes, *Tabāfut al-Tabāfut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, 2 vols., tr. S. Van Den Bergh, Luzac, London 1954, Vol. 1, pp. 300-5, Vol. 2, p. 166.

¹⁷ Ibn Ṭufayl's tale was imitated and, in a way, rebutted Ibn al-Nafīs (1210-1288), the physician who first described the pulmonary circulation almost four centuries before Harvey (1628). Ibn al-Nafīs' object here comes close to an a priori deduction of *Islamic orthodoxy*. *The Theologus Autodidactus of Ibn al-Nafīs*, ed. and tr. H. Meyerhof – J. Schacht, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1968; L.E. Goodman review, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 51 (1969), pp. 219-22.

¹⁸ Ġazālī, *Tabāfut al-Falāsifa*, XVI, 160.

¹⁹ Ġazālī, *Tabāfut al-Falāsifa*, XVI, 56-57.

open to non-literal understandings of the *lawḥ mahfūz* than to the images fondly held in popular pictorial imagination. And, as Frank Griffel has shown, Ḡazālī himself leans on Avicenna's more allegorical approach. For he identifies the *lawḥ mahfūz* not only with God's cosmic plan and the object of His eternal knowledge, to which prophets are granted privileged access, but also with the primal object of creation, the Active Intellect, the divine throne, or even the *mubāʿ*, "that which must be obeyed", Ḡazālī's counterpart of the first Neoplatonic hypostasis.²⁰

To Ibn Ṭufayl, Avicenna's bold fusion of Qur'ānic imagery with Neoplatonic metaphysics resonates deeply with a thesis centrally enshrined in Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān, that divine inspiration works from within the human mind. Ḡazālī's thought that real insight rests on a divinely vouchsafed source reads in part like his riposte to the Ismā'īlī claim that all men need the authoritative guidance of the infallible imam. We have such a guide, Ḡazālī argues, in God's prophet. But, quite apart from partisan polemics, Ibn Ṭufayl sees an openness in Ḡazālī to Avicenna's synthesis. He shows his hand early on in Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān, when he credits Ḡazālī with a sober and disciplined Sufism eschewing the excesses of *ḥulūlī* immanentism (4/95). For Avicenna, too, resists the notion that the mystical adept somehow merges with God.²¹ Like Rāzī's outspoken dismissal of Ismā'īlī appeals to dogmatic authority,²² Avicenna's response to Sufi immanentism, rests on an Aristotelian appeal to the light of reason as a divine gift. His language is more overtly humanistic than Ḡazālī's. But Ibn Ṭufayl is alive to the family resemblance and dramatizes it when he pictures Ḥayy's rescue, by divine mercy and guidance, from the specious notion that he must be God since the mind is what it knows (123-24/150-51).

Note the Neoplatonizing means of that rescue: Ḥayy's inspired realization that beyond embodiment there is no individuation – hence no sameness or difference. Here, as in relating two versions of Ḥayy's origins, Ibn Ṭufayl seems to hope that those who pierce the thin veil of allegory in which he has modestly clothed Ḥayy's story, will see the identity of inspiration with the independent thinking made possible by the gift of reason that God lights up and invites one to pursue. Grace and reason here go hand in hand. That thought resonates in turn with Maimonides' celebration of Abraham as the first natural or philosophical theologian, since Abraham discovered the universal God without human instruction and in the face of the established (then pagan) tradition. In Maimonides' eyes, Abraham's revelatory inspiration was the bud brought into flower when the Patriarch's inquiries had brought reason within him to its highest pitch.²³

²⁰ F. Griffel, *A-Ḡazālī's Philosophical Theology*, Oxford U.P., New York 2009, pp. 193-4, 256, 264, 280. See Al-Ḡazālī, *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, ed. and tr. D. Buchman as *The Niche of Lights*, Brigham Young U.P., Provo 1998) and my discussion in "Light on Light", *Muslim World* 109 (2019), pp. 477-97.

²¹ See Goodman, *Avicenna* (above, n. 2), pp. 164-71,

²² *Munāzarāt bayna al-Rāzīyayn*, ed. P. Kraus in Abi Bakr Mohammadi filii Zachariae Raghensis, *Opera Philosophica fragmentaque quae supersunt (Rasā'il falsafiya ma'a qitā' baqīyat min kutubihī al-mafqūda)*, Fouad I University, al-Qāhira 1939. I translated the debates of the two Rāzīs in "Philosophy in the Majlis", in H. Lazarus-Yafeh – M. Cohen – S. Griffith – S. Somekh (eds.), *The Majlis Book: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1999 (Studies in Arabic language and literature, 4), pp. 77-100.

²³ See Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed* III 29 and his making Genesis 21:33 the epigram of all three parts of the work, read in a sense that he explains in that chapter.

Ḥayy in Hebrew

Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan circulated early on in an anonymous Hebrew translation, best known under the title *Yeḥiel ben Uriel*. That phrasing renders Ḥayy's name almost literally, but it stresses God's role, by linking God with life and the light of awareness, as in the favorite biblical proof-text for the idea of emanation: For with Thee is the fount of life, by Thy light do we see light (Psalms 36:10). Burnishing the work's fame among readers of Hebrew came a commentary by the Maimonidean Averroist Moses Narboni, also known as mestre Vidal Bellshom (ca. 1300 - ca. 1362), who prized it as a celebration of independent thinking and discovery.²⁴

Born in Perpignan in Majorca, Narboni lived in Cervera, Barcelona, Valencia and Toledo but died in Perpignan some time after 1362. A committed rationalist, keen to find natural explanations for biblical miracles, Narboni, like Maimonides before him, was convinced that the Torah's seemingly simple sense as a guide to life harbors metaphysical profundities accessible to deeper probers. Like Maimonides, he read Jacob's vision of angels ascending and descending a ladder grounded on earth but leading up to heaven (Genesis 28:12-13) as an invitation to inquiring minds to seek the heights where contact (*ittiṣāl*) with the divine awaits. Once enlightened, as both men reasoned, one must descend again, as if returning to Plato's cave, with sorely needed guidance and leadership for those still below.

Narboni attached his commentary to another of his, on Ibn Bāḡḡah's *Tadbīr al-Mutawāḥḥid*, *The Regimen of the Solitary* – tellingly, for both works reflect the isolation that seemed, all too often, the price of the philosophical quest. Fluent in Latin, Castilian, and Provençal, but not as comfortable in Arabic, Narboni based his many philosophical commentaries on Hebrew translations of Arabic originals. He was at home in philosophy, having read Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed* with his father at age 13. But Maimonides' work had already become a bone of contention between Jews inclined toward philosophy and others actively averse to it. So Narboni felt much the outsider in many traditional Jewish settings. He readily identified with Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan,²⁵ his sense of isolation calling to mind the alienation Ibn Ṭufayl suggests would have been felt by Absāl, another seeker who had mastered many tongues (137, 142/157, 159).

In the 1340s, while still living in Perpignan, commenting on Averroes' work on the *Possibility of Contact or Communion with the Divine* (Hebrew: *Efsharut ha-Devekut*), Narboni had contemplated a commentary on *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzan*. But after Pedro IV of Aragon conquered Majorca in 1344, Narboni had to leave his birthplace. Feeling constrained intellectually in Cervera, he would recall his time there as an exile. In Barcelona, too, the

²⁴ See A. Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān: A Cross-Cultural History of Autodidacticism*, Johns-Hopkins U.P., Baltimore 2011, p. 46. Ben-Zaken sees Narboni identifying with Ḥayy, reflecting his isolation from the community in Perpignan and appropriating Ibn Ṭufayl's ideal of self-development in the *Letter on Perfecting the Soul*, he wrote for his son.

²⁵ See Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* (above, n. 24), p. 147 n. 5; M. Hayoun, "Be'ayot ha-Nefesh u-Koḥoteha", *Da'at* 23 (1989), pp. 65-88; E.I.J. Rosenthal, "Political Ideas in Moshe Narbonni's Commentary on Ibn Ṭufayl's *Hay B. Yaqzan*", in G. Nahon – Ch. Touati (eds.), *Hommages à Georges Vajda*, Peeters, Leuven 1980, pp. 227-34; L. Miller, "Philosophical Autobiography: Moshe Narbonni's Introduction to his Commentary on *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*", in L.I. Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*, Brill, Leiden 1996 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, 24), p. 232.

presence of avid anti-Maimonists set him ill at ease. But among the kindred spirits he did find there he was able to encourage sponsorship of a brilliantly illuminated manuscript of Maimonides' *Guide*, a rather rarer vehicle for the illuminator's and calligrapher's arts than Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, where graphic design could vividly reflect the philosophically informed architectonic of that 14-volume code of Jewish law. When the Black Death reached Barcelona in 1348, the massive death toll, blamed on the Jews of the city, led to the massacre of hundreds, and Narboni was forced to return to Cervera, where he completed his commentary on *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* in 1349.

Ittiṣāl, contact or communion with God, the subject of the work of Averroes that sparked Narboni's plan to comment on *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*,²⁶ lay at the heart of Ibn Tufayl's work. Often awkwardly rendered "conjunction", *ittiṣāl* is the Arabic counterpart of the Plotinian term *aphe*, "contact", i.e., with the divine. *Devekut*, literally cleaving, with its biblical resonances, is the favored Hebrew equivalent. The idea of divine contact or communion is a striking alternative to the more radical notion of *ittiḥād* or mystical union, with its dangerous penchant for heretical excesses in the thought that the adept might somehow become one with the divine even as he lost himself in God's all-enveloping unity. The need to avoid such *.ulūlī* excesses is prominent in Ibn Ṭufayl's narrative (123-26/95-96, 150-52), as it had been in the sober Sufism of Ḡazālī, and in the rational mysticism of Avicenna. Ibn Ṭufayl, as we've noted, opens his book with praises for Ḡazālī's sobriety in damping the dangerous excesses of intoxicated Sufis like al-Bistāmī and al-Hallāḡ (4/95-96). As for Avicenna, his philosophical explorations were deeply motivated by the search for personal immortality. He had no desire to lose himself in the sea of immanentist monopsychism.²⁷

Among the readers of *Yeḥiel ben Uriel* was Ḥasdai Crescas (ca. 1340-1410/11), one of the few exponents of Jewish philosophy to be cited by name by Spinoza, and a key forerunner in Spinoza's rejection of Aristotle's finite cosmos.²⁸ Crescas lived in Barcelona and Saragossa not long after Narboni's death and was a link to the Averroist eternalism that Spinoza would come to share. But was Ibn Ṭufayl's thought experiment known to Maimonides?

In his *Translator's Introduction* to the *Guide*, Shlomo Pines wrote of Ibn Ṭufayl: "There is no explicit reference to him or to his philosophy in the *Guide*, and there is no evidence to show that Maimonides was in any way influenced by Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophic tale".²⁹ But the *Guide* omits the names of many of the Jewish and Muslim players in its philosophic backfield. In our new translation/commentary of the *Guide*, Phillip Lieberman and I note numerous parallels and echoes of Ibn Ṭufayl.³⁰ Perhaps Pines was seeking more overt evidence than Maimonides was prone to provide – or perhaps he missed the forest for the trees.

Maimonides (1138-1204) did not need to read Ibn Ṭufayl in translation. Arabic was his spoken tongue, as much on his lips as Hebrew. But working at the interface of the two kindred

²⁶ Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* (above, n. 24), p. 44.

²⁷ See Goodman, *Avicenna* (above, n. 1), pp. 126-9, 164-72.

²⁸ In Letter 12a, to Lodewijk Meyer, dated Rijnsberg, 20 April 1663, in *Opera*, ed. Gebhardt 4.61 l. 35, Spinoza cites Ḥasdai Crescas as "Rab. Jaçdaj" for rejecting the notion that the world is contingent. H. Wolfson, in *Crescas' Critique of Aristotle*, Harvard U.P., Cambridge, MA 1929, retraces Crescas' response to Maimonides' analytical reduction of medieval Aristotelian cosmology to 25 premises and one postulate granted for the sake of the argument: the eternity of the cosmos.

²⁹ Sh. Pines, *Guide of the Perplexed*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1963, p. CVIII.

³⁰ L.E. Goodman – Ph. Lieberman, tr. Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, Stanford U.P., forthcoming.

languages, he helps his reader by using Arabic to gloss biblical terms as central as *mitzvah*, a divine commandment, explaining that a mitzvah is a precept (Arabic, *waṣīyya*, counsel or advice), imperative, yes, but available only to rational beings and appealing to their good judgment (*Guide* 1.14a). When the Torah calls its laws just (*tzaddikim*, Deuteronomy 4:8), Maimonides explains, that this means that they are balanced (Arabic, *mu‘adila*, *Guide* 2.84b). For justice in Arabic means balance (‘*adl*).

We see literary echoes of Ibn Ṭufayl in Maimonides’ proposal (*Guide* II 17) that a talented youth growing up “on an isolated island” without ever seeing a woman or any female animal, would dismiss out of hand his elders’ account of the course of human fetal development. Maimonides has a different use for the premise of isolation than Ibn Ṭufayl made of it in his tale. But he retains the Arabic word *fiṭra* that Ibn Ṭufayl used in the distinctively generic sense of talent, rather than the particularistic sense prominent in traditionalist Muslim sources. And there is a telling verbal echo that Pines seems to have missed in Maimonides’ metaphor for prophetic souls as highly polished stones able to reflect God’s light for the benefit of those unable to see the light for themselves.³¹

Perhaps the most telling impact of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* visible in the *Guide* is Maimonides’ reliance on Ibn Ṭufayl’s thesis that eternalists can still be theists. Maimonides’ case for that contention retraces Ḥayy’s reasoning step by step: If the world began it must have had a Maker. If it is eternal, as Aristotelian philosophers propose, an incorporeal Mover is needed. For (as Ḥayy reasoned) no merely physical force can sustain unending motions. Maimonides does have reasons of his own to prefer creation to eternity. But, like Ḥayy (and like Galen),³² he finds no decisive argument on either side of the great divide and argues that neither creation nor eternity can be demonstrated. Like Ḥayy, Maimonides finds that Aristotelian eternalism and the scriptural affirmation of the world’s creation yield the same core conclusion: the reality of a transcendent God. Thomas Aquinas, who read Maimonides’ *Guide* in its Latin translation, followed Maimonides’ lead here: If creation was no mere myth or irrational dogma, it could be freely endorsed as a core doctrine of scriptural theology.

Regarding immortality, too, Maimonides ranges himself with Ibn Ṭufayl. As he wrote clearly in the *Guide* “What is incorporeal and immortal is the realized and fulfilled soul”.³³ There’s no mention here of the body. As for eternal torment, Maimonides parts company with Saadiah Gaon (882-942), his pioneering predecessor in Jewish philosophy.³⁴ He seems impatient with notions of pain as otherworldly retribution, partly because such eschatologies seem to treat pleasures and pains as the ultimate coin of value, a notion he sharply rejects.³⁵ What matters, as Maimonides makes clear in his exegesis of the book of Job, is epiphany (*ittiṣāl*), not bodily pain or worldly loss or gain.³⁶ So, when it comes to suffering, he pointedly quotes Exodus (32:33) and Leviticus (23:30) to

³¹ See *Guide*, Introduction, ed. Munk 1.4a (cf. Moïse Maïmonide, *Le guide des égarés: traité de théologie et de philosophie*, ed. S. Munk [first ed. Zeller, Osnabrück 1856-1866]) and our note *ad loc.*

³² See *Guide*, ed. Munk, 2.33b.

³³ See *Guide*, ed. Munk, 1.92b; cf. 3.46a.

³⁴ See Saadiah Gaon, *K. Al-Mukhtār fi l-Āmanāt wa.l-ʿIṭiqādāt* (*The Book of Critically Selected Beliefs and Convictions*), ed. J. Kafih, Sura, Jerusalem 1970; tr. S. Rosenblatt, Yale U.P., New Haven 1948, Treatise IX.

³⁵ See *Guide*, ed. Munk, 3.48b-49a.

³⁶ See *Guide*, ed. Munk, 3.48b-49a, 50b, 51b.

suggest that (as Ibn Ṭufayl had it) the soul's most grievous loss is of God's presence.³⁷ That's torment enough.

Under pressure from critics eager to find flaws in the work of the Great Eagle, as he came to be called, Maimonides pulled his punches somewhat, calling bodily resurrection a bastion (*qā'ida*) of Jewish belief. But we need to recall that he, like Plato, draws a critical line between knowledge and belief: Beliefs are symbolic, imaginatively painted surrogates of knowledge, vital to those who have not reached the higher, conceptual plane, where sound argument opens the door to certainty.³⁸ So true beliefs are placeholders. Knowledge, here as in Ibn Ṭufayl, is on a higher plane. Maimonides knows how to argue for the immortality of the rational soul, the formal essence of humanity, biblically called God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). But he knows no good argument for bodily resurrection. And, as he writes, "in intellectual matters one must follow where the argument leads".³⁹

Maimonides warms to the idea, broached by Ibn Ṭufayl (127-31/152-53), that disembodied souls, having no bodies to render them the same as or different from one another (or from their divine source) enjoy a sort of unity in diversity (e pluribus unum, as one might say, reclaiming the phrase sacred politically to America's Enlightenment founders). Thoughts of immortality in such terms are at least as old as Plato (*Apology* 41A-C). Maimonides credits a like idea to Ibn Bāḡḡa and kindred spirits (*Guide* 1.121b).

Maimonides, like Ibn Ṭufayl, lived a rather lonely life as a philosopher. The physician/philosopher al-Rāzī, whose works Maimonides knew well, although he had little respect for Rāzī's metaphysics/theology (*Guide* 3.18a), had called Socrates a loner.⁴⁰ We cannot say that Maimonides was isolated socially, any more than the gregarious Socrates was. But Maimonides, Ibn Ṭufayl, and others of their ilk found rare, but all the more precious intellectual companions who could think and communicate in their domain. Sarah Stroumsa has described the intellectual isolation of such men (the isolation of intellectually inclined women in this milieu must have been far fiercer), heightening their readiness to reach out to one another across confessional, geographic, and temporal boundaries.⁴¹

Fārābī had written, rather unsympathetically, of doubters, sensualists, and relativists, calling such misfits "weeds".⁴² But Ibn Bāḡḡa embraced the metaphor when he wrote the

³⁷ See *Guide*, ed. Munk 3.2, 36b, 125ab.

³⁸ *Guide* I 50 and 1.72b, 96b, 3.124a.

³⁹ See *Guide*, ed. Munk 2.19a.

⁴⁰ The phrase in full, *muta.allā muta'allib*, which Arberry translates as "the Divine Hermit". But we might come closer to Rāzī's intent by reading it as "the God-intoxicated loner". See Rāzī, *K. al-Ṭibb al-Rūbānī*, ed. P. Kraus in *Opera Philosophica* (above, n. 29), p. 31.3 (repr. in *Islamic Philosophy*, ed. F. Sezgin, Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Frankfurt am Main 1999, vol. 19); tr. A.J. Arberry as *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes*, Murray, London 1950, p. 33.

⁴¹ S. Stroumsa, *Andalus and Sefarad: On Philosophy and Its History in Islamic Spain*, Princeton U.P., Princeton 2019, pp. 94-101; cf. the discussion in my introduction to *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, pp. 37-49.

⁴² Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya, al-Mulaqqab bi-Mabādi' al-Mawḡū dāt*, ed. F.M. Najjar, al-Maṭba'a al-Kāṭilikiyya, Bayrūt 1964, pp. 104-6; tr. Alfarabi, *The Political Writings*, II, "Political Regime" and "Summary of Plato's Laws", tr. Ch.E. Butterworth, Cornell U.P., Ithaca-London 2015, pp. 90-4; cf. Fārābī's *Mabādi' āra'abl al-madīna alfāḍila* [*The Principles of the opinions of the Inhabitants of the Excellent City*], A revised text with introduction, translation and commentary, ed. R. Walzer, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1985 (repr. *Great Books of Islamic World*, Chicago 1998), p. 252 n. 15, p. 278 l. 12, p. 290 l. 13; and see I. Alon, "Fārābī's Funny Flora: al-Nawābit as 'Opposition'", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 121 (1989), pp. 222-51.

Regimen of the Solitary.⁴³ For Ibn Ṭufayl that image became emblematic of the life he led in the eye of the Almohad storm, as the close friend and conversation partner of Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf, with whom he could freely (but not openly!) discuss matters philosophical – emblematic, too, of the life Ibn Ṭufayl fictionally idealized for Ḥayy, with Absāl, his friend, disciple, and confidant, on their return from civil (but confining) society to an island of their own. He pictures Ḥayy not roughly uprooting plants out of place or dangerously entangled with another but carefully freeing and transplanting them (114-15/146). When Maimonides mourns the loss of philosophy to his Jewish contemporaries he speaks to similar effect, although rightly blaming the setbacks to intellectual inquiry on the destructive impact of barbaric persecution, alongside the self-censorship of Jewish esotericism.⁴⁴

Ibn Ṭufayl in the Renaissance

Ḥayy Ibn Yaqqān was much sought after in Europe well before Pococke’s 1671 Latin version. For Narboni, in the introduction to his commentary, had called out what he read as the key subtext that Ibn Ṭufayl, on the last page of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqqān*, had covered only with the lightest veil, readily breached by “those fit to pierce it” (156/166), the implied but unstated thesis that tradition stands athwart the ladder of discovery. In Ḥayy’s early practice of dissection, as he sought to discover what had gone wrong on the death of the doe foster mother that had nursed him, Narboni saw a model of independent exploration and experimentation. True to that model, as Ben-Zaken puts it, Narboni preferred students to be educated, not led by a bridle.⁴⁵ The experiential gateway that Ibn Ṭufayl held open led as much to spiritual as to physical discovery, and to a hermetic jewel box that would soon become both more public and more personal.

Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) commissioned a Latin translation of *Yeḥiel ben Uriel* in 1493, along with Narboni’s commentary. Pico had studied Hebraica in Florence with Joḥanan Alemanno (1435-ca. 1504), the author of a work of his own, *Ḥayy ‘Olamim (Eternally Alive)*, proposing an idealized scheme of self-education. *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqqān* was Alemanno’s model, as witness his supercommentary on Narboni’s treatment. Another informant of Pico’s was Elijah del Medigo of Crete (ca. 1460-1493), whom Pico met in Padua.⁴⁶ Pico himself was no isolated autodidact. He gathered learning and ideas wherever he found them. But his erudition was highly personal and selective, focused on anything he hoped might elevate his

⁴³ See Ibn Bājjah, *Tadbīr al-Mutawahḥid*, ed. M. Fakhry in *Opera Metaphysica*, Dar al-Nahar, Bayrūt 1968, and the discussion in E.I. J. Rosenthal, “The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Ibn Bājjah”, *Islamic Culture* 25 (1951), pp. 187-211, esp. pp. 203-6 (repr. In Rosenthal’s *Studia Semitica: Islamic Themes*, pp. 35-59, esp. pp. 51-4).

⁴⁴ See *Guide*, ed. Munk 1.93b, 2.80a, 3.2b.

⁴⁵ Narboni, *Yeḥiel ben Uriel* (Munich: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, *Codex Hebr.* 59) f. 51b; Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqqān* (above, n. 24), p. 59, citing *Yeḥiel ben Uriel*, *Codex Hebr.* 59, f. 46a.

⁴⁶ In the autobiographical sketch he included in his *Ḥayy ‘Olamim*, Alemanno modeled the phases of his own life on the seven-year cycles Ibn Ṭufayl had used in framing the life of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqqān*. See B.C. Novak, “Pico della Mirandola and Joḥanan Alemanno”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982), pp. 125-47. Alemanno’s “extensive marginalia”, on *Yeḥiel Ben Uriel*, which he read in the 1480s survive in *Codex Hebr.* 59 in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. See Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqqān* (above, n. 24), p. 63 and p. 150 n. 52.

understanding in the natural or divine sciences, or the mystical traditions of *Kabbalah*. He was, in this regard, a link in the chain of ideas that made the ideal of independent discovery an increasingly cosmopolitan heritage. The tradition continued with Joseph del Medigo (1591-1655), Elijah's great-nephew, also born in Crete. A student of Galileo's, he was, as Ben-Zaken puts it, "a keen advocate of experimental science and Copernican cosmology". A colleague of Menasseh ben Israel's in Amsterdam and friendly with Spinoza's father, Joseph looked back to Narboni's work and called it "profound and sublime".⁴⁷

Active in the controversies that shook Florence in the last two years of his life, Pico was working hard on a polemic against astrology when he was poisoned and died. His aim, inspired in part by Ibn Ṭufayl's work, was to help free humanity from thoughts of an inexorable destiny. Ḥayy, to him, represented freedom, a destiny self-chosen and self-made, not written in the stars.

Orphaned at an early age, Pico was blessed with some of the talents Ibn Ṭufayl had assigned his fictive protagonist, and he early formed habits of independent thinking. His peregrinations from Bologna, to Ferrara, Padua, Florence, and Paris reflect his appetite for learning and his restiveness with intellectual authority. Tall and handsome, the young count was not as ready as Ḥayy to disengage when he found his ideas unwelcome. In nine hundred theses that he published at Rome in 1486, he challenged the intellectual hegemony of established authority and invited all who disagreed to come to Rome at his expense and debate him publicly.

The disputation he envisioned was scotched by the Pope, Innocent VIII; and thirteen of his theses were condemned. But the *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, with which Pico had hoped to open his intellectual carnival, remains a landmark of Renaissance humanism and a manifesto of the ebullient independent mindedness that endures as the heritage of its era, celebrating the freedom of the individual to choose what he shall be and how he might perfect his life, a Renaissance descant on Ibn Ṭufayl's themes.⁴⁸ Seeking refuge in France after his condemnation, Pico was arrested. Freed at the instance of Lorenzo de' Medici and other princes, he spent the last years of his brief life seeking to live the life of a self-taught philosopher, a "weed" not successfully transplanted.

Ibn Ṭufayl and the Enlightenment

Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophical fiction was published in a new Latin translation in 1671 by the Oxford Arabist and Hebraist Edward Pococke (1604-1691), who sought to credit the effort to the son he hoped would succeed him in his chair of Arabic at Oxford. As he notes in

⁴⁷ Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* (above, n. 24), p. 63; D. Geffen, "Insights into the Life and Thought of Elijah Medigo, Based on his Published and Unpublished Works", *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 41/42 (1973/4), pp. 69-86.

⁴⁸ Pico's *Oration*, published posthumously, is translated by E. Livermore Forbes in E. Cassirer – P.O. Kristeller – J.H. Randall Jr. (eds.), *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1948, pp. 223-54. In introducing the celebrated (but too rarely read) work, Kristeller remarks (pp. 215-16) on Pico's classical education, his openness to Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas and to medieval philosophy more broadly, including Arabic and Hebrew texts. He notes Pico's readiness to defend the image of the Schoolmen "against the attacks of his Humanist friends" and does not slight Pico's religious quest, his (all-too innocent) friendship with Savanarola, and his love of vernacular Italian poetry and prose. All in all, we see here a living counterpart more to Absal than to Ḥayy – and, even more, in real life, to Ibn Ṭufayl himself, a humanist author in an authoritarian milieu.

introducing his Latin rendering, Pococke had known the work in its Hebrew version before undertaking his translation from the Arabic original. Indeed, he had first essayed an English translation as early as 1645.⁴⁹

Pococke was a royalist, and his years of political exclusion during the Protectorate no doubt delayed his pressing on with *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*. His hopes of publishing it rose in 1660, on the Restoration, when he, too, was restored – in his case, to the canonry of Christ Church, the post linked to his chair of Hebrew. His friends were now seeking support from Robert Boyle for such a translation. For Boyle underwrote Pococke's Arabic translation of Grotius' *De Veritate Religionis Christianae*. Boyle seems to have hoped that an Arabic Grotius would help promote intercultural understanding – doubtless under (ecumenic) Christian auspices. Perhaps the universalism portended in Ibn Ṭufayl's portrayal of the religion he knew best, in generic rather than parochial terms, would return the compliment and open pathways to a genuinely two-way conversation.

The plot of Ibn Ṭufayl's tale fit nicely with Boyle's experience of self-directed intellectual and spiritual growth, and its themes chimed with Boyle's dislike of dogmatism in theology or natural philosophy.⁵⁰ Indeed, the image of Ḥayy's progress lent support to Boyle's advocacy of experimental discovery, as reflected in the controversies surrounding his experiments with the vacuum pump that led to his formulating what we know as Boyle's law regarding the pressure and volume of gases.⁵¹

When Pococke's Latin version finally did appear in 1671, the preface to the *Philosophus Autodidactus*, as he called it, noted the affinity of Ḥayy's hands-on ways of learning to the kind of experimentalism Boyle had championed, typified in Ḥayy's dissections. Ibn Ṭufayl, himself a physician, prized dissection. And Galen, the classical exponent of scientific medicine, his works extensively translated into Arabic, had championed autopsy, as he called it, using a term that meant seeing for oneself.⁵²

Pococke had studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac at Oxford. Eager to perfect his Arabic, he had secured a post in 1630 as chaplain to the British trading company in Aleppo. There, alongside devotion to his pastoral duties, he befriended Jews and Muslims, including a local Sufi who tutored him and helped him acquire many of the Arabic mss now housed in the Bodleian Library under the name of his patron, Archbishop Laud, then Primate of England. Laud required every British ship returning from the Levant to bring back at least one Arabic or Persian manuscript.

In Aleppo, Pococke, cultivated warm relations with Catholic, Jewish, Greek Orthodox, and Muslim scholars. He had spent 5 ½ years in Syria when Laud, whom he had not yet

⁴⁹ P.M. Holt, *Studies in the History of the Near East*, Routledge, London 1973, p. 14, reports the discovery in the Bodleian Library of fragments of Pococke's early draft of an English translation of the work, MS Poc. 429; M. Nahas, "A Translation of *Ḥayy b. Yaqzān* by the Elder Pococke (1604-1691)", *Journal of Arabic Literature* 16 (1985), pp. 88-90. Pococke's Latin translation was reprinted in 1700.

⁵⁰ For Boyle's years' long project of self-taught Christianity, Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* (above, n. 24), pp. 116-19.

⁵¹ *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* struck another chord with Boyle, given his interest in spontaneous generation, as proposed in the more scientific sounding story of Ḥayy's origins.

⁵² Galen (129-216) a prolific author and prolific dissector, used vivisection to demonstrate that voluntary motion (and thus thought!) stems not from the heart but from the brain. See *De Usu Partium*, tr. M. Tallmadge May as *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, Cornell U.P., Ithaca 1968, pp. 362-3 n.

met, summoned him home to become the first tenant of the Professorship of Arabic Laud founded at Oxford. Pococke's inaugural lecture in 1636 spoke of the Arabs' love of early Arabic poetry, a topic far from parochial or proselytizing.

The heritage of Renaissance humanism at Oxford, as elsewhere in Europe, was entrenched, if not immured, in classical languages – Arabic and Hebrew as well as Greek and Latin. This was the learning that had made possible the collaboration that created the King James Bible, published in 1611.⁵³ But, like the Arabic translation movement centuries earlier, such studies fed humanistic intellectual appetites far beyond the practical, prudential, or apologetic interests that sparked the earliest such voyages.⁵⁴

John Locke was among the beneficiaries of the polyglot heritage at Oxford. As a King's Scholar at Westminster, he had competed in the "Challenge", an examination that included Arabic and Hebrew as well as Latin and Greek. For the "major election", that secured his place at Christ Church College, Oxford, among those reserved for Westminster students, Locke's orations were in Latin and Hebrew. But, for the Oxford M.A., "Hebrew and Arabic were required, in accordance with Laud's statutes".⁵⁵

Arabic had been introduced at Westminster by Richard Busby (1606-1695), the Royalist headmaster, a lover of mathematics, natural philosophy, and classical languages, and the author of Hebrew and Arabic grammars. Busby had studied Arabic at Oxford under the Matthias Pasor (1598-1658), the same polymath under whom Pococke began his study of the language. Pasor had been convinced that Arabic texts held a "treasure house of ancient knowledge" in mathematics and astronomy – not to mention medicine – the same wealth that readers of Arabic had sought to tap by the translation of Greek texts into Arabic that began in the 9th century. So Locke was no beginner when attending Pococke's classes in Arabic and Hebrew in the 1650s. He became a Bachelor of Arts at Oxford in 1656, and Master in 1658, studying mathematics and astronomy as well as Arabic, Hebrew, and the literature of the other classical languages that he knew so well. In 1663, when Locke applied for a readership at Oxford, Pococke was one of the three professors who wrote in support of his appointment. Locke later served as a tutor to Pococke's then teenaged eldest son, and Pococke remained "most revered" among his teachers. His memorial notice for Pococke ran to 11 pages, celebrating his learning and "unaffected humility". "He had", Locke wrote, "the silence of a pupil where he had the knowledge of a master".

Locke, like Pococke, was a royalist in those early days. But what proved more lasting in his case than partisan or sectarian affiliations was the example of Pococke's openness, warmth and tolerance. For the tolerance that shines as the great theme of Locke's thought had shone forth earlier in Pococke's cosmopolitan friendships and humane comportment. The values motivating those virtues are made explicit and articulate by Pococke, as might

⁵³ See L.E. Goodman, "The King James Bible at 401", *Society* 50 (2013), pp. 73-80.

⁵⁴ See L.E. Goodman, "The Greek Impact on Arabic Literature", in F.L. Beeston – T.M. Johnstone – R.B. Serjeant, G. R. Smith (eds.), *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1983, pp. 460-82; "The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic", *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1990, pp. 477-97. Turkish translation by E. Ayyıldız, *Nüşba* 18 (2019), pp. 15-44.

⁵⁵ G.A. Russell, "The Impact of *The Philosophus Autodidactus*: Pocockes, John Locke, and The Society of Friends", in Id. (ed.), *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England*, Brill, Leiden 1994 (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 47), p. 239.

be expected in the work of a learned exegete. In *Micah* we read: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks... everyone shall sit under his own vine and fig tree, with none to make him afraid (4:3-4) and You have been told, O man, what is good and what the Lord requireth of you: just this – to act justly, love kindness, and humbly to walk with your God (6:8)”. In Malachi: Have we not all one father? Did not one God create us? Why, then, do we betray each man his brother and profane our fathers’ covenant! (2:10).

At *Micah* 4:3-4, Pococke asks who the prophet expects will bring about the changes he proclaims. He favors the view of “Some Jews of great learning and authority”, who say that the Messiah is intended. At 6:8, he notes how Micah subtly refocuses attention on thoughts of what God expects of humankind: God seeks not gifts but inner change. As for Malachi, Pococke rejects a tendentious reading of the verse and pinions the violations of the covenant that Malachi targets: Favor shown “oppressors and exactors” makes a mockery of the truth, that all of those addressed are “Children of one father, Jacob, and so equally free, and having equal right to justice, according to the Law, without respect of persons, and by one God created, i.e. made his People” – and then, breaking the syntax to speak in his own person, as if from the pulpit Pococke adds – “why then do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, in oppressing him, and by unjust usury exacting of him..”. There’s a taste here of the kind of the moral life and spiritual thinking that Locke saw practiced and heard preached by his teacher.

In 1637 Pococke traveled to Constantinople, on leave from Oxford, in search of manuscripts and historical and geographical data. There he apprenticed himself to the learned Jews who taught him to read Judaeo-Arabic and helped him secure Hebrew mss. There, too, he befriended the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, soon executed at the Turks’ decree. Clearly horrified Pococke described the event in detail. But like events were happening at home.

Warned in Constantinople of the growing turmoil in England, Pococke set out for home in 1640, halting in Paris to win Grotius’ consent to drop some scurrilous tales about Muhammad from the Arabic version of his book. He reached England the following year, in time to visit his benefactor in the Tower, bearing Grotius’ counsel to seek escape (as Grotius himself had done, in 1621, escaping life imprisonment with his wife’s aid, by hiding in his book chest). Laud proudly refused any such attempt.

Before his execution in 1645, Laud had made permanent the professorship of Arabic that still bears his name. But on his execution, the estate funding that chair was sequestered. Pococke, without its income for three years, relied on the little living his Oxford college had gotten him in Berkshire. There he married and raised a family. In 1647 he submitted to the new authority in Oxford but used an absence to avoid accepting the Covenant. In 1648 Charles, now imprisoned on the Isle of Wight, named him Professor of Hebrew. That made him also Canon of Christ Church. But since he refused to abjure the King, the prestigious post went to Cromwell’s son-in-law. Pococke would have lost both his chairs and even his country parish, but for the Oxford dons, including Locke’s old teachers, who claimed, rightly, that England held no qualified replacement for him and warned the “reform” commission that removal of this celebrated savant would discredit only themselves. Pococke was nearly the last royalist left standing at Oxford.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ See Russell, “The Impact of *The Philosophus Autodidactus*” (above, n. 55), p. 240.

Laud's legacy lived on in the Arabic mss and fonts he had acquired for Oxford. Pococke used them extensively, his publications proving Arabic history and literature worthy of study in their own right, not just in support of biblical learning. His *Porta Mosis* or *Gateway to Maimonides*, gave European scholars access to Maimonides' *Commentary* on the *Mishnah*, as represented by Maimonides' introductions to the six orders of that ancient code of Jewish law. Begun by Pococke in 1652 and published in 1655, this was England's first Judaeo-Arabic work. Its neat columns, printed in Laud's Hebrew fonts, faced the lines of Pococke's Latin. Here, Ben-Zaken reflects, Locke might have seen the words of the brilliant and tragic Elisha ben Avuya (later 1st to early 2nd century) comparing a child's learning to writing on a fresh tablet, and an old man's to the blurred and blotted words on a palimpsest.⁵⁷ That thought resonates with Locke's, image of a *tabula rasa*⁵⁸ – but also with Locke's distaste for dogma, a subtle subtext of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, not so thickly veiled, as Ibn Tufayl admits.

We don't know if Locke saw the Arabic *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* or any part of the translation Pococke hoped to publish in 1660. We do know that few Arabic texts were accessible to a bright and enterprising student of Arabic in the Oxford of the 1650s – and none more engaging than *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*. Locke remained at Oxford, pursuing medicine and working with Robert Boyle and Boyle's fellow experimentalist Robert Hooke, and others, until leaving in 1667 to join the household of Lord Ashley (himself a recovering royalist), who had come to Oxford for medical help. Ashley would later serve as Lord Chancellor of England and be named the first Earl of Shaftesbury in 1672.⁵⁹ Living at Exeter House, Ashley's London home, Locke was fruitfully engaged in conversation, developing the political ideals the two men shared. As Ashley's physician, he helped coordinate the 1668 surgery for an abscess near the liver, a dangerous procedure that saved his friend's life.⁶⁰

The humane warmth that Pococke heard in scripture and echoed in his sermons re-echoes in Locke's writings and projects – in the framework for a constitution that he and Shaftesbury wrote for England's fledgling colony of Carolina,⁶¹ and later in Locke's *Second Treatise of*

⁵⁷ M. Avot 4.20; cf. Arist., *De Anima* 429 b 29 - 30 a 1). See Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* (above, n. 24), p. 121. In the extensive biographical introduction to his edition of *Porta Mosis* and Pococke's commentaries on Hosea, Joel, Micah, and Malachi, Leonard Twells writes that Locke had hoped to arrange with Boyle for the younger Pococke to translate Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*. See L. Twells, *The Lives of Dr. Edward Pococke*, London 1740, p. 291. Twells' work, archived in the Robarts collection of the University of Toronto, is posted online.

⁵⁸ The image was also used by the Stoics, by Avicenna, and of course by Ibn Tufayl.

⁵⁹ His grandson, the Third Earl, wrote *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711; 6th edition, 1737-38; repr. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001) 3 vols.

⁶⁰ Eminent physicians including Thomas Sydenham and Francis Glisson took part along with Locke, their notes, including those in Locke's hand, are preserved in the *Shaftesbury Papers* in the National Archives at Kew. See P.R. Antsey – L.M. Principe, "John Locke and the Case of Anthony Ashley Cooper", *Early Medical Science* 16 (2011), pp. 379-503. Locke met Sydenham soon after moving to London, and they remained close friends throughout Sydenham's remaining twenty years. Sydenham speaks with genuine warmth of Locke in the dedication of his book on Fevers. See A.C. Fraser, *Locke*, Blackwood, Edinburgh 1890 (repr. Kennikat Press, Port Washington NY 1970), p. 30.

⁶¹ The document, which survives in Locke's hand, stipulates that, "Religion ought to alter nothing in any man's civil or estate right. No person shall disturb, molest, or persecute another for his speculative opinions in religion, or his way of worship". Quoted in Fraser, *Locke* (above, n. 60), p. 29. The document further stipulates that no atheist is to be a freeman in Carolina, but that "any seven or more pastors agreeing in any religion shall constitute a Church, to which they shall give some name to distinguish it from others".

Government. Indeed, Pococke's commentaries on Micah, Joel, and Malachi were among the books Locke preserved in his own library; and we know that he heard Pococke's sermons. For he recalls his teacher's "constant and regular assisting at the Cathedral Service, never interrupted by sharpness of Weather, and scarce restrained by down-right want of Health".⁶² If Locke framed the ideas foundational to the British and American constitutions, it's worth noting the thoughts and the example that helped guide his mind when young – and the biblical texts where the earliest inspirations of those ideas were first voiced.

Even after leaving Oxford for London, Locke remained in close touch with the members of the Royal Society, to which he was elected in 1668. He was well apprised of the wide-ranging discussions that took place in print and at Oxford, in meetings, lectures, and the fellowship of the coffee houses.⁶³ And he remained in close conversation with Shaftesbury, at whose home he first conceived the twin ideas that would set the course of his life as a philosopher.

The year was 1671, the same as that in which Pococke's Latin version of Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān appeared. It was in that year that Locke began what would become *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. He dates the occasion himself in introducing the Essay: Five or six friends had met in his chamber at Exeter House and discussed a topic "very remote from this" – that is, from the nature of human understanding "and it came into my head" – after the discussion had seemed to grind to a halt "without coming any nearer a resolution... that before we set ourselves upon enquiries of that nature it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with".⁶⁴

James Tyrell, one of the friends who took part in that conversation, noted in the margin of his copy of the *Essay*, Locke's gift to him, that the topic far removed from Locke's epistemic focus in the *Essay* was morals and revealed religion.⁶⁵ If so, the conversation could hardly have avoided the seething issue of the day: the delicate relations of religion and the state: What prompted Locke's segue to questions about the scope and limits of human understanding, then, was his first seeing – or first articulating to his friends, and to himself – a link between his two central and abiding concerns: tolerance and empiricism.

Locke was a made man when he met Lord Ashley, although nearly undone when Shaftesbury was implicated in Monmouth's attempt on the throne of England, and Locke himself had to flee to the Continent. What the two men most deeply shared from their first meeting was their commitment to what we now call liberalism, an outlook still in the making for them conceptually and in practical terms – and, even today, a work in progress.⁶⁶

⁶² Letter of 23 July 1703 to Humfry Smith, who was seeking recollections for his projected but unfinished life of Pococke. *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E.S. De Beer, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1989, # 3321, 8.37. In this letter, written late in life, Locke complains of his loss of memory but makes a point of Pococke's warmth and openness, ready conversation, and good humor.

⁶³ Pococke reflected and even in a way stimulated British interest in the coffee fad with his translation of a tiny book by Daud b. 'Umar al-Anṭāki (d. ca. 1599), titling it, *The Nature of the Drink Kaubi or Coffee* (1659).

⁶⁴ Locke's "Epistle to the Reader", prefatory to the *Essay*.

⁶⁵ Tyrell, a Whig historian, was a grandson of Bishop Ussher of chronology fame. His copy of Locke's *Essay* is preserved in the British Library.

⁶⁶ We get a sense of the fluidity of such questions in Locke's mind from a 1667/8 ms in his hand, titled *Reasons for Toleration of Papists Equally with Others*, preparing the ground for his *Essay concerning Toleration*, written soon afterwards, and anticipating his three *Letters Concerning Toleration* (1689, 1690, 1692). In the ms, pre-

Empiricism, too, was still *in statu nascendi*, championed by Boyle, working in the wake of Sir Francis Bacon, and curiously harking back to Ibn Ṭufayl's *Ḥayy* and the Galenic privileging of firsthand experiential knowledge. Locke's earliest jottings toward the empiricist manifesto that the 1671 conversation sparked in him, thoughts that he originally expected "would be contained within one sheet of paper", were recorded in his commonplace book:

First, I imagine that all knowledge is founded on and ultimately derives it self from Sense, or something analogous to it ... the simple ideas or images of things ... are nothing but the reviving again in our mind the imaginations which these objects, when they affected our senses, caused in us ... and therefore I think that those things which we call sensible qualities are the simplest ideas we have, and the first object of our understanding.⁶⁷

That all our knowledge begins in the senses was not a new idea. It was Aristotle's⁶⁸ and might be claimed for many another. Democritus and Epicurus must be counted among its early exponents. But the thesis that universal ideas were mere complexes of sensory residues

served in the Greenfield Library of St John's College, Annapolis, Locke reviews the pros and cons of tolerating Catholics (Shaftesbury's *bête noire*, especially since the exposure of the "Popish Plot" to blow up Parliament): "If abilities alone ought to prefer men to employment, Papists ought to be tolerated", Locke writes. But he argues at greater length that allegiance to the Pope defeats the treatment of Catholics as loyal English subjects. See J.C. Walmsley – F. Waldman, "John Locke and the Toleration of Catholics: A New Manuscript", *The Historical Journal* (2019), pp. 1-23, accessed online from Cambridge University Press, September 17, 2019. Locke's earliest substantial exploration of political theory was his *First Tract of Government*, not to be confused with his famous two *Treatises*. Written in about eight weeks in 1660, although not published until 1967, the *Tract* responded to the view of Edward Bagshaw (1629/30-1671), that the state should not attempt to regulate prayer. In the *Tract* Locke argued (in rather Hobbesian terms) that the "Bedlam" of religious conflict would not end without the engagement of the civil magistrate in religious matters, albeit with a view to public wellbeing. Like other witnesses of the religious violence plaguing Europe, the early Locke upheld the idea of a state religion. See I. Kurun, *The Theological Origins of Liberalism*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD 2016), pp. 107-8. In a letter to his friend Henry Stubbe, as Kurun notes, Locke conceded that "men of different professions may quietly unite (antiquity the testimony) under the same government and unanimously cary the same civill intrest and hand in hand march to the same end of peace and mutuall society though they take different way towards heaven". Locke's concerns about Catholics were lasting: "The only scruple I have is how the liberty you grant Papists can consist with the security of the Nation (the end of government) since I cannot see how they can at the same time obey two different authoritys carrying on contrary intrest espetically where that which is destructive to ours ith backd with an opinion of infallibility and holiness supposd by them to be immediatly derivd from god founded in the scripture and their owne equally sacred tradition". Letter # 75 of mid-September 1659, *Correspondence*, ed. De Beer, Vol. 1, pp. 109-12. Cf. Spinoza's stance, as discussed in M.A. Rosenthal, "Why Spinoza Chose the Hebrews", *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy*, Heidi Ravven and L.E. Goodman, SUNY Press, Albany 2002, pp. 225-60. Rosenthal tellingly describes Ferdinand Bols' monumental painting in the Magistrate's Chamber of the Amsterdam Town Hall, showing Moses' second descent from Sinai: Moses holds the second set of tablets against his breast, the people below looking up to him in reverence and awe. The marble frieze nearby portrays Moses' first descent, the people, "singing, dancing, gambling, fighting, fornicating", as Rosenthal describes it. At the focal point of the frieze stands the draped and bearded figure of "the high priest, who had succumbed to the demands of the people and fashioned the idol (Exodus 32:4)". In the painting, Aaron "contritely avoids looking directly at Moses". The drama here, Rosenthal writes, "is focused in the tension between these two figures, counterposed along a diagonal axis of light: Moses bearing the law, and Aaron, the high priest, bowing down before him". Bols completed his painting in 1665, when Spinoza had his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* very much in hand.

⁶⁷ Fraser Locke (above, n. 60), p. 35.

⁶⁸ *Posterior Analytics* II 19.

was radical. It was clearly incompatible with Platonism and with the Neoplatonic thought, rooted in Aristotle's reflections, that external help is needed, from the immanent/transcendent Active Intellect, to transmute experience into conceptual understanding.

The notion that ideas antecedent to experience bear some special, irrefragable authority seemed to Locke a mere mask of dogmatism. It is that thought that sparked a passion in him when he first saw a nexus of liberalism to empiricism. For his was an age when wars were fought, and men drawn and quartered⁶⁹ in disputes over dogma. Ideas retailed as innate seemed to Locke far more likely to be received (or imposed) nostrums, vindicated more by prejudice (and punishment) than by any pristine hallmark of the mind's formation. "Locke's dislike of innate ideas", as Sterling Lamprecht wrote, "was clearly due above all else to the dogmatism which the assertion of such ideas involved".⁷⁰

In his extended campaign of demolition against that assertion, as Lamprecht showed, Locke targeted no mere strawman; nor was Descartes his chief target. There were heady, ready advocates of innate ideas among other predecessors. They included Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648) and the Cambridge Platonists.⁷¹ Ironically, they too were seeking common ground in broader and simpler moral and religious ideas than they could see in scholasticism. Lord Herbert's table of five "common notions", could almost stand as a stripped down, generic Enlightenment credo. Its elements: 1) that there is a supreme Deity, 2) that this Deity should be worshiped, 3) that virtue, alloyed or allied with piety, is the core of sound worship, 4) that men should repent of their sins and actively reject them, and 5) that God's goodness and justice entail reward and punishment in this life and the hereafter.

Common these ideas were, but they were hardly common ideas in the canonical sense, of commanding universal consent. Nor were they proof against critique. Seeking authority for them by calling them innate, to Locke seemed a mere dialectical ploy, inviting a slide from common consent in the old, rhetorical sense of *endoxa* (and the argument *ex consensu gentium*), to pretenses of axiomatic primacy for notions that were all too readily rejected. And if we descend from the heights of thoughtful theory to the muddier ground of vulgar notions and pastoral or sacerdotal catechism, far more would-be truisms crop up that might be called innate but cannot withstand scrutiny: An outsider ready to critique such so-called common notions need only confess that he fails to see their patency, let alone God-given innateness. How, then, could they serve as axioms?

The exponents of innate ideas saw them as alternatives to dogma. But, as Lamprecht writes, "the theory had developed into a cloak for new dogmatisms". So it hardly met the purpose it was meant to promote.⁷² Its appeal, Locke would write, was too "short and easy". By licensing a confusion of complacency with certainty, it "eased the lazy from the pains

⁶⁹ Hanging and, while still alive, being disemboweled, castrated, and torn limb from limb, was the penalty for treason. But treason was not readily distinguished from heresy. John Donne's brother Henry had harbored a Catholic seminarian who suffered this penalty in 1593. Henry himself was clapped in plague-stricken Newgate, where he died for being a Catholic. See J. Stubbs, *John Donne: The Reformed Soul*, Norton, New York 2007, pp. 43-4. The barbarous penalty was last used in 1803 on seven men, for conspiring to assassinate George III. It was not abolished from English law until 1870.

⁷⁰ S. Lamprecht, "Locke's Attack on Innate Ideas", *The Philosophical Review* 36 (1927), pp. 145-65, part. p. 149.

⁷¹ Lamprecht, "Locke's Attack on Innate Ideas".

⁷² Lamprecht, "Locke's Attack on Innate Ideas", p. 149.

of search, and stopped the inquiry of the doubtful”.⁷³ Many a man, as a result, might “take monsters lodged in his own brain for the images of the Deity”.⁷⁴

Here we see the affinity of Locke’s epistemic project with Ibn Ṭufayl’s use of his philosophical fiction to point toward truths that he was sure underlay the received religion, truths too readily misconceived or mis-applied when symbols are mistaken for what they are meant to represent – or when the minimal demands of moral decency are proclaimed as peaks of piety. It’s plain to see a kinship here between Locke’s *Essay* and Ibn Ṭufayl’s philosophical novel. But there’s also a deep disparity. For part and parcel of Ibn Ṭufayl’s celebration of personal discovery was his proposal that Ḥayy’s reasoning had led him to the philosophical and theological ideas that unimpeded human reason would inevitably discover. Yet the conclusions he pictures Ḥayy reaching by the use of reason are, in fact, Avicennan and Neoplatonic nostrums and not at all sheer truths of reason. In this sense, despite its celebration of the independent use of reason and the joy and profit of personal discovery, the proposed findings of Ibn Ṭufayl’s thought experiment were profoundly incompatible with the conclusions Locke would enshrine in the *Essay* – just as Ibn Ṭufayl’s passive acquiescence in the political, moral, and theological dogmas of his day was profoundly at odds with the ideals of the Glorious Revolution that Locke would herald in the *Second Treatise*.

Gül Russell has laid out an impressive array of circumstantial evidence for the claim that on or before his intellectual awakening Locke knew and felt the impact of Ibn Ṭufayl’s little book. Even if Locke had seen no text of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* before Pococke published his Latin version, he did come close to the book while in exile on the Continent.

He was staying in Rotterdam, in the home of Benjamin Furly (1636-1714), an English merchant and a Quaker with a passion for religious liberty, whose library, at his death, held some 4400 works. Part of Furly’s circle was Jean Le Clerc, whom Locke had met in Amsterdam, and who launched his *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique* in 1686.⁷⁵ The *Bibliothèque* ran to some 25 volumes, its last in 1693. In its first year it carried a 22-page summary of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* and a French version of Locke’s work on the keeping of a commonplace book. An active participant in Le Clerc’s project, Locke reviewed books, theological and scientific, probably including Boyle’s *De Ipsa Natura* and Sydenham’s *Schedula Monitaria*. In 1688, Le Clerc published a French abstract of Locke’s *Essay*, under the title, “Extrait d’un Livre anglois qui n’est pas publié, intitulé Essai philosophique concernant l’entendement (...)”.⁷⁶ So if Locke did not already know *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* from his years of study with Pococke,

⁷³ Locke, *Essay* I 3, § 25.

⁷⁴ Locke, *Essay* I 2, § 26.

⁷⁵ See Russell, *The ‘Arabick’ Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England* (above, n. 55), pp. 249-51. Kurun (*The Theological Origins of Liberalism* [above, n. 66], pp. 86-7) sees an earlier possible link between Locke and Ibn Ṭufayl in Locke’s affinities with the Socinianism, of which the philosopher was charged. For the founder of that anti-Trinitarian heresy was the polymath Michael Servetus (Miguel Servet, 1509-1553), who was burned at the stake at Geneva, at the instance of John Calvin, for his opposition to Trinitarianism in general and to Calvin in particular. Servetus evidently knew Arabic, for his anatomical work leading to the first European description of the pulmonary circulation was grounded in the work of Ibn al-Nafis, whose response to Ibn Ṭufayl is mentioned in note 16 above. But we need not look so far to place Ibn Ṭufayl’s work in Locke’s hands, given Locke’s years of study with Pococke and his close collaboration with Le Clerc.

⁷⁶ Locke reprinted perhaps a dozen copies for friends, using the title *Abregé d’un ouvrage intitulé Essai philosophique touchant l’entendement*.

it certainly was there for him alongside a schematic presentation of his own formative ideas. But truth be told, Locke was now in pursuit of bigger game.

It would be hard to claim that Locke knew nothing of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* before he wrote his manifestos of liberalism and of philosophical empiricism. He'd have to have been strikingly and uncharacteristically insensitive of his surroundings to have been unaware of the work. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that it was he who apprised Le Clerc of Pococke's Latin rendering and set up its treatment in the *Bibliothèque*. But if we move beyond the allure of *Quellenforschung* and draw the circle of concerns wide enough to reach a world beyond the Oxford of Boyle or Pococke, or the London of the vanished Shaftesbury, we can see a problem posed in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, that Ibn Ṭufayl and even his friend the Caliph had not been free to confront head on: What truths, indeed, would untutored and untrammelled reason discover on its own? To address that question forthrightly and draw the rather strictly empiricist conclusions, that Locke would deem not only epistemologically rigorous but politically and theologically liberating, Locke would have to set aside the impressions prompted by any early exposure to *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, file them away alongside his fond memories of his teacher, and devote himself single mindedly, in the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise*, to his own newborns: the twin ideas, as he saw them, of liberalism and empiricism.

Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Second Treatise of Government* were both published in 1690. But the seeds of Locke's discovery of an interdependence between liberalism and empiricism arose, as we've seen, in 1671, the year Pococke that published his *Philosophus Autodidactus*. Yet, although the ideals of independent thinking, empirical discovery, and rational religion are all represented in *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* (and although Locke warmly appreciated Pococke's biblically fired humanism), *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* was not to be the keystone of Locke's liberalism, or his empiricism.

Locke's work with Boyle and others in the nascent Royal Society was more central in framing his empiricism. His medical work with Sydenham and others, backstopped by Ibn Ṭufayl's valuation of dissection did underwrite Locke's view of medicine. But Locke's empiricism branched more widely and ran far deeper than Ibn Ṭufayl would press it. Politically, Locke's work with Shaftesbury that bore fruit in the Carolina constitution was far more central to his political outlook than what he might read in Ibn Ṭufayl or hear from Pococke's lips.

The seed of liberal humanism in Ibn Ṭufayl's manifesto of personal discovery (provided it stays on the right track!) is encased within the hard shell of the thought that if intellectual exploration does deserve a place, such an outlook, to Ibn Ṭufayl's mind, would hardly suit a communal way of life. What bars Ibn Ṭufayl's entry to the new world Locke would build, is his concession to the Almohads that (a uniformly enforced) mass religion is the needful for humanity at large. Locke, like Shaftesbury, may have his blindspots (regarding Catholics in particular), but he is not prepared to open up an intellectual/spiritual island world for every non-conforming transplant – a virtuality that exploration and discovery had turned into fact for Locke and Shaftesbury, transforming a thought experiment into a real-life experiment with human strengths and limitations, with results still to be determined.

After Pococke....

Translations from Pococke's Latin version soon made Ibn Ṭufayl's book a sparkling early manifesto of independent thinking in Europe. That the work was written by a Muslim added

to its éclat.⁷⁷ Its treatment of prophetically mediated religions as socially necessary declensions of a higher truth only enhanced its appeal.

George Keith (1638/9-1716) made an English version of Pococke's Latin in 1674, enthralled by the support it gave his (then Quaker) view that religious knowledge comes by intense personal illumination. In introducing his translation, he wrote of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*:

I found some good things in it, which were both very savoury and refreshing to me... as where he saith, Preach not thou the sweet savour of a thing thou hath not tasted [cf. 10/98] ... Also he showeth excellently how far the knowledge of a man whose eyes are spiritually opened, differeth from that knowledge that men acquire simply by hear-say, or reading: and what he speaks of knowledge attainable, that is not by premisses premised and conclusions deduced, is a certain truth, the which is enjoyed in the conjunction of the mind of man with the supreme Intellect, after the mind is purified from its corruptions and is separated from all bodily images, and is gathered into a profound stillness [cf. 7-8/97-98]. These and many other profitable things agreeable to Christian principles are to be found there.⁷⁸

Personal experience was the appeal here, endorsed in Ibn Ṭufayl's introductory letter. His portrayal of Ḥayy's learning by experience chimed, as we've seen, with the Galenic heritage – as it did with the Sufi spirituality of Ġazālī, for whom personal experience and practice formed the bedrock of religious knowledge. Keith, as a Quaker exponent of personal illumination could not fail to be taken by the spirit of exploration, anti-dogmatism, and discovery that Ibn Ṭufayl found encapsulated in the lines he quoted from Ġazālī:

Forget all you've heard, and clutch what you see –
At sunrise, what use is Saturn to thee? (16/101)⁷⁹

A Scottish born Presbyterian, Keith had become a Quaker in 1662. He traveled to America, where he did pioneering survey work on the then border between East and West Jersey. In time he broke with the Philadelphia Quakers, finding their Christianity rather too independent. He and his followers produced one of the first anti-slavery tracts published in the Colonies, *An Exhortation and Caution to Friends Concerning the buying or Keeping of Negroes* (1693). After returning to Britain in 1694, Keith was read out of meeting by the London Friends, and in 1699 he denounced William Penn and other Quakers as Deists. Entering the Church of England in 1700, he returned to America as a missionary, hoping to win back to the Church the strayed children, among whom he himself had once strayed.

⁷⁷ See H. Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment 1670-1840*, Johns Hopkins U.P., Baltimore 2012 and the chapters in Russell (ed.), *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England* (above, n. 55) by V. Salmon, H.T. Norris, R. Jones, M. Feingold, C. Wakefield, M.B. Hall, R. Mercier, and G. Molland.

⁷⁸ Keith, quoted by Russell, "The Impact of *The Philosophus Autodidactus*" (above, n. 55), pp. 247-8. As Russell remarks, "For Keith the *Philosophus Autodidactus* represented precisely what he summarized as the Quaker 'common notion': 'the sufficiency of inner light'". Robert Barclay, Keith's collaborator in drafting the Quaker confession of faith, makes explicit reference to *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* as a perfect exemplar of the "experience of inner light without the means of the Holy Scriptures" (*ibid.*, p. 248).

⁷⁹ Ibn Tufayl quotes the couplet from Ġazālī, *Mizān al-'Amal*, p. 409 Dunya. The translation here is mine.

Keith seems to have had little more success in winning souls than Ḥayy and Absāl found in their short-lived efforts to open up spiritual windows for their hearers. He spent his final years as rector of a church in Sussex. His works, as Russell notes, were well represented in Locke's library. The books listed did not include Keith's English version of Pococke's translation, but they did include Robert Barclay's *Apologia for Quaker doctrine* (Amsterdam, 1676), where *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* is highly praised and summarized, and the illuminist moral that Keith drew from it is reproduced almost verbatim – not surprisingly, for Keith himself had collaborated with Barclay in drawing up that Quaker manifesto. The encomium of the inner light is his.⁸⁰

George Ashwell (1612-1695), like Keith working from Pococke's Latin, prepared *The History of Hai Eb'n Yockdan an Indian Prince, or The Self-Taught Philosopher* (1686). Ḥayy might readily be called Indian, given Ibn Tufayl's account of his origins on "an equatorial island off the coast of India". But the island of Ḥayy's spontaneous generation suggests Sarandib, the legendary counterpart of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), where, as Ibn Tufayl puts it, "human beings come into being without a father or mother". Ibn Tufayl was playing with fanciful tales of the isle of Waqwaq, where children grow on trees.⁸¹ But one must fold in the more traditional version of Ḥayy's origins to make him a prince.

Ashwell, a scholar and then fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, became a rector in Oxfordshire. He was impressed with "the Steps and degrees" by which "humane reason", in the person of Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān, "improved by diligent Observation and Experience, may advance to the knowledge of natural things, and from thence to the Discovery of Supernaturals; more especially of God, and the Concernants of the other world". He hoped, as his Introduction to the work declared, that reading it would "set an example to the men of this licentious generation" in morals and religion – discovered in "the light of nature alone".⁸² Nature here was to teach not only of its own laws but also of its Author and the law above it, as discoverable by reason at the instruction of experience. Beyond familiar scripture and Anglican teachings alone, the good rector taught, one could find inspired and inspiring precepts in a "Mohametan" source. Finding freshness as well as universality in the exotic, Ashwell covered himself against any charges of importing alien doctrines by describing (and prescribing) *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* as a hearty moral and religious tonic.

Simon Ockley (1678-1720), born at Exeter and educated at Queens' College, Cambridge became a fellow of Jesus College there and was named professor of Arabic in 1711. His two-volume *History of the Saracens* (1708-1718) relied chiefly on al-Wāqidī's all too fanciful *Futūḥ al-Shām*. Ockley's cosmopolitan interests are evident in his translating Leon of Modena's *History of the Present Jews throughout the World* (1707). His translation of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* (1708, reprinted in 1711, etc.), as he could boast, unlike Ashwell's or Keith's, was from the original Arabic. He was keen to dissociate Ḥayy's story from

⁸⁰ Russell, "The Impact of *The Philosophus Autodidactus*" (above, n. 55), pp. 247-9.

⁸¹ See Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* (above, n. 24), pp. 32-5; the dust jacket of *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* features a handsome illustration of the *Tree of Waqwaq* from Bodleian ms Or. 133, fol. 41v. And see my *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* (above, n. 1), p. 186 n. 63.

⁸² Russell, "The Impact of *The Philosophus Autodidactus*" (above, n. 55), p. 256 n. 28.

the “bad Use” Keith had made of it in behalf of Quaker illuminism, dismissed as “the Errors of some Enthusiasts of these present Times”.⁸³

Spinoza’s good friend Johann Bouwmeester (1630-1680) was another early translator. A philosopher, physician, and co-director of the Amsterdam theater, Bouwmeester was active in the liberally oriented society *Nil volentibus arduum*, a club whose name bore its motto: *Nothing is too Hard for those with the Will* – “Where there’s a will there’s a way!” Bouwmeester’s Dutch version, based on Pococke’s Latin, appeared in 1672. Spinoza, who had doubtless read Ibn Ṭufayl’s work in Hebrew, along with Narboni’s commentary, may well have introduced it to Bouwmeester when Pococke’s Latin version appeared, making the work readily accessible to readers of Latin. Bouwmeester’s Dutch version, “revised by Adriaan Reland” was reprinted with handsome engravings at Amsterdam in 1701.⁸⁴

There was also a German version (1726), said by the translator, one J. Georg Pritius, to be based on Pococke’s Latin, but believed by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, a Professor at Jena, to have relied on Ockley’s English version. Eichhorn himself worked directly from the Arabic in preparing his own German version (1782).⁸⁵

Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān was one of the first Arabic books to be printed in the Middle East when Arabic printing was established in Cairo in the nineteenth century. The Christian writer Farah Antoun (1874-1922), who pressed for a secular Arab counterforce to Muhammad Abduh’s pan-Islamism, published his Arabic edition in 1909.⁸⁶ To him the work was a classic of scientific and humanistic philosophical thinking in an Islamic milieu, but also an icon of his own secularist universalism. Modern Farsi, Urdu, and Turkish versions have similarly put *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* to use in their own contexts, as monuments of the Andalusian “Golden Age”.

Crusoe, Rousseau, and Themes of Isolation and Identity

Recent writers have shown wide-ranging interests in the parallels and “influences” of Ibn Ṭufayl’s philosophical novel on works as disparate as Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, and Rousseau’s *Emile* – not to mention the figures of Mowgli in Kipling’s *Jungle Book* or Tarzan in Edgar Rice Burroughs. This is not to place to biopsy that wide ranging literature and the tales, fanciful or journalistic of “the wild child”. The theme of isolation takes protean forms today in film, and fantasy. Like *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān* such explorations are often in search of the true nature, strengths and limits of our humanity, and they often they use the premise of

⁸³ Ockley, in the *Appendix* to his translation, *The Improvement of Human Reason Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan* (1708), repr. Olms, New York 1983, p. 167. For the publication history of translations of *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqzān*, see Conrad, *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl* (above, n. 25), bibliography.

⁸⁴ See Conrad, *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl* (above, n. 25), pp. 275-6. Ashwell, as Conrad notes (*ibid.*, p. 277) made the “grave error followed by several later translators”, of dropping Ibn Ṭufayl’s introductory letter, which Conrad rightly calls “extremely important”. For it is there that Ibn Ṭufayl makes as clear as he chooses to do his purpose(s) in writing the book. Ockley’s translation was reprinted variously in London and Dublin. But the 1731 edition repeated Ashwell’s “grave error”, by dropping Ibn Ṭufayl’s introduction. Ockley also suppressed all references to Ḥayy’s spontaneous generation, most likely out of hostility to the naturalism implicit in Ibn Ṭufayl’s account and unready to accept its compatibility with sincere theism. Also dropped in the 1731 edition of Ockley were the engravings previously taken over from the Dutch versions.

⁸⁵ Conrad, *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl* (above, n. 25), p. 280.

⁸⁶ Ben-Zaken, *Reading Ḥayy Ibn-Yaqzān* (above, n. 24), p. 41.

isolation in an alien environment seeking to isolate a human essence presumably obscured or blurred in what is, in fact, our most natural setting, human society.

The device of isolation is at least as old as Homer's *Odyssey*. It's very much in play when Genesis paints its picture of humanity, male and female, alone together in God's garden. For to biblical sensibilities, humanity is most honestly typified not by a monadic self but by the dyad of male and female, free but overseen by the God, in whose image humans, male and female, were first formed from the earth, their material needs, for the nonce, assured by God's garden, before they must set forth to meet the challenges of life in the world, face the cares of parenthood, and witness the rise of the society they have spawned.

For many a modern author, Defoe prominent among them, the initial problematic that a man in isolation must confront is that of coping with nature, just as Hāyī must do before seeking intellectually to explore a higher world. Access to the material goods and tools of the background culture often seems critical before intellectual and spiritual challenges are even thought of. That's clearly true of Crusoe, who must salvage key materials and tools from his shipwrecked vessel, although that concession somewhat jars the premise of Crusoe's story. The privileging of technological imports and displacements runs to extremes in Jules Verne, when the stranded men of *The Mysterious Island* make their own nitroglycerine.

But in many a modern thought experiment that echoes or parodies Ibn Ṭufayl's, the missing baggage is not tools nor tack but ideas. Most cheerfully lost are ideas deemed humdrum or conventional. Hence Thoreau's mild self-isolation, walking distance from town in *Walden*. And hence the rather tighter moral and mental swaddling of Emile, whose human contacts are strictly limited and controlled, and whose only book, as he grows up, is Robinson Crusoe – with no exception even for – or especially for – the Bible.

Most critically missing in many of the twentieth century thrillers that seek, usually unwittingly, to retest the results of Ibn Ṭufayl's thought experiment, is memory. The amnesia motif has grown so common as to shed any heuristic value it may once have borne. But even in its most etiolated versions – where the protagonist (typically male) may well retain his visage, his suit, even his hat, the reader (or viewer) is expected to identify with the protagonist (by design, an all too typical figure) facing challenges (often urban, typically social), without knowing who he is, as he struggles to regain some orientation toward action, in a tintype portrayal of the lonely crowd: The audiences of such extravaganzas are expected, forcefully, even personally, to ask themselves, 'Who am I?'