

# THE LEGACY OF MUSLIM SPAIN

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moral goals by sacred speech being viewed as one of the central sins of a decayed religion-based society.<sup>10</sup>

Ibn Ṭufayl's novel thus differs from most of the works noted above by its length and rigid structure, by its realistic vein and by its being of authentic Arabic origin. Moreover, this tale, a mixture of narrative and philosophical reflection, is not only a rare achievement of Arabic literary art, but also a precious document of the struggle between philosophy and orthodoxy, and of the complex relationship between *falsafa* and Islamic mysticism. It will now be discussed in more detail under the following headings:

- The narrative and its structure
- The conflict between philosophy and orthodoxy
- Philosophy and mysticism

## II

*Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān*<sup>11</sup> is the tale of a man who grows up on an uninhabited island and attains the highest degree of insight, both philosophical and religious, by dint of his inborn capacities, by his experiences, perceptions and reflections. Having reached this highest possible state of development, he is visited by a man named Asal,<sup>12</sup> who comes from another island. Asal first teaches him human speech, then tells him of his religion, whereupon the two discover that their persuasions are in principle the same. Ḥayy then visits Asal's island and its people, whom he finds to be superficial believers, concerned with the pleasures of the body; he tries to open their eyes to the higher realities of the other world, but in vain. He and Asal thereupon leave them and decide to retire to the lonely island and spend the rest of their lives in devotions there.

The tale is thus divided into two parts with quite different contents. In the first section, we have a straightforward, uninterrupted development involving a gradual, continuous ascent on the ladder of human cognisance; the ascent itself is divided into seven stages of seven years each, this number having no doubt been chosen on account of its cosmological and religious connotations.<sup>13</sup> By its very structure this development is represented as an ideal one, which could hardly take place in any real human existence, at least not in this perfect, unhampered manner—to say nothing of the beginning, involving Ḥayy's rearing by a gazelle, which could, at best, produce a mental cripple like Kaspar Hauser. Goodman is probably right, therefore, when he states that Ibn Ṭufayl makes Ḥayy's ontogeny recapitulate human phylogeny: "His Adam-like position alone on an island, his Promethean role as discoverer of fire ... show that he is intended to symbolise mankind ..."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the development of Ibn Ṭufayl's hero is not devoid of realistic detail capable of application to a real individual's life.

## IBN TUFAYL AND HIS HAYY IBN YAQZĀN: A TURNING POINT IN ARABIC PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING

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### I

Ibn Ṭufayl was born near the beginning of the 6th/12th century at Guadix, about 50 miles north-east of Granada, and died in 581/1185. He earned his living mainly as a physician, serving several members of the Almohad dynasty, among them his last patron, Sultan Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (reigned 558/1163-580/1184), who was a learned man and a fervent promoter of the rational sciences. Ibn Ṭufayl was last but one in the line of six great Arabic Aristotelians: al-Kindī (d. after 257/870), al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), Ibn Bājjā (d. 533/1138), himself and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198),<sup>1</sup> and one of his works, his philosophical tale *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* ("The Living, Son of the Awake"), brought him great fame.

Although this novel is one of a long series of philosophical allegories and edifying tales (the Arabic term for the genre being *tamthīl*), it stands out as unique not only in Arab Andalusia but within medieval Arabic literature as a whole. Medieval Arabic fiction was either popular, or of foreign origin, or both. Of the famous tales belonging to high literature, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 139/757), one of the pioneers of Arabic prose writing,<sup>2</sup> and *Bilawhar wa-Budhasaf*, also known as Barlaam and Yoasaph, a version of the Buddha legend,<sup>3</sup> are of Indian origin, whereas the delightful long tale "Man and Animal Before the King of the Genii", inserted in the Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity, is evidently of Persian stock.<sup>4</sup> The tales of the *Thousand and One Nights* sprang from various sources, but were regarded as old wives' tales (*khurāfāt*)<sup>5</sup> rather than serious literature. The allegorical tales devised by Ibn Sīnā (370/980-428/1037)<sup>6</sup> and Ṣihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (550/1155-587/1191)<sup>7</sup> were much shorter and full of dreamlike fantasies. On the other hand, Arabic narrative which was non-fictional (or pretended to be so) usually consisted of brief anecdotes or short reports, hardly ever stretching over more than a few pages.<sup>8</sup> As for *maqāmāt*, the only fictional genre apart from the *tamthīl* that was acknowledged as serious literature by the *udabā'*, this again involved anecdotes, developed into small stories and revolving around a picaresque hero.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding their comic surface, the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008) and al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122) contain sharp social criticism, notably an attack on the misuse of religious language, the legitimisation of im-

Hayy's life begins with what resembles either legend or fairy-tale. He is born by spontaneous generation from the mud of the shore, or—in another version offered for those who do not believe in spontaneous generation—he is the offspring of an illicit union between a noblewoman and her lover on a neighbouring island, and was sent out by his mother in an ark, a remote allusion to the early fate of Moses (Exodus, II, 1-10; Quran XX, 37-40a).

He is brought up, nurtured and protected by a female gazelle—a picture which, for the Arabic reader, must have aroused all the associations of the "Lady Gazelle and her Murderous Glances", the standard metaphor for the beloved girl or woman with her dangerous semi-magic power over the lover.<sup>15</sup> Here, however, the power of the gazelle is limited to nurturing, and she dies before the youngster has reached puberty. The island is, as Fedwa Malti-Douglas called it, "a male utopy", where the female element is eliminated or reduced to its non-erotic aspects.<sup>16</sup> It is Hayy who gains power over the gazelle: when she dies he opens her chest, discovers her heart and concludes from the emptiness of the cavities within that an invisible life principle, the human soul, must have escaped from it at the moment of death. Thus—and this is an aspect overlooked in the somewhat feminist approach of Malti-Douglas—it is the only female being in the story which enables Hayy first to survive and, finally, to form an idea of the human soul.

Hayy imitates the animals, clothing himself and chasing other animals. He even imitates them in his burial of his foster-mother, having watched ravens burying one of their number which had been killed—another Quranic allusion this, for Cain learned to bury his dead brother from a raven (V, 31). If these two references are not merely accidental, they would mean that Hayy was born with all the faculties of a prophet, in other words of a perfect man; but that, deprived of the protection of his innocent nurse, he has now become a man capable of sinning, even though the problem of sin does not emerge in practice in the further course of Hayy's personal history, he being, as it were, totally immune to the temptations of human flesh.

Instead he spends his time studying nature, discerning the differences between animals, plants and minerals, and arriving at the notions of matter and form, and of species and genus. Having realised the importance of form as the principle instilling life and individual actions into matter, he considers the body of minor importance and places all his emphasis on the further investigation of the soul, the principle of form. Furthermore, he soon infers the necessity of there being an originator of the inborn particularities that recur in every individual representative of a given species. Remarkably, the author here refers to a Quranic verse and a *ḥadīth* which in fact belong to totally different realms of argumentation. The Quranic verse "You did not slay them, but God slew them, and when thou threwest, it was not thyself that threw, but God threw ..." (VIII, 17) is one of the cornerstones of Ash'ari theology, being its main argument for the doctrine of predestination and the

denial of free will. On the other hand, the prophetic saying "I am His ear, through which He hears, and His eye, through which He sees" stems from the stock of *ḥadīths* current in mystical circles. One gains the impression that the author wanted to satisfy both mystical and Ash'ari readers in choosing these quotations. Their common denominator, at any rate, is the direct link between the divine and the human, the participation of man in God's power.<sup>17</sup>

Hayy has reached the age of twenty-eight, and he now turns to pondering on this supreme being, spending the next heptad of his life over this problem and being persuaded, finally, that this necessary being is "the Cause of all things", "the Maker"; "He is being, perfection and wholeness. He is goodness, beauty, power, and knowledge. He is He"; "all things perish except His face."<sup>18</sup>

There is no further differentiation between the next two heptads, but the first of them appears to be devoted to solving the problem of how man can acquire knowledge of God and how he can approach Him. Hayy realises that he is evidently the only created being on the island aware of God's existence and longing to know Him, and he discovers that it is by virtue of his own self, i.e. the incorporeal, eternal part of his existence, that he will be able to apprehend the Necessarily Existent Being. He further perceives the necessity of imitating the three categories of beings whom he resembles: animal, in order to preserve his physical existence; the celestial bodies, because they are the purest created beings; and the Supreme Being itself. He also discovers that it is through the contemplation of God that man attains happiness.

The last heptad is devoted to practice. It has become apparent to Hayy that he must imitate the celestial bodies in three respects: in their care for the world of creation; in their circular movements; and in their constant contemplation of the Creator. He accordingly starts, first, to practice the life of an ascetic and a whirling dervish, totally devoted to ecstasy and contemplation. It is worth mentioning that, in the course of this development, he takes on an attitude that can only be called "environmentalist". He realises that, in nourishing himself from plants and animals, he destroys these created beings and thus prevents them from attaining perfection—or, in Aristotelian terms, fulfilling their entelechy; he therefore decides to do them as little harm as possible. Pondering, further, on the imitation of the celestial bodies, he comes to recognise their constant care for the world of generation and decay, "giving warmth, essentially, and *per accidens* cooling, radiation of light, thickening and thinning and all the other things they do to prepare the world for the outpouring of spirit-forms upon it from the Necessarily Existent Being".<sup>19</sup> He therefore "imitated their action by never allowing himself to see any plant or animal hurt, sick, encumbered, or in need without helping it if he could".<sup>20</sup>

This ecological alertness, praiseworthy though it seems to us, is not, nevertheless, a goal in itself for Ibn Tūfayl. It is only a passing stage in the

religious understand that the message of their religion is [a] parabolic [representation of philosophy].<sup>22</sup>

There can thus be no doubt that Ibn Ṭufayl's text, for all its apparent harmony with orthodox views, must have sounded provocative to the ears of orthodox people, and would have done so even had he limited himself to the first part of his story. No doubt Ibn Ṭufayl is eager to soothe such potential readers as far as possible, without, however (none of the great Arabic Aristotelian philosophers would, it seems, ever have deigned to do so) abandoning any of the Aristotelian tenets. An example in our text is Ḥayy's reflection on the question of whether the world is eternal or created. As is well known, the eternity of the world is one of the three Aristotelian doctrines which al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) judged to be heretical in his great attack on Greek philosophy. "The Incoherence of the Philosophers" (*Tahfīṭ al-falāsifa*).<sup>23</sup> Now, Ibn Ṭufayl makes his hero ponder long over the question of "whether all this had come to be from nothing, or in no respect emerged from nothingness but always existed".<sup>24</sup> The answer Ḥayy—and with him the author—finally arrives at is in between: the things on earth are, of course, finite, but the motion of the heavens is eternal. Thus, after years of pondering this problem, Ḥayy "was no longer troubled by the dilemmas of creation versus eternity, for either way the existence of a non-corporeal Author of the universe remained unscathed ..."<sup>25</sup> The answer aims at reconciling the two tenets, but the orthodox party would, one imagines, hardly have accepted it as satisfying.

Similarly, the frequent quotations from the Quran aim to give the impression of being in line with the "Law-giver". On the other hand, Ibn Ṭufayl does not suppress his criticisms of this law when it comes to social realities. There can be little doubt that the island inhabitants sketched in the second part of his story are intended to typify a Muslim society and the *sharrī'a* aspects of Islam. Even though Ibn Ṭufayl leaves the identity of the islanders' religion vague—calling them "followers of a certain true religion, based on the teachings of a certain ancient prophet"<sup>26</sup>—it is obvious from the religious duties observed by this community, which are those of Islam, namely prayer, alms tax, fasting and pilgrimage. The two other monotheistic religions are, however, not expressly excluded.

From this it follows that the criticisms directed at this religion through the mouth of Ḥayy are criticisms that the author himself wished to launch against certain aspects of exoteric Islam. Here again, surely, Ibn Ṭufayl makes an effort to win over his readers before turning to his critical remarks. The description of the first encounter between Ḥayy and Asal is not without a certain humour or self-irony, if we take Ḥayy to be a projection of the author himself; at any rate it may be understood as a symbolic scene betraying the difficulties of the encounter between reason and religious tradition.

development of Ḥayy, who soon comes to feel that this kind of care is still too much involved with the physical world and therefore holds him back from the pure contemplation of God in a state of ecstasy. He abandons whirling for the same reason, and withdraws to a cave where he devotes himself exclusively to the contemplation of God.

So Ḥayy undertook to expel all this from himself, for none of these things was conducive to the ecstasy he now sought. He would stay in his cave, sitting on the stone floor, head bent, eyes shut, oblivious to all objects of the senses and urges of the body, his thoughts and all his devotion focused on the Being Whose Existence is Necessity, alone and without rival. When any alien thought sprang to his imagination, Ḥayy would resist it with all his might and drive it out of his mind.<sup>21</sup>

This way of life continues until, when Ḥayy has reached the fiftieth year of his life, it is interrupted by the appearance of Asal.

### III

Ibn Ṭufayl shows us a man who, without any outside help, without any teacher or book, attains the highest degree of knowledge, or gnosis, by dint of his inborn intelligence. The possibility of such a development is not in itself a tenet of Greek philosophy. Nevertheless, and despite the mystical tinge of this treatise, Ibn Ṭufayl does defend a much disputed tenet of the *falāsifa*, the Arabic philosophers of the Aristotelian school: the possibility of knowing God and reaching a state of perfection through one's own intelligence, without a prophet or holy book. It is true that Ḥayy's development does not represent the normal curriculum of a philosopher, which would consist of listening to the lectures of a teacher, participating in scholarly discussions, reading books and writing dissertations. Yet the fact that Ḥayy has no teacher only underscores the enormous power attributed in this tale to human reason. What Ibn Ṭufayl is here affirming, without expressly saying so, is what Arabic philosophers before him had always contended, namely that philosophy can dispense with religious training, since it conveys the same truth, only on another level of language which is inaccessible to the untrained mind.

A statement in one of Fārābī's lesser-known treatises is of particular importance in this context:

Upon realising that this religion is a parabolic version of the message of philosophy, the philosophers will not oppose the religion; but the exponents of the religion will oppose the philosophers. Philosophy and philosophers, rather than playing (as they should) a leading part in administering the religion and its followers, will be rejected. Religion will not receive much support from philosophy, while great harm may come to philosophy and philosophers from the religion and its followers. In the face of this threat philosophers may be compelled to oppose the religious, in quest of safety for themselves. They will take care not to oppose the religion itself. What they oppose is the idea of the religious that their religion is contrary to philosophy. They endeavor to eradicate this idea, trying to make the

When Ḥayy sees Asal, who is wearing a long black cloak of wool and goat hair, he wants to meet him, but Asal is afraid of him and runs away:

Ḥayy ran after him, and with the power and vigor God had given him, not just mentally, but physically as well, he caught up with him and seized him in a grip from which he could not escape. When he got a good look at his captor, clothed in hides still bristling with fur, his hair so overgrown that it hung down over a good part of his body, when he saw how fast he could run and how fiercely he could grapple, Asal was terrified and began to beg for mercy. Ḥayy could not understand a word he said. But he could make out the signs of fright and did his best to put the other at ease with a variety of animal cries he knew. Ḥayy also patted his head, rubbed his sides, and spoke soothingly to him. Eventually Asal's trepidation died down and he realised that Ḥayy did not mean him any harm.<sup>27</sup>

The difficulties of mutual approach are further highlighted by Ḥayy's hesitation to eat from the food Asal offers him. But ultimately both men overcome their mistrust. Ḥayy learns human speech from Asal, and then the two tell each other of their religious experiences, which turn out to be, in principle, identical:

Hearing Ḥayy's description of the beings which are divorced from the sense-world and conscious of the Truth—glory be to Him—his description of the Truth Himself, by all his lovely attributes, and his description, as best he could, of the joys of those who reach Him and the agonies of those veiled from Him, Asal had no doubt that all the traditions of his religion about God, His angels, books<sup>28</sup> and prophets, Judgement Day, Heaven and Hell were symbolic representations of those things that Ḥayy ibn Yaḳzān had seen for himself. The eyes of his heart were unclosed. His mind caught fire. Reason and tradition [*al-ma'qūl wa 'l-man-qūl*] were at one within him. All the paths of exegesis lay open before him. All his old religious puzzles were solved; all the obscurities clear. Now, he had "a heart to understand."<sup>29</sup>

This is the usual way the *falāsifa* would indicate their readiness to cooperate with the believers, stressing the identity of religious and philosophical truth. However, the orthodox reader must have noticed the barely veiled hitch: so far Asal, who had a traditional religious training, has been puzzling over the obscurities of his religion, but as soon as he encounters a philosopher, all these problems are solved by means of exegesis. We are reminded of Fārābi's remarks in his *Enumeration of the Sciences*, where, dealing with religious law (*fiqh*) and scholastic theology (*kalām*), he mentions the difficulties arising from the fact that certain religious tenets contradict human reason, and how the theologians try to cope with this problem by various stratagems ranging from exegesis to violence.<sup>30</sup> It also reminds us of Ibn Sinā's introductory remarks to his *Treatise on the Confirmation of Prophetic Missions*, in which he addresses an unnamed friend, saying that he wants to dispel his doubts arising from the fact that prophets assert things which are merely possible, as necessary, without having a logical argument, be it apodictical or dialectical, in support of them, and [that they claim] even impossible things, resembling old wives' tales.<sup>31</sup> What Ibn Sinā does in this treatise is to inter-

pret certain verses of the Quran allegorically; in other words, teach how to read the Quran as a philosopher.

The attitude of the philosopher towards revelation is thus very often one of superiority and condescension, most palpable in the famous saying of the Brethren of Purity, that the religious law is medicine for the sick, whereas philosophy is medicine for the healthy.<sup>32</sup> Here again, Ibn Ṭufayl is eager to soothe potential suspicions. When Ḥayy has learned about Asal's religion, he is persuaded that its founder must have been "a messenger sent by God". And when Asal has described to him prayer, alms tax, fasting, pilgrimage, "and other such outward practices", he "held himself responsible to practice these things in obedience to the command of one whose truthfulness he could not doubt".<sup>33</sup> The statement is, perhaps, not without hidden irony, for to whom, on this lonely island, should Ḥayy pay alms tax, and in what kind, having no money or possession, and where should he perform the pilgrimage? All this seems to be said for the sake of gaining inclined ears for what follows:

Still there were two things that surprised him and the wisdom of which he could not see. First, why did this prophet rely for the most part on symbols to portray the divine world, allowing mankind to fall into the grave error of conceiving the Truth corporeally and ascribing to Him things which He transcends and is totally free of (and similarly with reward and punishment) instead of simply revealing the truth? Second, why did he confine himself to these particular rituals and duties and allow the amassing of wealth and over-indulgence in eating, leaving men idle to busy themselves with inane pastimes and neglect the Truth? Ḥayy's own idea was that no one should eat the least bit more than would keep him on the brink of survival. Property meant nothing to him, and when he saw all the provisions of the Law to do with money, such as the regulations regarding the collection and distribution of welfare or those regulating sales and interest, with all their statutory and discretionary penalties, he was dumbfounded. All this seemed superfluous. If people understood things as they really are, Ḥayy said, they would forget these inanities and seek the Truth. They would not need all these laws. No one would have any property of his own to be demanded as charity or for which human beings might struggle and risk amputations. What made him think so was his naive belief that all men had outstanding character, brilliant minds and resolute spirits. He had no idea how stupid, inadequate, thoughtless, and weak-willed they are, "they are but as the cattle, nay, further astray from the way!"<sup>34</sup>

In other words, Ḥayy criticises the following aspects: the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Quran, the stress on legalistic aspects combined with a certain laissez-faire attitude in matters of moral discipline, and the lack of a higher ethical code that would equal in standard the philosophical ethics of Plato or Aristotle. However, Ibn Ṭufayl then immediately goes on to criticise his hero for making these criticisms, which, he says, proceed from an illusory image of man.

In fact, this point is developed further. Ḥayy's illusions about the true character of human society make him hope "that it might be through him that they would be saved",<sup>35</sup> and he and his friend accordingly wait for a ship to take them to the other island. There Ḥayy starts preaching his wis-



dom to the inhabitants, but in vain. It is only because he is a friend of Asal, who is himself the friend of the ruler of the island, Salamān, that they respect him as a person; and "the moment he rose the slightest bit above the literal [sense of the scripture] or began to portray things against which they were prejudiced, they recoiled in horror from his ideas and closed their minds".<sup>36</sup>

This Ḥayy now understood the human condition [*fahima ahwāl al-nās*].<sup>37</sup> He saw that most men are no better than unreasoning animals, and realised that all wisdom and guidance, all that could possibly help them was contained already in the words of the prophets and the religious traditions.<sup>38</sup>

Taking his leave of Salamān and his friends, he "apologised, dissociating himself from what he had said", and "urged them to hold fast to their observance of all the statutes regulating outward behavior and not delve into things that did not concern them, submissively to accept all the most problematical elements of the tradition and shun originality and innovation, follow in the footsteps of their righteous forbears and leave behind everything modern".<sup>39</sup>

Ḥayy and Asal then return to the lonely island and spend the rest of their lives in devotion.

This retreat from society is a time-honoured attitude of philosophers. Plato talks of it in his *Republic*;<sup>40</sup> Fārābī mentions it in his political writings;<sup>41</sup> Ibn Bājja, the immediate predecessor of Ibn Ṭufayl, wrote a treatise on the subject entitled *On the Conduct of the Solitary*;<sup>42</sup> and Ibn Ruṣhd speaks of the desperate situation of philosophers in non-philosophical societies in his commentary on Plato's *Republic*.<sup>43</sup>

What gives a particular pointedness to Ibn Ṭufayl's handling of the topic is the high degree of ambiguity involved; for he intersperses his text with Quranic quotations, and even proves the rotten state of this Muslim society by means of a Quranic verse which was, however, not meant to describe Muslims at all, but unbelievers, who here, as elsewhere in the Holy Book, are equated with animals.

He justifies the character of the book and the law of this religion by the "human condition", and has his hero apologise and revoke his criticisms in an almost cynical way, revealing his total disillusion and resignation vis-à-vis the community in question. Goodman compares this act of revocation with the concealment of one's true conviction in communist states.<sup>44</sup>

We should, however, be cautious how far we suspect Ibn Ṭufayl of crypto-heresy. Certainly the possibility exists. He was in the fortunate situation of having a generous, open-minded patron, the Almoḥad sultan Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (reigned 558/1163-580/1184), who would not refrain from discussing with him such "hot" topics as the question of the eternity of the world. There is a famous tradition that, when the young Ibn Ruṣhd came to his court and the Sultan asked him "What do they [the philosophers] believe about the heavens? Are they eternal or created?", Ibn Ruṣhd was very upset, not know-

ing how to answer and apparently fearing a trap, until the Sultan "turned to Ibn Ṭufayl and began to discuss the question with him, referring to the positions of Aristotle and Plato and all the other philosophers, and citing the arguments of the Muslims against them".<sup>45</sup>

The historian 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Marrākushī characterises Ibn Ṭufayl as a man who "was eager to reconcile religion and philosophy and gave great weight to revelation, not only at the literal, but also at the more profound level. Besides this he was tremendously learned in Islamic studies".<sup>46</sup> However, this characterisation might, again, spring from a desire to show the philosopher in a light that would make him more acceptable to orthodox readers.

More importantly, Ibn Ṭufayl himself makes the point that religion has, as it were, two levels: "In the Law were certain statements proposing a life of solitude and isolation and suggesting that by these means salvation and spiritual triumph could be won. Other statements, however, favoured life in a community and involvement in society".<sup>47</sup> Asal clings to the first, Salamān to the second way. But at the same time, Asal is described as searching after the inner (*bāṭin*), the spiritual meaning (*al-ma'āni ar-rūḥāniyya*) and allegorical interpretation, whereas Salamān is qualified as "anxious to preserve the literal [*ẓāhir*]" and "refraining from thought and independent decisions due to his cowardous nature".<sup>48</sup>

Although most people wish to restrict themselves to its literal (*ẓāhir*) meaning, the scripture itself does thus lend itself to allegorical exegesis; it does have deeper, spiritual meanings, which, however, the majority of believers are unable or unwilling to grasp.

Ibn Ṭufayl's verdict on Muslim society anticipates the situation soon to come into being in al-Andalus: an intolerant orthodox climate drawing its growing vigour from the onslaught of the Christian *reconquista*. Yet the bases of this attitude had been laid in the East, mainly by al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, which may be said to have dealt a lethal blow to the Peripatetic school in the Arabic and Islamic world.<sup>49</sup>

Ibn Ruṣhd (d. 595/1198) was the last of a series of Arabic *falāsifa* to attempt to prove the compatibility of philosophy and the Law, reason and revelation [*al-mā'qūl wa 'l-manqūl*], particularly in his famous *Faṣl al-maqāl wa-taqrīb mā bain al-ṣhārī'a wa 'l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl* ("Decisive Discourse on the Compatibility of Religion and Philosophy"). These efforts of his, however, no longer made any impact in the Islamic world, and, with Ibn Ruṣhd, Arabic Aristotelianism came to an end, though certain elements of Aristotle's philosophy were incorporated in later systems. In its place another star was soon to rise in Spain, and another doctrine to radiate from there to many parts of the Islamic world: namely, the Andalusī mystic Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638/1240) and his doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, or pantheism.<sup>50</sup>

If Ibn Ruṣhd may be regarded as the pinnacle of Arabic Aristotelian philosophy, Ibn Ṭufayl is rather a pivot linking that school with Islamic mys-

ticism, although his influence seems to have been limited in his own time due to the ever-increasing orthodox animosity towards the *falāsifa*, whose very name, according to Ibn al-'Arabī, had become a matter for suspicion in his time.<sup>51</sup>

#### IV

If genuine Aristotelian thought was alien to mysticism, this was not the case with Arabic Aristotelianism, due to the influence of the so-called "Theology of Aristotle"; this was a paraphrase of the *Enneads* of Plotinus (d. 270 A.D.), which lent a neo-Platonic tinge to most of the works of Arab *falāsifa*. Three elements are paramount: the so-called emanation which consists in spherical beings ruling the stars and linking the One with the many; the interpretation of created beauty as a reflection of divine beauty; and the possibility of reaching union with the universal reason, the Active Intellect, which is at the same time the tenth and lowest of the intelligences emanating from God and linking the world with the Creator. Of these neo-Platonic elements it was the union with the Active Intellect which particularly appealed to the Arabic philosophers. Fārābī speaks of it in his political philosophy and his propheticology: the perfect man, fitted to be the ideal leader of the community, must unite within himself the faculties of the statesman, the philosopher and the prophet, and this can only be attained through a contact with the Active Intellect.<sup>52</sup> Ibn Bājja devotes a treatise to the subject under the title of "Man's Union with the Active Intellect".<sup>53</sup>

In Ibn Ṭufayl's novel there is a clear shift from this kind of neo-Platonic idea to what we might call philosophical mysticism. He undertook the novel with the intention of speaking of something beyond reason, though not contradicting it. He is aware that he is not the first to make a bridge between philosophy and mysticism; although he does not mention his "Theology", he mentions the "Oriental Wisdom" of Ibn Sinā—which seems, incidentally, to refer to Ibn Sinā's so-called "Visionary Accounts" rather than to his lost philosophical compendium. In any case, Ibn Ṭufayl states that the three heroes of his novel, Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān, Salamān and Asal take their names from Ibn Sinā, which is a clear reference to two of the three accounts, but also an indication that Ibn Ṭufayl does not seem to know them directly, for his heroes have little or nothing in common with their namesakes in Ibn Sinā's tales. On the other hand, the journey of the soul related by Ibn Sinā's Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān, who, in his tale, is a personification of the Active Intellect, culminates in the contemplation of God's enrapturing beauty, and the same is true of his *Treatise of the Birds*.<sup>54</sup>

Ibn Ṭufayl announces that he intends to talk of experiences hardly expressible in human speech, capable only of being enjoyed or beheld in ecstasy and contemplation; and this is what his hero finally arrives at after long training. The reader will remember that Ḥayy attempted to approach the

Creator by imitating the celestial bodies in three respects, in their care for nature, their circular motions and their contemplation of God. In doing so Ḥayy adopted various attitudes familiar in mystical life patterns. His care for animals and plants reminds one of certain mystical saints, and also of Christian anchorites; the legendary Arabic poet Majnūn, who lived in the desert in close friendship with the wild animals, would approximate closely to this type.<sup>55</sup> His whirling is, of course, as mentioned above, to be interpreted as the whirling of mystics, already a long established practice at that time, at least in the East, where it seems to have started in the second half of the 3rd/9th century.<sup>56</sup> But ultimately Ḥayy leaves all this behind him, withdraws into a cave and devotes himself exclusively to ecstasy and contemplation. "Drowned in ecstasy, he witnessed 'what no eye has ever seen or ear heard nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive' ". It is remarkable that Ibn Ṭufayl should use this Biblical quotation,<sup>57</sup> and not a Quranic verse, to describe the highest degree of mystical vision. It is true that mystics knew a similar saying in the form of a *ḥadīth qudsī*,<sup>58</sup> but, since Ibn Ṭufayl does not say this, we may surmise that he either did not know its origin, which is unlikely, or wished his readers to recognise it as a Biblical quotation (and many readers in the Andalusī milieu must have known the Bible); in other words, he deemed nothing more appropriate, in his search for words to express the inexpressible, than this extra-Quranic saying. In fact Ibn Ṭufayl uses this quotation several times in the course of the following descriptions of Ḥayy's visions, also pointing, here again, to the linguistic problem involved: the ineffableness of Ḥayy's—and therewith his own—experiences.<sup>59</sup> Yet Ibn Ṭufayl has found a way, and an admirable one at that, of putting at least one of his visions into speech, using a most evocative image which opens a cosmic vista before the inner eye of the reader. Although somewhat long, the whole passage should be quoted:

Passing through a deep trance to the complete death-of-self and real contact with the divine, he saw a being corresponding to the highest sphere, beyond which there is no body, a subject free of matter, and neither identical with the Truth and the One nor with the sphere itself, not distinct from either—as the form of the sun appearing in a polished mirror is neither sun nor mirror, and yet distinct from neither. The splendor, perfection, and beauty he saw in the essence of that sphere were too magnificent to describe and too delicate to be clothed in written or spoken words. But he saw it to be at the pinnacle of joy, delight and rapture, in blissful vision of the being of the Truth, glorious be His Majesty.

Just below this, at the sphere of the fixed stars, Ḥayy saw another non-material being. This again was neither identical with the Truth and the One, nor with the highest sphere, nor even with itself, yet distinct from none of these. It was like the form of the sun appearing in one mirror, reflected from a second which faced the sun. Here too were glory, beauty and joy as in the highest. Lying just below he saw the identity of the sphere of Saturn, again divorced from matter and neither the same as nor different from the beings he had seen—as it were, the reflection of the reflection of the reflection of the sun; and here too he saw splendor and rapture as before.

Thus for each sphere he witnessed a transcendent immaterial subject, neither identical nor distinct from those above, like the form of the sun reflected from mirror to mirror with the descending order of spheres. In each one Ḥayy sensed goodness, beauty, joy, and bliss that 'no eye has seen, or ear heard, nor has it entered the heart of man to conceive', until finally he reached the world of generation and decay, the bowels of the sphere of the moon.

Here too was an essence free of matter, not one with those he had seen—but none other. Only this being had seventy thousand faces. In every face were seventy thousand mouths; in every mouth, seventy thousand tongues, with which it ceaselessly praised, glorified, and sanctified the being of the One who is the Truth. In this being, which he took to be many although it is not, Ḥayy saw joy and perfection as before. It was as though the form of the sun were shining in rippling water from the last mirror in the sequence, reflected down the series from the first, which faced directly into the sun. Suddenly he caught sight of himself as an unembodied subject. If it were permissible to single out individuals from the identity of the seventy thousand faces, I would say that he was one of them. Were it not that his being was created originally, I would say that they were he. And had this self of his not been individuated by a body on its creation I would have said that it had not come to be.

From this height he saw other selves like his own, that had belonged to bodies which had come to be and perished or to bodies with which they still coexisted. There were so many (if one may speak of them as many) that they reached infinity. Or, if one may call them one, then all were one. In himself and in the beings of his rank, Ḥayy saw goodness, beauty, joy without end, the like of which eyes cannot see, ears hear, or human hearts conceive.<sup>60</sup>

This gorgeous vision, so reminiscent of Dante's Paradise,<sup>61</sup> is the pinnacle not only in Ḥayy's life, but also in Ibn Ṭufayl's story. Structurally it adds the vertical or space dimension, divided into the seven spheres, to the horizontal or time dimension of Ḥayy's life, divided into the seven heptads. The two dimensions are linked, and the seven is multiplied in the sublunar being with its seventy thousand faces, which are many and yet one at the same time. This vision is almost exclusively neo-Platonic in its content, although the notion of the mirror, so dominant in this scene, also became central in Islamic mystical thinking and was often used, as it is here, to illustrate the close relationship between the Creator and His creation.<sup>62</sup>

A prominent question, interlaced with this vision, is also one of the central questions that preoccupied the neo-Platonists: how does the multiplicity of the world emerge from the One? For Ibn Ṭufayl, this problem takes on a somewhat different shape, namely: is the Creator One or All and thus many, are the created beings many or One? During the description of the vision Ibn Ṭufayl leaves the answer in suspense, or rather as an unsolved paradox. Later, however, he adds a clarifying remark: as far as God is concerned, the question is inadequate, since the categories of number belong to the world of bodies and can thus not be applied to what is beyond it.

For the rest, the text leaves no doubt that, in his moments of ecstasy, Ḥayy experiences identity with God. "His true self was the Truth."<sup>63</sup> In this respect Ibn Ṭufayl differs from all the other Arabic Aristotelians, although

Fārābī, Ibn Sinā and Ibn Bājja do have their mystical dimension. But neither does the union with the Active Intellect, for all the ecstatic joy it conveys, equal mystical self-effacement and identity with the Creator, the "Truth" or "Reality" as Ibn Ṭufayl usually calls Him, nor do Ibn Sinā's two allegories dealing with the soul's journey envisage anything like mystical union; they simply lead on to, and end with, the vision of eternal beauty. This demonstrates the closeness of Ibn Ṭufayl's mysticism to the Unity of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*) of Ibn 'Arabi.

There remains the question of how Ibn Ṭufayl's attitude towards orthodoxy ties in with his mystical strain. It seems to me that, of the three or four usual means of escape from the dry lowland of orthodoxy—hedonism, the fine arts, philosophy and mysticism—Ibn Ṭufayl's preference was for the last two, but that he apparently saw little prospect for a further development of Aristotelianism in view of the growing rigidity of the orthodox party. In other words, he seems to have anticipated that the only way successfully to transcend the Law in an Islamic environment lay in mysticism, rather than philosophy. Ibn Rushd's efforts to revive the authentic Aristotle remained unsuccessful as far as the Islamic East was concerned, and the same was true of his ardent endeavours to prove the compatibility of philosophy and revelation. Under the pressure of the approaching *reconquista* his patron had to yield to the pressure of the *fūqahā'* by banning the philosopher from his court and forbidding the reading and propagation of works of philosophy. Ibn Ṭufayl thus appears as a logical link between Ibn Sinā's foundations of "Oriental Wisdom",<sup>64</sup> marginal as these were within the huge body of his philosophical and medical works, and the near ascent of both the "Wisdom of Illumination" (*ḥikmat al-iṣṣrāq*) of Suhrawardī and the "Unity of Being" of Ibn 'Arabi. Both, however, were hardly less "heretical" than Ibn Ṭufayl, even though they far outdid him, and Ibn Rushd, in filling their texts with Islamic quotations. Suhrawardī was, in fact, condemned to death by an orthodox law-court, while Ibn 'Arabi spent most of his life as an emigrant in the East. The parable of two men, a believing philosopher and a philosophising believer, who leave the religious community to which they belong because they want to say what they think and practice what they believe, is unfortunately not outdated. Such things still happen, *mutatis mutandis*, in many a real life of today.

1 For Aristotelian philosophy in Islam cf. A. Badawi, *Histoire de la philosophie en Islam*, Paris, 1972.

2 Cf. C. Brockelmann, "Kalila wa-Dimna", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., Leiden, 1960.

3 Cf. D. M. Lang, "Bḥawthar wa-Yudasaf", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed.

4 *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, Beirut, 1376/1957, II, 203-377; L. E. Goodman, *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, Boston, 1978.

5 Cf. Ibn al-Nadim, *Kitāb al-fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, Leipzig, 1871-72, p. 304.

6 Cf. H. Corbin, *Avicenne et le récit visionnaire*, Vol. I, Teheran-Paris, 1954.



- <sup>7</sup> Cf. H. Corbin (ed.), *L'archange empourpré. Quinze traités et récits mystiques traduits du persan de l'arabe*, Paris, 1976.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. H. Waardenburg-Kilpatrick, "Selection and Presentation as Distinctive Characteristics of Medieval Arabic Courtly Prose Literature", in *Courtly Literature-Culture and Context*, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, 1990, pp. 337-53. The use of the adjective "courtly" in this article seems debatable to me.
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. J. T. Monroe, *The Art of Badi' az-zaman al-Hamadhani as Picaresque Narrative*, Beirut, 1983.
- <sup>10</sup> On the misuse of religious language cf. the chapter "Profanisierung sakraler Sprache" in my forthcoming book *Allmacht und Mächtigkeit*, Munich, 1991.
- <sup>11</sup> Arabic edition by 'Abd al-Halim Mahmūd; *Falsafat Ibn Ṭufayl wa-risālatuhū: Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān (Silsilat ad-dirāsāt al-falsafiyā wa 'l-akhlāqīyya)*, Cairo, n.d.; English version by L. E. Goodman; *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*, New York, 1972.
- <sup>12</sup> Goodman uses the form Absal in his translation, which is, however, the form of the name used by Ibn Sīnā in his allegory "Salāmān and Absal". Ibn Ṭufayl seems to have changed the name of his hero by intention, in order to emphasise the difference between him and Ibn Sīnā's hero.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. F. C. Endres and A. Schimmel, *Das Mysterium der Zahl. Zahlensymbolik im Kulturvergleich*, Cologne, 1984, pp. 142-71.
- <sup>14</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 9.
- <sup>15</sup> Cf. my "The Lady Gazelle and Her Murderous Glances", *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 20, 1989, pp. 1-11.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. F. Malti-Douglas, "A Male Utopia", in *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, ed. L. Conrad, Oxford, forthcoming.
- <sup>17</sup> On the aspect of "mightiness", cf. the introductory chapter of my *Allmacht und Mächtigkeit*, (see note 10 above).
- <sup>18</sup> Sura 28, 88; Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 134.
- <sup>19</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 145.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- <sup>22</sup> This passage, which is from al-Fārābī's *Kitāb al-hurūf*, is quoted by F. Zimmermann, in *Al-Fārābī's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's De Interpretatione*, London, 1981, Introduction CXIV, note 1.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. I. A. Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy Between Philosophy and Orthodoxy. Ijmā' and Ta'wil in the conflict between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Ruṣṣūd*, Leiden, 1989, p. 84 et seq.
- <sup>24</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 130.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-59.
- <sup>28</sup> Goodman translates "bibles", which evokes a wrong impression.
- <sup>29</sup> Sura 50, 36; Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 160.
- <sup>30</sup> Al-Fārābī, *Ihsā' al-'ulūm*, xxx, 132-37.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibn Sīnā, *Fi ṭibḥāt al-nubuwāt* ("Proof of Prophecies"), ed., with introduction and notes, Michael Marmura, Beirut, 1968, p. 41.
- <sup>32</sup> Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam. The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age*, Leiden, 1986, p. 171.
- <sup>33</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 161.
- <sup>34</sup> Sura 25, 46 (in a translation diverging from Goodman's less exact one); Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 161 et seq.
- <sup>35</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 162.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- <sup>37</sup> Arabic text, p. 149.
- <sup>38</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 164.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65.
- <sup>40</sup> *Republic*, VI, 10.
- <sup>41</sup> *Al-Madīna 'l-fādila*, Beirut, 1959, p. 109 et seq.
- <sup>42</sup> *Fi ṭadbīr al-mutawahhid*; cf. M. Fakhri, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, London-New York, p. 261 et seq.

- <sup>43</sup> Averroes' *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, ed., with an introduction, translation and notes, E. I. J. Rosenthal, Cambridge, 1966, p. 183.
- <sup>44</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 236, n. 282.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4 et seq.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.
- <sup>48</sup> Arabic text, p. 141; Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 156.
- <sup>49</sup> Cf. Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy*.
- <sup>50</sup> On Ibn al-'Arabi, cf. H. Corbin, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi*, Paris, 1958.
- <sup>51</sup> F. Rosenthal, "Ibn 'Arabi Between 'Philosophy' and 'Mysticism'", *Oriens*, 31, 1988, p. 15 et seq.
- <sup>52</sup> Cf. R. Walzer, "Al-Fārābī's Theory of Prophecy and Divination", in *Greek into Arabic*, Oxford, 1963, pp. 206-19.
- <sup>53</sup> Cf. D. M. Dunlop, "Ibn Bājjā", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed.
- <sup>54</sup> Cf. above, note 6.
- <sup>55</sup> Cf. A. Khairallah, *Love, Madness, and Poetry. An interpretation of the Magnum legend*, Beirut-Wiesbaden, 1980, p. 117 et seq.
- <sup>56</sup> A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, 1975, p. 181.
- <sup>57</sup> I Corinthians, II, 9; cf. Isaiāh, LXIV, 4.
- <sup>58</sup> Cf. Goodman, *Hayy*, note 205.
- <sup>59</sup> Cf. my "Symbols and Hints: Some Considerations Concerning the Meaning of Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān", in Conrad (ed.), *The World of Ibn Ṭufayl*.
- <sup>60</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, pp. 152-53.
- <sup>61</sup> On the possible influence of Ibn Ṭufayl's novel on the *Divina Commedia* via a Hebrew translation, cf. G. Sirohmater, "Chaj ben Mekitz-die unbekannte Quelle der *Divina Commedia*", *Deutsches Dante Jahrbuch*, 55-56, 1980-81, pp. 191-207.
- <sup>62</sup> Cf. the passage on the mirror concept in J. C. Bürgel, *The Feather of Simurgh. The "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam*, New York, 1988, pp. 138-41.
- <sup>63</sup> Goodman, *Hayy*, p. 150. The Arabic text is as follows: *khātara bi-bāhithi annahū lā dhāta lahū yughayyiruhū bihā dhāta 'l-haqqi 'alā wa-anna haqiqata dhāthi hiya dhātu 'l-haqq* (Maḥ-mūd, *op.cit.*, p. 133).
- <sup>64</sup> Cf. H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, Paris, 1964, p. 237 et seq.

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## RELIGIOUS STUDIES